

TARGET

TRAUMA AFFECT REGULATION:
GUIDE FOR EDUCATION & THERAPY

T-Care Skill Two: Recognizing Triggers

Your Name

Your Program's Name

in partnership with

Advanced Trauma Solutions Professionals, LLC

Advanced Trauma Solutions Professionals, LLC

- Thank participants for attending the training
- Introduce trainer(s) and discuss your background(s). Make sure to include your role as a T-Care trainer and your experience with the TARGET program.



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- Explain that TARGET is an evidence-based practice that was created by the model developer, Dr. Julian Ford. Share that TARGET is disseminated by the organization Advanced Trauma Solution Professionals, LLC. Take time to discuss that participants in contracted ATS projects have permission to use the TARGET materials and make copies of them for their clients, determined by their defined role in the contracted project. However, by law, they cannot distribute the materials to colleagues or others without specific permission.
- Let participants know that you can support them in getting more information about ATS, Inc. and the TARGET model

Introductions

- ♦ Tell us about yourself
- ♦ What is your name?
- ♦ What is your current position?
- ♦ What is one thing you value about your work?

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- Take time to allow the group members to introduce themselves.
- Reflect respect and genuine interest as they share.
- Even if the group is acquainted it's important to establish rapport as a training cohort. This list may be adapted to include additional questions that support this goal and maintain professional boundaries.
- Refer to **Overview Appendix: Page 1** for additional ice breakers and introductory questions

Goals

What do you want to learn
and/or accomplish in this
training?

Training Activity

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- Use 1-2 minutes to have participants brainstorm things they would like to learn (from either the instructors or their peers) during the training.
- Ask participants about specific goals related to the training concepts: identifying personal triggers, recognizing the reactions to being triggered, the role of the ALARM.
- These goals should be written on large sheets of paper and posted for the group during the training.
- Let participants know that you will check back in with goals towards the conclusion of the training.
 - Sample script, "I want you all to begin reflecting on the goals you have around TARGET and this training. We will check in as a group about this after you've had a minute to brainstorm."

T-Care Training Objectives

You will be able to:

◆ UNDERSTAND

- That people who need services often have experienced violence, victimization, betrayal or losses, and
- That surviving those traumatic stressors has the capacity to alter the brain's ALARM, the early warning system in the brain, so that survivors are on high alert and ready to go into survival mode at any moment.

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- Describe the objectives for this training series.
- Focus in on and describe the objectives for the current training specifically.
 - Sample Script: "You'll learn about the TARGET model and the skills T-Care teaches to help people think clearly when they're stressed. By learning about this you are going to be able to better understand your clients through a trauma-informed lens. And you'll be practicing those skills as we go along so you can begin learning how to help yourself understand and regulate stress reactions in daily life. We'll talk about how being a model for self-regulation supports the clients we work with and increases our professional effectiveness. Today we're going to be talking about different types of stress and focusing on how extreme stress or trauma can actually change the way the brain and body functions."

T-Care Training Objectives

You will be able to:

◆ KNOW

- That it is possible to reset the ALARM, and
- How to utilize practical tools to help yourself, and others, to reset the ALARM before you have an extreme reaction to a normal stressor.

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T-Care Training Objectives

You will be able to:

♦ **ROLE MODEL** and **RESPOND**

- By resetting your ALARM
- By thinking clearly under stress, and then
- By helping someone else reset their ALARM.

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Trauma Affect Regulation: Guide for Education & Therapy

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- Sample Script: “*TARGET stands for Trauma Affect Regulation Guide for Education and Therapy.*”

FREEDOM Steps

A 7-step sequence of skills, **FREEDOM Steps**, that help youth and adults...

- ♦ Understand and gain control of trauma-related reactions Triggered by current daily life stressors,
- ♦ Recognize and utilize personal strengths, and
- ♦ Become highly focused and mindful, make good decisions, and build healthy relationships.

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- Provide a brief overview of the purpose and benefit of learning and applying the FREEDOM Steps
 - Sample Script: “*TARGET teaches a sequence of seven skills to enable individuals to safely unpack stressful current experiences. These are called the FREEDOM Steps. The goal in TARGET is to help youth and adults recognize their personal strengths using the FREEDOM Steps, and to use these skills consistently and purposefully when they experience stress reactions in their current lives. This helps them to think clearly and act effectively.*”
- Ask participants to turn to **TRAINING HANDOUT: 1**
- Proceed to the next slide

FREEDOM Steps: Handout 1

Focus

Slow down, Orient, and Self-Check

Recognize

Stress Triggers

Emotion

One MAIN Emotion

Evaluate

One MAIN Thought

Define

One MAIN Personal Goal

Options

Build on Your Positive Choices

Make a Contribution

Make the World a Better Place

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- **TRAINING HANDOUT: 1**
- Briefly review each of the FREEDOM Steps

T-Care: Handout 2

T-Care is a TARGET-based approach to trauma-informed services. T-Care is a user's guide to the brain's stress response system and a set of practical tools for preventing and managing stress reactions.

1. Noticing ALARM Reactions
2. Recognizing ALARM TRIGGERS
3. Understanding GOALS
4. Focusing Your Mind

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- Ask participants to turn to **TRAINING HANDOUT: 2**
- Ask for a volunteer to read this handout to the group
- Share with the participants that today's training will be focused on the second step in T-Care, identifying your personal Triggers so that you can take control before your brain's ALARM takes control of you.

How will learning
the T-Care skills
support my work?

Discussion

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- Use 2-3 minutes to ask participants to share their answers to this question.
- Record their answers on a large flip-chart.
- Let them know that this list will grow throughout the training as they connect what they learn to their professional roles.
- Refer to **Overview Appendix: Page 2** for a sample list of ways that learning the T-Care skills will support work with clients.

What do you remember from the Noticing ALARM Reactions training?

Discussion

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- Use 5 minutes to have participants brainstorm what they remember from the previous training, Noticing ALARM Reactions.
- As the participants share what they remember, use focused follow-up questions to generate additional discussion and ensure that the key points from the last training are all discussed.

- ◆ Stress reactions happen when the ALARM in the brain signals that you need to handle something.
- ◆ The purpose of the ALARM is to get you to pay attention so that you'll handle stress effectively.
- ◆ If you don't reset it, the ALARM gets stuck and goes into emergency mode even with minor stressors, and this can cause big problems in dealing with people and life.

Review

Noticing ALARM Reactions

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- Take time to review the key points from the previous training, Noticing ALARM Reactions.
- You can acknowledge, and omit, the key points that were included in the group review process from the previous slide.
 - Sample script: *"Everyone has an Alarm in their brain and it acts as the early warning system. The Alarm goes off whenever something goes wrong in your life, so it reacts to everyday things like having a bad hair day as well as to a major life crisis. During extreme stress the Alarm signal in the brain becomes highly activated, initiating survival skills. Once the extreme stress is over, the brain doesn't always automatically reset itself to normal stress management mode. People with their brains stuck in Alarm mode often overreact to minor stressors, causing difficulties in their relationships and life activities."*

- ◆ The brain has two other areas that deal with stress. The FILING Center stores and retrieves memories so you can get information when you need to figure out what's going on in a situation.
- ◆ The THINKING Center takes information from the ALARM and the FILING Center and figures out what you need to do to handle stressful situations.
- ◆ Recognizing your personal ALARM reactions and the early warning signs can enable you to activate your FILING and THINKING Centers to prevent ALARM reactions from becoming extreme.

Review

Noticing ALARM Reactions

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- Take time to review the key points from the previous training, Noticing ALARM Reactions
 - Sample Script: *"Once the Alarm is activated by a stressful event, it sends a message to another part of the brain called the hippocampus. The hippocampus, which in TARGET we call the Filing Center, stores memories and information that we need in order to solve problems. The Filing Center pulls out the information needed to the specific situation and sends it to a third part of the brain, the pre-frontal cortex - what we call the Thinking Center. The Thinking Center then sorts out this information and helps you come up with some options for working things out. These 3 areas of the brain make up your stress response system, and under normal circumstances they work very well together so that when you experience stress, you go into action in a productive way and make decisions based on your values. The other very important function of the stress response system is that once you're actively thinking about how to handle the situation, a signal is sent back to the Alarm that everything is going to be ok and the Alarm then begins slowing you down into a more balanced emotional state."*

T-Care Skill Two: Recognizing ALARM TRIGGERS

Introduction

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- ✦ A trigger is a very specific part of a stressful experience that sets off a peak ALARM Reaction
- ✦ Everyone has their own unique Triggers that set off their ALARM
- ✦ Recognizing your personal Triggers in advance can help you be prepared and able to handle stress reactions when they occur

Key Points

T-Care Skill Two

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- Sample Script: “Triggers are reminders of intensely negative experiences in the past. Triggers are recognizable because they are usually followed by a flood of emotion. Triggers are highly specific and individual to each of us. Most Triggers are not really a signal of a life-or-death threat, but may be interpreted as such by a person’s Alarm. A Trigger can seem like an emergency to the brain’s Alarm unless the Thinking Center is used to change the file in the brain from ‘horrible emergency’ to ‘manageable stress.’ If you recognize Triggers in advance you are activating your Thinking Center and preparing your Filing Center to change the way that future Alarm reactions are labeled and filed. Recognizing Triggers enables you to anticipate and reset Alarm signals as you learn to distinguish between a real threat and a reminder.”



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- Share with participants, “Triggers activate the brain’s Alarm and set in motion a cascade of automatic physical and emotional feelings, thoughts, perceptions and behavioral reactions.”

ALARM Triggers: Handout 3

- ✦ Things that make me feel unsafe
- ✦ Things that take control away from me
- ✦ Things that make me feel disrespected
- ✦ Things that are boring
- ✦ Someone else's alarm stuck going off
- ✦ Things that seem like too much to deal with
- ✦ Violations of my personal space
- ✦ Things that get in the way of achieving my goals

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- Explain to participants that when you get triggered you might find yourself doing something you didn't really intend to do. For many of the youth and adults they work with this may be behaviors such as yelling, hitting, running away or withdrawing.
- Sample Script: *"Triggers usually set off strong ALARM reactions before you really know what happened, so it's important to start identifying them in advance. That way you're prepared to recognize them and take control before they take control of you. Many things can Trigger an Alarm reaction and even though each person has different Triggers, there are some things that are Triggers for almost everyone. This slide orients you to common triggers that we all, including the youth and adults we work with, may have."*
- Have participants turn to **Page 9 in their T-Care manual and Training Packet: Page 3**
- Ask for a volunteer to read the top of this handout to the group.
- Then, have participants individually go through this handout, noting any Triggers that are familiar to them.
- Discussion questions may include:
 - Which ones have triggered you in the past?
 - What did you feel in your body when that Triggered your Alarm?
 - What emotions did you notice as soon as you were triggered?
 - Once you were triggered, did you do anything that

What are common
triggers our clients
experience?

Discussion

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- Foster discussion around this question
- Sample follow-up questions:
 - *"What are the signs you've observed that help you understand that a client is triggered?"*
 - *"How have you responded to early warning signs that a client is having an Alarm Reaction?"*
 - *"Are there certain triggers that most of the clients experience? For example, being told, 'No' or when they are preparing for a call with family?"*
 - *"How does knowing this information help you respond supportively?"*
- As the trainees share examples, help them get specific about the triggers they are describing

A short film

Father of the Bride: "Hot Dog Buns"

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- Film Clip: Father of the Bride, "Hot Dog Buns"
- After watching the film, discuss specific ways in which Tommy demonstrates how trauma effects the stress response system.
- Discussion:
- As a group, make a list of all Steve Martin's triggers in this film clip. How were his Filing and Thinking Centers functioning? What were the consequences?

Taking Charge of ALARM Triggers

Discussion

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- Have participants break into small groups.
- Have participants turn to **T-Care Manual Page 10 (if using the Manual)**
- Encourage the groups to discuss the following question:
 - *“How can you help the youth and adults you work with to prepare for normal daily stressors that are likely to trigger an ALARM reaction?”*
- Tell the participants that this page in the manual outlines examples of how T-Care helps them begin responding to clients in a way that builds off of the tools they shared earlier in the training, incorporating their new knowledge about recognizing Triggers.
- Which of the outlined options seem easiest to implement? Which seem more challenging? Why?

Role Play

John spent the morning trying to fill out apartment rental applications, but needed help with some of the questions. John became angry at the case manager he sought help from when she told him, using a critical tone, that he needed to pay closer attention filling them out. He slammed the papers down, said, “I’m done,” and walked out of the office. A peer support specialist, who has worked with John in the past, approached him with the goal to help him calm down.

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Role Play

As a large group, decide which response is most effective:

- ✦ The peer support acknowledges that John has accomplished a lot all morning but says that if he can’t calm down he will have to do an SOS.
- ✦ The peer support sits down with John and acknowledges that he has been doing very well all morning and that being criticized is a trigger that set off his ALARM. The peer support explains that being criticized is a trigger for many individuals and asked John how he can help him reset his ALARM.
- ✦ The peer support, beginning to feel frustrated that her efforts aren’t working, instructs John to pull it together and stop having an extreme stress reaction.

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- As a large group, process the scenario and decide which response they would choose. Encourage dialogue around how they made this decision.
- In a small group, have the participants practice one individual playing the client and staff member(s) supporting him using the language and approach identified as most effective from above.
- Reconvene as a larger group and discuss the experience

How will learning the T-Care Skills support my work?

Discussion

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- Refer back to the answers that the participants recorded at the beginning of the training
- Check in with the list that was created. Offer them the opportunity to remove or revise any of their earlier brainstorming.
- Ask the participants what new ways they've identified around how what they've learned today will support them in their professional roles.
- Refer to **Overview Appendix: Page 2** for a sample list of ways that learning the T-Care Skills will support work with clients.

Goal of T-Care:

To feel in control
and think clearly
when stressed.

Resonance

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- ✦ Review participant goals
- ✦ What is 1 way you choose to apply T-Care on a regular basis for personal and professional effectiveness?
- ✦ Let us know what worked and needs to be improved in this training on the Evaluation Form

Thank you for your time, attention,
and dedication!

Take Home Message

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- Refer back to the goals the participants identified at the beginning of the training.
- Discuss which goals they feel that they have begun making steps towards accomplishing.
- Let them know that you will be available to continue to answer questions and that this training will be a part of a series of trainings where they will continue to work on these goals.
- **Ask the participants one way they will be able to practice what they've learned between trainings.**
- **Assign between-training practice to pay attention to when their Alarms are triggered, including the body signals, and begin identifying the specific triggers that set them off. Help them understand that paying attention to this information will play a big part in their ability to turn down their Alarm. Share with them that every time they turn down their Alarm and activate their Thinking and Filing Centers they are modeling self-regulation and practicing good self-care!**