


## A REGULATION-FIRST Neurobehavioral Model for Supporting Children with FASD/PSE and Their Caregivers


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10<sup>th</sup> International Conference on Adolescents and Adults with FASD  
Integrating Research, Practice, and Policy Around the World



1

## OUR TEAM



**ALEX LUNDY**  
• Vice President of Programs

**RYAN CONLEY**  
• Director, HRC

**BRIE ANDERSON-FELDMAN**  
• Therapy Supervisor

2

## SESSION OVERVIEW

- Discuss How A Regulation-First Neurobehavioral Approach Is Effective For Children With FASD/PSE
- Share A Clinical Model That Illustrates Neurobehavioral, Caregiver-Centered Support In Practice
- Offer Practical Accommodations That Reduce Stigma And Strengthen Caregiver-Child Relationships

3


## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

By the end of the session, you will be able to...

- Explain The Fundamentals Of The Neurobehavioral Model
- Identify The Impact Of Caregiver Education And Accommodations
- Apply A Primary Service Provider (PSP)-Transdisciplinary Service Model

4

## THIS WORK MATTERS



**FAMILY IMPACT**

- High Levels Of Stress
- Strained Attachment Between Caregiver And Child

**CHILD IMPACT**

- Dysregulation Misinterpreted As Intentional
- Dysregulation Becomes A Cycle

**THERAPY IMPACT**

- Inconsistent Access To Skills Across Environments
- Most Approaches Demand Compliance and Forced Structure

Felicichia, R. J., Ventrone, C. R., & Mattson, S. N. (2025). Greene, R. W. (2016). Ichniowski, C., et al. (2023). Largo, S., et al. (2017). Mathis, D. (2025). Mattson, S. N., Berres, G. A., & Doyle, L. R. (2019). May, P. A., et al. (2024). Mohamed, Z., et al. (2020). Okon, H. C., Oki, R., Goto, J., & Bink, S. (2019). Popova, S., et al. (2023).

5

## BEHAVIOR THROUGH A NEUROBEHAVIORAL LENS



Identifies What The Brain Is Capable Of At Any Given Moment


Behaviors Reflect Brain-Based Needs  
• NOT Willful Defiance

**MATCH EXPECTATIONS      REDUCE SHAME      SUPPORT REGULATION**


Mathis, D. (2025). Mattson, S. N., Berres, G. A., & Doyle, L. R. (2019). Popova, S., et al. (2023).

6


## SYMPTOMS



**PRIMARY**  
Physical brain-based traits that shape how a person grows and behaves\*



**SECONDARY**  
Behaviors demonstrating a disconnect between skills and expectations\*



**TERTIARY**  
Social impacts due to a mismatch between skills and expectations\*

Felicchia, R. J., Weir, C. R., & Mattson, S. N. (2025). Mattson, S. N., Berres, G. A., & Doyle, L. R. (2019). Olson, H. C., Ode, R., Gelfo, J., & Beck, S. (2009). Qian, R. (2019). Reedman, B., Beeri, K., & Wu, H. (2024). Wozniak, J. R., Riley, E. P., & Charney, M. E. (2019).

7

## DEVELOPMENTAL IMPACTS

- Language & Communication
- Eating & Feeding
- Motor Skills
- Learning & Memory
- Sensory Processing
- Adaptive Skills
- Executive Function Skills
- Play Skills & Social Participation

Felicchia, R. J., Weir, C. R., & Mattson, S. N. (2025). Kodrowska, P. W. (2009). Mattson, S. N., Berres, G. A., & Doyle, L. R. (2019). May, P. A., et al. (2024). Popova, S., Charney, M., Burt, L., Crawford, A., Hoyme, H., Mahherjee, K., Riley, E., & Elliott, E. (2023). Wozniak, J. R., Riley, E. P., & Charney, M. E. (2019).

8



## REGULATION-FIRST WHY IT MATTERS


**DYSREGULATION**  
A physiological state when the nervous system is temporarily overwhelmed because the demands of an environment have exceeded internal resources.

**DYSREGULATED BEHAVIORS ARE MISLABELED**

- defiant
- oppositional
- manipulative
- attention-seeking

Dana, D. (2018). Perry, B. D. (2006). Porges, S. W. (2025).

9



## REGULATION-FIRST WHY IT MATTERS

**REGULATION MUST COME FIRST**

- A child **cannot** reason, learn, or build skills while dysregulated

**ADULT REGULATION SHAPES CHILD REGULATION**

- Children with FASD/PSE **depend** on a calm adult nervous system

Dana, D. (2018). Porges, S. W. (2025).

10

## SENSORY PROCESSING & REGULATORY SYSTEMS

**Sensory Processing Differences Impact Behavior**

- "Acting out"
- "Ignoring"
- "Having a meltdown"

**Sensory Experiences Trigger Trauma Responses**

- Sounds
- Tastes
- Smells
- Visual Cues
- Touch
- Textures

Altabeh, H. M., Alkhatib, A., Qasem, F., & Alkhatib, M. (2025). Brandes-Alfken, A., Powers, R., Wren, J., Chu, R., Shapiro, K. A., Steele, M., Mahherjee, P., & Marco, E. J. (2024). Dana, D. (2018). Dana, W. (2014). Porges, S. W. (2025).

11

## CHANGING THE NARRATIVE AND BECOME A DETECTIVE...

**GET CURIOUS RATHER THAN BLAME - ASK "What if?"**

"What if my child is not being disrespectful right now?"

- What If They **Can't** Access The Language Needed To Form A Complex Thought Or Use Mannered Words?

Many Challenging Behaviors Come From Skill Gaps

- **Not Refusal**

**Adults Need To Shift From A Won't To Can't Mindset**

Baith, H. (2008). Brandes-Alfken, A., Powers, R., Wren, J., Chu, R., Shapiro, K. A., Steele, M., Mahherjee, P., & Marco, E. J. (2024). Dana, D. (2018). Greene, R. W. (2016). Kodrowska, P. W. (2009). Mallon, D. (2025). Porges, S. W. (2025). Pollock, A. R., Wang, L., Fedy, C. J., & Nelson, J. S. (2023). Tegen, D. J., & Byrnes, T. P. (2012).

12

### CHANGING THE NARRATIVE AND BECOME A DETECTIVE... WON'T TO CAN'T

- Willful Non-Compliance
- Not Listening
- Purposeful Behavior
- Task Refusal
- Can't Understand The Request
- Can't Process At Typical Speed
- Can't Control Impulses
- Can't Figure Out Where To Start

Rath, H. (2010), Selioucha, R. J., Wainic, C. R., & Mattson, S. N. (2021). Heath, G. R., File-Schaw, C., Wang, L., Eddy, C. J., Howe, M. J. G., & Palfreman, A. R. (2020). Mattson, S. N., Benne, G. A., & Doyle, L. R. (2019). Palfreman, A. R., Wang, L., Eddy, C. J., & Alton, J. S. (2021). Singh, D. J., & Ryan, T. P. (2012).

13

"I forget that many of our clients have trauma history... Instead of trying to teach them coping skills, I should let them feel **safe first**."  
HRC occupational therapist

14

### THE HOPE RISING CLINIC MODEL REGULATION-FIRST APPROACH

**NEUROBEHAVIORAL FOUNDATION**

- Behavior Reflects Brain State
- Connection Drives Change
- Mutual Caregiver-Child Regulation
- Regulation Before Expectations
- Flexibility Over Perfection
- Stabilizing Arousal Enables Engagement

Dozier, M., Roben, C. K. P., Caron, E., Hoje, J., & Bernard, K. (2018). O'Byrne, E., McCusker, C., & McGeeney, S. (2021). Perry, B. D. (2006). Singh, D. J., & Ryan, T. P. (2012).

15

### THE HOPE RISING CLINIC MODEL TRANSDISCIPLINARY APPROACH

- UNIFIED NEUROBEHAVIORAL FRAMEWORK**
  - OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY
  - MENTAL HEALTH
  - FAMILY SUPPORT SPECIALIST
- WHOLE-CHILD UNDERSTANDING**
  - SENSORY PROCESSING
  - EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONS
  - SOCIAL EMOTIONAL LEARNING
- MULTIFACETED INTERVENTION**
  - BEHAVIORAL THERAPIES
  - EDUCATION
  - CAREGIVER EDUCATION & COACHING

Bruder, M. B. (2010). Dozier, M., Roben, C. K. P., Caron, E., Hoje, J., & Bernard, K. (2018). King, G., Strachan, D., Tucker, M., Dunne, B., Desrosier, S., & Shillington, M. (2009). Park, K., & Carta, J. (2015). Perry, B. D. (2006). Shillden, M. L., & Raab, D. D. (2013).

16

### THE HOPE RISING CLINIC MODEL MULTIDISCIPLINARY ASSESSMENT

TARGETED ASSESSMENT GUIDES TARGETED INTERVENTION

**KEY AREAS**

- Attachment
- Sensory Processing
- Emotional Modulation
- Executive Function Skills

Lange, S., Probst, C., Gmel, G., Bihler, J., Biedl, L., & Papova, S. (2017). Mattson, S. N., Benne, G. A., & Doyle, L. R. (2019). Wozniak, J. R., Riley, E. P., & Charney, M. E. (2015).

17

### THE HOPE RISING CLINIC MODEL CAREGIVER EDUCATION PROGRAM

- FOUNDATION FOR SHARED UNDERSTANDING
- CAREGIVER REGULATION BEFORE INTERVENTION
- MINDSET SHIFT

Bruder, M. B. (2010). Bohena, C., Slayen, C., Dennis, S., Cheng, K., Gaultie, T., & Thiele, J. (2012). King, G., Strachan, D., Tucker, M., Dunne, B., Desrosier, S., & Shillington, M. (2009). Olson, R. C., Qi, R., Gels, J., & Bink, S. (2001). Park, K., & Carta, J. (2015). Prentiss, C. L. M. (2015). Shillden, M. L., & Raab, D. D. (2013).

18

## THE HOPE RISING CLINIC MODEL PRIMARY SERVICE PROVIDER MODEL

- BUILD STRONG THERAPEUTIC RELATIONSHIPS
- TRUST ENHANCES ENGAGEMENT
- ALIGNED INTERVENTIONS
- FLEXIBILITY TO ADAPT INTERVENTIONS OR PIVOT APPROACH

Bruder, M. B. (2018). Feliciano, R. J., Vessis, C. R., & Mattson, S. N. (2020). King, C., Strachan, D., Tucker, M., Duque, B., Drennon, S., & Shillington, M. (2009). Stone, K. C., Shi, R., Goff, J., & West, S. (2009). Park, K., & Corne, J. (2020). Sheldon, M. L., & Rush, D. D. (2013).

19

## THE HOPE RISING CLINIC MODEL THERAPEUTIC PROCESS

- UNIFIED TREATMENT APPROACH
- EXPERIENTIAL PLAY THERAPY
- OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY
- BUILDING CAREGIVER CONFIDENCE
- SHARED FRAMEWORK AROUND REGULATION

Bruder, M. B. (2018). Perry, B. D. (2006). Sheldon, M. L., & Rush, D. D. (2013).

20

## REGULATION BEYOND EMOTIONS

### REGULATION HIERARCHY (INTERNAL/SELF)

1. Physical Homeostasis
2. Secure Attachment & Relationship With Caregiver(s)
3. Communication Skills To Express Needs And Feelings
4. Learn To Identify Internal States (Interoception)
  - How To Care For Biological Needs

Dena, D. (2018). Dena, W. (2014). Porges, S. W. (2005).

21

## REGULATION BEYOND EMOTIONS

### REGULATION HIERARCHY (EXTERNAL/STRATEGIES)

5. Recognize The Impact Actions Have On Others
6. Prevent/Avoid Actions Or Situations That Commonly Lead To Dysregulation
7. Develop Understanding Of When To Use Tools When Dysregulated
8. Learn To Anticipate When Tools Are Needed To Prevent Dysregulation

Dena, D. (2018). Dena, W. (2014). Porges, S. W. (2005).

22

## REGULATION BEFORE ACCESS TO SKILL BUILDING

### HOME

<b>SLOW DOWN</b>	"10 Second Breath" THINK - "Secure your mask first, and then help the other person"
<b>ADJUST DEMANDS</b>	"Let's put away just 2 blocks."
<b>MATCH CAPACITY</b>	"Let's clean up the red blocks as a team!"

Fun, B. (2019). Mohamed, Z., Carlisle, A. C. S., Livsey, A. C., & Mahoney, R. A. S. (2020). Petrenko, C. L. M. (2015). Sheldon, M. L., & Rush, D. D. (2013). Thomas, M. S. C., Johnson, M. H., Kamaloff-Smith, A., et al. (2021). Yggeby, L. S. (1978).

23

## REGULATION BEFORE ACCESS TO SKILL BUILDING

### SCHOOL

<b>SLOW DOWN</b>	Calming Corner / Sensory Room Or Tools
<b>ADJUST DEMANDS</b>	"I wonder if we can start with one word instead of thinking about the whole sentence."
<b>MATCH CAPACITY</b>	"Your brain looks full, let's take five to do some wall pushups."

Fun, B. (2019). Ojicki, B. (2019). Redmond, B., Breen, K., & Wu, H. (2024). Thomas, M. S. C., Johnson, M. H., Kamaloff-Smith, A., et al. (2021). Yggeby, L. S. (1978).

24

## REGULATION BEFORE ACCESS TO SKILL BUILDING

### COMMUNITY

<b>SLOW DOWN</b> "Pace With Purpose"	Live Out Loud – Verbalize YOUR Thinking Process
<b>ADJUST DEMANDS</b> "Less Is More"	Not Every Behavior Requires A Big Reaction
<b>MATCH CAPACITY</b> "Share The Load"	Ask For "help" With Small Achievable Tasks (e.g., "I need your help putting the groceries in the car.")

Brandes-Adler, A., Powers, R., Wren, J., Chu, R., Shapiro, K. A., Smith, M., Malherbe, P., & Marco, E. J. (2024). Etn, D. (2019). Ikema, C., Steyer, C., Bennis, S., Chang, K., Gaudin, T., & Thiele, J. (2023). Thomas, M. S. C., Johnson, M. H., Kernell-Smith, A., et al. (2021). Vygotsky, L. S. (1978).

25

## DEVELOPMENTALLY REALISTIC EXPECTATIONS

**MATCH DEMANDS TO DEVELOPMENTAL CAPACITY**

- NOT CHRONOLOGICAL AGE

**PROVIDE SCAFFOLDING**

- VISUAL ROUTINES
- VISUAL & AUDIBLE TIMERS
- CAREGIVER MODELING

**ADJUST ENVIRONMENTS vs CHANGING CHILD**

- ACCOMMODATIONS
- MODIFY ROUTINES

Brandes-Adler, A., Powers, R., Wren, J., Chu, R., Shapiro, K. A., Smith, M., Malherbe, P., & Marco, E. J. (2024). Thomas, M. S. C., Johnson, M. H., Kernell-Smith, A., et al. (2021). Vygotsky, L. S. (1978).

26

## NOTES ON ACCOMMODATIONS & EXPECTATIONS

<p><b>ACCOMMODATIONS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are Dynamic!</li> <li>• Best When Shared With Others Supporting A Child</li> </ul>	<p><b>We Are NOT Removing Expectations</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support Matches A Child's Capacity</li> </ul>
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**SEEK SUPPORT TO REFRAME A CHILD'S BEHAVIOR & GUIDE EXPECTATIONS**

Sheldens, M. L., & Bush, D. D. (2013).

27

"My training in the field never touched on sensory systems and the role that plays in regulation. It has been eye-opening to be able to look at certain behaviors not just from a MH perspective but also from an OT perspective."

HRC mental health clinician

28

<b>REGULATION</b>	<b>FOUNDATIONAL</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regulation Support</li> <li>• Sensory Tools</li> </ul>
<b>INTERACTION</b>	<b>RELATIONAL</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communication Support</li> <li>• Mutual-Regulation Prompts</li> </ul>
<b>ENVIRONMENT</b>	<b>ENVIRONMENTAL</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Environmental Modifications</li> <li>• Predictability &amp; Routines</li> </ul>

Beth, H. (2020). King, G., Stechen, D., Tucker, M., Dwyer, B., Desmond, S., & Shillington, M. (2009). Park, K., & Carta, J. (2025). Perry, B. D. (2006). Sheldens, M. L., & Bush, D. D. (2013).

29

## ADVOCACY

- **ACADEMIC**
- **EXTRACURRICULARS**
- **SOCIAL PARTICIPATION**
- **MEDICAL CARE**
- **COACHING**
- **LANGUAGE**
- **CONFIDENCE**
- **SUPPORT & CONNECTION**

Olson, H. C., Ohi, R., Gelfo, J., & Beck, S. (2009). Opini, B. (2019). Reedman, B., Breen, K., & Wu, H. (2024). Poremba, P., Poremba, C. E., Fahn, N., Mahoney, E. C., & Choi, N. P. (2014).

30

“This has really helped me move from feeling like there has to be discipline and correction to a mindset of **problem-solving** and new solutions and **reading my child’s cues** before a behavior happens and there’s full-on escalation. It felt good to have affirmation that **rewards and consequences don’t work.**”  
HRC caregiver

31

## CONCLUSION

1. BEHAVIOR IS BRAIN-BASED
2. REGULATION + RELATIONSHIP  
Regulation Comes First
3. CAREGIVER INSIGHT DRIVES CHANGE  
Growth Through Support
4. TRANSDISCIPLINARY SUPPORT  
STRENGTHENS PROGRESS
5. ADJUST EXPECTATIONS

Fellicchia, R. J., Vesicic, C. R., & Mattson, S. N. (2025). King, G., Strachan, D., Tucker, M., Dwyer, B., Desrosier, S., & Shillington, M. (2009). Mattson, S. N., Benes, G. A., & Doyle, L. R. (2019). Olson, R. C., Qi, R., Gels, J., & Brod, S. (2009).

32

## FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

- UNIQUE FAMILY STRUCTURES
- TRAUMA HISTORIES
- FAMILIES IN CRISIS
- PROVIDER BURNOUT
- NEURODIVERSE APPLICABILITY

Ikhena, C., Slayen, C., Beninc, S., Cheung, K., Gault, T., & Theule, J. (2023). Mohamed, Z., Carlisle, A. C. S., Lively, A. C., & Mulheiser, R. A. S. (2020). Olson, R. C., Qi, R., Gels, J., & Brod, S. (2009). Frensch, C. L. M. (2015).

33

## Q&A DISCUSSION

34

## CONTACT & RESOURCES

**1909 214<sup>TH</sup> ST SE  
Bothell, WA 98021**



**(425) 219 - 4788**

**HOPE RISING CLINIC.ORG**

**HRC@WONDERLANDKIDS.ORG**

35

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37

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38



39



40