**March Inner Circle Outline**

Let’s Talk “Tantrums”

Can look different…for each child

On the floor crying, kicking and screaming, breaking stuff, hurting themselves, sulking, seething, stuffing, hiding, or fleeing

--include behaviors like picking, staring or stalking, chanting and crazy choices

Key: Be Pro-Active NOT Reactive

Whether it is

-way ahead-like a way of life

-or in the moment

External Regulator

(lay out clothes, give count downs, play music for cues, use sensory stimulus, remove distractions ahead of time, make a plan for trauma impacts (memory, cause and effect, nuance, small small world to maneuver, etc)

I can’t stress enough that the majority of the time this is a Can’t NOT a Won’t. (I realize it looks, smells, feels and sounds like a won’t but if you treat it like a can’t you will all be better off)

Let’s dissect a tantrum…

There are 4 layers; The Un-plug, The Trigger, The Emotional Flood and The Spin.

Level 1- Un-Plugged

A. Looks – distracted, manipulative, beligerant, naughty, defiant

B. Is Anxiety or Impact of Trauma - the first stumbling block. Not manage the moment or concept. (maybe even managed this same situation before but isn’t now)

(hyper vigilant so gets Distracted, no sense of time and space, cause and effect thinking not engaged, no self-regulation.)

Level 2 –The Trigger

It is brought to their attention that they are not meeting expectations or are being asked/told to perform in a different way. Could be communicated verbally or non-verbally.

This becomes **The Trigger** which in our children is rooted in a heavy all-encompassing layer of Shame.

Level 3 – Emotional Flood

Move into Fight – Flight – Freeze

All executive functioning now gone.

This is the level that most call the tantrum.

We see the icky big behaviors or we lose them altogether.

Level 4 – The Spin

We move in to regain *control*. (it’s time to go, others are watching, we are tired)

The child is re-triggered.

We are triggered.

And so on!

Children move very quickly through these levels. And we can end up in The Spin within minutes. That is not what we want and it does not work to calm their brains at all.

So while we work to be proactive overall in hopes of moving the “things” that trigger our kids we unfortunately can’t make the world trigger free. That is why we also have to think very proactively in the moment. We have to have a plan. A set of tools we can pull out to use in an instant. It takes practice, practice, practice.

When dealing with our kids, especially in highly charged moments, like one with a time schedule, other people involved in the outcome, scenarios involved with food etc., we have to be VERY proactive.

Here’s a tool you can use:

I want you to S.I.T.

Seriously, sit somewhere safe and use this tool.

**STOP**-get yourself to baseline

 (Don’t say a word, breathe, bring down heart rate, unfurrow your brow, dry your tears, decide that you do have time to deal with this, remind yourself you got this, GET YOURSELF TO BASELINE) You are NOW the safety net! You now actually have the power you are looking for.

**IDENTIFY**- what level are you dealing with? What do you know about your child…does school cause anxiety, do they have sleep issues so they don’t rest well? Look at the bigger picture. Then with all of that in mind…decide what level they are at.

Are they at level one…distracted, slow, flitting from one thing to another, a decreased emotional age, but still engaged in life?

Or are they at Level Two…mis-reading cues or reading them correctly. Self-loathing. Seeming confused. Feeling like they are stuck in the mud, acted wrong again, un-worthy, ugly, not-accepted, abandoned?

Or are they at Level Three…fighting with you, crazy behaviors and words, or silent staring at you and still not doing what you asked or have they run into their rooms and slammed the door or do they move away slowly with their hood up or hair hanging in their face.

Or are they at Level Four…where everyone around them is pulled into the moment – and not in a good way. Some might try to convince them to act differently, some will purposefully withdraw from the scene and others will fight back.

\*\*\*Note-you don’t have to be 100% positive. There are levels between these four.

**TAKE ACTION**- Once you have accomplished step 1 and 2 you can take action.

**Action Steps for Level 1**

(Assuming your face is relaxed your voice is soothing and calm and your body language is open and safe-basically you have accomplished S and I)

You can maybe still save this moment from becoming a full-blown tantrum.

1. Move in to level where child is and make physical contact – what will feel best to your child? Big pull in hug or a light touch to the head? You know best. If you don’t know then you follow your gut and try one or the other. I would suggest starting at a light touch.

2. Comment on what the child is doing and touch it too. – Child is petting dog…You say “Oh such a good dog you are rufus” while petting the dog gently. Continue – probably longer then you want to.

3. When you feel your child begin to shift extend the conversation to other sensory pictures. For example, “ hey by the way I have got your breakfast ready at the table…we have strawberry jelly your favorite” or “Mom, set out that shirt you were looking for it is on your bed.” (DO NOT PUT PRESSURE OF TIME OR EXPECTATION HERE)

4. Rock between touch and sensory story a couple of times (or More).

5. Now your goal is to help your child make a move…doesn’t matter which move, just a move. SHE/HE is plugging back into you…good news! (getting up off of the floor, going to eat, getting his shirt on, putting the dog out to go potty, giving the dog a treat, etc)

6. Now, you got them moving…you are NOT done.

Meet them at their **emotional age**…probably pretty low.

You have to **be the bridge between** what they are supposed to be doing to how well they can really do it.

Maybe food first here. Be careful and comb their hair for them – not the time to pull it for any reason. Help them button or zip. Keep them out of their pit of shame. Be kind and loving. Be careful not to be patronizing. Building them up. Etc Phew…maybe you avoided a whole tantrum – they are plugging back in to you. With practice you will!

**Action Steps for Level 2**

(Level two is kind of a continuation of Level 1 so while getting them to move helps it doesn’t always stop the movement through the tantrum.)

Level 2 takes more intentional tools to get your child to plug back into you and your relationship. They are functioning in this moment with tools that don’t work; old irrational beliefs about themselves and the world, deficits that cause them to misread the moment or your intentions, mistrust, shame and fear.

1. Use counting or numbers in any subtle way you can. (teach this as a tool later) If you are getting your child to move count the number of steps you both are taking. If you are petting the dog count the times you pet. When you are trying to get your child to move to the next step or are counting down being done with a step, count backwards from 10. Count the legos they are playing with. Count the things you have to remember to do that day. Count slowly and concisely…sounding the same every time you use the tool.

Remember you are NOT counting for him. For example, the seconds he has to get something done. You are counting what you are doing together.

2. Use food. Be the discerning adult that knows his basic needs and provides them without having to be asked. (Safety Net) Sit and eat with him. Facing each other. Cut it up for him if needs be. Don’t feed unless wants it-fine line. Use language that assures your child you understand him/her and his needs and that you know that they are trying and need help.

3. Use music to help cue change in the mood. Light, upbeat and sing along while you help your child accomplish the next steps.

4. Don’t give a lot of choices. Just keep rolling through.

5. Be empathetic.

**Action Steps for Level Three**

1. Stop Talking

If you need to talk only repeat your mantra

2. Stay in tune with your own body. Face soft and loving, slow breathing and heart rate, body language open, stay in vicinity of child. (if safe) If you have to move away tell child you are not leaving him/her.

3. Take care of basic needs of child. Food, warmth, comfort, etc.

4. When you feel shift back towards baseline be soft place to land. “you are okay” “don’t worry Mom’s got you” “it’s over you are okay”

5. Repeat S.I.T. again

**Action Steps for Level 4**

1. Stay in vicinity

2. Do the S of S.I.T.

3. Assure others you have them all covered and you are okay. Take care of their needs.

4. Continue on with I of S.I.T.

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S.I.T.

S STOP! Sit, Safely and Get Yourself to Baseline. (Don’t speak, Breathe, Bring down heart rate, unfurrow your brow, dry your tears, decide that you have the time to do this. Remind yourself you CAN do this. NOW you are the Safety Net – NOW you have the power to manage this situation!)

IIDENTIFY! What Level is your child on?

(What do you know about your child? Look at the bigger picture of your child. NOW decide which level of a tantrum is your child at?)

T TAKE ACTION! Use Action Steps!

(You are the external regulator and the bridge – it takes you to encourage a change in behavior and a change in beliefs. You are modeling a new way of doing things.)

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