

## Safe and Nurturing Learning Environments for Preschoolers

Treshawn Anderson: Hi, everyone. Happy Friday. Welcome to Teacher Time. I'm Treshawn Anderson, and joining me today is Judi Stevenson-Garcia. Hi, Judi.

Judi Stevenson-Garcia: Hi, Treshawn. How are you?

Treshawn: I'm doing good, trying to stay warm.

Judi: I know, me, too.

[Laughter]

Treshawn: So, we're here from the National Center on Early Childhood Development, Teaching, and Learning, and we're excited to be here today to talk to you about how to provide safe and nurturing learning environments for preschoolers. So, if you've been joining us for Teacher Time for the past several -- several years, you'll notice that this season, things may look a little different. This season, we're using a new platform called ON24, and for Teacher Time, and it's supposed to be a little bit more user-friendly, customizable, and easy on the eyes. Hopefully, you feel the same way about it after we're done. But before we begin, I want to go over just a few housekeeping items, as we'll be using some of the ON24 features during our webinar today.

So, at the bottom of your screen, you're going to notice multiple application widgets that you can use. These widgets are all resizable and movable, so feel free to move them around to get the most out of your desktop space, and you can expand your slide area or maximize it to fullscreen by clicking on the arrows in the top right-hand corner. We're going to be using the blue chat widget down at the bottom here in ON24 to interact with you all, and many of you have started to do that already, telling us how you support safe and nurturing learning environments in your learning environment, so that's great, and so you guys all have that. But if you have any questions -- specific questions during the webcast, you can submit them through that purple Q&A widget, and some of you have started using that already, as well, so good job.

Also, when we show videos, which we're going to do today, it's probably going to take up most of your screen when it starts to play, and you won't be able to see your chat box anymore, so if you want to chat in the chat box while you're watching the video, as sometimes we'll ask you to do, just go ahead and move the chat box all the way to one side of your screen so that you can see both the chat box and the video at the same time. We'll give you guys a chance to do that when we -- before we start our first video. A copy of today's slide deck, and viewer's guide, and all additional resources that we're going to be talking about today are available in the green "Resource" icon, so be sure to download any resources or links that you think are going to be helpful.

Judi: Yeah, there's lots of good things in that resource link, so definitely look there for the resources that we have for you. And so, then just some technical things, so just to make sure that this webinar moves smoothly for you, we recommend that you use a wired Internet connection, and you can also close any programs or brow -- browser sessions that you have running in the background. That sometimes slows things down, because our webinars are very bandwidth intensive. They take up a lot of space on your computer, so if you close anything that you're not using, that'll help the webinar run a little bit more smoothly.

And the ON24 webcasts are streamed through your computer, so there's no dial-in number, so you should be able to hear us right through your computer speakers. Just make sure your computer speakers, or your headset, or your earphones -- headphones, whatever you're using, are turned on, and the volume is up, so you can hear us, and you can hear the videos when they play. If you registered for

Teacher Time through the ON24 system, you'll have access to an on-demand version of this. It's going to be emailed to you about 30 minutes after this live webcast, and then you can just go back and -- and view it or share it just through the same link that was sent to you earlier. And we'll also post a link to this episode on MyPeers, so if you're on MyPeers, you'll be able to access it there, as well. Also, sometimes, depending on your Internet connection, your slides may advance more slowly than others, so if you log off any VPN connection, that can help. If your slides fall behind, you hear us talking about moving forward on a slide and you've seen your -- think your slides are behind, if you push F5 or refresh your page, that will help you catch up, too.

So, the -- what's nice about this platform is that it's completely customizable, so if you want to minimize any of your widgets, like if you want to get rid of the tips for a great webinar pod, you can just click on it, and it'll go down to your widget bar, and then if you want to see it again, you can click on it, and it'll pop back up anytime you want.

You also will have options for any technical issues you're having. There's a help widget, so you can go there first if you have a question. You could also put technical questions in the Q&A widget if you're having trouble navigating the -- the platform. And then the last thing is, finally, at the end we're going --- at the end of the webinar, we'll post a link to an evaluation form. We really appreciate it when you give us feedback. We use this information to improve our future webisodes, and when you complete the evaluation you'll be able to then download a certificate of completion for your participation in the webinar. And if you're viewing the webinar with friends on one computer and only person is registered, you can forward that evaluation link to your colleagues, and then once they complete the evaluation, they will receive a certificate of completion, as well.

Treshawn: Great. Thanks, Judi. Yeah, so stay around for that evaluation link at the end. So, we want the next hour to be as interactive as possible, so feel free to chat using the blue chat box icon, and use the purple Q&A icon to ask our guest expert some of your pressing questions. And so, each episode this season, we're going to be talking about three big takeaway points that you can take back to your classroom that are related to our topic. Then we're going to chat with our guest expert, who will give us some strategies to take back to our classrooms and family childcare homes to use with the children. And then the Q&A pod, we'll use that for specific questions for our guest expert, and finally, at the end of the webisodes, we are going to end with some reflection and planning. So, let's go ahead and dig into our topic for today.

Judi: That sounds good. So, our topic today is providing safe and nurturing learning environments for preschoolers, and we're basing our conversation today around the Framework for Effective Practice. It represents five components of quality teaching and learning, and hopefully this Framework is familiar to some of you or most of you. Hopefully you've seen it before, and the first thing we look at, at the the bottom, is the foundation, which focuses on providing nurturing, responsive, and effective interactions and engaging environments for children.

And then, next, you have the pillar on the left, which is implementing research-based curriculum and teaching practices, and then the second pillar encourages us to use screening and ongoing assessment of children. The roof focuses on highly individualized teaching and learning for children, with a specific focus on children with suspected delays and diagnosed disabilities. And then, finally, at the center of it all, which is where everything really happens, is the parents and families of the children that we work with in our programs. So, this year, this season, for Teacher Time, we are going to focus on this house Framework, and we're going to take it piece by piece.

Our first episode today, Safe and Nurturing Learning Environment for Preschoolers, is going to be in that foundation of the house. It's really where everything begins. And then through the rest of our

season, we're going to use the additional topics related to the rest of the components of the house, so we'll also, coming up next, we'll talk about implementing curriculum with fidelity. We'll spend some time talking about supporting families through transitions, and then we'll also talk about using developmental screening and ongoing assessment to make sure that we're really individualizing and meeting the needs of all the children that we work with. And then throughout every episode, we'll definitely make sure that we mention that kind of top piece of the Framework, which is strategies for highly individualized teaching and learning. Okay, so, like I said, for this episode, we're focusing on the foundation and very specifically, making sure that we're providing safe and nurturing learning environments.

And some of you, as you introduced yourselves, have already given us some really great strategies for how you do that because we know that nurturing, responsive, effective interactions and the engaging learning environments that we provide are the foundation for all learning in early childhood settings. They support preschool children's social and emotional well-being and their mental health. So, we know that children and families benefit from interactions and environments, especially when they are culturally and linguistically responsive, because they meet the needs of children, all of the children in our program, when we're responsive to their backgrounds and what's unique about them.

We also know that it's important for children with suspected delays or diagnosed disabilities to have environments that are responsive to their unique needs and abilities. So, what this means is that when we respond to the cultures, and languages, and abilities of each child and each family in our programs, they're going to benefit, because they feel included. They feel valued, and they know that they're respected. So, the three pieces of these high-quality preschool settings and these nurturing environments include, first, a well-organized and managed learning environment, and I know you all work very hard to do that each day, and we'll talk a little bit about that.

The social-emotional support that we provide are key, and then, finally, the intentional teaching practices, the interactions, the materials that we provide that really encourage children's thinking, their development, and their skills. Treshawn, are you still there? I lost Treshawn. Is Treshawn still there?

Well, I guess we'll wait and see if Treshawn has come back, but we'll keep moving forward. So, our focus today is on providing safe and nurturing learning environments for preschoolers, and so to do this, there's three things that you can do. First, you can be sensitive and responsive. Second, you can be consistent. And then third, you can be mindful. So, we're going to spend today just talking about these three main points and how you can do or be each of these things each day as you work with young children. So, let's start with the first one, being sensitive and responsive. We'll start with a little bit of the research. So, the research tells us that sensitive and responsive interactions support preschoolers' healthy development and emotional well-being. When children experience this nurturing and sensitive interaction with their caregivers, they feel safe, and they feel confident, knowing that they're going to be well cared for, and this really allows them to access learning opportunities that we provide.

They learn that they are worthy of care. They learn about what relationships feel like and what the world is like, and they develop secure relationships with adults, with you, and this feeling of safety and security leads preschoolers to explore and learn about their environment, and it supports their ability to develop relationship skills as they grow, so it's that safety that allows them to kind of engage and explore with their environment. So, remember, we're going to watch a video, and just remember, as we mentioned at the beginning, when we show videos, it might take up most of your screen, so if you want to move the chat box to the side, we'll chat about this video as we watch. We're going to watch how a teacher supports children in social problem-solving. And in the chat box, while you watch the video, tell us what she's doing that's showing sensitivity or responsiveness, and also let us know if you have suggestions for something she could do that would maybe improve or help her to be more sensitive or responsive to the children's needs. So, let's take a look.

[Video clip begins]

Woman: Do you know? Okay, but I think Miracle is saying it's hers. She's taking it because it might be hers. Okay?

Girl: It might be hers.

Woman: It might be hers. Girl: Because I'm taking it to her.

Woman: Were you giving it to her?

Girl: No -- [Speaking indistinctly] Miracle friend.

Woman: Oh, you're being her friend. She was being your friend. That's why she picked up your hat, she said. Okay? I don't think was trying to take your hat away. I think she was trying to give it to you. All right, so you can tell her that. Say, "I was only trying to give you your hat back."

Girl: I was only trying to give you your hat.

Woman: "I wasn't trying to take it."

Girl: I wasn't trying to take it.

Woman: Okay, Miracle, did you hear that? All right. What do you want to say to her? What do you want to tell her?

Miracle: [Speaking indistinctly]

Woman: What's that? Did you hear her? What did she say? Do you guys want to shake on it or be friends again? All right. Go ahead. Oh, so you're sharing your hat. Don't you need it anymore? Do you need it or not? You don't. She doesn't need it anymore, but I think she's willing to share with you. All right? So, make sure it's nice and safe if you leave it. All right?

[End video clip]

Judi: Okay, so take a few minutes. Some of you are already chatting in the chat box. I see some of your -- what you're noticing is that she's allowing the child to answer, which is great, so she's not answering the questions for the child. The teacher is helping her to use words to explain the situation. She's giving her some words. Let's see what else. She's asking questions to figure out what -- what happened. Yes, Rebecca, that's true, so instead of coming in and saying, "Here's what I'm seeing," she's asking so that she's supporting the children and -- and using communication to help her understand what's going on.

Cara, you suggested getting down to the child's level. Oh, that's true, yeah, so she could have gotten down and been on the child's level. That might have helped with some of that sensitivity and responsiveness. She's repeating what the child said and helped the child solve the problem. These are great, you guys. Oh, Letty, that's true. She's not hurting the children, right? She recognizes that this is an important time for problem-solving and communicating, and so she's -- she's helping them to do that. She's -- she's seeing this as a moment where she can teach children these important skills. Open-ended questions. This is great. Yeah, definitely. Thank you for that. It's really powerful, right?

This is just like a -- just two minutes of these children's day, and you can see that this teacher is -- is supporting their -- their -- their value as -- as children and helping them to solve problems, something that we could easily just step in and say, "Here, I'm going to fix this. Why don't you give the hat back?" She's allowing them to -- to figure it out on their own. Yeah, building on it with other questions, Jacquelyn, exactly. That's great.

So, we're going to listen to -- now we're going to listen to a teacher who is talking about the importance of being sensitive and responsive. And so, again, in the chat box, you can tell us about what she says that stands out to you. So, let's watch.

[Video clip begins]

Stella: I feel that, as early educators, that we need to really be passionate about our children, be passionate about their well-being, and bring passion into the classroom, because kids know. They know when you care about them. They know when you love them. And when they know that, that's when the real learning takes place, because they feel safe, safe enough to try, safe enough to explore.

[End video clip]

Treshawn: So, as we --

Judi: Oh, I love her. Oh, sorry. Oh, hey, Treshawn. There you are.

Treshawn: I lost you guys for a little bit.

Judi: Welcome back.

Treshawn: Now I'm back. Thank you. She is very sensitive and just very calming and loving, and you can tell that she's really invested in the thing that she does and helping children feel safe in their environment, so I really love that little clip.

Judi: Rosalyn noticed she said be passionate. Children feeling safe, sense of security, oh, and some people are very excited. "Yes!" Like, "This is what we want. Yes." So, they were really responding to her and her passion for her kids, and creating a safe space for them.

Treshawn: Right, and as we've mentioned, you know, a safe and nurturing learning environment is really at the foundation of a healthy child development. And when teachers and family childcare providers are sensitive and responsive in their interactions with children, this positive relationship really builds trust between the adult and the child, making the child feel safe and loved. And when children feel safe and loved, they're more likely to want to explore and learn in their environments, right?

Judi: Exactly. So. And we know these sensitive and responsive interactions are important for all children. This includes children who have languages -- who speak languages other than English at home. Responding to their needs means responding to and supporting their home language, as well as English. Sensitive, responsive, predictable interactions help them feel safe when they are away from home, when they're away from their family and -- and the familiar language environment that they're used to.

So, it's really important for children, especially who are -- who are learning a language other than English and then maybe speaking English in your program. It also means being sensitive and respon -- responsive to all of our children's individual needs that they come to our program with, their specific cues, their specific backgrounds. It's important for all of the children that we work with but also especially for those who may have suspected or identified delays. We want to make sure that we are paying attention to where their abilities are and what their needs are so that we can meet them as they come into our programs each day. So, just for example, you may have a child -- We have an image of Marshall here. Here's Marshall. So, here's an example. Marshall is experiencing some difficulty using his fine motor skills to cut paper in the writing center. So, when you are sensitive to his needs, you'll be paying attention to that, and you'll be there to support him if he gets frustrated. It does not mean rushing to the rescue every time a child faces a challenge, right? We want to be there to support them.

So, for preschoolers, we want to pay close attention to what their level of skill is and maybe where they are being challenged but also where they're getting frustrated so that they can learn from the challenges

but not get so frustrated that they just give up. And so when we're close to kids, our children, and we pay close attention, that's when we figure out when it's time to provide some additional support, like we saw in that previous video.

Treshawn: That's a great example. So, another example is we have so -- we have these kinds of observations and interactions, and they play a key role in supporting children who are dual language learners, as well. And so, another example of that is, say, during circle time, our friend, Miguel, here, he's excited to show his friends that he can count to 10 in his home language. After he's finished counting, his teachers give him a big high five and a huge hug, and being responsive, his teacher recognizes the importance of his home language and shared that the other children in the classroom -- and shared that experience with the other children in the classroom who are excited to hear him count, as well. So, I know these situations are very well thought out, but what happens when you're in the heat of the moment with multiple preschoolers who all need your attention? And I'm sure that that's happened before. Well, like Judi said, if Marshall's teacher was busy and distracting -- you know, and distracted by helping the other children in the writing center, she may not have responded to Marshall's needs, and Marshall could have gotten frustrated and maybe thrown his scissors.

But his teacher was there, and she was aware of his specific needs, and she was ready to respond. And also, Miguel's teacher could have ignored his request to count in his home language just to get through circle time, and I know sometimes we're pressed, you know, to meet all the needs and requirements of our curriculum and things. And so rather than taking time to celebrate diversity and Miguel's home language, you know, she could not have been as responsive as she was. But because she was responsive to his emotional needs and developmental needs, and she exchanged hugs and excitement, he now knows that his home language is respected in his learning environment and that his emotional needs will be met, because his teacher was responsive to him.

Judi: Exactly, and so I just wanted to say there's several -- that there's a conversation going on in the group chat that I think is really important, and there are several who have mentioned that it's really challenging to be responsive to children. And Renee said that she's experiencing teachers who are just losing their passion because they're exhausted from the high level of needs of the children that they're working with and the challenging behaviors that they're encountering.

And I feel like this is a really good opportunity. I mean, keep share -- keep having this conversation, because I know you all are -- you guys are the ones out there working with these children and families on a daily basis, and I think, you know, if we can work together to figure out some ways that we can build up the supports for teachers so that they have -- that they are not feeling so worn out or that they've lost their passion. I think this is a -- what we're talking about today is really important for that, because we're talking about how to build those relationships so that we can -- we can alleviate some of the challenging behavior so that we can be sure that we're really meeting the needs of individual children in our -- in our programs.

And -- and that's where the challenge is, right? So, I think the very first thing we want to do is be responsive and supportive and, you know, make sure that that's our goal. That will help, I think, alleviate some of the -- the challenging behaviors that -- that we're experiencing. And then, you know -- and then, we'll go through our other two steps, too, about some strategies that we can use to kind of alleviate that stress and maybe bring back some of the passion.

So. Oh, do you want to go ahead, Treshawn?

Treshawn: Yeah, I was going to say, you know, and on the flip side of that, you know -- you know, although it is hard, you know, to manage, sometimes, classrooms and -- and children's behaviors, and things get challenging, you know, research does show that insensitive and unresponsive care may

contribute to children's lower self-esteem and increase -- increased rates of anxiety and challenges with self-regulation. So, you know, although these children may be coming to our centers with different issues and -- and needs, it's good to know that, you know, if we can take the time to be sensitive and responsive to their needs, then that can help buffer some of those impacts of self-esteem and anxiety.

So, when we just take those little, you know, those little bits of time to be responsive to their needs, then that helps them, you know, in the long run. When preschoolers receive this insensitive and unresponsive care, they may not feel safe in their environments, because they may worry about when their needs will be met. But when we are sensitive and responsive to children's needs, it helps them feel safe and that they're worthy of being taken care of, and it also increases their confidence and their ability to influence others in their environment. And so like we said, we know it's not possible to be responsive 100 percent of the time, but it is important to recognize that if there are times where we do miss children's cues or we don't respond in the most sensitive way, that we can still let the child know that we love them and we respect them, and then we can do our best to be more responsive next time. So, no one's perfect, but these things can change. Our behaviors can change, too. And there are always opportunities to repair situations and interactions that may not have been as sensitive or responsive as you would have liked, and that's a good thing.

Judi: Exactly. So, let's move on to the second way that we can create a safe and nurturing learning environment, and that is being consistent. And so, let's take a minute to think about what consistency means to us as adults, right?

So, we expect -- we might have a daily routine that we -- that -- that provides us with some level of consistency. You know, we get to work, and we -- we have some time to plan, and then our kids arrive. But imagine getting to work, and your director, right away, says, "I need you to cover in another room for a few hours," but then it ends up being the rest of the day, and then you get asked to stay late because some parents are late, and then, you, so that means you stay until 6:30 when you normally get off at 6:00. Like, what does this do to you, right? This can make you feel anxious. This could make you feel like you don't have control. And so, if having an unpredictable routine or schedule makes you feel this way, imagine what it feels like for preschoolers, who really have no control over their day.

So, what we want to do is be consistent and provide a really predictable schedule, and I know many of you do that already -- predictable schedule, consistent routines, so that preschoolers know what to expect. This gives them a sense of security and a feeling of safety. It eases that anxiety of wondering what's going to happen next or not having control, and it helps them build their trust in their environment and feel confident in themselves. Remember how we said when they feel safe, that allows them to go out and explore the world.

So, let's talk a little bit about what we mean by consistent schedules and predictable routines. The schedules are what organize the day into blocks of time, like morning greeting, free play, mealtime, snack time, small group time, outdoor time. So, children begin to predict their day based on those schedules, and they're just beginning to understand the concept of time, so knowing what is coming next is one way that they start to understand units of time.

Treshawn: And when the schedule is consistent, each of the events typically happen around the same time each day. For example, when children arrive into your family childcare home and into your classrooms, their playmates may be engaged in free play until it's time for morning snack, and that's a typical routine that happens.

On the other hand, routines are predictable daily events related to caring for children's basic needs, like toileting, offering snacks and meals, napping, which may be your favorite time of the day, hand-washing, brushing teeth, washing up and changing clothes -- changing their clothes as needed. And with

preschoolers, routines form a structure for their daily schedule. And although routines and schedules should be consistent each day, it's also important to allow some flexibility to meet children's individual or group needs.

For example, children may be engaged in a large group butterfly exploration during circle time, and you may choose to save calendar for later in the day and continue to further engage children in this butterfly conversation or take their play outside. So, let's watch a video of a teacher as she talks about their daily schedule with her group of children, and tell us in the chat box what you notice about her use of the schedule and how they support children's emotional safety.

[Video clip begins] Woman No. 2: First, we're going to read a... Then, we're going to sing a... Then we're going to wash...

Child: Hands. Make something. Eat it.

Woman No 2: And eat it. Good job. So, the first thing we do is read a --

Child: Book.

Woman No. 2: Book. The spider book. I know, but wait. Look. We washed hands. Right? So, we're all done. Now it's time to...

Emilio: Eat.

Woman No. 2: Wait. First, there's eat. First, we need to...

Emilio: Make it.

Woman No. 2: Make the snack. Good job, Emilio. Ready? How we make our snack, the first thing we do is, we're going to get our supplies. Let's start there. Let's get supplies.

[End video clip]

Judi: So, there are some great comments you guys are noticing, and you're also giving each other some really great ideas about how to support schedules and routines. Someone mentioned that they like that the pictures -- She's letting the children -- Chastity said she's letting the children tell her what the routine by giving clues. Right, so she's just not telling them. She's having the children participate. And let's see. A consistent schedule is very important when they learn this now what's going to happen through the day. Right. That's really important for kids to give them that sense of safety. She's using the picture cards at different times of day, so it's not just in the morning, saying, "Here's what's going to happen," but as they go through the day, she's showing them, "We're done with this, and we're moving to this." Use it all day long and not just first thing. Right, Debbie. That's -- Debbie and I are thinking the same thing. And the visuals, right, Laura. The visuals are so helpful. It's really important. So, in terms of --

Treshawn: So, for infant --

Judi: Oh, go ahead. Go ahead, Treshawn. Sorry, we're talking over each other today.

Treshawn: It's fine. I was going to say for infants and toddlers, their schedule and routines are really built around their developmental needs and information from the family. But as children get older, they are better able to follow this group schedule with some individual routine still occurring as necessary. For example, most children will flow through the schedule at the same time, you know, going from free play, to potting, to morning snack, to circle time, but one child may need to finish eating breakfast at a slower pace before circle time, and that's okay, or another child may need to change clothes after playing in the water table. That's just fine, too, because for younger 3-year-olds, they may still be tired in



the morning and struggle to make it to lunch, so giving them a quiet space, or -- or to rest, or to read quietly is a way to let them know that it's okay to slow down when you're tired.

So, it's important for you to observe different patterns of behavior for children and respond consistently. And for family childcare providers, hats off to you, because you're required to meet the needs of children of multiple age groups, which means close observation and intentional planning, and that's even more important to making sure you're meeting the needs of all the children in your classroom.

Judi: Exactly, and remember, as you mentioned, for preschoolers, you have suspected delays or diagnosed disabilities, and some people are mentioning that in the chat box that the visual cues can be really helpful for children with IEPs. They have needs that differ from the rest of the children in the group, so we want to make sure that we're really sensitive and accommodating in our routines and our daily schedule. So, for example, a child may need an individualized schedule that is different than the -- the larger group schedule that - that he or she can bring across the day and carry with them, or you may have some children who need a little bit more time in advance before you move to a transition so that they can be successful in that.

So, obviously, understanding what children need, paying attention to where they have challenges around schedules and routines, talking to their parents and families about how they use routines at home, and then definitely paying attention, if they have an IEP, sometimes those specific accommodations are mentioned around schedules and routines. All of that is going to help you understand what you need to do to help them really do their best in your in your -- program. So, we're going to watch -- now we're going to watch two videos about arrival and departure. We'll watch -- It's two different videos. One is in a family childcare setting -- setting, and one is a departure from a childcare center, so as you watch the video, just pay attention to what the teachers and family child-care providers are doing to be supportive and responsive to the children during these transition times.

[Video clip begins]

Child: Oh, no, Duncan. Oh, no, Duncan. Oh, no. Oh, no. Oh, no, Duncan.

Teacher: Yeah, you can take it off.

Child: I want to go. Good job, Duncan.

Teacher No. 2: Dominic, this one's not yours. This is your name.

Teacher: Good job getting your jacket on.

Teacher No. 2: Put on your jacket. That's a boy. Good job. Do you see? He did it. Take your arms out.

Child: Yay!

Teacher: You don't have to yell.

Child: Duncan? Duncan?

Teacher: Do you need help? You need help?

Child: No. Let him go.

Teacher: I like that you're independent. [All speaking indistinctly]

Teacher No. 2: Take your coat off?

Teacher: Do you need help?

Child: Nice doggy.

Teacher: He's a nice doggy.

Teacher No. 3: Get down.

Child: Get down, Duncan. Get down.

[End video clip]

Judi: I'm sorry about that. I -- I see that some of you are saying that there was an echo on that video. There definitely was an echo. I'm going to show you the second video, and hopefully we will not have an echo on that. We'll see how that one goes. [Video clip begins]

Teacher: You want to let all of them go first, and then you go?

Child: This is -- Teacher: Justin's going to go first, and then Allen is going to go. And then who?

Child: Hayden!

Teacher: And then Hayden. We have to get in our chair first, though. Shall we get in our chair?

Child: Two kids.

Teacher: Two?

Child: Two kids to go home.

Teacher: Two kids to go home. Justin and Allen?

Child: I get a new bus today.

Teacher: You got a new bus? Oh, yeah, you did get a big bus. You're absolutely right. You have a big bus now.

Child: Yeah!

Teacher: Are we ready to ride our big bus?

Child No. 2: I need --

Teacher: Are we ready to see Mommy and Brother? Yes?

Child: I get a new bus today.

Teacher: You're going to get on the bus today?

Child: My new bus.

Teacher: Your new bus. Yes.

[End video clip]

Judi: I hope that was a little bit better. Sorry about those technical glitches there, but as you can see, and -- Well, hopefully as you saw, in the first video, the family childcare provider was helping the child remember where his cubby was and giving him some affirmation about his commands of the dog. The dad was allowed to finish the drop-off routine, and then the family childcare provider takes the child to engage in the environment as dad leaves. That looks like a successful transition, right? And then in the second video, the teacher, as some of you mentioned before, was at the child's level, talking through the routine, and then you could tell that she was responding to the child and sharing his excitement. She was responding to his excitement and sharing it about riding a new bus. And I see some of you are saying -- Yeah, she's down at the boy's level. She was very caring. She was repeating what he's saying.

Actually, my 5-year-old son has said to me, "Why do you always say what I say?" because I actually do that. I repeat a lot of what he says to me while we're having a conversation together, which is funny that he noticed that. So, yeah, thank you for those responses.

Treshawn: One thing I really liked about that video, too, is that she was really trying to understand what he was saying and what he was excited about. And oftentimes, we just, you know, kind of rotely mimic what they say or, you know, imitate what they say, but she was really trying to understand so that she can share in the excitement, and that's one thing I really like about that video, as well. It looks like you guys picked up on that, too. So, a consistent group care schedule and established routine provides predictability and a sense of well-being that really enables children to learn. And one of the benefits of having a consistent schedule and predictable routine is that these schedules and routines help children understand the expectation of group-care environment, which may be different than other settings, like what they do at home. So, in other words, being consistent and having a schedule and routine are key learning opportunities for preschoolers.

When children know what to expect and begin to rely on consistent schedules, this helps reduce those behaviors that we were talking about that you may find challenging. And transitions for preschoolers can be stressful, too, especially when there isn't enough consistency and when they don't know what to expect and especially when they're tired. So, having these consistent routines and predictable transitions will help manage their emotions and behaviors in a way that makes it more positive. So, predictable and consistent schedules in the preschool learning environment really help children feel secure and comfortable. When children have difficulty with change, especially those ones that have those particular things that -- You know, I think we all have little tics that we need to know and be prepared. I know my daughter is always like, "Tell me where I'm going, what I need to wear," you know, "so that I'm prepared." So, when we have those children in our classroom, really having this schedule and routine helps them in that way.

Judi: Yeah, and one thing I would say, too, is that children who are dual language learners really benefit from these predictable and consistent schedules and routines, and especially it's helpful if we can communicate in their home language around these routines. But if not, even if they don't always understand the language that's going on around them, they -- understanding what's going to happen next and these visual cues can really be helpful, as well. And they begin to trust that the teachers and staff that are working with them are going to take care of them during or after activities. Another thing is that this consistency builds their cognitive skills, not just their social-emotional skills, in terms of understanding the sequence of time, how routines and activities happen. One thing happens first, and then something happens next.

And then, obviously, it does support their social-emotional skills because it allows them to develop trusting relationships with adults. We want to remember that routines and transitions are learning opportunities for preschoolers. They develop independence and self-help skills, like putting on and taking off their jackets, washing hands, brushing their teeth, and feeding themselves. And transition times are really important, too, because it's helping children develop self-regulation skills, stopping one thing and beginning another, which can be challenging for children when they want to continue to play, but they have to stop, because it's time to move to a different activity.

So, preschoolers still need lots of support during transition times. It's really hard to stop doing something you're having fun doing and shift and do something else, and so teachers can help by using those visual -- visual schedules, letting children know in advance when a transition time is coming. Some of you have mentioned that in the chat box. Sitting close to children who have trouble making their way through transitions so that you can support them. And then also it's really important to acknowledge feelings that they may be having, like it's hard to stop playing when we want to keep playing, but it is

time to move onto our day. Or I'm really hungry right now. Are you hungry? Because it's time to have lunch. So, it's hard to clean up when we're hungry, right? We want to move on to lunch.

Treshawn: So, hopefully that section on providing consistent routines and schedules helped you guys, you know, with classroom management and helping with those somewhat challenging behaviors that we talked about next -- that we talked about earlier. But next, we're going to talk about a third way to create a safe and nurturing learning environment, and that's to be mindful. Who would've thought? So, mindfulness is a way of thinking and being, and it means pushing away all those distractions and just being present in the moment both physically and mentally, and so when we're present, we can be more aware of our emotions and use strategies to help us stay positive. That will contribute to a safe and nurturing learning environment.

So, to help us talk more about the importance of being mindful and how we can support an environment where children feel safe, we asked our friend, Rebecca Parlakian, from ZERO TO THREE to join us today. She's also partnered with the National Center on Early Childhood Health and Wellness. Hi, Rebecca. Are you here?

Rebecca: I'm here. Can you hear me?

Judi: Hi, Rebecca.

Treshawn: Yay.

Rebecca: Hello. Great.

Treshawn: Welcome.

Rebecca: Thanks for having me.

Treshawn: Yeah, it's so nice of you to join us here on Teacher Time today. So, you guys, remember, if you have questions for Rebecca as she's chatting with us, go ahead and use that purple Q&A widget to ask her a question, and then we'll be sure to try to answer it if time permits. So, Rebecca, we've heard a lot about children's, you know, self-regulation and how important that is for their social-emotional development and even school readiness now. But can you tell us a little bit about adult self-regulation, like what is it? What does it mean for teachers and for the environment?

Rebecca: Yeah, so, adult self-regulation is really a more mature way of thinking about children's self-regulation. So, we define it as when we're able to manage our feelings, actions, and behavior so we can engage in goal-directed next steps. Right? So, when a car pulls out in front of me on the highway, instead of, you know, ramming their bumper, I have the self-regulation to kind of slow down, take a deep breath. Although I will say the drivers in D.C. will tax your self-regulation to the max. But when we talk about self-regulation with children, we often add to the definition the phrase, "with the support of familiar, trusted adults." I would say that that is also true for adults. Right? I mean, we need the support of others to regulate ourselves. So, think about when you call a friend or your mom after a really bad day. You just want to talk it through with someone. That's a strategy for self-regulation that we use and we probably don't even think about. And so I think, for early educators, for teachers, family childcare providers, self-regulation becomes a really critically important skill that allows us to give children the experience of a safe and nurturing learning environment, because we are taking care of ourselves and managing our own reactions so that we are making a thoughtful response instead of a knee-jerk reaction.

Judi: So, that's great, in terms of thinking about how we have to self-regulate ourselves so that we can support children in doing the same thing. So, can you -- That sounds a little bit to me like this term that

we have on the screen, co-regulation. Can you tell us what -- how co-reg -- what co-regulation is and how -- how that's important for our interactions with children?

Rebecca: Yeah, so, you know, really when adults yell, or they get wound up, or angry, or frustrated, first of all, even if we're not yelling, you know, we're just feeling that way, you know, babies as young as 3 to 5 months old can sense and be impacted by our emotional state. So, that's the first thing to really, you know, recognize is that very young children, starting in infancy all the way through the rest of their lives, you know, they recognize how we're feeling. And teachers are a child's secure home base when they're away from family members, and so when we are getting really wound up, children lose their rock. They lose the person that they rely on to help them feel safe, to feel calm and to return to a soothed, regulated state.

So, co-regulation is this process between adult and child where the adult provides regulatory support and models or provides regulatory strategies for the child to use in the context of a trusting, nurturing relationship. And for preschoolers, I mean, you had some videos where that was kind of happening, right, where with the hat, that was kind of -- That co-regulation was kind of happening in that video. But, you know, for example, two -- two preschoolers may find a ladybug on the playground, and one of them really wants to tell the teacher, but the other one tells the teacher first. So, the first child, you know, shoves their friend, like, "I -- I wanted to tell her first." So, the teacher might say, you know, "It's not okay to push, but I hear -- I see how much you wanted to tell me that," so, you know, really validating the child's behavior, setting limits, and then saying, "How about you both tell me together about the ladybug and what you discovered?" You know, I think it -- this is tricky. It's hard because sometimes we have kids with more difficult temperaments, with more extreme behaviors.

And, you know, I always remember a TED talk that I watched where the teacher said, you know, "You don't have to love every child, but you need to make every child feel loved." And I always try to remember that is that it's this process of co-regulation where we're validating where a child is, and we're providing a scaffolding to differentiate our approach to help them slowly build the skills of self-regulation that they need to be successful.

Judi: That's great.

Treshawn: Yeah, that's awesome.

Judi: Oh, go ahead, Treshawn.

Treshawn: No, go ahead, Judi, if you had a follow-up.

Judi: No, I was just going to say, can you tell us, like -- So, what are some things that teachers can do to co-regulate? Rebecca: Yeah, so, I think, you know, some things we can do in the classroom setting -- So, I think co-regulation is really all about having that warm, nurturing, supportive relationship. That's number one. Number two is really beginning to understand each individual child's cues and temperaments because, again, our approach will be different based on where each child is. I think third, we can create an environment of yes, an environment that really buffers children from stressors that exist in the space.

So, we can create child-safe and child-friendly places that are set up for children's success, so only having materials out, for example, that children are allowed to touch and engage with instead of having materials out that they can only touch sometimes. That's really, really hard. Right? So, we want to create environments that say yes to children. Environments also include what you were talking about earlier, predictable routine. Routines. Transition strategies, which may need to be individualized based on children's temperaments and needs, and behavioral expectations that really reflect children's

development and what they can do and understand. And then I think, lastly, we can use our teaching to create intentional activities and offer intentional opportunities for learning around self-regulation.

So, we can be a role model ourselves. We can notice when children are using self-regulation strategies. We can integrate self-regulation strategies into our classroom, like having a cozy corner or, like, a cooldown. There was a classroom I was in where they had a peace tent that you could kind of use the tent when you were feeling overwhelmed. You could go in the peace tent, and the teacher modeled it. The teacher would just say, "I'm really frustrated that the milk was spilled, and I just need to go to the peace tent for a few minutes." The idea is that these things are not punishments, but that there is a pleasure.

Judi: Right.

Rebecca: It's a support. It's something in the classroom that makes children feel good, because we're trying to get them tools.

Judi: I love that. So, the teacher used the peace tent, as well?

Rebecca: Yes, she did.

Judi: That's fantastic. I love it. It's not just for the kids, and I love that you said that. So, the teacher is modeling it. She's acknowledging it when children are using it, and it's not a punishment, right? Calming down is not a punishment. It's a self-care method. So, if we're going to talk about -- So, I just said self-care. The last thing we want to talk about a little bit is about using mindfulness. This is a term that everyone is hearing these days. But can you just tell us a little bit about how teachers and family childcare providers can engage in mindfulness or self-regulation exercises? Like, how can we use this at work? Because I -- You may have heard earlier, you know, people are -- Teachers are losing their passion.

Judi: They're -- They're feeling overwhelmed by the amount of need, and so I know mindfulness is one way that we can really address that.

Rebecca: Yeah. So, first I just want to recognize that, you know, there's nothing that's this, you know, silver bullet, right? I mean, our jobs -- These jobs are hard jobs, so there are going to be tough days. And some strategies -- I also want to acknowledge that, you know, probably none of us on this call have a half an hour to stop during the day and just do deep breathing or whatever. So, the strategies I'm going to share are kind of in-the-moment strategies. So, the quickest one is, like, to get ourselves out of that knee-jerk reaction. I think it's really important to recognize that unless a child is in physical danger, if we can stop and take two breaths before we respond, and just those two breaths is enough to calm our nervous systems so that we can make an informed decision in the moment, and that just takes us making a behavior change to just take two breaths.

I think the other idea -- The other thing that I use is we -- our family goes on vacation to the beach. That's our happy place, and so whenever I'm at a beach, I take a 20-second video of the tide, of the water coming in, and I just keep it on my phone. And when I'm having a really bad day, I just take that video out, and I watch it for 20 seconds and just kind of breathe deeply. And that's something, like, just think about for yourself, what's your happy place? Is it taking a hike? Is it watching leaves fly off the trees in the fall? Take a 20-second video and just have it there so that during the day, maybe you're, like, getting snack ready, you can just play it, you know, and take your deep breaths for 20 seconds, watch your video. I think that's a really nice way to kind of focus our attention.

Third, I would use the strategy of self-compassion, and self-compassion is when you actually are as nice to yourself as you are to other people. Think about yourself. Think about what you would tell a friend.

So, if you're thinking, like, "I just have no more energy for these kids. Like, I can't do it anymore," You -- what would you tell a friend? You would tell a friend, like, "Yeah, sometimes there's really hard days. You're an amazing educator, and you're going to get through this, but just know that you have it in you, and you're doing a great job." That's would you tell a friend, so tell yourself. That's called self-compassion.

Judi: That's great.

Rebecca: Yeah.

Judi: So, we have a question. Someone asked a question in the chat box. She said -- Kathy said she uses the conscious discipline. Would that be something related to -- to self-regulation or supporting self-regulation?

Rebecca: Yeah, absolutely. I think the conscious discipline approach is really about helping children learn in the moment and, again, being very present in the moment and being a partner with the child in that process, so absolutely.

Judi: All right. One of the last things -- So, we put up a slide that just has some mindfulness steps that you could go through if you have some time to take a break and re-center. But you have to -- Before you go, you have to tell us about breathing buddies.

Rebecca: Oh, yeah. So, breathing buddies. So, a strategy that you can use with preschoolers to kind of teach them how to do deep breathing as a calming strategy. Before nap time, have everybody get a stuffed animal, which will be their breathing buddy. And they lay on their cot, on their backs, put their breathing buddy on their tummies, and then model for them how when you take a deep breath, your tummy actually pushes the breathing buddy up. Then when you exhale, the breathing buddy goes down. Have them hold it gently and watch the breathing buddy, and do kind of model that deep breathing before nap time. It really helps them fall asleep, and you can use that later when kids -- when a child is losing it. You can say "Oh, my gosh. You're having so many strong feelings right now. Would you like to do breathing buddies for a little bit to feel better?"

Another quick strategy is having children lay their hands on the table in a five, like, put their five fingers out, and have them trace their fingers with the pointer finger on their other hand. Every time they get to the top of a finger, they should take a deep breath, and we call that starfish. So, model the starfish, model breathing buddies, and bring a little peace to your life, because you all deserve it.

Judi: I want to do breathing buddies in a peace tent. That's what I need some days.

Treshawn: I want a peace tent. That's what I got from that. I'm going to use it myself. Before you go, Rebecca, I know you have some great resources to share. We've put them for you guys in the green resource tab, but if you want to talk a little bit, just quickly about, you know, the resilience practice and the mindfulness resource suite.

Rebecca: Yeah. There's a fantastic resource on the ECLKC about mindfulness as a strategy to promote child resilience, and the PowerPoint is there. The videos are there. The activities are there. So, if you want to continue your learning about mindfulness or you want to bring it to your staff, I really encourage you to check that out. And also, Zero To Three has developed a suite of resources about mindfulness designed for professionals in their practice, and you can download those free of charge at [zerotothree.org/mindfulness](http://zerotothree.org/mindfulness). So, I hope you have have fun diving in and learning more.

Judi: That's great.

Treshawn: Great.

Judi: Thank you, Rebecca, for being here.

Rebecca: Oh, it's my pleasure, guys. Thanks for having me.

Judi: All right. Thanks, Rebecca.

Treshawn: Thanks. So, as we close, we're going to remind you, you know, about the three ways that we - - what -- that we -- that you can build a safe and nurturing learning environment for preschoolers. And that, hopefully you remember, is to be sensitive and responsive, to be consistent, and lastly to be mindful. And doing all of these things will help us meet children's needs in a way that helps them feel safe and worthy of being taken care of and feel confident, too. And so if you look at your viewer's guide, you'll see that you've been given the chance to choose a few of these strategies that Rebecca was talking about and try them on your own, and then reflect and see how they made a difference in your interactions with young children, so be sure to download the viewer's guide and try them out in your own classrooms.

Judi: Yeah, definitely use that viewer's guide as a way to follow up and do some self-reflection or work together with your colleagues. And, finally, I just want to make sure that we take a minute to highlight a special campaign from the Office of Head Start. You may have seen some webinars coming out around this topic. It's the Safe Foundations, Healthy Futures campaign. And so, the goal of this Head Start campaign is to make sure that we are providing safe environments for all children and to eliminate any preventable risk to children's health, safety, and well-being. And so here at Teacher Time, we're supporting this effort by starting off our Teacher Time series with some practical ways you can create emotionally safe learning environments for the children that you care for. So, you can follow along with the latest information, access their campaign schedule, and get more information about the campaign by joining the Safe Foundations, Healthy Futures community on MyPeers. So, if you're not already on MyPeers, you definitely should join. But if you want to join MyPeers, there is a community specifically focused on Safe Foundations, Healthy Futures. And in the resource widget, where we have all of the links to resources for you, there is a link to an ECLKC page that gives some really great resources around creating a culture of safety.

Treshawn: Awesome. So, one of the questions that came up, as we talk about our resources, is that -- the use of the slides. And so, those are listed in your resource tab, so if you want to click on those and download the slides, you can have those available for you, Victoria. That's who asked about that. But as we wrap up, we just want to encourage you to join our MyPeers Teacher Time -- our Teacher Time community on MyPeers. Sorry. That's where you can see postings of the webinar if you've missed it or if you had a friend that missed it and really wants to see. We'll be posting our links there, and also, we kind of post throughout the month regarding the various topics that we're going to be talking about. So, go ahead and join this free community. You can also join Text4Teachers on your cellphones and the ELOF2GO on your cellphones, and those are both available in English and Spanish. And then, there's tons of resources and helpful information for you in the viewer's guide. So, again, we encourage you to download that viewer's guide, because at the end is a ton of resources that you can go to online, print out, and just have for yourselves.

Judi: Yeah, and I would say also that, you know, definitely, I would love to take this conversation that's been happening in the group chat and have it on the MyPeers Teacher Time community. I think, you know, for those -- If any of you are feeling like maybe you've lost your passion, or you're overwhelmed, or you're struggling with a group of children or all of the children that you're working with this year, and you're feeling like you need some inspiration or you need to do some self-care, we can -- We want that community to be a space for you where you feel like you can talk to other teachers and find strategies just like you did here during our webisode.



So, please join the Teacher Time community on MyPeers and reach out. It's been -- Some of the other communities have been really helpful in providing just strategies, support, understanding, you know, just because we're all in this together, and it really helps to hear from other people who are doing the same work as you're doing. So, the very last thing we're going to do is we'll leave you with the evaluation link. It's going to -- Oh, let me just see if -- I think I can advance the slide. And if you click on that link, you can complete the evaluation, and then you'll be able to download your certificate of participation. I just really want to thank you for being here today.

Thank you for sticking it out with some of our technical difficulties. And we'll look forward to the next Teacher Time for infants and toddlers, which is in December, and then we'll be back to talk about curriculum fidelity in January. So, keep an eye out for those updates and, again, all of those updates will be available on the MyPeers Teacher Time community page.

So, thanks, Treshawn. It was good to see you.

Treshawn: Yes, good to see you, too, and thanks, Rebecca, for joining us on Teacher Time.

Judi: Yes.

Treshawn: Hope to see you guys again next month.

Judi: All right. Thanks, everyone.

Rebecca: Bye, everybody.

Judi: Bye.

Treshawn: Bye.