

# Supporting Passionate Parents and De-Escalating Parents in Crisis

Tina A. Boteilho LMFT  
Ahupua'a Counseling Services LLC  
Maui Behavioral Health Resources  
February 11<sup>th</sup>, 2022



Mountain Plains (HHS Region 8)

MHTTC

Mental Health Technology Transfer Center Network  
Funded by Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration

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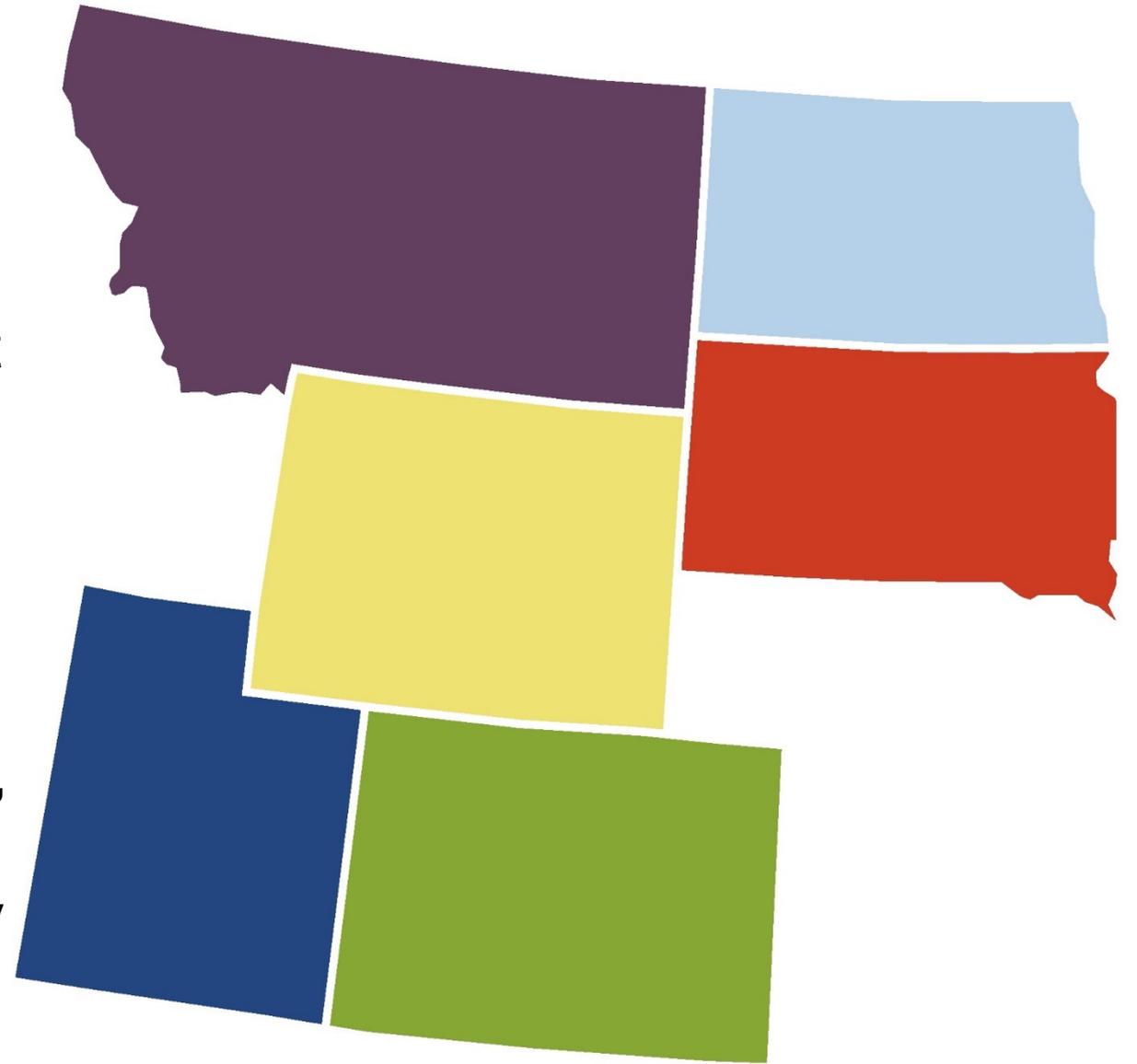
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The work of the Mountain Plains MHTTC is supported by grant H79SM081792 from the Department of Health and Human Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.

# The Mountain Plains Mental Health Technology Transfer Center

The Mountain Plains Mental Health Technology Transfer Center (Mountain Plains MHTTC) provides training and technical assistance to individuals who serve persons with mental health concerns throughout Region 8 (Colorado, Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, Utah and Wyoming).

We belong to the Technology Transfer Center (TTC) Network, a national network of training and technical assistance centers serving the needs of mental health, substance use and prevention providers. The work of the TTC Network is under a cooperative agreement by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Service Administration (SAMHSA).



# Land Acknowledgement Statement

Today, the University of North Dakota rests on the ancestral lands of the Pembina and Red Lake Bands of Ojibwe and the Dakota Oyate - presently existing as composite parts of the Red Lake, Turtle Mountain, White Earth Bands, and the Dakota Tribes of Minnesota and North Dakota. We acknowledge the people who resided here for generations and recognize that the spirit of the Ojibwe and Oyate people permeates this land. As a university community, we will continue to build upon our relations with the First Nations of the State of North Dakota - the Mandan, Hidatsa, and Arikara Nation, Sisseton-Wahpeton Oyate Nation, Spirit Lake Nation, Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, and Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa Indians.



The MHTTC Network uses affirming, respectful and recovery-oriented language in all activities. That language is:

STRENGTHS-BASED  
AND HOPEFUL

INCLUSIVE AND  
ACCEPTING OF  
DIVERSE CULTURES,  
GENDERS,  
PERSPECTIVES,  
AND EXPERIENCES

HEALING-CENTERED AND  
TRAUMA-RESPONSIVE

INVITING TO INDIVIDUALS  
PARTICIPATING IN THEIR  
OWN JOURNEYS

PERSON-FIRST AND  
FREE OF LABELS

NON-JUDGMENTAL AND  
AVOIDING ASSUMPTIONS

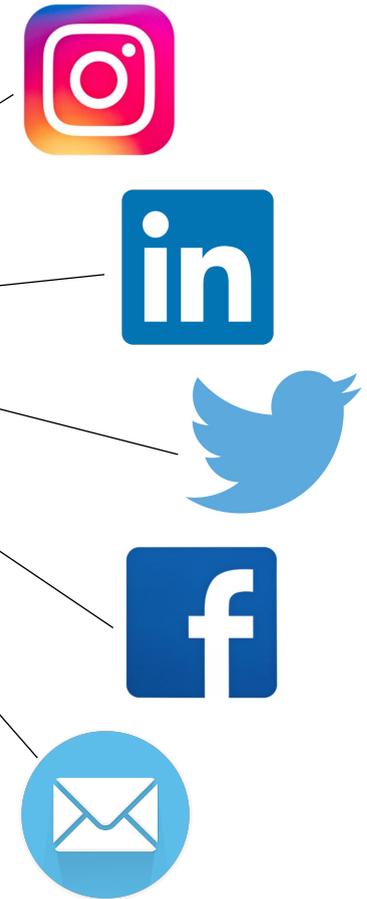
RESPECTFUL, CLEAR  
AND UNDERSTANDABLE

CONSISTENT WITH  
OUR ACTIONS,  
POLICIES, AND PRODUCTS

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# Inspirational Thoughts

Take a minute and write down the name of a parent you worked with or know personally that really is a positive or healthy parent in your opinion.

Next to their name write down three parenting traits they possess that in your opinion is healthy.

# A Parent's Truth

44.3% of parents with children living at home reported worse mental health as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

27% of parents reported increased alcohol/drug consumption

8% increase in suicidal thoughts/feelings

11% reported more stress about being safe from physical/emotional domestic violence

24.8% of parents reported their children's mental health had worsened since the pandemic

22% of parents also reported more frequent negative interactions with their children due to the pandemic.

# Do Passionate Parents Matter?



At the end of the day,  
the most overwhelming key to a child's success  
is the **positive** involvement of parents.

# A Passionate Parents Story

## Meet John and Samantha

John and Samantha have three children. A 5 year old, a 12 year old, and a 16 year old. John grew up in a small ranching and farming town. Samantha grew up in the big city. With all three children they had difficulty getting pregnant and consider all of their children the greatest gifts in their lives. Over the years John has struggled with substance abuse and Samantha has wrestled with anxiety and depression. Their youngest has severe asthma. Their middle and eldest are healthy. They recently returned to work after a year and a half of not working. They've just gotten a phone call from the office that there has been a problem at the school. They both had to leave work. You are called to come because they are arguing, complaining, and demanding answers.

# What Will You Do With John and Samantha?



Please write down what would be your immediate response to John and Samantha

# Quick De-escalation In A Crisis

1. **Take a deep breath and watch your breathing** If you calm yourself down and watch your breathing they will start to mirror that.
2. **Find Your Center** If you walk in with good intentions /humble presence you're easier to talk to. If you are or become overwhelmed take a break, calm yourself, or ask for support.
3. **Be warm and welcoming** Thank them for coming. Acknowledge their care for their child. Invite them to sit, offer water or a snack, create a comfortable space for them to talk or offer to walk with them outside.
4. **Meet them right where they are at** If they need to feel heard sit and listen. if they are crying or upset offer them a calm or private place. If they are angry offer to write down some of their grievances.
5. **When they go high you go low** If their tone or body language becomes loud or aggressive attempt to remain calm and lower your voice and soften your body language.
6. **Practice active listening** Listen and repeat for clarity. Listen for the sake of understanding not formulating a response.
7. **Always stay client centered** Often times people want to be heard and create their own outcome, give them a chance to create their own positive outcome.

# Substance Abuse or Mental Health

## Ask yourself:

1. What is your initial impression? Trust your gut
2. Does the parent appear intoxicated or have other indicators of being intoxicated recently? For example a smell of chemicals or appear to be irrational, unable to calm down, pressure speech, verge of nodding off.
3. Does the parent seem to be dysregulated or unable to regulate their mood? Do they appear yelling, then calm, then crying, all within a few minutes.
4. Do they appear to have good self care? Is their hair brushed? Do they appear to be dressed appropriately for work or a meeting? Do they appear to have showered to taken time to care for themselves?
5. Are they oversharing or not participating at all in what is happening in the room?

# Getting To The Root Of Things: Client Centered & Strength Based

**Who** are we all here to support? Who is an ally? Who gets in the way? Who is responsible for lifestyle, habits, or change?

**What** is at the core of what is presenting? What are the goals or objectives? What is your intended outcome?

**Where** can this family or child go for additional support? Where do they feel safe and supported? Where are they spending time outside of school hours?

**When** is there going to be a follow up? When can they expect to hear about or see progress?

**Why** is this happening to them at this time? Why have other solutions or interventions not worked in the past?

**How** can they advocate for themselves? How can they get more information or answers?

# Reflection



Please write down three positive skills you have naturally.

Please write down three positive skills you  
have had to learn from others.

# Tools For Parents

**Ask Your Kids What Questions They Have** As parents, we tend to overexplain. We tend to talk to our kids in the way that we would like things explained to us. A simple, "I know there are a lot of changes going on right now, and you might have some questions. What would you like to know? Work together to find an answer to his/her questions.

**Allow Yourself to Make Mistakes** There is no way to be a perfect parent, but there are a million ways to be a great parent. Most of us have never experienced a pandemic before, so we are making things up as we go along. Allow yourself the freedom to make mistakes.

**Be Prepared for Unanswerable Questions** It is normal for kids to ask strange or deeper questions during a crisis. Consider telling them you'll look into the answers, need some time to think about it or, that sometimes things just happen, and you will do your best to protect him or her.

**Acknowledge Your Kids' Fears** Let kids know it's okay to not be okay. Tell them that it's okay to have a lot of different feelings at once. Let your kids know that feeling sad, angry, and afraid are very normal feelings to have. Talk about how these feelings can come and go, depending on what is happening that day.

**Keep Your Anger in Check** Usually, kids are oblivious to what your feelings are about how we got to the point where we are facing a pandemic. However, they may have heard you talking to your partner or friends. If your kids overheard you talking with others and ask why you were upset, explain that adults sometimes get frustrated about some things and talk them out with other adults. Make sure to keep information you share appropriate for the age of your child.

**Be Truthful About Your Ability to Protect Your Kids** Kids inherently feel that you will always be there to protect them. When that worldview is shattered, such as when a parent dies, it can throw kids into chaos. If your kids ask you if you can stop them from getting sick, let them know you are doing everything in your power to make sure your kids stay healthy. Then talk about all the things you are doing together at home, such as washing hands thoroughly and wiping down surfaces.

**Answer Questions About Separation Anxiety** Your kid may be afraid to be away from you. This is a normal feeling for your child to have. You may also not want to be away from your child. That is also completely normal. Talk to your support system or a mental health professional if you are experiencing a feeling of dread about your kids going back to school. Talk with the school about what precautions they are taking when school is back in session to help ease your fears.

**Continue Social Contact Through Video** Your kids may ask when they can see their family/friends again. Tell them that they can, just in a different way for a while. The beauty of living in this day and age is that your kids have easy access to playmates and friends through online video or specify only certain playmates.

**Turn Off the News When Your Kids Are Home** While it's important for us to keep up-to-date, the news has a lot of information that is not age appropriate. Part of our job as parents is to filter that information so that kids' questions are answered, gently and lovingly.

**Have Structure...to a Point** It's important to keep kids on a schedule. But keep in mind kids will need more time than usual to just be silly and unwind. Yes, have a structure to your day, but also be flexible about it. Everyone may be a little crankier than usual. Spend some time just having your kids be kids.

**Practice Good Self-Care** One of the best things we can do for our kids is to take good care of ourselves, physically and emotionally. And that means taking extra good care of ourselves during a crisis. Kids watch us like a hawk for what they are supposed to do during a time of great stress.

# Supports Are Out There



**NAMI National Alliance On Mental Illness:** Mental Health Education and Support Groups for child, adolescents, adults, family members, caregivers, and veterans [www.nami.org/findsupport](http://www.nami.org/findsupport) 1800-950-NAMI

**National Suicide Hotline:** 800-273-8255

**Alcoholics Anonymous:** [www.aa.org](http://www.aa.org)

**Narcotics Anonymous Meetings:** [www.na.org](http://www.na.org)

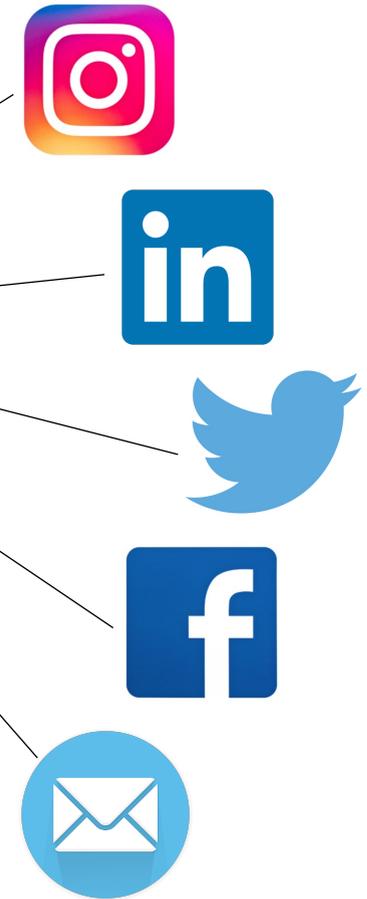
**Co-Dependents Anonymous:** [www.coda.org](http://www.coda.org)

**Psychology Today:** Therapists/Psychiatrists: [www.psychologytoday.com](http://www.psychologytoday.com)

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