One-Minute Resilience Building Interventions for Traumatized Children and Adolescents

Caelan Soma, PsyD, LMSW and Sarah Wasil, MA, LPC

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13725 Starr Commonwealth Road, Albion, Michigan 49224
www.starr.org  |  info@starr.org

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About the Authors

Dr. Caelan Soma, PsyD, LMSW, Starr Commonwealth’s Chief Clinical Officer, provides oversight for all clinical operations and research at Starr Commonwealth. Dr. Soma provides trauma assessment and trauma-informed, resilience-focused intervention for youth utilizing evidence-based practices, including Starr’s SITCAP® model programs. She has been involved in helping with the aftermath of disasters such as Sandy Hook, Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, and others. She has authored several books, the most recent, 10 Steps to Create a Trauma-Informed Resilient School and Healing the Experience of Trauma: A Path to Resilience.

She is an internationally acclaimed speaker and trainer, and is the instructor for many Starr courses, including Children of Trauma and Resilience and Structured Sensory Interventions II. She received her doctorate in clinical psychology at California Southern University, where she received the 2013 CalSouthern President’s Award.

Sarah Wasil, MA, ACTP, holds a Bachelor of Arts in Psychology and History, with a concentration in human services from Albion College and a Masters of Arts in Counselor Education: Community Counseling from Western Michigan University. She is a Certified Trauma Practitioner as well as a Licensed Professional Counselor. Sarah first began her work at Starr Commonwealth in 2007 working with residential mental health treatment programs for adolescents. She later became the Assistant Director for The National Institute for Trauma and Loss in Children/Starr Global Learning Network, where she conducted trainings nationally to schools and agencies, provided case consultation, and provided individual therapy for children and adolescents who experienced psychological traumas. She also assisted with community outreach for trauma-related incidents, research projects, and development of evidence-based trauma intervention programs and online curriculums. In the spring of 2015, Sarah became the Executive Director of the Jackson Friendly Home which provides housing, medical care, mental health treatment, and supportive services to homeless and disadvantaged senior women. Sarah rejoined Starr Commonwealth in 2018 as the Director of Development.
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**INTRODUCTION**

*One-Minute Resilience Building Interventions for Traumatized Children and Adolescents* is a comprehensive collection of over 200 age-specific, sensory-based and resilience-focused intervention activities to use with children and adolescents ages 3-17 years old when time is limited. All intervention activities take less than 15 minutes to complete, and many can be done in 5-10 minutes, which make them practical to use in any child-caring setting. Activities in this resource do not need to be implemented by a licensed mental health professional. In fact, the activities can be used by parents; caregivers; residential direct care staff; educators; paraprofessionals; and hospital, clinic, and agency child-caring professionals.

The intervention activities are categorized into age-specific, sensory-based categories that address all themes of trauma and include resilience-focused activities to help nurture and foster survivor thinking and relaxation. New to this resource are activities that highlight and allow children exposure to the four most important protective factors for all youth to experience; belonging, mastery, independence and generosity. These activities can be used alone or integrated into other Starr SITCAP® model programs.

Each activity includes directions and a reproducible worksheet, and utilizes drawing activities accompanied by specific questions that target major sensations associated with trauma and resilience themes. This intervention approach aligns with research that supports activities with traumatized children must be sensory-based rather than cognitive-focused and grounded in safety and control (regulation).

**Benefits of One-Minute Resilience Building Interventions for Traumatized Children and Adolescents:**

- Helps children experience safety in the presence of a caring adult. This is critical to relieving overwhelming experiences and taking in new experiences associated with resilience.
- Experiences are not stored in the memory unless they are sensory-based. Cognitive processes such as logic, reason, and problem-solving are not accessible during stress and trauma.
• Experiences must be repeated. It is only through repetition that a child will truly believe they are safe and connected, and can indeed manage their overwhelming sensations of hurt, fear, worry, or anger.

• Body awareness and control leads to self-regulation.

• Increasing a child’s time devoted to art, play, and creativity are excellent strategies to help reduce stress while engaging sensations of calm and goodness.

• Safe experiences strengthen and build brain connections. In time, these repetitive experiences will replace unsafe sensory memories.

• Coloring and drawing provide children with an opportunity to be an active participant in their healing process by:
  - Helping them focus on their internal resources.
  - Re-working and managing overwhelming sensations.
  - Engaging them in positive experiences.
Activities for Ages 3-5
SAFETY

Keep this Kitten Safe!

Directions:
Ask the child to draw what this kitten needs to feel safe. If the child needs help getting started, suggest that the kitten might like to have a blanket or toy near them.

Reframing:
All of us have certain things or people in our lives that make us feel safe. This kitten needs _______ to feel safe. What things or people do you need to help you feel safe? Why do those things make you feel safe? Why does that person make you feel safe? Listen and acknowledge their responses.
Keep this kitten safe!
SAFETY

Safe Place

Directions:
Ask the child to draw a picture of their safe place. If the child needs help getting started suggest certain places that may feel safe to them (e.g. bedroom, grandma's house, school.) Encourage them to draw all of the things about that place that makes it feel safe.

Reframing:
Yes, we all have certain places where we feel most safe. It is a good feeling to feel safe, isn’t it? Feeling safe makes us feel happy. If you can’t go to your safe place, you can always draw a picture of your safe place to remember what it feels like to be there!
Activities for Ages 6-12
SAFETY

This is the Safest Place for Me to Be!

Directions:
Ask the child/adolescent to think about a place that makes them feel safe, content, and happy. Instruct them to see it in their mind. Ask them to see all of the different shapes, colors and people that are part of this safe place. Give them about 2 minutes to think of this place. Then, as they continue to think of this place, ask them to take drawing materials and draw a picture of their safe place.

Reframing:
In the future, you can control unwanted reactions by returning to your safe place the way you have been doing here, either in your mind or by drawing. You will never forget your traumatic experience, however, you can gain control over your reactions to the memories. Your safe place can be a mental refuge that will help you gain control over your trauma reactions.
My safe place:
SAFETY

My Safe People

Directions:
Ask the child to circle and color in the picture(s) that represents their safe person(s). Have them tell you each person’s name and then write their names above the picture. If someone is not represented, ask the child to draw in that person in the box provided.

Reframing:
It helps to know that there are people we can count on, people that we know love us and will be there for us if we need anything. Now that you have picked out some people who make you feel safe, you know who to go to if you are feeling unsafe.
My safe people:

- Mom
- Dad
- Grandma
- Grandpa
- Brother
- Sister
- Friend
- Teacher
- Other
SAFETY

This is Where I am Safe!

Directions:
Ask the adolescent to describe to you where they feel the safest. Then, ask them to draw a picture of that safe place.

Framing:
We all have places and people who make us feel safe. It is important to identify and think about where we feel the safest so that if we need to we can either go to that place or think about that safe, special place in our minds to help us feel better. Drawing a picture of your safe place will also help you to feel less scared.

Note:
If you are working in a school setting, refer to where in school the adolescent feels the safest and with whom at school they feel most safe. You may be surprised by their responses. These questions are essential for providing options to the youngster when they are feeling unsafe and help them create a plan.

Reframing:
What about that place makes you feel safe? What is it that you do that allows you to feel most comfortable? Remember that you now have options to help yourself feel safe. You can go to your safe place or to your safe person when you need to get away from feeling unsafe.
This is where I am safe:
SAFETY

If Something Bad Happens I Can Always Call...

Directions:
Ask the adolescent to make a list of the people they can call if they need something. Rehearse with them what to say when they make that call.

Reframing:
When we need something, it helps to have a plan. It helps us to know exactly who to call and what to say should we need them. Now you have a list of people you can call, along with their phone numbers. Keep this in a safe place in case you ever need it!
If something bad happens these are the people I can call: