

## **Safe and Nurturing Learning Environments for Infants and Toddlers: Teacher Time**

Treshawn Anderson: I'll move the slide. Hi everyone. Welcome to our first Teacher Time episode of the season. I'm Treshawn -- I'm Treshawn Anderson, and joining me today is Judi Stevenson-Garcia. Hi, Judi!

Judi Stevenson-Garcia: Hi.

Treshawn: Good to see you. We're from the National Center on Early Childhood Development, Teaching, and Learning, and we're so excited to be here today to talk about how to provide safe and nurturing learning environments for infants and toddlers to support their social-emotional well-being. If you've been joining us for Teacher Time for the past several years, you'll notice that this season things may look just a little different. This season we're using a new platform. It's called ON24 for Teacher Time, and it's a little bit more user-friendly, customizable and somewhat easier on the eyes, I think. But before we begin, we want to go over just a few housekeeping items because we'll be using some of these features during this webinar.

So, at the bottom of the screen, you're going to see multiple applications widgets that you can use, and all the widgets are resizable and movable, so feel free to move them around to get the most usage out of your Desktop space. You can expand your slide area or maximize it to fill your screen by clicking the arrows in the top-right corner. And we'll be using the chat room feature here in ON24 to interact with you all, but if you have any questions during the webcast, you can submit them through the, using the purple Q&A widget at the bottom of your screen, and we'll try to answer all your questions during this webcast. A copy of today's slide deck, and viewer's guide, and any additional resources are going to be available in the resource list, which is green, at the bottom of your screen. We hope that you download any resources or links that you think that you'll find useful.

Judi: That's great, and I see lots of you are saying hello in the group chat, so keep saying hi, and letting us know who you are, and where you're from. And as Treshawn said, if you have questions you can put them in the Q&A box, and we'll get to those when we have a chance, and just so we can make sure that you have the best viewing experience, we recommend that you use wired Internet connection. Sometimes wireless can cause trouble.

Also, if you're having trouble with the webinar, if you close any other programs or any other browsers you have open, that can help speed up the webinar. Sometimes we use, webinars use a lot of bandwidth, so if you close any unnecessary programs or browser tabs that'll help you conserve your bandwidth. Also, as you may have noticed, the webcast is being streamed through your computer, which is a little bit different than our previous platform. So, there's no dial-in number. So, for the best audio quality, just make sure your computer speakers or your head-set are turned on and the volume is up so that you can hear us.

And also, if you find that the slides are lagging behind our conversation, you can use the F5 function on your keyboard and that'll refresh the page and hopefully that will help speed things up for you. There is a help widget at the bottom of your screen. If you open that up there's going to be additional answers for some common technical issues. You can always ask a question in the Q&A box if you have technical issues. With that said, we hope this is a great webinar for you. We're excited to be using this new platform, and we're just going to see how it goes. And so you know, we are going to have an on-demand version of this webcast. It's going to be available about 30 minutes after the webcast, and you can access it using the same link that was sent to you earlier.

If you want to minimize any widgets -- like if the group chat is bothering you or our video is bothering you -- you can minimize whatever you want. Just click on it. It'll go down to the bottom of your screen. And then, if you want to open it later you can just click on it, and it will come right back up onto your screen. And you can move the widgets to wherever is comfortable for you as your viewing. And the last little note, before we get started, is that we are going to have a link to an evaluation form at the end of the webinar. We really appreciate your feedback. That evaluation helps us. It gives us information for improving our future webisodes. And then, when you complete the evaluation, you also can download a certificate of completion for your participation in this webinar. If you are viewing the webinar together with a group of people, and there's only one person registered for the webinar. You can forward the evaluation link to your colleagues, and they can complete it and receive a certificate of completion, as well.

Treshawn: So, we want this next hour to be as interactive as possible, so feel free to chat using that blue chat box widget, and using the purple Question and Answer pod to ask our guest experts some questions when it comes to that time. And as you can see, Jan is going to be our chat room facilitator, so she'll be there to answer some of your immediate questions, as well. Each episode this season, we're going to begin with three big takeaway points related to the topic, and then we'll chat with a guest expert who will give us some strategies to take back to our classrooms and family child care homes to use with the children. And so, the purple chat pod is where you'll ask those specific questions to our guest expert. So, please make use of it. And finally, we'll end with some reflections and planning. So let's get started.

Judi: All right. Yeah, let's get started. So, we're going to start by talking today about providing a safe and nurturing learning environments for infants and toddlers, and it's always a good idea to start with a framework. Hopefully this is familiar to you all, but the Framework for Effective Practice represents the five components of quality teaching and learning. And the first is that foundational level, which focuses on nurturing, responsive, and effective interactions. and those engaging environments we provide for children. Next, you have the pillar which emphasizes implementing research-based curriculum and teaching practices, and then the pillar on the right side encourages us to use screening and on-going assessment for children. And then the roof focuses on highly-individualized teaching and learning for children with a specific focus on children with suspected delays and diagnosed disabilities. And then finally, at the center of it all, this is a new addition to our framework, is the parents and families in our programs. So, this season, we're really going to focus on the house framework.

Our first episode today is really going to focus on the foundation, and then we'll move from left to right. We'll talk about curriculum, and then we'll talk about supporting families and children through transitions, and then we'll talk about using on-going assessment to inform effective teaching practices. And then throughout every episode, we'll reference strategies for highly-individualized teaching and learning. So, with this episode, as I said, we're focusing on the foundation, these nurturing, responsive, and effective interactions, and engaging learning environments. They are the foundation for all learning in early childhood settings. And they support children's social and emotional well-being, and their mental health.

We know that children and families benefit from interactions and environments that are culturally and linguistically responsive, and that meet the needs of all children, including those with suspected delays or diagnosed disabilities. So, this means that when we respond to the cultures, the languages, and the abilities of the children and families in our programs, they benefit from those services we provide because they feel included. They feel valued and respected, even the infants and toddlers. We also know that high-quality, early-learning group settings include a well-organized and managed learning environment, lots of social and emotional support, and then also our intentional teaching practices, the

interactions we have on a daily basis, and the materials that we provide that encourage children's thinking, their development, and their skills.

Treshawn: So, today our focus is on providing emotionally safe and nurturing learning environments for infants and toddlers. These environments are essential to supporting infants' and toddlers' well-being and mental health, and to do this, we thought of three things that you can do. First, you can be sensitive and responsive. Second, you can be consistent, and third, we can be mindful. We're going to talk to you about how each of these things that you do everyday will help children as you work with them. First, let's start with being sensitive and responsive. So, being sensitive and responsive, research tells us that these sensitive and responsive interactions support infants' and toddlers' social-emotional development, sorry. When children experience these nurturing and sensitive interactions with their caregivers, they feel safe and confident knowing that they're going to be cared for. When they learn, they also learn that they're worthy of being cared for. They also learn what relationships feel like, and they also learn what the world is like. They develop secure relationships with adults, and this feeling of safety and security really leads to infants and toddlers being able to explore and learn in their environment, and supports their ability to develop relationships later on as they grow.

Judi: Right exactly. It's that foundational piece that's so important, and we know that these interactions are important for all children. This includes children who have languages other than English at home and are dual-language learners even before they begin to talk. Responding to their needs means supporting their home language, as well as English. Sensitive, responsive, predictable interactions also help them feel safe when they're away from home and family and maybe their familiar language environment. Being sensitive and responsive also means that you pay close attention to, and respond to, children's cues. So, for example, there's a little boy here, Jackson. He's smiling and cooing while you change his diaper. He's attempting to engage with his teacher, and being responsive, his teacher is smiling back returning his expression and moving in closer to let him know that she's interested in his efforts to engage.

And at the same time, she talks through the steps of his diaper change letting him know that he'll be clean and dry soon. We're going to put a new diaper on, and if you think about children who may be dual-language learners, or even very young babies who are learning language, talking about this process in their home language can be very helpful. If that's possible. These interactions also play a key role in supporting children who may have suspected delays or identified disabilities. That close interaction and being sensitive and responsive means you're paying attention to their individual needs, or desires, and then responding in a way that meets their individual needs.

Treshawn: Yeah, that's great. So, here's another example. This is Dari, and he's extra sensitive to loud sounds. So am I. So, when another child yells and bangs on a toy, you move closer to Dari and you observe his reactions. Being sensitive and responsive doesn't always mean that you rush in to help children right away, but it does mean you pay close attention to their needs, and then decide on how much support they need. So, these situations that Judi and I just talked about are, of course, very well-thought out.

But what happens when you're in the heat of the moment with multiple infants and toddlers who all need your attention at one time? Well, if Dari's teacher was busy and distracted with other children and didn't really notice the loud noises were startling him, she may not have responded as quickly, and he may have gotten more and more upset. But because Dari's teacher is responsive to his individual needs, he develops trust that his needs are going to be met. He also has learned that he's an effective communicator and that his communication means something because other people are responding to him when he does communicate. And he also learns to care for himself and self-soothe himself from the way that other people are taking care of him. Infants and toddlers who are dual language learners are

just beginning to say words in their home language, so it's also important to talk with families about these sounds and words so that you can respond to what children are saying. Because what may sound like babbling to you, may be the child's first attempts at trying to say the words in their home language that maybe we don't know. But we also know that it's not possible to be responsive 100 percent of the time, but it is important to recognize that if there are times where we missed children's cues, or if we don't respond in the most sensitive way, that we can do our best to let the child know that we love and respect them, and that we will do our best to be a little bit more responsive the next time.

Judi: Yeah, repairing that relationship, I think, is so important, too. That's another way to be responsive. Like, "Oh, I missed your cue." Or, "I wasn't able to get to you right when you needed it," and making sure that they know that you're still -- that you're doing your best to be there for them, I think is really important, as well. Okay, so we're going to give you a chance to think a little bit about being sensitive and responsive.

So, here's an example for you to think about personally. So, imagine you are having coffee with a friend at a local cafe, chatting with each other, and you're sharing something very personal with your friend -- maybe about a family member who's recently had some medical issues and has been going to different specialists and your concerns. And you're anxious to hear what the test results might be. And while you're talking to your friend, your friend is kind of listening but also maybe looking at her cell phone, and maybe responding to her text messages, and she's nodding and saying, you know, I'm sorry to hear that. If that's the response you get from a friend, think, was that sensitive? Was she responsive? And how does it feel when your friends or colleagues don't give you the support you need when you're struggling and don't respond empathetically when you're upset? So, if you think about that in relationship to the way that we respond to children, they're giving us those cues that they need our response, as well, and it's our job to make sure that we give that to them. Even if they can't verbalize and say, "Hey, get off your cell phone. I'm trying to talk to you." They're going to have that -- they're going to feel the same way when we are sensitive and responsive as we would when we have friends. Yeah, not sensitive. I see some people commenting in the chat box. This is not sensitive. Right?

So, we know from research that in addition to being supportive that sensitive and responsive caregiving really builds children's capacity to care for themselves and to develop trust in the same that you've provided for them. We also know that insensitive and unresponsive care can contribute to children's lowered self-esteem, increased rates of anxiety, and challenges with self-regulation. Babies who receive insensitive and unresponsive care may not feel safe in their environment because they are going to worry that their needs might not be met. And so, what we want to focus on is making sure that we are helping children feel safe, worthy of being taken care of. This will increase their confidence and their ability to influence others in the environment, and all of that works together to build the foundation for their future growth and learning. So, what we're going to do now is we're going to watch a video of a teacher as she tries to engage a toddler who doesn't want to leave his mother.

So, what we want you to do is as you're watching the video, think about the teacher's response to the child, and then also think about maybe if there's another approach that you would take to working with this child and his mother that would show sensitivity and responsiveness. And when we come back from the video you'll have a chance to tell us what you think in the chat box.

[Video clip begins]

Woman No. 1: Josie and Ryan, they know their way around the classroom. They're pretty smart guys.

♪ Wash, wash, wash our hands ♪

♪ Wash our hands Wash our hands ♪

♪ This is the way we wash our hands ♪

♪ When we're at Head Start ♪

♪ Right? Over here is paper towels. ♪

♪ This is the way we dry our hands ♪

♪ Dry our hands, dry our hands, dry our hands ♪

♪ This is the way we dry our hands ♪

♪ When we're at Head Start ♪

Leon, do you want to paint before I put the paint away? Mama loves are better. Hmm? I have to say I agree. Mama loves are better. You like to wash the paintbrushes from here, Ryan?

Thank you. Right here, Miles.

[Video clip ends]

Judi: Okay. So, we're going to push to the next video. Let's watch another video with a toddler and his teacher as they work together on a problem.

[Video clip begins]

Woman No. 2: What would you like to do?

Judi: And then we'll talk about both.

Woman No. 2: Is your sleeve a little bit wet? It is a little bit wet. Do you want it down? Down?

Girl No. 1: It got wet in the sink.

Woman No. 2: I know, in the sink. It got a little bit wet, didn't it? Some water splashed on it.

[Video clip ends]

Judi: Okay, so now we got to see two videos. So, we watched one teacher with Leon who didn't want to leave his mom, and then another teacher who was responding to a little girl who had a wet sleeve. So, tell us in the group chat, what did you see in terms of both of these teachers and their sensitivity and responsiveness to the children's needs? We'll wait for some responses to come in on that -- in the group chat.

Treshawn: While we wait for some responses to come in, some people have been wondering about where the resources are. There's a green button that should be at the bottom of your screen. That's where you can find the slide deck, and our viewer's guide, and things. Oh, good.

Judi: The teachers were really patient. Thanks, Angeline. Both were calm. Yes. The second teacher was at the child's level and gave her a choice.

Treshawn: Mm-hmm.

Judi: The first teacher was very unobtrusive. Sara. The first -- Wendy says the first one was not so responsive. Wendy, I'd be interested I think if you have thoughts on maybe how she could have been more responsive.

Treshawn: Mm-hmm.

Judi: They were aware of how the children were feeling. Yeah, calm and patient, talking to them about what they were experiencing. Right? Verbalizing, especially for very young children, verbalizing for them is really important since they might have the words to say how they're feeling. Oh, now we've got lots of responses coming in.

Treshawn: Yeah, and some people feel like the second teacher was a little bit more responsive than the first teacher. That's interesting.

Judi: Mm-hmm. Need to talk with -- What is it? You need to talk to the child, not at them.

Treshawn: Giving the child different options.

Judi: Yeah, I think you guys are really hitting on it. The first one could have gotten down on the child's level. Yeah, that could make a difference, right, coming over and getting down to where the child was at, and it's hard. I mean, I know these are video clips, you know, but, and it's all we can do to know what the circumstances were. Getting down to make eye contact, yeah. I think that's a great suggestion. We saw that in the second video where she was down on his level -- on the little girls level, and acknowledging something that sometimes teachers might brush off. Right? Like, "Oh, your sleeve is wet. Don't worry about it. It'll dry." But it was really bothering the little girl, and so she acknowledged that and gave her words to offer it. Yeah, giving options. This is great, you guys, great.

Treshawn: Mm-hmm.

Judi: Okay, so I think, Treshawn, you have other videos to share with us.

Treshawn: Yeah, well not yet. Sorry. So, we've observed some teachers interacting with children, as you guys see, and so now we're going to hear from a teacher's perspective, and so let's listen to this infant-toddler teacher talk about the importance of her being sensitive and responsive in her classroom.

[Video clip begins]

Woman No. 3: I think just strengthening and building those relationships throughout the whole year. I know for me, it's important the first few weeks of school to not create a formal... Well, I'm a firm believer of once a child has trust in their caregiver and they feel comfortable, and you know, they know that their caregiver is meeting their needs or has their best interest at heart, it makes it a little bit easier for that child to learn, you know. You know, making sure that your child is safe, and that they're fed, and that they're comfortable is a big piece of, you know, them being able to learn. And so, I think building those relationships and having those strong foundations just supports the child even more, and it makes them a little bit more willing to learn from you, or have that faith in you that my teacher is going to plan something for me that I'm interested in, and I'm going to want to participate.

[Video clip ends]

Treshawn: Great, so now we're going to listen to some strategies that she uses to develop a strong relationship with infants and toddlers. So, then, watch the video, and then afterwards I would like to hear from you guys what stands out to you.

[Video clip begins]

Woman No. 3: I think just strengthening and building those relationships throughout the whole year. I know for me, it's important the first few weeks of school to not create a formal lesson plan, and just, kind of, be laid back, relaxed, kind of, sit on the carpet, play with toys, just be there for that kid to crawl on me, or come to me so that I can hug maybe three or four of them at one time, and just show them that, you know, I know Mommy is not here but I'm here if you need me, and you know, I'm going to hold you, and kind of, take that role of being their mother -- their second mother at school, and to help them

feel comfortable. It's important, you know, because if they don't have that trusting relationship with their teacher, it's -- they're not going to be able to focus to learn. So, I think that's why it's important.

[Video clip ends]

Treshawn: So, she talked about, you know, which I think is interesting, not creating a lesson plan at the beginning of the school year and just hanging out with the children, and getting to know them, and see what they like and don't like, and what makes them tick and things. And I think that's really important. You know, it's kind of scary to not have a plan, but you know, sometimes just being in the midst of children is the plan, and I think that's a great way to create this whole sensitive and responsive environment, because you're getting to know the children and what they need and their cues so that's exciting. So, as we mentioned -- Oh. Sorry. Were you going to say something, Judi?

Judi: No, I was just going to say I'd love to -- No, I'd love to hear if anyone wants to add to the group chat, the strategies that you use, especially as she mentioned like at the beginning of the year since we are at, kind of, the beginning of the year for some programs, how to establish that safe relationship with children. I'd love to hear strategies. If any of you have strategies to share with the group, please put them in the group chat. Oh, I see some people are chatting.

Treshawn: As we're waiting, if you're still having some problems viewing or hearing, this is going to be recorded and will be available for you shortly after -- 30 minutes after this live webinar happens. So, if you have trouble right now, maybe you can log on later on to listen.

Judi: So, some people are saying that they spend the first week or so getting to know the children, establishing trust, developing that relationship which is so important, especially for babies and toddlers, getting them used to a new environment. It's -- that's really key. Getting to know families, definitely. You have to know the families. Right? What's important to your child? What are their cues? What do they love to do?

Treshawn: Roberta said actually do the -- do the home visit at the beginning of the year.

Judi: Oh, yeah. Rosemary said that, too. Yeah, home visits is so important. These are great suggestions.

Treshawn: Oh, and incorporating music with children's names. Looks like home visits are really coming up as important. Getting to know the families. That's really a great way to get to know the children because families are the experts.

Judi: Yeah. Well we know -- You know, this relationship especially between adults and children, but the relationship with families it -- families have a lot of anxiety coming into programs, as well. Sometimes about where their children are going to be and wanting to make sure their children are safe. So, when we can help families feel safe and children feel safe, you know, we know that once children feel safe in their environment, they're going to want to explore. Right? They'll start to move out and explore, so that's really the environment we want to set for them. So, I think we should move on to -- So, we talked about being sensitive and responsive. That's our first way to create a safe and nurturing learning environment. And the second way to do it is to be consistent. And so, that's really where we want to make sure that we provide some predictability for our babies and toddlers. So, if you think about, in your life, in your morning -- I don't know what your mornings -- Well, I kind of know what your mornings are like, Treshawn. Mine are crazy. I have two little kids, and they're always unpredictable. But we do better when we have a schedule in place, you know, that the boys can rely on. So, but imagine, you know, arriving to work and your director asks you to cover for another room for just a few hours, but it ends up being the rest of the day. And maybe some parents pick up late, so you have to stay until 6:30 when you're used to getting off at 6. So, this kind of inconsistency in the schedule can make you feel unbalanced. It can make you feel anxious or stressed, and that -- those kinds of feelings are sometimes

challenging as an adult to manage. But imagine having an unpredictable schedule as a child, and what that might do for infants and toddlers who really don't have any control over their day. So, having a predictable schedule and a consistent routine helps infants and toddlers know what to expect, and that's really important for them to feel safe. It promotes this sense of security and eases the anxiety of always wondering what's going to happen next. So, having some routines and consistency in your day helps them to build trust in the environments, in the adults around them, and also they get to feel a little bit more confident in themselves because they know what to expect and what's going to happen next. So, let's talk a little bit about what we mean by consistent schedules and predictable routines. So, the schedules, they organize the day into blocks of time such as arrival, eating, outside time, and for older toddlers you may have a small group or a greeting time where you can sing some songs and welcome everyone. That could be part of their daily schedule as well, and since infants and toddlers are not understanding the concept of time, a schedule is one way that they start to understand how experiences and routines that they're going to engage in throughout the day, kind of, how time is related to that. And so when a schedule is consistent, each of the events typically happen around the same time each day. So, for example, as children arrive into your family child care center or your classroom their playmates may be engaged in free play until it's time for a morning snack. So, having that -- knowing what to expect every day when you arrive at school is really important. Treshawn: So, on the other hand, routines are predictable daily events related to caring for children's basic needs. So, routines

include: diapering, toileting, bottle feeding, offering snacks and meals, napping -- some of you guys' favorite time of the day -- hand washing, brushing teeth, washing up, changing clothes as needed. So, with infants and toddlers, routines really form the structure for the daily schedule. Routines provide a wonderful opportunity for children to learn new things, and with so many routines during the day, like especially those feeding and diapering times, we really want to make sure to take advantage of those times and use them as learning opportunities for our infants and toddlers. For infants and toddlers, schedules and routines are built around their developmental needs and information from the family. So, for example, one infant may take several short naps during the day, but another child may take two very long naps instead. So, it's important to, for you, to observe the different patterns of behaviors for each child that you have in your care and respond consistently. And for family child care providers, you have to meet the needs of multiple age groups, which can take some planning and definitely sensitive and responsive caregiving, hands down. But because many home routines are rooted in cultural traditions, it's really important to communicate with families about their expectations. and what's important to them in supporting routines.

Judi: Exactly. We have some great strategies popping up in a group chat, so if you guys aren't in the group chat, there's some great ideas there around how to welcome kids into the classroom using a picture schedule so that students or children help to know, understand what's coming next which is great. We know -- actually, speaking of picture schedules -- that can be really helpful for children who might have a suspected delay or diagnosed disability. They sometimes will have needs that are different or unique from the other children, and so we want to make sure that we have accommodations in place for their caregiving routines. And all of this comes with being sensitive, responsive, and consistent in the environment, so that they can feel safe whatever their abilities are. And we want to make sure that we have open communication with families about what their expectations are -- to make sure that we are giving predictable routines and using the same routines at home and at school so that children feel safe in their environment away from home. So, we're going to take a minute and watch a video of a family child care provider as she engages in a routine with an infant. And as you watch, just think about how a consistent feeding schedule, and a consistent caregiver, will make a difference for babies. We'll watch and then we'll chat about it after.



[Video clip begins]

[Video clip ends]

What did we see there with the little baby being fed? But if they're outdoors, it's such a nice opportunity.

Treshawn: Yeah, I loved being outside as a teacher.

Judi: Yeah. I mean, that baby just looks comfortable. Right? The teacher is in a place where she can still pay attention to the other children while she's engaging in that feeding, so she has the opportunity to keep surveilling while also being able to give that child some one-on-one attention. And also the baby gets to, kind of, look around and watch the other children. She's seated in a position where she can eat, but she also can see the other children which is great.

If you have thoughts about the consistency and feeding schedule or the teacher's responsiveness go ahead and put them in the group chat, and then we'll keep talking just a little bit about consistency in a group-care schedule. Oh, I see, Courtney, yeah. The child trusts the caregiver. Right? And that baby is little. Right? But you can already tell that there is some trust there. We would want -- Oh, Rosemary says, "I saw little interaction. I would be talking to the child as I'm feeding." Yeah, sometimes you really want that int -- You take advantage of that one-on-one time to make sure that you're having that conversation. Yeah, the child was definitely exploring with her eyes. She was not engaged. She could sing or talk. Yep, these are all great suggestions. So, we want to make sure that we're providing this predictability and this sense of well-being that's going to allow children to learn, and so some of the benefits of having a consistent and predictable routine is that children understand what the expectations are for their group-care environment which is very often going to be different from other settings. If you think of them at home where they might be the only child, or they might have siblings, their routines and their days are going to be different than they are when they're in group care.

And when children know what to expect, and then begin to rely on that predictability this helps to reduce behaviors that you might find challenging. So, if you think about the transition from lunch to nap time, I know that was always a challenge for me in my toddler room. Transitions can be stressful for infants and toddlers, especially when there's a lot of them, and they're tired, and if they don't know what to expect, if there's not consistency in what happens during that transition time it can be really -- That's when you can start to see behaviors that will challenge you. And providing that consistent routine and predictable transitions will help children manage those times without acting out.

Treshawn: So, predictable and consistent schedules in the infant and toddler learning environment really help children to feel safe and secure, and comfortable, and children begin to trust their caregivers in that their needs are going to be met during, or even after, the activities. And this is especially important for children who have difficulties with change. And also children who are dual language learners will benefit from predictable and consistent classroom environments, especially when they are communicated in their home language whenever that is possible for you. And visuals, like the ones you see here on the screen, are helpful for older toddlers when they are intentionally used by teachers and family child care providers throughout the day. The big picture is that schedules help children to feel safe so that they can develop and learn. So, we're going to watch a video of a teacher talking about how she keeps children in mind when implementing the schedule and routines, and after the video we're going to chat a little bit about what you think about her strategies. So, let's watch.

[Video clip begins]

Woman No. 3: Trying to respect the children and not move too far away from their daily schedule because they're anticipating these things. You know, once they get comfortable in your classroom and

they've been there for a while, they're anticipating that after I go to the bathroom, wash my hands, I'm going to eat next. Or after I clean up my toys I'm going to have that outside time. So, you know, making sure that I stick to their schedule as much as possible. I think that stability and them knowing that, you know, my foundation here is solid, that's something that they need and that they look forward to.

[Video clip ends]

Treshawn: We all know that when we work with young children that they can be a little bit unstable, or unpredictable. Sometimes things come up -- fire drills, and visitors, and things like that -- but what I liked about what this teacher says is she tries her best not to move away from the schedule. And what happens after snack happens snack every time. Whether it's a different time of the day, their routine still stays the same. I thought that was interesting. What do you guys think about some of her strategies that she was mentioning? Tell me in the chat box. Visual cues, yeah definitely important. Having a routine really helps children feel secure because they know what to expect. They know what's coming next. It puts them in charge of their day just a little bit.

Judi: Yeah, the visual cues are really important.

Treshawn: Thanks. Mm-hmm. Wendy agrees. So. So, to create an emotionally safe and nurturing environment, we first talked about being sensitive and responsive. Next, we talked about being consistent, and some of you guys are still chatting away about, you know, how this is really important. And now the third way, is to really be mindful. So, mindfulness is a way of thinking and being, and it means pushing away all those distractions and really being present in the moment. Like, we have to be present in the moment right now as we're watching this webinar both physically and mentally. And when we are present we can be more aware of our emotions and use strategies to help us stay positive, thereby contributing to a safe and nurturing learning environment. So, to help us talk more about the importance of being mindful, and how we can support an environment where children feel safe, we asked our friend Allyson Dean to join us from the National Center on Early Childhood Development, Teaching, and Learning. Hi, Allyson.

Judi: Hi, Allyson.

Allyson Dean: Hi! Hi Treshawn. Hi, Judi. I'm so happy to be here today to talk about such an important topic. So, yeah, so I've been listening to you and thinking about all these things you're saying and really what is just so critical about everything I'm hearing you talk about today is how central the teacher or family child care provider is to creating that safe and nurturing environment. I think about myself and how I do that for my family members and children in my life, and I think, "Boy, one of the keys, really, is to maintain that being in the moment, being present, being mindful."

So, recently with a friend of mine here at "Zero To Three," Rebecca Parlakian, who also is a partner on the Early Childhood Health and Wellness Center, one of our other national TA centers, and I talked to her about what she thinks, sort of, as one of the most -- some of the most critical things to maintaining that sense of, you know, mindful, purposeful, in the moment teaching and caregiving. And she started by talking with me about adult self-regulation, and it sounds crazy. We spend so much time as early educators thinking about how to teach and support children to self-regulate themselves, but we as adults have to self-regulate as well to remain mindful and to provide that support that children really need from us.

So, I'm going to ask Treshawn to play a little snippet of that interview for you now where you can hear Rebecca really talk about what it means -- what adult self-regulation means, and how it's a key part of mindfulness.

[Video clip begins]

Allyson: We've been talking on Teacher Time. about how that plays in terms of adult self-regulation.

Rebecca: Yeah.

Allyson: And I wondered if you would just take a few minutes to unpack that term for our audience and share a little bit about what that means.

Rebecca: Sure. So, you know, I'm sure we've all heard self-regulation in terms of toddlers and pre-schoolers, but self-regulation is essentially the ability to, kind of, recognize and manage our feelings and emotional responses and behavior so we can engage in, kind of, a positive goal-directed response to a situation. So, I think about living in DC, the traffic is terrible. You're trying to get out of the city and a car just cuts you off. And so, having self-regulation means that you take a deep breath, you calm yourself, you put on the brake, without, kind of, hitting them in the bumper. Right? So, that's, kind of, what it looks like for adults. With children, we usually add the phrase with the support of a familiar adult. And all of this is a very complex skill and so often it for years, actually, it's nurtured and scaffolded through the relationships children have with their adults. And we use those relationships, too. I mean, I call my best friend and say, "You have to talk me down," after a really bad day. Right? So, we all rely on our relationships to some extent to help us regulate. And the reason self-regulation in adults is so important is that when we stay calm and self-regulated, we can provide children with someone they can rely on when their overwhelmed and distressed. and we really are their emotional rock when their parents aren't there, and so our self-regulation becomes a critical component to creating a positive emotional environment.

[Video clip ends]

Allyson: I really love how Rebecca took us through that reminder that the way children, particularly infants and toddlers, self-regulate is with the support of adults. Right? They're not yet developmentally ready to regulate on their own, to self-regulate. Right? And so, when you think about really being present, self-regulating ourselves so that we can be there to support infants and toddlers, and a little bit another term we hear often in child development, which is co-regulation or the ways in which we intervene and support children when they're really stressed out. When they're having a meltdown, or feeling really overwhelmed as emotions, we as an adult can stay calm and provide the supports to help children come back to center, or co-regulate with them. So, I asked Rebecca to talk a little bit more about that with me, too, because co-regulation is not necessarily a term that we hear a lot in our work with infants and toddlers, and I asked her to just unpack that a little bit more. So, let's listen as Rebecca talks more about this companion process of co-regulation.

[Video clip begins]

Allyson: You know, when you were talking about calling up your friend to help you calm down, it sort of made me think about that co-regulation that happens in our relationships with the people we trust. Is there an element of that for infants and toddlers, as well?

Rebecca: Absolutely. In fact, you know, babies are born with very little ability to regulate.

Allyson: Mm-hmm.

Rebecca: And so they, you know, babies and toddlers and to a certain degree children across that age span, rely on adults to regulate, to co-regulate, and what that means is it's an interactive process where the adult and child are -- Where the adult is really providing regulatory support to the child in the context of a trusting, nurturing relationship, and co-regulation, of course, looks different at different ages. So, you know, in a baby it might look like, you know, a dog starts barking outside and the baby is startled and, you know, you pick him up and cuddle him and speak softly, like, "Oh, it's okay. The doggy

is just talking really loudly," or whatever, and you know, pat his back until he calms down. That's co-regulation for a baby. For a pre-schooler, you know, imagine he's on the playground, a friend knocks him over, and he's so angry and he's about to, you know, hit him or something, and the adult might come over and say, "You feel so angry right now. Why don't we go tell him how you're feeling, and ask him to apologize?" Right? So, I mean, I just co-regulated today with my daughter who texted me after a bad chemistry test. So, it continues but just looks different.

Allyson: Yeah, that makes sense.

[Video clip ends]

Allyson: So, those are two really important terms that came up during my talk with Rebecca that you're seeing on the screen now. First, self-regulation where we manage our own physical and emotional responses, and I see some of the responses in the chat box during that video about how we can -- if we can't be calm how can we expect that from the children in our care, and that's so true. So, understanding how to self-regulate not only helps us be in the moment, but we're modeling for children. Right? And then, co-regulation or how we support young children through our interactions and our supports. We help children manage difficult emotions, and we provide a response that can bring a child back to center or back to equilibrium when they are having a hard time staying in control of their emotions.

Judi: Yeah, that's great. I see Amber said that if we can't be calm, how can we expect, you know, children to be calm. And that's so true. And it's interesting to think about how our behaviors really directly impact the way that children respond to their feelings and their emotions. So, can you tell us just a little bit about how co-regulation works and what the benefits are for infants and toddlers?

Allyson: Sure. Well, as Rebecca and as I said, co-regulation is really being in that -- in the moment and watching and observing children so that you can be there to provide just the right amount of support at the time that they need it. And so there's, kind of, three main ways that that can happen and the first seems obvious, but really building a warm and caring relationship. You know, I was thinking about earlier when you were sharing your videos, knowing how to respond to that toddler during drop-off who wasn't quite ready to separate from mom, or understanding how to be close by to support a child who startles at noises. Those are things that caregivers learn by knowing those children. They come to know children through developing warm and responsive interactions, knowing families and understanding how families support children in the home, doing those home visits.

So, all those things that really help us develop a relationship and really know individual children is first and foremost, and then second, really trying to create what we call an environment of yes. Meaning that, we really minimize the number of environmental stressors on young children.

You know, we don't, for instance, set up a play area where we have one exciting and interesting toy that all of the toddlers will want to play with at the same time, which would be very stressful for them, and would be very hard for us to co-regulate them through that. So, we have to think about creating an environment of yes to minimize that, and then third, really through our own teaching and caregiving we're modeling and supporting in the moment, children who can't yet self-regulate to begin to learn how to do that in the future, or to make baby steps toward that.

So, for instance, if you're in an infant room and you've got a child who has one of the favorite, you know, chew toys, and you can see another child who really wants their own chew toy and probably that one that that one child is biting on, you might say, "Boy, Joey, I see you're really interested in that chew toy Sara has. Let's go to the bin and you can pick one of your own," and then have several there that look just like that favorite one.

And then, when Joey does pick one from the bin, rather than trying to grab it away from Sara, you can praise and say, "I really like how you waited for me to help you get that chewy, and now you know where the basket it for the next time you want one." So, we really start to model, even in infancy, even though we know it's not developmentally appropriate to think that they can do these things by themselves yet, we really do start that modeling process early so that they begin to learn those skills as they move into pre-school, you know, elementary school ages they continue to practice that self-regulation.

And, of course, I just want to say we know that we can't, you know, we can't minimize all of the environment stressors in infants' and toddlers' lives, nor would we want to. Right? We definitely want to have some situations where infants and toddlers can practice with the help of a supportive adult. They can practice waiting a turn or beginning to self-regulate to really start to learn how to do those things.

Allyson: Were you going to ask a question?

Judi: Well, we had -- someone commented that she uses a strategy where she tries to help a child calm down. But she also says, "I see you took a deep breath. You are calming down. Good job relaxing." So, she's verbalizing for the child. So, the last thing we want to talk about is mindfulness, So, can you just tell us a little bit? I know you have one more video for us about mindfulness.

Allyson: Sure. I do. Again, because so much of helping children self-regulate is really being in the moment and keeping calm ourselves, and important strategy for doing that is mindfulness. So, I asked Rebecca, again, to talk a little bit about that concept of mindfulness and what it looks like in a group setting.

[Video clip begins]

Rebecca: You know, mindfulness, I think, is a great strategy for us to help self-calm. There's a really nice and growing evidence space on the use of mindfulness by teachers. And you know, mindfulness is not a religious practice. It's really just a practice that prompts us to pay attention to how we're feeling and what we're expecting in the moment. And, kind of, by acknowledging that we can create a response that can help us feel better, and help us choose a more effective path. And some of those ways that we can prompt ourselves to self-calm is one strategy is the starfish strategy where you, you know, put your hand on the table and trace it with your finger, and every time you go around a finger you take a deep breath. So, your basically prompting yourself to take five deep breaths.

And I think, you know, all of us are going to have bad days at work. We all are going to have those days where we're feeling heightened frustration or annoyance, but even doing something as simple as taking five deep breaths, at a very base level in our bodies, we start to feel calmer. And we can even bring the children into this process starting as young as two with an activity that I like to call breathing buddies. So, we lay on our backs, you know, maybe before nap time or sometime in the afternoon when children are starting to feel a little cranky and tired, and we have children put a stuffed animal on their bellies, and we can, too, because that's fun. And we help the children realize that as they breathe their breathing buddy goes up and down. And then, we can begin to prompt them to see how slow we can get that breathing buddy to move. So, we're essentially scaffolding them to take deep breaths, and it makes a really nice transition into nap time. Once it becomes part of your routine, then you can, kind of, use the breathing buddy strategy at other times of day -- when a child is really angry, when a child is really frustrated -- you can say, "Hey, how about we do breathing buddies for a little bit?" You know. So, it's all about creating that environment of nurture and support, and giving children opportunities to practice self-regulation.

Allyson: Mm-hmm. That's really cool. I love that idea. Breathing buddies. Thanks for joining us today, Rebecca. I hope you'll come back again and talk to us soon.

Rebecca: Oh, thank you so much.

[Video clip ends]

Judi: Breathing buddies!

[Laughter]

I love it. I need a breathing buddy.

Treshawn: Me, too!

Judi: Well, thank you, Allyson, so much for joining us today, and for bringing us those great videos of you and Rebecca. It was so much helpful information, and also I -- You've brought us this -- these tips for being mindful and we're not going to -- If we had time, we would do this together, maybe, with you. But -- So, for those of you who are watching, if you download from your resources tab the PowerPoint, it's a PDF, you can take these steps with you, and this is not the only way to be mindful. Right, Allyson? It's just a nice way if you, in the middle of your day, are feeling anxious, or in the morning you want to calm yourself before you walk into your space, this is a great practice to get into. And as we mentioned, and as you mentioned, Allyson, with co-regulation, like, if we aren't calm ourselves then we're going to have a hard time supporting children in that. So, thanks for being here. Do you have any last words?

Allyson: Nope. Just keep breathing.

Judi: All right. Well, please come back sometime to see us at Teacher Time if you can. But thank you so much for being with us here today.

Allyson: Bye-bye. Thanks.

Treshawn: Bye, Allyson.

Judi: Bye, Allyson.

Treshawn: So, as we close, we just want to remind you of the three things that we talked about today and how to build a safe and nurturing learning environment for infants and toddlers. We encourage you to be sensitive and responsive, to be consistent, and then to be mindful taking a deep breath and realizing, you know, what's going on in your environment and being present in the moment. So, doing all of these things, will help us to meet children's needs in a way that helps them feel safe, worthy of being taken care of and confident. And if you look at your viewer's guide, you'll see that we'll be giving you the chance to choose a few strategies to try and then reflect on how they made you feel and how they made a difference in your interactions with young children. So, we encourage you to download those from the green resource file button.

Judi: Yeah, definitely. And if you have been with us in previous seasons you'll see that this season we, kind of, changed the viewer's guide around. So, we based it on the "know, see, do, improve," which you might be familiar with. So, please download that and take a look at it. It'll give you the, kind of, the framework to reflect on what we talked about today and then to try it out. You can maybe try it out with colleagues if you guys are watching together, and then to reflect on it to improve your practice. The resources are in the resource widget on the bottom of your screen. So, you can open that up and download and go to any of the links that we have there. So, before we leave, I just want to highlight for you a special campaign.

Some of you may have already listened in on some of the webinars, but this is directly related to our topic today. So, this Fall, the Office of Head Start kicked off its newest national campaign, Safe Foundations, Healthy Futures, and the goal is to make sure that environments for young children are safe, and that we eliminate preventable risks to children's health, safety, and their well-being. And so here at Teacher Time we're supporting this effort by giving you some practical ways you can create emotionally-safe learning environments for your children.

But you can also follow the latest news and information on this campaign by joining the Safe Foundations, Healthy Futures community on MyPeers. So, if you're already on MyPeers, you can go to click on communities, and you can find a community specifically designated for this campaign, lots of helpful links, conversations happening there. If you haven't joined MyPeers yet, the link is in the resources tab. You can also, we would love for you if you're not already there, to join the Teacher Time community. That's really where we post resources. We post links, and we love to extend the conversation that we started here to make sure that we can keep talking about creating safe environments for our children.

So, all of the resources and links to the things that we're talking about today are in that resources widget for you. And finally, if you're interested in learning more about our topic today, the office of Head Start is going to be hosting a webinar in November on strategies to create positive learning environments for children and staff. You should get a website -- I'm sorry -- a link through your e-mail, but in the resources tab there's a link where you can register directly for that webinar in November.

Treshawn: Great. Thanks, Judi. Thank you, guys, for joining us for our first Teacher Time episode of this season. We hope you come back for more. We also hope you enjoyed this topic and found some strategies that you can use to create safe and learning -- safe and nurturing learning environments for the infants and toddlers in your learning environments, as well.

So, we encourage you to continue this conversation, ask questions that maybe didn't get answered, or to chat with your fellow teachers in our Teacher Time MyPeers community, as Judi said. And this is a free community for teachers to really share ideas, access new materials, and we post, you know, the -- we post this webinar in that Teacher Time community, as well.

So, if you didn't get to see, or if you had some technical problems you can go back and view it again. We also encourage you to sign up for Text4Teachers and ELOF 2 GO. Those are apps that are available on your phone, and they're available in both Spanish and English. So, that's great. And most of all, we encourage you to download the resources from the green resources file widget at the bottom of your screen. You'll have the viewer's guide and a copy of our slides. So, we're done, guys. We made it.

Judi: And I just have to say -- That this has been a great first episode, but I'm really -- You guys in the group chat were fantastic, and I'm so happy that, you know, we were able to have the opportunity to share your strategies and to learn from you about the great things that you're doing. So, our next episode for Teacher Time is going to be in November. We're going to be talking about safe and nurturing learning environments for preschoolers. So, if you have friends who work in pre-school classrooms, or if you work with preschoolers, join us on November 16, for the preschool Teacher Time around safe and nurturing environments for preschool children. And yeah, please join us on MyPeers. We'll be there.

Treshawn: And lastly, I'm going to post the link to the evaluation. So, if you'd please go on and do the evaluation -- you can even forward it to friends that we're watching along with you -- to complete the evaluation, and then you'll get your certificate of completion afterwards.

Judi: Perfect. Well, thanks, everyone. We'll see you next month. Enjoy your weekend.

Treshawn: Have a good weekend. Bye.