

## Intervention Plan for Joey

### Behavioral Symptoms:

1. Joey displays an excessive amount of aggressive behavior toward others and emotional tantrums when he is distressed.
2. Joey's teachers and caregivers appear unable to influence the occurrence, intensity, or course of these aggressive behavioral responses and emotional tantrums.

### Apparent Psychological/Neuro-Developmental Cause:

- Socio-emotional context: Joey has been exposed to socio-environmental factors (including a chronic early childhood exposure to domestic violence and potential disruptions in the parent-child relationship related to his mother's reported diagnosis with a major mood disorder) which have apparently disrupted Joey's development of age-expected social-emotional regulation of his behavior and emotional expression.
- The emotional-relationship disruptions to Joey's developmental experience have apparently led to an immature development of his emotional-relationship and social communication capacity, leading to Joey's behavioral presentation of primitive aggressive and explosive-expressive emotional responses to his inner experiences of distress, rather than his developing the more mature and higher-order relationship-communication responses which would be typical and expected for his age.

### Joey's behavioral symptoms suggest the following psychological-developmental issues:

1. Anxiety: Joey's exposure to domestic violence appears to make him particularly vulnerable to experiencing excessive anxiety and helplessness
2. Unable to interpret internal emotional cues: Joey appears unable to accurately read and interpret his internal emotional cues, particularly emotional cues that should prompt him to seek emotional nurturance from caregivers
3. Unable to seek nurturance: Joey appears unable to recognize how to successfully resolve his emotional distress through seeking the nurturing support of caregivers
4. Unable to form relationship-field of mutual influence: Joey's capacity to form a child-caregiver relationship of mutual influence appears impaired

Summary: Joey's innate vulnerability to experiencing painful emotional states, his inability to accurately recognize and interpret the meaning of these painful emotional states, his inability to recognize how to appropriately respond to these emotional states by seeking caregiver support and nurturance, and his impaired capacity to form a child-caregiver relationship of mutual influence results in a more primitive explosive-aggressive behavioral expression of his emotional-relationship experience rather than the desired, more advanced, age-appropriate communication-relationship expressions

## Goals of Intervention:

1. To help Joey accurately recognize his internal emotional cues of distress and to bring his emotional distress into the caregiver-child relationship through age-appropriate communication and seeking of teacher/caregiver nurturance when distressed.
2. To help Joey develop an increasingly mature capacity for interpersonal communication through age appropriate affect-signaling and verbal communication of his experience and needs.
3. To reduce Joey's anxiety by calmly and confidently communicating teacher/caregiver intent and ability to contain his dysregulation and to keep Joey and other children safe and secure by providing calm and confident limits and structure with a warm and relaxed teacher/caregiver emotional tone

## Intervention Targets:

1. Relationship Capacity Development: Improve Joey's capacity to form a communicative caregiver-child relationship of mutual influence which can be used to help Joey cope with and regulate his distressing emotions, and which encourages him to seek caregiver nurturance when he is distressed.

During times when Joey is not emotionally distressed, Joey's caregivers and teachers should actively seek him out for positive relationship development. The following teacher/caregiver features can support positive relationship development:

- Adopting a warm and positive emotional tone
- Offering him easy and abundant smiles within a relaxed caregiver/teacher interpersonal manner
- Providing Joey with abundant positive comments and compliments
- Offering descriptions of Joey's activity that communicate teacher/caregiver interest
- Offering affection touches on the arm, shoulder, or upper back
- Adopting an "organizing intention" which guides the caregiver's actions as being one of simply adopting an "intent-to-be-with" Joey, rather than a task-oriented or goal-directed intent

Goal: The goal of this intervention is to help Joey establish a positive relationship with the teacher/caregiver that can then be utilized when he becomes emotionally distressed

2. Scaffolding Joey's Identification of Internal Signals and his Ability to Seek Caregiver Nurturance: Improve Joey's capacity to accurately identify his internal signals of emotional distress in order to allow him to correctly interpret his emotional signals as a need for caregiver nurturance

During times when Joey is emotionally distressed, as evidenced by dysregulated emotional-behavioral outbursts and aggression, caregivers should calmly and confidently

intervene to provide supportive structure and attuned responsiveness to Joey's inner experience. The following caregiver features can support Joey's increased capacity to correctly recognize and interpret his inner emotional cues:

- A calm and confident attitude and approach from the teacher/caregiver
- Moment-to-moment reading of Joey's responses and adjusting the moment-to-moment teacher/caregiver response to Joey to remain sensitive and attuned to Joey's changing emotional-relationship signals
- A de-emphasis by the teacher/caregiver on the "intent to task" and a greater emphasis on the organizing intentions of an "intent to understand" and an "intent to form relationship"
- Offering Joey a warm emotional tone to encourage Joey to seek the nurturing support of the teacher/caregiver
- Providing Joey with brief affect-signals of social disapproval for his aggressive-dyscontrolled behavior, interspersed amid a generally positive emotional tone that encourages Joey to seek nurturant support from the teacher/caregiver

Goal 1: The goal of this intervention is to encourage Joey to adopt an intent to understand toward his own inner experience by offering this intent within the caregiver-child relationship.

Goal 2: The goal of this intervention is also to encourage Joey to communicate his inner experience through more sophisticated affect-signaling, and through age-appropriate verbal and socially-connected communication encouraged by his teacher's/caregiver's actively seeking this communication from Joey

Goal 3: The goal of this intervention is also to encourage Joey to seek emotional nurturance from his teachers/caregivers in response to his cues of emotional distress by helping Joey find and experience nurturance in response to this distress

3. Increase Joey's Emotional Security by Providing Limits and Structure: Address Joey's anxiety at being out-of-control by providing Joey with social and behavioral cues that communicate that the teacher/caregiver is calm, confident, and in control, and that the teacher/caregiver will not allow Joey, or any other child, to be hurt
  - When Joey displays emotional-behavioral dysregulation, such as aggression or tantrums, teachers/caregivers should intervene with a calm and confident emotional tone to limit threats to the other children from Joey's aggression and to calmly and confidently communicate that the teacher/caregiver is in control
  - Structure and limits should be offered with a warm and relaxed teacher/caregiver emotional tone. Occasional brief emotional signals offered by the teacher/caregiver of "mad-sad-afraid" emotional tone can help to communicate to Joey the negative social response to his behavior, but the overall teacher/caregiver emotional tone should quickly return to a warm and positive emotional tone to encourage Joey to form a nurturing relationship with the caregiver that can be used to help him to regulate his emotional-behavioral experience expression.

Goal 1: The goal of this intervention is to reduce Joey's anxiety by communicating the calm and confident presence of a competent adult who is capable of providing limits and structure in contrast to Joey's sense of feeling overwhelmed and out of control.

Goal 2: Another goal of this intervention is to ensure the physical safety of other children.

Goal 3: Another goal of this intervention is to draw Joey into the mutual exchange of social-emotional signaling which serves as the foundation for the development of more advanced verbal communications of emotion