



# Caregivers Need Support Too:

Self-Practice Improves Emotion Regulation for Individuals with IDD

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# Supporting individuals with IDD and:

- Chronic emotion dysregulation
- Frequent crisis behaviors

## Leads to higher risk of:

- Caregiver stress and burnout
- Missed shifts due to exhaustion and health issues
- Higher staff turnover
- Unintentional reinforcement of crisis behavior (rinse and repeat)

# The Challenge

Caregiving staff are a human service organization's most valuable asset

# Addressing the Challenge



- A therapeutic model directed to caregivers in support of those they serve.
- Effectively directing caregiver energy to avoid burnout.
- Training & resources with a foundation of mindfulness-based practices.
- Coaching & self-care tools for care providers to use at work and home.

# Hope Human Services

## Zone Intensive Supported Living



Disability Services in Washington State

The primary focus of Zone Intensive Supported Living Services is on developing a staff framework for staff training and engagement

### **Level 1: Zone Development**

*Review, Assessment, Transition, & Zone Intensive Development*

### **Level 2: Zone Implementation**

*Plan Implementation, Intensive Training, Coaching, & Documentation*

### **Level 3: Zone Actualization**

*Support, Coaching, Skill Acquisition, & Plan Finalization*

### **Level 4: Zone Generalization**

*Generalization & Stabilization Sustainability Review*

### **Level 5: Zone Maintenance**

*Generalization and Maintenance*

# The Green Zone 20 Toolkit

## Core Principles & Strategies:

Know the Zones, Validation, ABC's, Highlighting Needs & Strengths, Coaching Steps

## Any Zone Tools:

Shine a Light, DIAL In, ROOT, HOPE Ahead, Change the Channel

## Green-focused Tools:

HOPE Ahead to Meet Goals, Push & Pull, Lean In or Leave It, YUM, Showing my Colors

## Zone-based Guides:

GROWING the Green, BREATHE in the Yellow, RIDE the WAVE in Blue, FIRED UP for Safety, FUEL the Green with Red Energy



Be **PROTECTIVE**  
In the **RED** zone



Be **RECEPTIVE**  
in the **BLUE** zone



Be **RESPONSIVE**  
in the **YELLOW** zone



# Know the Zones



Be **PROACTIVE**  
in the **GREEN**  
zone

# Any Zone Tools



Shine a Light



ROOT with  
Values



Change the Channel



DIAL In



HOPE Ahead  
for Problem Solving

# Green Zone Focused Tools



**YUM**  
You Us  
Me



**Showing  
My  
Colors**

**Tending the Garden  
Of Relationships**



**Lean in  
Let it  
Go**



**DIAL In  
on the  
Push &  
Pull**



**HOPE  
Ahead  
To Meet  
Goals**



# Skills Coaching Steps

## **CHECK IN** on our own emotions

- Shine a light

## **CHECK UP** on their experience & willingness

- Help them Shine a light on their thoughts, feelings, and intentions.
- Validation "I can tell this is hard for you."
- Cultivate Consent "Willing to hear my thoughts? Want my support?"

## **CHECK OUT** learning & growth opportunities together

- Brainstorm action ideas (On course Actions)
- Assess and work together on the plan (HOPE Ahead rehearse!)

## **CHECK BACK** as a team using debrief and consult to learn from experiences and refine plans

Two individuals for whom initial skills coaching was not effective, leading to a switch in focus from individual skills coaching to staff self-practice and modeling.

In both cases, this switch resulted in:

- Higher caregiver job satisfaction
- Better staff self-care and emotional health
- Decreased individual crisis behavior
- Increased individual quality of life
- Higher staff retention

# Case Studies

## Challenges faced prior to transition to the program

Young adult woman diagnosed with mild ID, bipolar disorder, borderline personality disorder, PTSD, generalized anxiety and panic disorders.

Poor quality of life prior to transition to the program:

- Majority of awake time in yellow, intense yellow, blue and red zone; minimal green zone
- Frequent hospitalization; hospital-seeking
- Threatened and/or attempted severe self-injury and suicidal behavior multiple times weekly
- Other weekly behaviors included property destruction, staff assaults and threats, false reports of staff abuse, and refusals of ADLs
- Engaged in an abusive romantic relationship
- Staff had difficulty identifying her values and interests

# Stella\*

\*Names changed to protect identity

- Staff training and coaching sessions with Green Zone Trainer
- Staff initially engaged primarily in self-practice and modeling for Stella
- Staff completely flipped their investment of time from reactive to proactive engagement
- Staff interactions focused on emotion validation, Shine a Light (mindfulness); DIAL and Change the Channel (emotion regulation and distress tolerance); ROOT (valued action and cognitive coping skills), Warm Heart Compass for self-compassion and Tending the Garden of Relationships
- Stella met with Green Zone Trainer to work on individual skill development
- Transition of skills coaching from trainer to direct support staff to staff reinforcement of Stella's own practice

# Staff Coaching and Support Plan for Stella\*

Significant improvements attained at 6 months;  
maintained with ongoing improvements 10 months  
later:

- Reversal of zone time: majority of waking hours in green zone with minimal yellow/blue and rare red zone
- Minimal crisis behavior and hospitalizations
- Engages in rich green zone life filled with valued activities including walking, swimming, playing board games, attending social and community gatherings, actively pursuing work, owning and caring for a dog (a life long dream), and getting involved in her Native community
- Left the abusive relationship and building new social circle
- Positive relationships with staff
- Almost completely independent with use of Green Zone tools; uses a Vision Board
- Moved from the stance of "Who can I get love from?" to "How can I love myself?"

# Stella\*

\*Names changed to protect identity

## Challenges faced prior to transition to the program

Young adult woman diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder, ID, Generalized Anxiety, Bipolar Disorder, PTSD and Schizophrenia.

Poor quality of life prior to transition to the program:

- Only slept about 2 hrs/da
- Screamed 22/24 hrs/da
- Did not talk or make requests
- Malnourished
- Expressed constant aggravation
- Smearred feces
- Constant property destruction
- Primary relationships were staff and they had a hard time knowing what she wanted or how to relate to her or calm her
- Staff turnover was high; called out frequently with headaches/migraines

Linnea\*

\*Names changed to protect identity

- Staff training and coaching sessions with Green Zone Trainer with the focus on self-practice to manage their own emotions at work
- VALIDATION was key instrument of change – starting with agency management validating staff and then staff validating Linnea
- Staff practiced Thinking About Thinking (ROOT) to identify and change unhelpful thought patterns and assumptions that impacted their relationship with her
- Staff increased their ownership in behavior support, began to feel supported and saw their feedback leading to positive change
- Offered food consistently throughout the day increasing her nourishment which in turn impacted her energy and sleep patterns
- Offered Green Zone practices and activities throughout the day reinforcing self-expression (Show My Colors, Warm Heart Compass, Change the Channel, etc.)

# Staff Coaching and Support Plan for Linnea\*

Significant improvements attained at 3 months and maintained with ongoing growth one year later:

- Sleeps 8 hrs/da
- Well nourished, eats calmly and with utensils
- Uses the bathroom independently
- Talks throughout the day with staff, makes requests for food, movies, outings, music etc.
- Takes daily walks
- Van rides with staff into the community to go shopping, visits the office, enjoys picnic lunches, etc.
- Grows a vegetable garden at home
- Enjoys movies, music, dancing, coloring/art
- Now has a stable core staffing team with whom she has a positive relationship
- Shares positive memories of her family and childhood

Linnea\*

\*Names changed to protect identity



# Caregiver/Staff Self-Care Survey

Staff describe a culture of care and supportive engagement:

- Staff consistently identify using Green Zone tools and practices at work with the individuals they support and to manage their own stress and emotions while at work
- Staff consistently identify using Green Zone tools and practices outside of work in their personal lives
- Staff consistently identify that using Green Zone tools and practices have benefited the emotional health and wellbeing of the individuals they support, their own emotional health and well-being and that of important people in their personal lives

# Caregiver/Staff Self-Care Survey

## Staff quotes

“The green zone tools hand in hand with the amazing staff are what had helped heal the client emotionally and mentally.”

“I enjoyed learning about the zone intensive program and I use it in my every day life - at work and at home.”



# THANK YOU!

From Green Zone Developers:  
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