**Episode 3**

**Interviewer, Respondent**

**[00:00:01]**

**Interviewer:** Hello, and welcome to Voices from the Village, a podcast from the Wyoming Early Childhood Professional Learning Collaborative. We know it takes a village to raise a child and Wyoming Early Childhood Educators, as an essential part of that village, this podcast is for you. I’m your host Nicky Baldwin and today I am so excited to introduce my guest Julie Kurtz. Julie is an author, national speaker and expert, consulting and training internationally on trauma responsive and resilience building strategies. She has over 30 years of experience working with youth, adults and families who have experienced trauma and toxic stress. Julie is also the founder of and CEO at the Center for Optimal Brain Integration and listeners, you will definitely want to check out the amazing resources available on her website. We’ll talk about more of those during the interview today. I first learned about Julie’s work last year when I discovered the book she co-authored: Trauma and Form Practices for Early Childhood Educators. This book came out in 2019 and could not have been timed more perfectly as we entered a worldwide pandemic, and the field of early childhood education was changed forever. Julie, thank you so much for joining me today and taking time to talk with us on Voices from the Village.

**Respondent:** Thank you Nicky, it’s such a joy to be here with all the early childhood providers in Wyoming and all the amazing work that you do, especially during this time of so much individual and collective trauma, so we need this topic more than ever.

**Interviewer:** Yeah, thank you. I couldn’t agree more. Let’s just get started Julie, tell us a little bit about you and how you ended up in this field and your interest in working with children and families that have experienced trauma. What led you to this point in your career?

**Respondent:** Gosh, I look back on my life and I think of all the pieces that cam together to lead me to this place without me knowing but what I do remember was when I was a little girl I used to have this recurring nightmare of this, I must have been anywhere from 4 to 6 and this gigantic invisible ghost-like man would chase me around my standalone garage and I would be in a state of terror and I knew as a child that I was in a nightmare but I couldn’t get myself out of it, Nicky, and I would open my mouth to scream thinking someone in my house would come and save me or wake me up and this nightmare would happen over and over and over and it was symbolic of my own trauma with my father growing up, me and my brothers and my mother and I think to myself I didn’t have a voice. I would try to scream and nobody would come and help me and the nightmare was symbolic and that’s why, I mean that’s not when I was a little girl I didn’t say: “I’m going to help everybody with trauma”, I just somehow got to that place and really all I care about right now and the rest of my life is figuring out how to give every child a voice who doesn’t have a voice and I think, in a nutshell, every child, every adult that’s experienced trauma that have lost their voice, we need a voice and we need to elevate our voice, my voice, your voice, everyone’s voice because I’ll just say one last thing that 50% of the kids under the age of 6 in the United States before Covid have experienced trauma and 67% of adults have experienced at least 1 trauma before they reach 18. So, this is you, me and all of our listeners, it impacts all of us.

**Interviewer:** Boy, that’s really, that feels really daunting when you talk about it, when you share those statistics. I mean it’s just so important that we make this a central part of the conversation in our field, absolutely. What would you say you want early childhood educators specifically to understand most about trauma?

**Respondent:** Oh gosh, this is, you know, I do trainings all day on this topic and I think if I were to condense it into a nutshell, I would say that trauma that we experience as a young child, impacts us across the lifespan. We sometimes think: “oh, they experienced that, they didn’t know, they were too young”, or sometimes we say to ourselves: “that was back then, this is now, and we don’t realize the neuro-biology of trauma that the memories of the terror that we experience neuro-biologically gets stored in our bodies like a passport stamp. In the primitive parts of our brain and later, as we walk through the day, they get triggered by one of our 5 senses, something that’s connected to the highway of that memory lane stored back in the storage bank of our memories and I’ll give you just a simple example: when I was in my 20’s, it’s interesting because I’m in a hotel right now doing this podcast and in Central California and it’s the very place I met my husband and when I met him, I took a road trip up to Northern California to go to a wedding and the car broke down on the side of the freeway. Now this is a non-eventful event, it was like we ran out of gas or something, nothing scary, just you know, get off to the side of the freeway and I froze and my whole body went into a state of terror and I turned (he wasn’t my husband then) but I turned to my boyfriend and I said: “are you going to hit me?”, and he said: “what the heck are you talking about, what are you saying?” because he’s the most kind, gentle person and that is what trauma looks like. It’s something non-eventful happens that triggers a memory of something that happened to us in the past which, in my case, was many road trips with my Dad and him going into a violent rage. So, the thing is we get triggered by non-eventful things that are so shaded in those past memories and they trigger us to go into fight, flight or freeze and that happens to the kids that we work with, that happens to us as adults and that is, it all sounds daunting till you get to the questions of: how do we have hope? How do we feel there’s a place of hope, we’ll get to that, but I just want to at least explain that it lives in our bodies, it lives in the kid’s bodies and they get terrified by things that don’t make any sense to us, like a transition or something simple like that?

**Interviewer:** Sure, and I think, I want to think about that, I’m imagining an early childhood classroom and there’s a child whose behaving in a way that’s not, the teachers don’t understand that could be viewed as a challenging behavior or something unpredictable and early childhood teachers want to do something to address the behavior. Can you talk to us a little bit about how you can determine if that’s a more typical or kind of challenging behavior or if it’s a response to trauma?

**Respondent:** Yes, oh that’s such a good question Nicky, well here’s the good news: you never have to know if it’s trauma, you never have to know if it’s a challenging behavior or is it trauma and, in that moment, do I need to know? Oh my gosh, if I don’t know I won’t know the right strategy to use. In our trauma trainings, we teach strategies that are aligned with every social emotional curriculum and the strategies are the same. The reason we use them for the children with histories of trauma is different. So, the good news is you don’t have to know the difference between a trauma trigger or a challenging behavior. Whenever a child goes into the survival part of their brain which is fight, flight or freeze, it could be from you know, a typical challenging behavior could be from a trauma trigger. All you need to know is with trauma, the reason we use these strategies is to help rewire a child’s brain to feel safe. With a challenging behavior, typically with social emotional curriculums, we’re trying to teach them a new skill because the challenging behavior comes from a place where: “I haven’t learned to manage my feelings yet. I haven’t learned how to identify them with trauma”. The meaning behind the challenging behavior is that I feel unsafe. So, when I turned to my boyfriend and I said: “are you going to hit me”, the meaning behind my challenging behavior is right now I don’t feel safe because my trauma memories are coming up. When I am mad at my partner because he didn’t remember the time, we were supposed to meet for dinner and I have been waiting for 15 minutes, that’s not a trauma trigger, it’s big emotions and I have to learn how to calm my emotions and talk to him in a way that is appropriate, right. So, there is a difference between the two, but all the strategies are the same and so what we teach teachers is: use the social emotional strategies to teach, but with children with trauma histories, it’s like developmentally, they’re stuck in a state of survival, scanning for danger all the time and fight, flight, freeze, and our jobs first are to help them feel safe and we’ll probably get to what are some of the strategies that we would use, but it’s rewiring their brain to safety so that they can then learn the social emotional skills that you want to teach them.

**Interviewer:** Sure. I think we will get to this more probably, I’ll just follow your lead, but I think, could you talk about some of the things are that we tend to want to do, that are not helpful?

**Respondent:** Well, when we get triggered emotionally and our emotions rise to a high level from children’s challenging behaviors, we tend to get triggered to the lower part of our survival brain which I call fight, flight, freeze too as adults. I’ll give just a simple example: Let’s say you’re in line at the grocery store after you pick your daughter up from pre-school at the end of a very long day of work and her being your child development center and she’s doing great, you went shopping and everything and now you’re in line and she begs for a candy bar in line and you say: “no, we’re going home for dinner, it’s 4:30 now, it’s not good to have sugar before dinner”. “Please, please, please, mommy, please, please, please, I never get anything”. “No”. Now, in her brain she’s had to hold it together all day. She has an immature sensory system because it takes 25 years for a child to build an adult like sensory system that can manage those big emotions without losing it into fight, flight, freeze in that moment, but she doesn’t, she loses it, she knocks all the candy bars over, she stomps on the ground and she starts screaming with the highest pitch sound ever. Now, at that very moment, the parent or caregiver has a choice to go to the lower part of their brain which is: “you better stop it right now or I’ll take everything away from you until the day you’re 30” or “stop, I’ll give you the candy bar if you stop”. I’ll bribe you or I’ll threaten you or I’m going to start yelling at you or I’ll spank you. These are the primitive strategies that we go to when we are reactive. We want to stop the behavior, so we want to threaten them, bribe them, run away, take them out and escape from the store, fight, flight, freeze. When we do those things, we don’t teach, we don’t support regulation, instead we’re just trying to get the behavior to stop so that we can have peace and not be embarrassed. Now, whether we grow humane being, is to do these following things, which is: get down to her level, help her calm down and regulate through your calmness. Once she’s calm, she is able to access her thinking, reasoning, executive brain and then she is able, you can help her, say: “okay, you’ll get a candy bar one day but not today and we need to clean up this mess and do you want me to help you or do you want to do it yourself, let’s get through this, you did a good job, you calmed your body down, now let’s leave”. I’m shortening the story a little bit. That is what we do with children to teach them how to be humane, to teach them skills, right? It takes longer, it takes a lot more patience and it takes adult self-awareness and regulation. On the other hand, if it was a trauma trigger, it’s the child whose feeling unsafe because something triggered that, like they grew up with food scarcity and you told them no to a piece of food and it triggered a memory that they never had any food and now they fall to the floor because they’re in a state of terror that they’re never going to get food. The strategies are the same but the reason we’re using them is to co-regulate them to feel safe again and to help them over time to feel safe with us and if I threaten that child: “you’ll not get anything till you’re 30 years old”, then you’re going to cause more trauma, you’re going to cause more terror, so I’m just kind of giving you both sides of the {inaudible}.

**Interviewer:** Yes, aha, and then I suppose if you try to reward them: “I’ll give you something great when we get home if you just be quiet”, it fits along those lines of it’s still not addressing, where you talked about the four of those strategies that you really want to see that will help lower that child’s stress and anxiety so they can get back in that thinking part of their brain.

**Respondent:** Yeah, and you know there’s no way that when I turn to my boyfriend and said: “are you going to hit me” then him saying: “I’ll give you a piece of candy if you stop saying that”….that’s not going to get to the real issue which is: I feel terror right now, that something bad is going to happen because it happened to me so many times” and so I think you’re absolutely right, I think we have to move away from our reactionary behavior where we tend to want to bribe, punish and make the behavior stop quickly to the thing that’s harder. It is much harder to look beyond the challenging behavior and say: “what is the meaning behind your behavior” and I’ll say there’s 4 meanings behind anyone’s challenging behavior. The first 3 are related to typical challenging behavior, children who don’t have a trauma history. When I am acting, when I have dysregulated behavior, I’m either trying to tell you that I’m trying to gain something or someone, No. 2, I’m either trying to avoid someone or something, or No. 3, I’m just trying to express an emotion. With trauma, it’s always No. 4, I’m trying to express that I feel unsafe right now, like I’m in the middle of a Californian earthquake, I don’t know what it would be in Wyoming. Would it be a…

**Interviewer**: A blizzard or a bunch of wind, that’s what we get.

**Respondent:** Yeah, so, you see what I’m saying, right?

Interviewer: Yeah, I get it, yes. That’s great stuff. Listeners I can’t wait for you to dig into some more of Julies resources that go deeper into all of these topics too, so if that feels like, that’s just barely scratching the surface, that’s probably all we’re going to get to today, we just want to introduce you to some of these concepts and then Julie is going to share with us ways to connect and dig more deeply into all of these, so thanks Julie. Let’s do talk about you share what you call simple strategies that teachers can use. I’m sure listeners are thinking they really want to get this right and I think you shared some of those in that example at the grocery store, but are there others that you’d like to share with us today?

**Respondent:** You’re so good at everything cause you just follow the trajectory of what’s the right thing to say next and I think giving people at least 4 concrete strategies that, by the way, are good for all kids but especially rewiring a child’s brain, what trauma does to you is put your brain into, it rewires your brain to be on high alert 24 hours a day, scanning every micro-facial expression, every movement outside of yourself for danger and misinterpreting things as dangerous because your body is being rewired to be in a state of terror. There are 4 key strategies that rewire a child’s brain to healing and resilience. The first one is relational connection. The No. 1 strategy for healing trauma is you, your relationship that you build with the child and every time the child has a challenging behavior, instead of punishing, yelling, threatening, you get down to their level and say: “you’re safe with me, I’m here with you now. I’m going to help you get through this and you’re going to borrow – and you don’t say these words – but in your inner voice it’s you’re going to borrow my calm until you feel safe again and when you feel safe again I’ll know cause that trigger will go away and you’ll be calm and over time you’ll start to feel safe with me and you’ll come to me as a possible source of helping you feel safe”. So, I could talk about 300 things about relational connection but, stay calm with the child when they’re dysregulated. The strategy No. 2 would be environment that are safe and predictable. Predictable routines, safety in the environment. One simple example is when a stranger walks into the classroom, I’ll never forget, the teachers didn’t introduce me and I was observing them outdoors and a child came up to me and said: “who are you” and I tried to show non-verbal and verbal cues that I’m safe and he looked at me and he said: “you see that spider over there, I hope he eats you up and makes you dead”. And my first reaction was: “you little brat! How could you say that?”, that was my inside voice and then I moved my inside voice to be: “ah, you’re scared of me. What can I do to help you feel safe?”. And so, when we help children feel safe, like introducing strangers that walk in, will have fewer triggers. Other things are transitions, not being abrupt, having calming environments, making sure children have lots of ways to expel energy and movement, I could go on and on but safe, predictable environments.

**Interviewer:** Can I just jump in very quick on that example because I think that’s an amazing example and I think a tendency for some teachers would be if a child had said “I hope that spider over there eats you up and makes you dead” would be to immediately to start teaching that’s not okay to say, we don’t say that to a guest, a big conversation over and around that behavior and then that’s not getting at anything that you just said that really matters to help that child, right? So, that just really stood out to me, about how we could miss the mark so easily if we’re so concerned about teaching instead of understanding where that child is coming from, right?

**Respondent:** You hit it right on the head and why you did is because when we’re in our survival brain, the very primitive lower part of our fear brain, we can’t access our thinking, reasoning and problem solving brain and one of the first ways, the habits that educators, including myself I mean, my kids are 26 and 27 but the first tempted thing you have to do when you see wrong behavior is to start teaching. 90% of our thinking, reasoning, problem solving and listening brain is flipped off when we’re in our high level of emotional brain or our survival trauma part of our brain. So, the first thing we always want to do, which is why I said relational connection is: calm a child down when their body’s calm, then they can access the part of the brain where we can teach, but not until they’re calm. You’ve got that right away.

**Interviewer:** Yeah, and I think that adults respond that way because we’re uncomfortable. I mean we don’t want someone to think, for a parent, that my child is rude, so we’re really responding to the adult social world around us and that’s where the mismatch comes in. It’s really uncomfortable for parents when your child hooks all the candy off of the shelf and you know all eyes are on you or you know, any of those situations.

**Respondent:** Yep, it’s the most humiliating thing and it’s much harder for us to take a breath. There’s a great quote from Victor Frankl, he says: In between something that triggers us and our reaction, there’s a space and in the space, we have the power to choose, but the problem is none of us have a space, we just have something happen and we react. Something happens and we react, if we just take a deep breath and say: “I need to calm my child down and not worry about what everyone else thinks and then I need to teach”. It doesn’t mean you’re spoiling your child, right, because spoiling is when you’re in the middle of the grocery store saying: “oh here’s the candy bar, be quiet”. That’s spoiling. Not calming them down first, getting them to regulate, then getting them to think about how to clean up their mess that they made and go home and let’s go and eat.

**Interviewer:** Yes, I love it. This is so great. Okay so I co-opted your 4 strategies, we were on No. 2 which was environments and then, keep going.

**Respondent:** The 3rd one is the teaching which requires the child to feel safe with you and feel calm but the teaching of emotions and sensations. Teaching of emotions is something we’ve heard of because many of us have been exposed to social emotional curriculum. Teaching of sensations is different, but I’ll just quickly say: sensations is noticing what’s happening in your body. Emotions are feelings, for example, Nicky have you ever – and you don’t have to answer this cause I’m putting you on the spot – but if you, let’s pretend Nicky is, have you ever been so stressed that you either got a stomachache or a headache or neck pain or clenching fists or sweating or eyes twitching or jaws clenching, any of those symptoms at all under stress?

**Interviewer:** Yeah, I mean yesterday I feel a lot of anxiety in my stomach, so I start my stomach feels uneasy, so something was coming up that felt a little daunting yesterday and I definitely felt it in my stomach.

**Respondent:** There is the example of when we have big emotions, we can have 4 symptoms: 1 is physiological, that’s sensations; the 2nd we could notice our emotions, the 3rd clue is our thoughts, like ah, I could be in the middle of the grocery store and I’m like “I hate everybody, they better be out of my way”, that’s a sign I’m in the high emotion state, and then the 4th is our behavior, like I’m all irritated and I’m rushing. These 4 clues are what we need to teach children, to be aware of what their body looks like when they have those emotions and the more, we teach sensory and emotional literacy, the more we can do the 4th and final step of building resilience to heal trauma and to grow humans to be humane. The 4th one is teaching them how to manage big emotions. There’s absolutely now way that I can calm my emotions until I know whether my emotions are in the green zone, the orange zone or the red zone, and if I know: “oh my God, my fists are clenched, my stomach hurts, my emotions are really high, I usually hurt others, myself and property when I get like that, but what can I do to calm my body down and so we help children build their own emergency first responder kit for themselves which is self-regulatory, strategies we practice. You know in California we do these fire drills and earthquake drills with kids and I’m like: hello, why aren’t we doing emotional drills, like when we have high levels of emotion? What’s our tool kit? Practice that every day too!

**Interviewer:** Yeah, but we tend to skip ahead to these are the 4 ways to problem solve but once again we’re not helping children regulate so that they can get to that space, we skip to teaching again.

**Respondent:** Yep.

**Interviewer:** I just wondered if you could say those 4 things again.

**Respondent:** Yes, and then I’m going to add a magic one that I was just going to add. The first one is attuned relationships, relational connections building a relationship where they feel safe with you. The second one is safe and predictable environments. The third one is teaching sensory and emotional literacy. The fourth is self-regulation and learning how to manage big emotions and I’ll just add that one more that I was going to add which is: now you can teach them how to problem solve, once they do all those things.

**Interviewer:** Right, yeah, that’s perfect, and one other piece I think I need to hear one more time is well, when you’re talking about the teaching of emotions and sensations, you also described four things to me, right, that we need to be thinking about, so what’s happening, can you repeat those again for our listeners?

**Respondent:** Oh yes, so you know teaching kid’s sensations and emotions in their body, I do an adult self-care training, so with kids I just teach sensations and emotions but really there are four clues to be aware of inside of your body. There’s a tool on my website when we get to the resources, it’s called “the zones of self-awareness” and I created this healing from my own trauma. I needed to realize that I have to be aware of my own inner world and the more I’m aware of my own inner world, the more I can manage my inner world and the more I can be aware of my triggers emotionally or my trauma triggers, then the more I can act in ways that are humane and for the greater good instead of just reacting, right, to these big emotions that I have. So, I created this tool, and we can be in a green zone, which is calm and regulated, medium zone, which is the orange where our emotions start to rise up, but this red zone, which is fight, flight or freeze and we’re being hijacked by the part of our brain that often makes us hurt others, ourselves and property without thinking. To recognize what zone we’re in, there are 4 clues: the first one is the sensations in my body. Oh, I have a stomachache. That’s a clue that I can pay attention to as to what zone I’m in. When I’m in the green zone, I don’t have any stomach aches. When I rise in the orange zone it might be a little churning but when I’m in the red one: Oh, my stomach hurts or a headache. The second clue is our emotions: I’m feeling so happy and calm; I’m feeling scared; I’m feeling terror, and then the third clue are our thoughts: you know I’ll be driving on the freeway and when I’m in the green zone and someone cuts me off, I like oh, sweetheart, go ahead, we’re all brothers and sisters in the world, we’re all connected and when you gain, I gain, like I’m calm. When I’m in the red zone, I might chase him down, flip them off, role my window down, you know we act, our behavior and our thoughts are different. So, the next two clues really are behaviors and our actions. What am I acting like? Right? Or our thoughts: “oh my God I’m going to run that person over and they cut me off”. Paying attention to those four things is a very advanced skill because when we know this, then we can actually find a strategy to regulate.

**Interviewer:** Yeah, what strikes me the further we go into this is how important the adult is so that these, and I just wanted to call out for our listeners the second book in the series that you’ve written, is about educators, right? So, our need to be able to be in a space where we can be that emotionally available for children at this level, that we can understand them there. So, I would love, that’s a whole other interview, I know, but can you just talk about the importance of adults in this equation.

**Respondent:** Aha, you just hit it again right on. Really, the healing of children’s trauma is mostly the adult staying calm and regulated and self-aware and our second book Culturally Responsive Self-Care for Early Childhood Educators talks a lot about the foundation of healing children’s trauma is the adult staying calm and not reactive, having self-awareness, just what I talked about with the zones of self-awareness and having regulatory skills and having really two things, enough self-care outside of work, whatever that is to you. You come to work with your emotional gas tank full because you’re going to have a lot of adversity happen throughout the day. Children’s challenging behaviors, they spit at you, they hit, they kick, your supervisor tells you something, you didn’t get something done, some teacher is mad at you for something and all of these things that come at you, if you’re depleted when you enter that door in the morning, because you have too much stress without the balance of restoration or self-care, and you walk in empty, you’re going to shoot to your lower part of your brain, your fight, flight, freeze reactive brain. I do, when I’m in the grocery store and I’m depleted, why does the grocery clerk always seem to check everybody out so slowly, why am I so irritated with them, why do I get in the wrong line, but when I’m calm, I don’t really notice and so, the same thing is with children. So, I think you’re right on about this, it’s mostly the adult.

**Interviewer:** Yeah, can we talk about self-care for just a minute, we had a really interesting conversation, the Professional Learning Collaborative, our group of facilitators was meeting the other day and I think I said these words and I think I should take it back, but I was kind of gently like chiding all of us for not engaging in enough self-care and I just thought this is a group of people and our purpose is to support the workforce, the educators in this field and we’re depleted as well and a colleague of mine challenged me a little about what we define as self-care and what she shared with us was that in the morning if she can get about ten minutes snuggling on the couch with her dog, that might be viewed by someone else as just downtime or something, but for her that is self-care. So, we’re trying to redefine what self-care means and one of our facilitators begged me to ask you how do you know if you’re doing it? How do you know if a thing that you’re drawn to do in your life outside of work counts as self-care?

**Respondent:** Yeah. I have a whole day training on this but you know, self-care when we hear the word, we get annoyed sometimes or we’re like: Oh, that’s many paddies or a candle with a bath and when my kids were growing up and I worked full-time, when someone would have talked to me about self-care, that: “What, I don’t have any time for that, I work full time, I pick them up, and the routine is all the way to bedtime and I’m lucky if I have five minutes after they go to bed”! But I remember, the things that I did, I would put them in the stroller and walk. So, I’m walking them. I would hold them and rock them and hum and that was calming me. I would play with them on the ground, doing something fun and so each individual person has their own unique strategies of what that means but I’ll tell you one thing: Dr. Bruce Perry says that it is literally the more powerful forms of self-care are the one to two minutes that we do throughout the day. The doses, the small itty-bitty doses, not “I need to take a full day, right, or a half-day off”, not an hour, it’s one to two minutes of getting up and taking a breath outside or for some people saying a prayer or quote themselves or looking at tiktok videos or looking at photos of your family. I’ll tell you, when I was a little girl, I used to watch TV shows that had great fathers and I hate to say it but it can be something in our imagination because the brain doesn’t know the difference between real and pretend so conjuring up a memory of our grandmother who passed or the cookies she used to make or a memory of something or a memory, not even a memory of past but that hammock that we dream of going to in Hawaii under that tree where we’ve never been, it can be anything that we access inside of our memories or that we do that is momentary.

**Interviewer:** Yeah, I love that. I think we all need to hear that because I think what I’ve experienced since the pandemic and heard from professionals is we’re being told we need to engage in self-care and now we all feel like we’re also failing at that. So, we’re struggling in everything else and now I’m not even doing self-care because I didn’t get a pedicure and I didn’t make it to Hawaii, so this idea of one-to-two-minute doses, that is brilliant. I’m going to hang on to that.

**Respondent:** Yep. That’s the nugget and the backside of the zones of self-awareness have some categories that help people think about what my emergency first responder kit is and what do I do that I didn’t even realize was self-care and sometimes it’s just stretching, shaking your body, taking one deep breath, it’s very, very, simple things that are moments of restoration. You got it, it’s a nugget.

**Interviewer:** Yeah, I love it. Let’s do talk about this because I’m dying for listeners to hear the kinds of resources that you’ve been alluding to and your website, everybody needs to go there. Can you share your website, web address and then tell us what’s there?

**Respondent:** So, if you go to our website: [www.optimalbrainintegration.com](http://www.optimalbrainintegration.com) you’ll find our home page and the first thing you can do if you want to is on that front page, join one of our communities, our social media communities, Instagram, LinkedIn, Facebook. The reason is because you can be in touch with many things that we post that are trauma related, self-care related. Secondly, you can join our community by that email group list at the bottom and be up to date on things that are happening in our Coby Community Center for Optimal Brain Integration. I’ll also share that we have a lot of blogs that you can just read if you’re interested that are free. We have an a-synchronist learning platform where you can click it and look at some topics if you want to learn right away. There are the blue icons for parents, the white icons for adults, the orange icons for teachers who are K through 12 and that early childhood icon are the green ones. Click them. They’re $22 an hour and we have many 1-hour ones that you can just get a spotlight on self-care or on trauma or on teaching social emotional literacy and in fact, you get an automatic professional development certificate. A couple of other things I’ll highlight are if you click our resources and you go to free resources, I have an app that’s free that you can download. The app has a 22-minute video and a 16-page user guide in English and Spanish. How to use it with children who are ages 3 to 8 to teach and promote sensory and emotional literacy. If you can’t use technology in your home or your classroom because it’s only available on an iPhone or an Android phone, you can actually print the paper version of the app that’s free, along with the arrows. There are many other resources, like I said the zones of self-awareness are health and wellness toolkit and a social scripted story to teach kids emotional literacy and self-regulation in English and Spanish. I could talk about more, but I don’t want to take up too much {inaudible}.

**Interviewer:** I’m loving it and I want to hear how can we find the app, let’s say someone didn’t make it to the website, can you just search in your App Store and what’s it called?

**Respondent:** Yes, yes, it’s called “Trigger Stop Sensory and Emotional Check-in” and there will also be a link on the app with that, that will take you to the website once you download it. And remember, it’s not available on computers, not on iPad or pads, it’s only available on an iPhone or an Android.

**Interviewer:** Okay, that’s amazing, I’m going to look at that as soon as we finish this interview today, I can’t wait. Thank you. So, this has been amazing Julie. I want our listeners to know that you’re going to be hanging out with us Wyoming folks in the upcoming three years because we received the Federal Pre-School Development Grant and a really important piece of that is addressing trauma informed practice and so we’re so excited that you get to do some more work with us in the State and I just want to let people know that that’s coming up, there will be a lot more that will be available to help all of us become better at using trauma informed practices. Is there anything you would want to say about that, the work that’s coming up in Wyoming?

**Respondent:** Yes of course, we’re in the process of designing and developing that, so over the course of the next three years we’re going to be doing a lot of work that’s going to bring trauma responsive, resilience building, and healing engaged strategies throughout the State of Wyoming, so we’re really excited to partner with you around that.

**Interviewer:** That’s great and our professional learning facilitators are going to be a key piece of that so a lot of information will be coming through us to all of you listeners. So, I can’t wait for that. Just a couple more questions Julie, one that I’m really interested about is as you’ve been doing so much training and you’ve been all over the world with this, when you think about early childhood education, this is going to be two-fold, so we’ll start with the more negative sounding question: What are you most worried about? And then, what are you most hopeful about, based on what you’ve seen in the last few years?

**Respondent:** Oh gosh, I am the most worried about the number of kids and adults that we found out that have experienced trauma and I’m worried because trauma lives in our body and there are two definitions to trauma: one is trauma is defined by the individual’s sensory system but the second is, it has long-term adverse effects on you socially, emotionally, mentally, physically and spiritually and when we carry that in our body throughout our lifespan, it has adverse effects on us and so that’s the thing that worries me the most is we have to bring this to every corner of our country. The thing that gives me the most hope is I feel like this is becoming, the topic is becoming one that is becoming centered in people’s voices and minds, not just because of the pandemic even before, but even more so now. So, the gift is that people are seeing more and more how important this is and it’s not just important that we give teachers the topic to heal kids, we have to help teachers and adults heal themselves because if I’m carrying trauma in me and it’s impacting me adversely, then I might not be able to help a child any further than I’ve helped myself.

**Interviewer:** Yeah, I agree. I feel like there’s some momentum building and the language is changing as we’re talking about behaviors. One thing that I just want to call out that I think is pretty beautiful that we’ve recently released Wyoming’s first ever statement of quality, early childhood quality and it’s called The Coherent Path to Quality and the components that are embedded in that path are aligned with what you shared as your four strategies. The first is relationships, the second is environments and interactions, you know I just love that the field is coming around that everything’s about relationships for all of us are learning and it just happens to be that it’s also the most essential thing for any child who has experienced trauma as well.

**Respondent:** I love that you just said that because then it tells us, oh, I’m not going to add this whole new curriculum with trauma, it’s going to align with everything I already do. That’s it exactly.

**Interviewer:** Yes. That brings me a lot of hope too. One final question for you Julie, because this is a podcast about professional learning, we would love to hear what’s something new that you’ve learned lately, that you’re just excited about and wanting to tell people about?

It can be anything.

**Respondent:** That’s such a good question. I’m learning every day. I’m a learning seeker and I’m learning because I think that when we have a growth mindset, will be better to convince them that we say that we know everything and now I’m thinking: what have I learned lately? I’m going to share something with you that’s just come into my mind because I didn’t prepare for this and the only thing that’s come into my mind is that I have learned that I, I’m going to be honest with you, I want to say something really profound but I’m learning as I grow as a human being, I’m learning that I’m not very good at being present in the moment. I’m constantly, I try to meditate for five minutes and notice that my brain was constantly scanning for what I needed to do next and so, I guess the thing that I learned recently is I have a hard time just sitting and being present in the moment, even when I’m eating a piece of food, my mind is racing, it’s like: how can I enjoy this food in the moment when I’m always just living in the future and that’s something that I’m working on and one of the ways I’m doing it is when I walk, I take photos of beautiful things that I see around me and then turn them into social media posts for the Center for Optimal Brain Integration. So, I hate to say I’m working on being present in the moment, it should be something natural for you but when you’ve been through trauma, you learn to, you’re scanning for danger all the time, I’m trying to rewire my brain to just be present and enjoy the moment. So, I have to say that’s the biggest thing I’ve learned about myself lately. Nothing profound from the outside right now.

**Interviewer:** Well, that’s pretty profound actually for all of us and I just think that I love that example of self-awareness, that positions you to be a learner if you’re just paying attention and it gives us opportunities to have insights into ourselves, so I love that. That’s what you live, that’s what you teach and that’s also what you’re living right now, so that’s great.

**Respondent:** Yeah.

Interviewer: Well, I just want to thank you so much Julie for sharing your wisdom with us today and thank you listeners for joining us on Voices from the Village. This podcast is made possible with support from the Federal Pre-School Development Grant and is produced by the University of Wyoming Early Childhood Outreach Network. We recorded our interview today on Zoom. Voices from the Village is directed and edited by Bryce Tugwell.

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