

Introduction

Foundations of Take Root Home Visitation Curriculum began by focusing on you and how what you decide to say and do matters to the families you serve. In closing, it comes full circle back to you. Why? You, as a professional and as a human being, are central to the effectiveness of your work for and with families.

Being an effective home visitor requires you to be aware of how your work impacts you and that you must take care of yourself. It is to be expected that, in caring so deeply about and working with families at risk for trauma, home visitors and other professionals can find themselves feeling vulnerable, helpless, and stressed. Sometimes known as compassion stress, this is a natural reaction of experiencing another person's suffering and wanting to relieve it.

Paying attention to how you are feeling and responding to your own needs will help assure that you can make the best decisions possible for the families you work with and, at the same time, focus on and enjoy life with your own family and friends.

The Center for the Study of Social Policy suggests that a powerful strategy for self-care is integrating the *Protective Factors* discussed earlier into your own life. On the next page, we offer some examples of self-care ideas. We invite you to use these suggestions as starting points in conversations with your spouse, partner, older children, and colleagues to develop additional ideas.

Take a Moment: Your Self-Care Practice

How often do you focus on taking care of yourself?

What do you do for your self-care?

How might you make this an integral part of your professional practice?

Social Connections

When you and family, friends, and others in your school, work, and child care communities can count on each other, life is easier and more enjoyable. Giving and receiving support makes everyone stronger.

You give support every day to the families you serve, colleagues, and your family and friends. Here are some ways you can ensure you receive the support you need to take root and thrive at work or at home:

- Make a point of spending time with family and friends playing, relaxing, or just having an interesting conversation.
- Foster supportive relationships with a colleague(s). Whether during one-on-one conversations or team meetings, it is good to know you can count on someone.
- Reach out to colleagues when you experience the inevitable bumps in your work with families of infants and toddlers.



Concrete Supports

Every person and every family need help sometimes. Learning who can help you meet your family's needs and where to go for support makes you stronger in good and challenging times:

- Think about who you can call to help you in different situations: pet sit when you are away, care for your sick child who has to stay home from school and you have to be at work, pick up your child from school when you have to work late, or give you a ride if your car breaks down. It is comforting to know someone is there.
- Make note of community resources that are available for you and your family, friends, and neighbors. Many resources may be the same as those you share with families you serve. Issues around health, housing, food, substance abuse, and violence can arise for all of us. Knowing there is somewhere to turn is a first step in moving forward.
- Prepare ahead for the unexpected. Develop a family emergency kit and contact plan about where to meet and/or how to reach each other in case of a natural or other emergency. Put aside funds to get you through the unwelcome surprise of a car repair, illness, or period of unemployment.

Part 5 Taking Care of You



Personal Resilience

You must nurture yourself to be able to handle difficult times in positive ways. Here are some suggestions on how to do this:

- Make some time for yourself regularly. Do something you enjoy and that replenishes the energy you use focusing on the needs of others. Choose something that makes you happy, makes you feel challenged and engaged, and allows you to take your mind off of others at work and home and just focus on you.
- Be kind to yourself. Have realistic expectations for yourself. No one knows it all. No one is perfect. Just as you do with others, pay attention to your steps forward as you extend your learning and skills.
- Pause and remind yourself of the ripples of positive change you create—at work and at home. Whether you have made someone smile or encouraged someone to take a risk and try something new, what you say and do matters and makes a difference.

Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development

Learning how young children grow and learn will help you respond to their changing needs and abilities with sensitivity and care. By building a positive, trusting relationship, you prepare children for a life of learning and engaging with others. You do this when you do the following:

- Ask yourself, “What is (child’s name) feeling and thinking?” to help you see a situation from a child’s perspective. This can be especially helpful when the going gets rough, whether it is your child or the child of a family you serve.
- Remember that parenting is an ongoing, lifelong journey, and no one has all the answers. This idea can help keep things in perspective as a professional and is a valuable point to share with parents.
- Appreciate the wonder that each child is a unique individual. Children have their own ways of being in the world and unique blends of strengths, interests, and needs.

Social and Emotional Competence of Children

When you have positive interactions, you help young children learn to manage their behavior, communicate their feelings, and get along with others in their family and community. You do this when you do the following:

- Model how to disagree, problem-solve, and work together respectfully with another person. This helps children begin to learn that people can get along even when they have different ideas and opinions.
- Acknowledge and respect children’s strong and deep feelings, then think together about ways to express these feelings. This shows children that their feelings are legitimate whatever they may be and helps them learn to express their feelings in acceptable, effective ways.
- Give children words for how to handle the unexpected and unwelcome situations, such as a friend’s mother offering a snack they do not like or deciding not to join friends in a soccer game because it looks too rough. In doing so, you give children the tools they need to express themselves and, at the same time, remain connected to others.

By taking care of yourself, you can be your best self. While your family members and colleagues will benefit from your self-care, you will gain the most because you will be present to experience, to enjoy, to struggle, to discover, to learn, and to grow in life at home and at work.

Part 5 Taking Care of You

In Summary

This guide encourages you to consider that you—as a professional and human being—are key to being an effective home visitor. You matter. What you decide to say and do matters. It is you who brings this curriculum, or any home visitation program, to life and encourages families to engage in learning and growing with you as their partner.

Let's briefly recap the content that has been covered in Parts 1-5 of this manual:

Part 1

Foundations of Take Root Home Visitation Curriculum focused on you as a decision-maker. This curriculum centered on considering the extraordinary learning opportunities in the ordinary daily moments of a family's life, seeing families through a strengths-based lens, and helping you work with the parents as partners. It also provided you with the theory and practice foundations of TRHV.

Part 2

How Principles of Trauma-Informed Care Enhance Your Collaboration afforded you the opportunity to explore the seven principles of *TICP* and to examine how they are intentionally woven throughout TRHV to support your effectiveness.

These principles can help create a work environment in which you and colleagues are safe and can be honest and open about coping with the stressors that are an inherent part of your work. *TICP* also creates opportunities for parents and other family members to rebuild the sense of control and empowerment that is key to creating trusting, responsive relationships babies and toddlers need to thrive and to make the best possible parenting decisions during *Everyday* and *Special Focus Moments*.

Part 3

How to Use Take Root Home Visitation walked you through the steps of a home visit, which included getting to know families through the use of the *Family Needs Screener* and the *Protective Factors Screener* and gathering documentation for planning a visit, including choosing an *Everyday* or *Special Focus Moment*, and after visit documentation. It also included tips for using the icons as a short cut to identify the content you need.

Part 4

Let's Practice! applied the steps and forms of this curriculum with the Miller family.

Part 5

Taking Care of You circled back directly to you. This chapter explored how you can nurture and fuel yourself in your life at work and at home by integrating the *Protective Factors* into your life and practice.

We now invite you to use TRHV—to make it yours and use it to support the families you work with and yourself.

