

DECODING BEHAVIORS WORKSHEET

Behavior	Decoding	Empathic Response	Corrective Actions
Hides under the bed	Child not feeling safe emotionally. Needs a break from intimacy, or is overwhelmed. Seeking to ground him/herself in a contained space	Be present with awareness of child's tolerance for proximity. Use a calm voice to wonder about what the child is feeling, for example "sometimes when I am feeling (scared, sad, small, out of control, overwhelmed) I like to climb under the blankets and pull them tight around me." Buckets 1, 2 & 3	Schedule a time to read a story together under a "chair tent." Help children decode their feelings throughout the day so that they develop a feelings language and encouraged them to communicate their feelings with words or signals.
Avoids eye contact	The child is in a shameful place. Overwhelmed by feelings or experiences such as sadness, intimacy, environmental stimuli, physical needs or a combination of the above.	Be present with awareness of child's tolerance for proximity. Use a calm voice to wonder about what the child is feeling, for example "sometimes when I am feeling (scared, sad, small, out of control, ashamed, overwhelmed) I find it hard to look other people in the eye." Buckets 1, 2 & 3	On a regular basis offer play opportunities. (Peek-a-boo, Chair tent) Copy each other's funny faces. Invite regular eye contact rather than demand it. Acknowledge spontaneous eye contact from the child with praise.
Sneaks food	Defensive self soothing – based on physical need or previous experience of deprivation. Fear of rejection, "If I ask, you'll say no (even though you've said yes before)." Sensory related memory of having to do this to "survive" before. Mastery need – "I know that I can count on this."	Be present with awareness of child's tolerance for proximity. Use a calm voice to wonder about what the child is feeling, for example "sometimes when I am feeling (scared, sad, small, out of control, ashamed, overwhelmed) I find it hard to look other people in the eye." Buckets 1, 2 & 3	Have a "bottomless bowl" of healthy snacks. Pack "emergency need" snack bags together. Surprise the child by adding something to the place he/she hides food. Build child's empathy/mastery by having him/her help to feed the dog, make snacks together for other family members or school mates.



Pathways to Permanence 2

Parenting Children Who Have Experienced Trauma AND LOSS


Session 3 Childhood Development

Exercise Worksheets



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<p>Steals from peers.</p>	<p>Stealing can denote a desire for connection or wanting to be like peer (perceived confidence, happiness, etc.) Sense of mastery/control, skill developed to survive. Fear of rejection, even if unfounded (“If I ask to borrow it, she’ll say no.” “I know my parent(s) wouldn’t get me one, because I’m so bad.”) Desperation to be seen in a positive light by peers, be the “hero” for finding missing item.</p>	<p>Be present with awareness of child’s tolerance for proximity. Use a calm voice to wonder about what child is feeling. Normalize and validate child’s need to feel connected, accepted, and valued. Buckets 1, 2, 3 & 5</p>	<p>Host play dates in your home or at the park to provide support and supervision and limit both the temptation and opportunity for your child to steal from peers. Create an end-of-playtime ritual in which the children swap a toy to use until the next time they get together. Help your child make amends. Role play strategies for when your child feels the overwhelming impulse to take something. Pro actively surprise your child with notes and gifts <i>which are not related to behavior</i>: Be the one to provide yummy classroom treats, so your child can experience positive social attention.</p>
<p>Lies to parents.</p>	<p>Lying out of a fear of rejection, the feeling of “If they really knew how bad I am.” A skill developed for survival, fear of painful punishment. It’s a part of the developmental stage of “magical thinking.” Not feeling safe emotionally, lashing out, such as accusations, to create emotional distance from parent, prove that parent will give up.</p>	<p>Be present with awareness of child’s tolerance for proximity. Use a calm voice to wonder about what the child is feeling, for example “Sometimes when I am feeling (scared, sad, small, out of control, ashamed, overwhelmed) I do things that I’m later sorry about.” Create an emotionally safe atmosphere, “There’s nothing you can do to make me love you any less.” Buckets 1 & 3</p>	<p>Try to discern and validate the need underlying the lie, rather than arguing the truthfulness. (“My birth parents took me to Disneyland every weekend.” —“I can understand why you’d like that to be true; it would be pretty exciting. It sounds like you’re missing them a lot today.”) Team with the child against the problem. Keep the desired outcome in mind. Continue to ask, “Would you like another chance to turn this around?” then praise honest response, rather than punishing for initial lies. Check your own language, day to day, to be sure that you’re separating the child from the behavior. Pro actively, set a tone in your family that focuses on desired behavior, rather than blame. (“Great teamwork cleaning up the milk!” vs. “Who spilled the milk?”)</p>

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Kicks the dog	Acting out experience of “big victimizes small.” Feels powerless and directs aggression toward the helpless to decrease the feeling. Overwhelmed by feelings or experiences, environmental stimuli, physical needs or a combination of the above and is seeking to “discharge” the overwhelm with inadequate tools for connecting and communicating needs.	Be present with awareness of child’s tolerance for proximity. Use a calm voice to wonder about what the child is feeling, for example “sometimes when I am feeling (scared, sad, small, out of control, ashamed, overwhelmed) I do things that I’m later sorry about.” Ensure that the dog is not harmed with the assistance of your child if your child can tolerate it without further dysregulating. Buckets 1, 2, 3, 4 & 5	Never leave the dog and child unattended together – an ounce of prevention. Assess your child’s “bucket need” and do some extra filling. Have your child engage in amends making to the dog. Feed it together, bathe it together, take it for a walk together. Praise your child for any tenderness or caring he/she shows for the dog or any life form smaller than him/herself.
<i>Practice decoding your child’s behaviors</i>			
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