



Atlantic Summer Institute on Healthy & Safe Communities

Promoting Child & Youth Mental Health: Engaging All Generations

CURRICULUM PATHWAYS 2016

Curriculum #4: “Developing Social and Emotional Skills to Work More Effectively with Children and Youth”

Objective: To develop enhanced social and emotional competencies that will enable participants to more effectively empower children and youth.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION:

The objective will be achieved through participation in an evidenced based, Canadian program, Handle with Care (HWC) that promotes the development of the social and emotional learning of children, youth, and families.

Handle with Care (HWC) is a program designed for parents and other caregivers to promote the mental health (social and emotional well-being) of children and families every day! Funded by the Public Health Agency of Canada’s Innovations Fund, it has been enthusiastically received across Canada within the general population and unique cultural groups. Handle with Care is based on four key building blocks which the four modules within this spectrum represent:

- Building Trust and Attachment
- Building and Enhancing Self-Esteem
- Expressing Emotions
- Building Relationships with Others

Delivered in small groups or in 1:1 situations, each Building Block has the same format:

- Key Message
 - Sub messages from child’s perspective*
- Research
- Self-Care
- Activities
- Bringing it home
- Bringing it together

Finally, this Program not only builds individual skills, but also enhances community capacity for collaborative, evidence-based approaches that build secure attachments, positive self-esteem, capacity for emotion expression and social relationships. Strategies and program delivery are based on community input and a mutual support model proven to build community capacity throughout the wider population, especially for those who may be at risk for mental health challenges.

Learning Objectives

After completing four interactive, 2-hour modules participants will:

1. Have a better understanding of the content of the Handle with Care program including:
 - a. The 4 Core Building Blocks
 - b. The Interactive Nature of the Program
 - c. The role of Self Care in Wellness
 - d. The diverse activities available within each Building Block.
2. Know more about the facilitation, flexibility, and cultural sensitivity of Handle with Care:
 - a. Creating a climate of trust and support
 - b. Encouraging participant interaction based on the needs and comfort levels in 1:1 and group situations
 - c. Ongoing design of the program based on the unique needs of participants, i.e. cultural and other participant needs.
3. Become aware of the impact of Handle with Care across Canada based on formal evaluation findings.
 - a. Explore the development of Handle with Care within communities
 - b. Examine the tools of mentoring and collaboration built into the structure of Handle with Care.
 - c. Review the overall growth of Handle with Care within Atlantic Canada and Canada over the last five years.

Module 1

KEY MESSAGE: Building trusting relationships with children is one of the most important things parents or caregivers can do to promote children's social and emotional development.

This module will explore the importance of building trust at all stages in a child's life as one of the most important things a parent or caregiver can do to promote their child's social and emotional well-being. Trust means that children know and feel they are loved and cared for, and that someone will always be there for them, no matter what.

Through a series of steps and interactive exercises, we will explore how we can build trust in infancy, childhood, the teen years, and as young adults. We will also look at how this can be renewed at any point in the child's or caregiver's life. At all points in a child's life, if they have a trusting relationship, they can go about their 'job' of learning. They don't need to spend time worrying about whether or not they have their parent or caregiver as a 'secure base.' Developing attachment relationships takes time, and we can aim to do our best every day. It is important to remember that it's never too late to build a trusting relationship with children.

Module 2

KEY MESSAGE:

Showing young children they are loved, loveable, and capable builds healthy self-esteem.

Healthy self-esteem involves feeling capable and feeling loved. Positive self-esteem is linked to good mental health, as well as fewer behaviour problems, social difficulties, and feelings of loneliness. A nurturing relationship, particularly with parents and significant caregivers, is the strongest factor related to healthy self-esteem. Parents and caregivers help shape positive self-esteem in young children by responding to them in a warm, accepting, and flexible manner on a consistent basis. A parent's or caregiver's unconditional love for a child, regardless of his or her behaviour, is essential for the development of a child's healthy self-esteem.

Again, through a series of steps and interactive exercises, we will explore how we can build self-esteem in infancy, childhood, the teen years, and as young adults. We will also look at how this can be enhanced at any point in the child's or caregiver's life. Interactions, experiences, and the feedback children and youth receive from parents and caregivers during the early years, teen years and as young adults provide the foundation for how children see themselves. Once established, an individual's level of self-esteem is relatively stable over time.

Module 3

KEY MESSAGE:

Showing young children how to identify and express emotions helps them gain a sense of control, share experiences and build healthy relationships.

Emotion regulation is very important for children and youth for their social and emotional development. Children and youth who learn to express their emotions in healthy ways have better self-control and more positive relationships with others. Conversations about feelings are crucial to emotional understanding and expression. When a young person is upset, what they need from the caregiver is to have their feelings acknowledged and respected. Just like adults, children need their feelings to be understood and respected by the people they care about. This, in turn, helps them to develop positive self-esteem and learn how to care about others.

As in the previous modules, we will guide workshop participants through a series of steps and interactive exercises, to explore the expression of feelings in infancy, childhood, the teen years, and as young adults. We will also look at the benefits of this at all points in the life of the child and caregiver. Children are constantly watching the people around them and learning from what they see. When children see the important adults around them identify and cope with strong feelings in positive ways, they have a better chance of practicing these behaviours.

Module 4

KEY MESSAGE:

Positive relationships help children feel good about themselves and build a foundation for future social and emotional well-being.

Positive relationships with others enrich everyone's lives. They help children, youth, and families learn how to get along with others, how to compromise, to think about how others feel, and to cooperate. Families, friends, and caregivers are a key source of support for helping children and youth develop positive relationships. Strong relationships with trusted adults are an important first step in developing positive relationships with others. If young people have a secure, trusting relationship with parents or caregivers, they are likely to be able to connect with others and feel concern for others. If they do not have secure trusting relationships with the adults in their life, they are more likely to show aggressive behaviour with others, and to experience rejection and disruptive relationships with peers.

By connecting what we have learned in the previous modules and our interactive exercises, we will explore how we can build on relationships in infancy, throughout childhood, the teen years, and with young adults. There are

bound to be times when children don't get along or have misunderstandings, even with close friends. However, adults can guide children through effective problem solving and reaching solutions that will last a lifetime.

Information from our research findings will be integrated throughout the program.

FACILITATORS:

Alice Taylor has a background is in Early Childhood and Adult Education. She believes that social and emotional well-being (Mental Health) influences every part of our lives, including our physical health. She holds a deep belief that honoring each person for who they are, as they are, enables us to make connections and form the kind of relationships which allows us to work together to build strong, healthy families who have the capacity to build strong, supportive communities, where all can flourish. Alice's connection, as a PEI partner with Hincks-Dellcrest Centre, enables her to continue her life-long commitment to children and families.

Eileen Conway-Martin lives in O'Leary, a rural area of Prince Edward Island and has worked in the areas of Counseling, Community Development, and Education, earning her Counseling Certification from Boston City Hospital and an M.Ed from Mount St. Vincent University. Having begun in Addictions, Eileen's worked with Women and their Families in Boston. In time she came to Prince Edward Island where her passion for Family and Early Childhood Development developed. Soon, an opportunity arose with the Mi'Kmaq Communities of PEI to be a Counselor and Community Educator. Beginning with Lennox Island, over the last 30 years, Eileen has had the pleasure of working in partnership with all PEI Aboriginal Organizations. Now as a Facilitator/Atlantic Coordinator with Handle with Care, Eileen continues her passion of hope, healing, and resiliency with children, families, and communities.

Sara MacDougall reviewed the Handle with Care curriculum and immediately signed up for an eight week parenting program and appreciated the experiential activities. Sara's biggest personal take away during the parenting session was the importance of self-care. Sara soon signed up to take facilitator training and recently facilitated a parenting group. Sara's dream is to have social and emotional learning programs embedded into school curriculum and Handle with Care Programs available to all parents. Sara MacDougall holds a Bachelor of Education degree from Mount Saint Vincent University and has taught elementary school in England and the United Arab Emirates. She currently works as a consultant with The Quaich Inc.