

## **Supporting Positive Family Responsiveness to Children's Communication**

Roselia Ramirez: Welcome to another session of the Home Visiting webinar series. I'm Roselia, and I'm one of your host presenters for the series, along with my colleague, Adriana, whom you're going to hear from shortly. We're from the National Center on Early Childhood Development, Teaching, and Learning, or DTL. Hi, Adriana. It's so great to be back for another informative session. Can you tell our participants more about our topic for today?

Adriana Bernal: Hi, Roselia. I think that our topic today, "Supporting Positive Family Responsiveness to Children's Communication," will be of great interest. We know that children experience the same emotions that we as adults do, but how they express or communicate those feelings can be very different and sometimes even challenging for us as adults.

Roselia: You know, Adriana, I'd like to remind our participants that our January session, we focused on supporting social and emotional learning through positive parent-child interactions. So, I think this topic is a nice continuation of our discussion, but it shifts our focus on how children use their behavior to communicate, including those behaviors that could be challenging for us.

Adriana: Yeah, Roselia, you are just right on track. As children grow and develop, there can be moments that are challenging for both children and families. So, today, we are going to focus on behavior and responding to that communication. For our session today, we have a special guest that we would like to introduce. So, welcome, Maria Vasquez Betancourt. She's a TTA specialist from the National Center on Health, Behavioral Health, and Safety, known as NCHBHS. We are excited that she will be joining this conversation.

Roselia: We have two objectives that will frame our session for today. By participating, we anticipate that you will enhance your knowledge about behavior so that you can, number one, discuss ways that children use their behavior to communicate, and then number two, to use strategies and resources to support families in understanding children's communication and determining an effective response. In your participant's guide, let's take a moment now and have you jot down what you hope to gain by attending today's session.

Adriana: Thank you, Roselia. Alright, let's get started. Children are born ready to learn through their interactions in the social world around them. Adults provide guidance to those interactions in space to practice new skills. To support the parents' role as facilitators of the child's learning experience, home visitors help parents understand where their child is developmentally and where they are progressing, including their social and emotional development. This understanding of healthy social and emotional development allows parents to reflect in their child's behavior and respond effectively. As we move through these webinar, let's keep in mind that we as home visitors can support positive family responsiveness to children's communication efforts. Children's social and emotional competence can be

straightened, which can lead to longer term outcomes, such as successful transitions to kindergarten, academic success, and the ability to develop and maintain relationships.

Roselia: These are great points, Adriana. Children need to know how to make friends, how to pay attention, how to be persistent, and not to give up. These are all aspects of social and emotional development, and as a bonus, all of these areas are interrelated. They affect and influence each other. So, children's social and emotional development also supports how they're developing in the other areas, such as cognition, physical, and language development. Alright, so as Adriana mentioned, we have a special guest for our session today. Maria, first, let me welcome you to the session, and thank you for joining in and partnering with us on this discussion. We know that children use their behavior to communicate their wants and their needs long before they have words to tell us. Can you share some information about how we can understand what children are telling us through their behavior and how we can support families to do the same?

Maria Vasquez Betancourt: Sure. I would be happy to, Roselia and Adriana. It is great to be included in this discussion for National Center on Health, Behavioral Health, and Safety to collaborate with DTL on this topic. Our center has been doing a lot of work around trauma and trauma-informed practices, which I will just share in a bit. But it is important to start with our own understanding that all behavior has meaning and being able to support families to understand it, too. An infant may cry when they are hungry or wet, just like an adult may yawn when he is bored or tired. Adults and children are communicating something through their behavior during every moment in every day, even if they are not aware of it. They give us cues to be able to understand what they are trying to communicate. Home visitors and parents can help infants, toddlers, and preschoolers by attempting to integrate in their cues and responding in a way that meets their wants or needs for using that behavior. As we respond to children's efforts to tell us what they want or need, they begin to feel competent and confident as communicators, which encourages them to continue to develop and refine their communication skills.

Adriana: Thank you, Maria. Knowing that behavior has meaning can really help us to shape how we understand our child's behavior and how we respond. Every communicative behavior can be described by the form and the function of that communication.

Roselia: That's a very important concept, Adriana. Thanks for sharing that. Let's take a look at these a little bit further. First, we have form. So, this is the behavior that is being used to communicate. A simple way to look at this is to ask yourself, "What does the behavior look like?" I think it might be helpful to better understand this if we could share some examples. Adriana, what are some behaviors that children might use to communicate to give us a better understanding of this concept?

Adriana: Well, Roselia, children use many different forms of communication, from eye gestures to vocalizing sounds and whole words. You may see children turn their head towards or away from others, cry, coo, babble, move their legs or arms, throw a tantrum, clap, smile, bite, reach out for an object, jump, or use words, among so many other behaviors. It is important to

remember, children, particularly young children, that they tend to use their whole body to communicate. They use gestures and other body movements, facial expressions, and sounds. Young children often don't have the words to express their emotions or talk about complex experiences, so they use their behavior to do the talking for them

Roselia: Thanks, Adriana. I really like how you brought up the fact that children often use their behavior to do the talking for them, because this leads us into the next concept in understanding communicative behavior, and that is that each form has a function. And so, this is the reason or the purpose of the communicative behavior. We want to ask ourselves, "What is the purpose of the behavior from the child's perspective?" Adriana, how about you expand on this for us?

Adriana: Well, Roselia, when we take a moment to pause and understand what the child is trying to tell us with their behavior, we might see that they are trying to obtain an object, engage in an activity, or seek attention or request help. They might just want more information about an object or maybe just need help or comfort, or sometimes, they are trying to avoid or escape a situation, especially if it is overstimulating.

Roselia: Those are some really great examples, Adriana. Thanks for sharing those. You know, as a parent and an educator, I know that it can take some practice in observing the form to identify the function, and so we hope that you can see why this is such an important topic.

Adriana: Yes, it is. And to add to the complexity of understanding the meaning of behavior, a single form of behavior might serve more than one function. For example, a toddler might be yelling, which is a form for different functions. Maybe he wants a toy that you have. Maybe he wants to play with you, but doesn't know how to let you know. Maybe he's tired, he's frustrated, because maybe you don't understand what he's trying to tell you, or he wants some attention.

Roselia: That's a great point, you know, and I also think it's important for us to mention that several forms of behavior may serve one function. So, for example, a child's purpose or function may be to build with their favorite blocks, but they use different forms of behavior, such as maybe biting, yelling, grabbing, running away with the blocks, or not sharing, and these actions may be based on how they're feeling that day, who might be in the household, or perhaps it's based on their cultural expectations. It's important to note that one size does not fit all. We can't say that if a child does a specific behavior, then it means this specific purpose, and I should try this one strategy. Wouldn't it be nice if we had a sort of recipe book that outlined it all for us? But then again, we must also consider that the ability to respond the same to every human being and get the same behavior change could also be a boring world for us to live in.

Adriana: That is absolutely right, and one additional point to consider is that the meaning of behavior is greatly shaped by culture, family, and the unique makeup and experiences of that individual child. For example, some cultures might express sadness by crying or by having a different facial expression. Some cultures might express happiness by laughing and being exuberant, while other cultures might expect more restrained behaviors. Asking families

reflective questions can help us develop a deeper understanding of what the family expects around behavior and how can we best support them to understand what the child is telling them with their behavior.

Maria: Ladies, this is a great place to share a resource that home visitors can use and share with their families. This research by the Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning at Vanderbilt helps families to understand their child's behavior by paying attention to their cues. Their research highlights behaviors by developmental age, beginning at birth up to age 2. A home visitor might go through – an example – compare and contrast what the parent is experiencing with their own child and highlight some strategies on how to respond.

Adriana: Yes, Maria. This is a great resource and offers some excellent information. Take a moment to write down some other ways to use these resources with families in your guide.

Roselia: Alright, ladies, how about we summarize for our participants what we've been talking about so far? We've spent some time talking about form and function of behavior, and Maria shared a great resource that you can share with your families. Let's pause here and see some behavior in action. We're going to watch a video, and we invite you to open up your participant's guide, and we want you to jot down what you see when you focus on form and function.

[Video begins]

[Talking and yelling in background]

Child 1: [Blows raspberry]

Child 2: Stop doing that!

Child 1: [Babbling]

Child: He touched my shoulder!

[Video ends]

Adriana: So, what do you think? That was a quick moment within the child's day, but did you notice – did you see the child's attempt to get another child's attention? He used multiple methods to communicate. He showed another child the toy, another child helped – based on his actions – by offering a different toy. So, Roselia, I hope you came to the same conclusion as I did about the child's function. He wanted to show his toy to the other children and play with them.

Roselia: I came to the same conclusion, Adriana. How about we take another look at behavior in action? But this time, we're going to look at a home visit. See if you can tell what the child is communicating with their behavior. Again, we invite you to open up your participant's guide, and we want you to jot down some notes as you watch.

[Video begins]

Mother: Do you want you to read your book with Miss Barb before she goes bye-bye?

Barb: Busy day. Busy – busy day for him. Is this your blanket? Is that your backpack?

Kevin: [Gasps]

Mother: Hey, attitude. Stop.

Barb: Do you want to sit with your blanket? Here. Here. Now we don't have to look at Kevin.

Mother: Uh-oh. Where'd he go? Where's Kevin? [Gasps]

Barb: Peek-a-boo.

Kevin: Don't see.

Mother: Don't see what? I'm gonna get it. I'm gonna get it. I'm gonna get it, get it, get it, get it, get it, get it.

Kevin: [Crying]

Mother: Oh, no. Where'd he go? Ah, peek-a-boo, baby. [Laughs] Uh-oh. Where'd he go? [Laughs] Uh-oh. We're gonna hide him. Uh-oh. Bye-bye.

Kevin: Mom! Mom!

Mother: What? What?

Kevin: My cup.

Mother: Your cup isn't in here. Do you want a drink of my water?

Kevin: No.

Barb: What do you want?

Mother: You need to drink some water.

Kevin: No!

Mother: OK. Well, I don't know what to tell you.

Kevin: My cup.

Mother: Your cup is dirty.

Kevin: [Crying]

Mother: Please don't.

Kevin: Can you wash it?

Barb: You can wash it, Mom. [Chuckles]

Mother: You need water in your life.

Kevin: [Crying]

Mother: Yeah, you drink too much milk and too much juice. You need some water in your life, you silly little boy. Don't kick me. Please be nice. Come here. Let's get a drink of water. Come on. Please stand up.

Barb: What have you got in your eyes? What are you making that funny noise for, huh?

Mother: Come on. Let's get a drink.

Barb: Are you mad?

[Video ends]

Adriana: Yes, this is a great example of the importance of taking the time to observe the form to help understand the function. We see that the parent and the home visitor took the time to observe at different points to understand what the child is telling them.

Roselia: So, here's some things that I saw in the video, and I'm wondering if you captured the same things. First, I saw that the child is searching his backpack for his sippy cup. He turns away from the home visitor and the parent. The child then uses multiple methods to try and communicate. He asks where the sippy cup is, he looks for it in his backpack, and he cries for it. He also pushes the parent away using his hands and feet as a whole body gesture. So, what is this behavior telling us in this short clip? Perhaps he wants something other than water in his sippy cup, or maybe he's telling the adults that he wants to change the activity or that he's tired and maybe he's just done with the home visit. What do you think?

Adriana: Now, let's take a moment to pause and review. We know that children use different behaviors – the form – to communicate to us about their wants and needs – the function. It is important to take the time to understand the meaning behind the behavior and respond in a way that is supportive of the child, whether just following or immediate reactions to a behavior. This is called positive responsiveness. When we focus on positively responding to children's efforts to communicate their behavior, it changes the way we see a child, the way we respond to a child, and ultimately, the way we teach a child.

Roselia: We want to emphasize that it takes time and effort to understand the intent of a child's communication, but the payoff is worth it. Children will feel valued and important. They will learn that we will hang in there and that we're going to try to understand what they're communicating through their behavior. We're going to shift gears now. We're going to invite Maria to talk to us about trauma and the influence that it can have on behavior.

Maria: Yes. Thanks, Roselia and Adriana. It is important to talk about trauma, because sometimes the behavior we're observing may be a reaction and our child's attempt to cope with traumatic experiences. Let's explore a bit more about the impact of trauma, recognize what is trauma, and how we can identify symptoms in children and changes of behavior because of the traumatic event.

Exposure to trauma can affect children's perception of time, cognitive style, emotional tone, problem-solving skills, and their ability to respond, to understand rules, regulations, and laws. The definition of trauma does not mean types of trauma or traumatic events. Instead, it describes the experience of trauma and highlights the factors that influence the perception of trauma. The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, known as SAMHSA, defines trauma as individual trauma resulting from an event, series of events, or set of circumstances that is experienced by the individual as physically or emotionally harmful or life-threatening and that has lasting adverse effects on individuals' functioning and mental, physical, social, emotional, or spiritual wellbeing. Stated simply, childhood trauma occurs when children are exposed, has experienced an event or events, and when this exposure overwhelms the ability to cope with what they have experienced. A critical element of the definition of trauma is that the experience or series of experiences overwhelms a child's ability to cope. A traumatic experience may be a single event or a series of events of a chronic condition. The experience of trauma is highly individualized. A traumatic event is not an isolated event perceived equally by those who experience it. In other words, what is traumatic to one child may not necessarily have the same impact on another child. Similarly, what adults may perceive as traumatic may be very different from what a child perceives a traumatic. For example, let's think about a parent may believe a hurricane that destroyed their home is most traumatic. However, a young child in the same family may be most upset by losing his cat, who ran away during the storm. Often, what children are most upset by is very different from what adults may believe is most upsetting. For this reason, it is critical to attempt to understand the unique meaning of children's experiences.

Adriana: Maria, so some examples might include things like homelessness, community bias, abuse and neglect, natural disasters, parental illnesses, and loss?

Maria: Yes. Yes, Adriana. Those are great examples, and many families could be experiencing several of these things right now. Let's talk about signs of trauma. The Center of Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation of Georgetown University states that trauma signs and symptoms in your children can take many forms. Understanding these signs and symptoms of trauma-related depends on sensitive information gathering from the child, family, and Early Head Start and Head Start staff. That said, the signs and symptoms must always be considered

in the context of a young child's history, caregiving system, and support. We must also recognize that symptoms, characteristics of trauma, could also be symptoms and related to trauma. It is essential to consider the young child's developmental age and stage as specific developmental tasks and caregiving context. For instance, some symptoms that are characteristics and attributed to trauma are things such as eating and sleeping disturbances, somatic complaints, clinging, separation anxiety, feeling helpless, passive, irritable, some difficult to soothe, constrictive play, exploration, and mood. Early recognition of these signs and symptoms, along with mental health consultation that guides planned and effective strategies to support the child and family in the Early Head Start and Head Start program, can help reduce and mitigate the symptoms. Some children even may need more intensive care intervention throughout trauma focused therapy designed for clinical work with young children and their family.

Roselia: Thank you, Maria. You shared some really great information, but I think you also bring up a great point in that it is important for home visitors to have an understanding of what trauma is and what behaviors may surface as a result, and that they should partner with and seek support from their program's mental health consultant. Let's shift gears now. Can you talk to us about trauma-informed care?

Maria: Sure, Roselia. Thank you for bringing that. SAMHSA shares that trauma-informed care realizes the widespread impact of trauma and understand potential paths for recovery, recognizes the signs and symptoms of trauma in clients, families, staff, and others involved with the system, responds by fully integrating knowledge about trauma into policies, procedures, and practices, and seeks to actively assist with traumatization. All of us show up to work bringing our histories, our experiences, and our whole selves, right? We may bring our own history of trauma, and so many other stuff. Trauma-informed care, TIC, includes the understanding of this, about ourselves and the staff, community partners, families, and children we work with. Let's try to be empathetic to the story of others. Program leaders and supervisors can encourage all staff to work to build and share this understanding and apply it to their everyday interactions. TIC involves integrating this understanding with all aspects of the program's organizational cultures, policies, and practices. TIC recognizes the role that trauma may play in the lives of families and staff. When behaviors and interactions rise concerns, TIC can see the possibility that these behaviors may be strategies that evolved to cope with trauma. It asks, "What happened to you?" instead of "What's wrong with you?" Trauma-informed programs help all staff and families sustain hope in the face of trauma and adversity. Grant programs can offer training about key topics in TIC and healing, which may include signs and symptoms of trauma, the process of healing and promote healing in others, self-regulation and coping with thoughts and feelings, conflict and recurring relationships, various trauma, occasions when trauma around us trigger us or maybe trauma history. You can't help others to be their fullest if you're not at your fullest. Create relationships and connections with others for support. Recognize how you feel or what you really need. It is OK to take a break and tell others, "I need to take a break." Think how you are caring for yourself. Do you take walks? Do you read? Write? Do something just for you. Schedule time to engage and reflect a supervision. Access your program's mental health consultant, and ask if they can have office hours with you



or your families. Accessing external support will reduce the load that sometimes we cannot handle because we may not have the tools, or because you simply cannot bear it at the moment.

Adriana: Wow, Maria. We really appreciate you reinforcing the message. We have been very intentional in stressing the importance of self-care throughout our series this year.

Maria: That's great, Adriana. You need to stay calm to positively respond to children's behaviors, especially if we find their behavior challenging. But to stay calm, we all know that we must take care of ourselves, right? And we want our home visitors to stress this importance to families as well. This is a nice visual to help folks think about trauma informed care. Realize the widespread impact of trauma individually and collectively and strengths and resilience, recognizes signs and symptoms of trauma and inner and collective growth, responds by putting this knowledge into practice and promoting wellness, resists traumatization by drawing from collective wisdom.

Adriana: Yes, and we also want to remind our home visitors of the Supporting Children Facing Trauma page on the ECLKC, part of the Head Start Heals campaign. Head Start Heals campaign is a campaign to increase awareness with the goal of ensuring that all children are receiving quality care by incorporating a trauma-informed care approach. There are many resources that support trauma-informed care, building resilience, and examining the impacts of toxic stress and trauma on young children.

Roselia: OK, so before we move forward and discuss strategies, let's reflect on how our experiences impact how we see and respond to behaviors. Everyone has things that push their button. This is something that just does not work for you and that drives out a specific response. Our views and experiences as adults influence how we view and react to the behaviors of others. Once we identify if the issue is really our own view, then we can identify supports for ourselves. Differences in temperament, personality, or just how we're feeling that day, can all play into those times when children's behavior just push our button. Home visitors can help parents to identify the behaviors that push their buttons. These are moments that can really challenge a parent's ability to be present and to be supportive of their child.

Adriana: So, now, in your participant's guide, we want you to write down some of your own reflections. Think about the behaviors in adults and those in children that push your button. Are they the same? Are they different? When these behaviors occur, it is equally important to be able to identify an appropriate response, even if we would rather lose patience, ignore the person, or yell. When we can recognize behaviors that push our buttons and determine our own responses, we are better able to support families to do the same.

Maria: Definitely. Also, once adults understand what children are communicating through their behavior, they can respond better. When adults help children find positive ways to communicate their needs to others, children learn important communication and social and problem-solving skills that will help them throughout their life.

Roselia: OK, so let's explore a simple strategy that can help us before we react. When children's behaviors push our buttons – pause, ask, respond. This is a three-step process that is straightforward and is easy for you to use as well as to share with families. It helps you to take a moment to evaluate what is really happening and to identify a supportive response. Let's take a closer look at each step.

Adriana: And then before you react to a child's behavior, we want to first pause. Pausing allows us to not immediately react or respond, but to observe and identify what happened before we saw the behavior take place. We want to reflect on the meaning of the behavior.

Roselia: Next, we are asking ourselves, "What is the intended communication of the behavior?" Home visitors can support parents as they practice this step by asking reflective questions such as, "What do I think my child is trying to tell me through this behavior?" Or perhaps you can ask the parent, "What might help you figure out what led to this behavior, have I seen this behavior, and what did it mean then?" In essence, we become detectives to better understand what has triggered the response.

Adriana: And finally, we want to move into responding. Responding allows us to effectively support or mediate a behavior based on what is being communicated, or what boundary is being tested. This response helps the child feel listened to, understood, and safe.

Maria: Yes. That is a great point, Adriana. Home visitors can support parents in understanding how they speak, keeping their voice calm and level, and acting deliberately and slowly, greatly support social and emotional development. In addition, we want to make it a practice to acknowledge the child's strong feelings. For example, "It's very upsetting when the blocks fall over like that, isn't it?" This can help a child understand that you know they are feeling a strong emotion, and it has a name, as well as give the child a chance to reset their emotions.

Roselia: Absolutely, Maria, and you know, to support the social and emotional competence of young children and to reduce those challenging behaviors, it's important to be intentional about teaching social and emotional skills and using supportive practices that have been found to be effective. In the next portion of our presentation, we're going to go over a few practices that adults can use to support children's development and promote competence in dealing with difficult situations. OK, so the first thing that we want to consider is that we want to identify those teachable moments. The main point here is that we want to make sure that these crisis moments are not the only time that we're teaching social skills. Social skills can be embedded into almost any part of your day, intentional planned times, as well as taking advantage of naturally occurring moments throughout the day.

Maria: Roselia, I would like to add observing and listening are really important for identifying teachable moments. For example, when someone in the house is crying or angry and the child recognizes this behavior and asks, in his own words, why that person is crying or angry, it is the perfect time to recognize emotions by name. Set an example to the child in the way that you can comfort someone who is crying. Invite the child to ask why the other person is crying, what

they need, what made them cry. With simple directions and inviting the child to demonstrate the same techniques that an adult uses with them, it is a strategy of teachable moments.

Adriana: The next practice is building positive relationships by making deposits. Think about, for a minute, how do we build relationships with children. I want you to think about this practice like there is a piggy-bank, and we are making deposits into the child's emotional bank. We make deposits when we do things to build relationships, while we make withdrawals when we engage in behaviors that remain for relationship building, like having to mediate a child's behavior. It is important to help families to see all the ways they make deposits with their child so that they feel confident when they have to make a withdrawal. Likewise, we might need to help families find new or more frequent ways to make those deposits when they are feeling stressed or challenged by their child's behavior.

Roselia: I really like the metaphor that you shared, Adriana. You know, parents can sometimes feel guilty or hurt when they have to redirect their child's behavior. They don't always consider all the deposits that they're making into that social and emotional piggy-bank. But before we move on to more practices, I wanted to share this resource – the “Behavior Has Meaning” in-service suites. This resource has a lot of information, there's tips for staff and families, and there's video clips that can help support these practices. This resource, as well as other in-service suites, can be found on the ECLKC, or the Early Childhood Learning Knowledge Center.

Adriana: So, next we have the use of visual cues. Visuals help to enhance understanding and reinforce expectations for children. This is a tool to support parents in their efforts to acknowledge and support children's efforts to communicate. Visual tools can be helpful in the home when children struggle to follow regular routines, for example, simple pictures that remind children that they need to wash their hands when they use the restroom or brush their teeth or when it's time to read a book. So, that can help to take the struggles out of the basic routines. Parents can point out to the visuals and remind children to look at the chart rather than struggle over these daily routines.

Maria: I'll actually talk about the next practice, which is teaching children to recognize and express emotions. Young children experience many of the same emotions adults do. Children can feel angry, jealous, excited, sad, silly, frustrated, happy, and worried. The difference is that very young children, ages birth to 3, often lack the self-control and language skills to express their strong feelings in ways that adults fully understand. Every day, bring chances for children to express their emotions. There are ways you and families can encourage children to share their feelings with you. For example, you can act it out. Children often work through their biggest feelings through pretending. Encourage families to fill a box with clothes they no longer wear, like work shirts and hats, along with materials like wooden spoons, pillowcases, and containers. As children play pretend, help them to talk about emotions by asking maybe, “How does this character feel? What is she feeling, or he is feeling – angry, sad, mad?” Also, encourage parents to share their emotions. Children will be more likely to share emotions if they see grownups doing it, too. This is a great strategy for families to use during mealtime.

Maybe they can go around the table and share one thing that they did and one emotion that they felt that day.

Roselia: And remember, children may not always have the words for those emotions, so utilizing visuals to help children learn the names of emotions can be very powerful. Key visuals, such as what you see here, are resources that can be found at the Head Start Center for Inclusion and the National Center for Pyramid Model Innovations. You can find the links to these resources on the resource document that's located in the green widget. These visuals can be used during home visits as well as socializations to support parents to connect and to support their children. These sorts of visuals help to build language by naming those feelings, and home visitors can encourage parents to consistently use different types of visuals to stimulate learning as well as to foster clear expectations for their children.

Adriana: So, this leads us to our last two practices. Facilitating the development of friendship skills is an important practice for families and young children who need support in making social connections and developing relationships. When children are successful at making friends, they have a lot of opportunities to learn and practice social skills, such as cooperation, turn-taking, sharing, problem-solving, and conflict resolution. This practice can also support how children think of alternative responses when faced with interpersonal problems and situations. Home visitors can also help parents to model friendship skills and problem-solving with different steps with different skills to different situations and demonstrate that thinking through issues can result in positive outcomes.

Maria: Yes, Adriana. Both social and emotional developments are important for young children's mental health. In fact, early childhood mental health is the same as social and emotional development. Research shows that this development, and more specifically, the nature of early relationships plays a critical role in fostering children's overall development.

Adriana: So, the last practice that we want to talk about is that of teaching self-regulation. When we are in a situation where an immediate response is required, it feels like it is needed then, and we react, and many times, this is our first impulse without stopping and thinking. These reactions are connected to our past experiences.

Maria: Yeah, I totally agree, Adriana. Teaching self-regulation is so important. Self-regulation includes being able to resist highly emotional reactions, to calm yourself down when you get upset, to adjust to a change in expectations, and to handle frustration without an outburst, or what many adults will call a tantrum. As children develop self-regulation, they gain skills that enable them as they mature to direct their own behavior towards a goal, despite the unpredictability of the world and our own feelings. Self-regulation can help address trauma. I want to add to this by saying that helping toddlers turn body language and feelings into words is a great place to start with teaching self-regulation. In the toddler years, children often use body language when they don't have the words to express ideas and feelings. Encourage parents to repeat back what they think their child wants. For example, "You look hungry. Do you want more apple?" They can help their child understand how words, feelings, and body

language goes together by thinking about – I'm sorry – by talking about them and making connections.

Adriana: This is a great example of how we can work with parents to support their child. Mindful greeting is another strategy that we can teach young children. Let's take a look at how one teacher incorporates mindful greeting to help children practice calming down. She uses this during her daily circle time routine and explains to children what she's doing. This can be shared with parents for individual practice as well as included in socializations.

[Video begins]

Teacher: One more time. Breathe in through your nose. Fill up your lungs, look up, and blow it out slowly. Alright, good job. Keep your legs crossed. Stretch way up high to the ceiling. Let's make two big circles. Slow. All these activities is to slow down our neurons, to slow down our brains. Stop at the top, and go all the way to the right. Somaya, thank you for listening to me. OK. There you go. Now we're going to zigzag it. To the right. To the left. Slow. Slow, like a caracole. Like a little, tiny snail that goes very slow. We want to slow down our neurons. Good job. OK, take them to your temples. [Speaking Spanish] Right here. Across our temples. Right here. And open up your jaw bones.

Child: [Laughs]

Teacher: Ah. Good job. Cross your arms on your shoulders and massage. Five, four, three, two, and one. OK, sit on a little, teeny-tiny rocking chair. Hold your precious baby doll. Be careful not to drop them, and rock them slow.

[Video ends]

Roselia: Alright, everyone, so we are coming to the end of our time together, but before we get to our Q&A, we want to remind you to visit the green resource widgets to access the resource list. Also, we encourage you to keep the conversation going in the Home Visiting MyPeers community. If you're not already a member, we encourage you to join and connect with your peers.