

# Support Group Discussion Guide: **Big Behaviors**



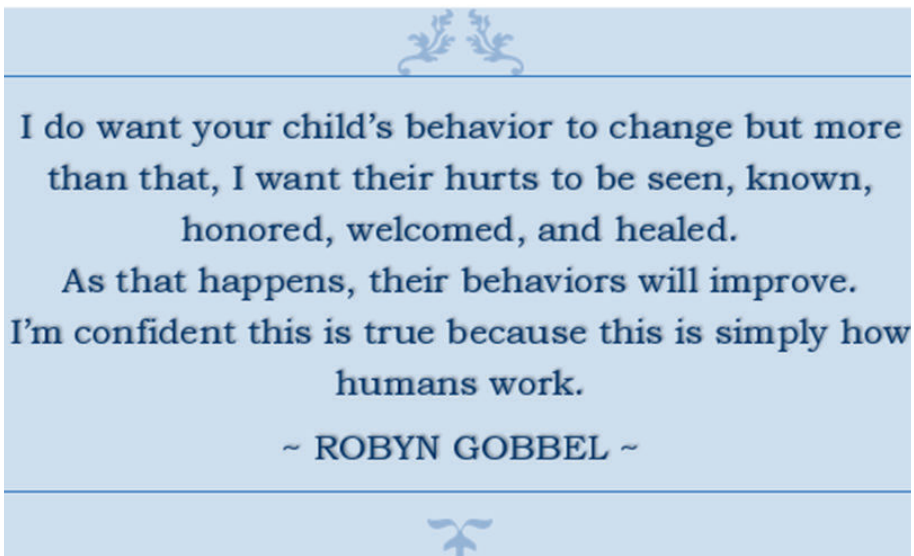
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We thank them for their generosity!*

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# Purpose

The purpose of this session is to remind us that our efforts matter, even when it feels like they don't. When we better understand the behaviors the child in our care is exhibiting, we take it less personally and are better able to recognize progress. Focusing on those victories, no matter how seemingly small, keeps us motivated and encouraged in the midst of the challenges.



The hope is that this discussion guide will provide prompting for safe and non-judgmental exploration of issues we're facing and help give voice to the very real, normal, and understandable feelings we all struggle with. You are encouraged to share your stories of successful strategies you have discovered and resources you have used, as well as the progress you've celebrated.

# Ice Breaker #1



## **We See What We Are Looking For (5 minutes)**

Give participants 30 seconds to scan their surroundings and take note of everything that is blue. When the 30 seconds are up, ask them to close their eyes and name all the things in the room that are blue. Then ask them to name all the things that are **GREEN**. They will likely have difficulty naming the green things because they were focused on looking for blue.

### **Objective:**

*The objective of this icebreaker is to illustrate that we see what we are looking for. If we can stay focused on taking note of the child's strengths and "small victories," we will begin to see and experience more of them.*

\*For a group larger than eight, breaking into smaller groups is recommended.

## Ice Breaker #2



### **What Are Your Child/Youth's Greatest Attributes? (20 minutes)**

Ask participants to share some of the child's greatest strengths and things they love and admire most about them.

#### **An Example:**

"I love that my 11-year-old niece is very strong-willed and brave. She is the first to stand up for kids at school who are being bullied. She will speak up, even when it's really hard. Last week her gym teacher made fun of a classmate's weight, and the whole class laughed. She called him out on it and told her classmates they should be ashamed for laughing. She also let a trusted teacher know what happened. The gym teacher apologized in the next class."

#### **Objective:**

*The objective of this icebreaker is for caregivers to take time to reflect on the things they love about the child(ren) in their care. This can sometimes get lost during challenging times. Often the same qualities we find challenging (i.e., "strong-willed") are strengths when reframed.*

*When the child/youth is presenting with challenging behaviors, remembering they are trauma-driven and do not define the child's true character can go a long way in helping them heal (and help us cope).*

\*For a group larger than eight, breaking into smaller groups is recommended.

## Introduction to Topic

### Seeing big behaviors? You're not alone.

Parenting children or youth who have been uprooted from their parents and home is hard, even when they are placed with a loved one. Not only are the kids trying to manage the uncertainty of their situation, but there is also the underlying trauma that caused the separation in the first place.

This major disruption will impact every aspect of their lives; their thoughts, feelings, *and behaviors*. The resulting “big” behaviors can be overwhelming for both the child and the caregiver.

This can lead to a continuous cycle of kids feeling bad about themselves and caregivers doubting their ability to help them heal.

In the video included in this session, foster parents Stephanie and Jermaine discuss feeling so overwhelmed by the big behaviors they were unable to see the difference their care was making in the lives of their children.

In this session, we will explore the dynamics impacting behavior when a child/youth enters our care. The reminder that these behaviors come from a place of trauma, hurt, loss, and fear can help us stay focused on seeing the small everyday victories that offer hope.



## **No Matter What Video: Small Steps Make Big Gains**

When we're immersed in the difficult responsibilities of caring for one or more child who has experienced trauma and separation, it's sometimes hard to recognize the progress that is being made.

In this video, foster parents Stephanie and Jermaine discuss the types of behaviors their children have exhibited as a result of their trauma—and how easy it can be to get discouraged when we're not recognizing the slow but gradual progress on the way to healing.



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KxE0BdFOuyU>

Click link to play video









# Resources

## *From the Lending Library*

- Virtual Resource Kit: Looking at Challenging Behaviors via a Trauma-Informed Lens (<https://wifostercareandadoption.org/library-assets/virtual-resource-kit-looking-at-challenging-behaviors-via-a-trauma-informed-lens/>)

## *Additional Coalition Resources*

- Resources for Relative Caregivers (<https://wifostercareandadoption.org/resources/for-relative-caregivers-2/>)
- Wisconsin Kinship Navigator Guide (<https://wifostercareandadoption.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/kinshipnavigatorguide7finalweb.pdf>)

## *Additional Resources*

- How Children Blame Themselves for #traumatic Events (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XtgF1R5upPU>)
- Disruptions in close relationships: How they affect a child's behavior, thoughts, and feelings (<https://fyi.extension.wisc.edu/grandparenting/files/2011/03/B3786-41.pdf>)
- Insight Into Common Foster Child Behaviors (<https://www.pathway.org/blog/common-foster-child-behaviors/>)
- Thoughts, Feelings, and Actions Worksheet (<https://www.therapistaid.com/worksheets/cbt-for-kids>)
- Wisconsin Kinship Navigator (<https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/kinship/navigator>)
- Grandfamilies.org (<https://www.grandfamilies.org/>)
- Kinship Care and the Child Welfare System (<https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/f-kinshi/>)
- Wisconsin GrandFacts State Fact Sheet 2021 Update (<https://www.grandfamilies.org/Portals/0/State%20Fact%20Sheets/Wisconsin%20GrandFacts%20State%20Fact%20Sheet%202021%20Update.pdf>)