

Title of Training: Responsive Circle

Board Present: Jennifer Bowman – President, Rebecca Dunahoo – President Elect, Emma Tempest – Secretary, Nicole Bedard – Benton County Member-at-Large, Anna Cannon – Washington County Member-at-Large

Participants in attendance: 23

The meeting was called to order at 6.30pm by Jennifer Bowman. Jennifer welcomed the participants to the NWAECA meeting. She thanked Stay Positive Arkansas and Leslie Corbell for being present today to facilitate the meeting. These Responsive Circle meetings will be a regular event in our NWAECA calendar this year and we hope you will leave feeling connected and with new ideas to take back to your settings to help the children and families you serve, as well as to help yourself as we navigate these new challenging times.

Business

1. Jennifer shared the free crisis counseling resource from Stay Positive Arkansas, [Promoting Positive Emotions \(PPE\)](#) that is available to anyone who needs support with building coping skills for the recovery process, managing Covid related stress and identify and meet children's needs.
2. **Thursday January 28th** We will be teaming up again with the Amazeum for their virtual educator night out. More details to come soon so save the date!
3. **Tuesday February 9th** Our next NWAECA meeting will be 6.30-7.30pm with presenter Marcy White talking about the explorers curriculum - an engaging curriculum designed especially for 3-6 year old children in Arkansas

Stay Positive Arkansas shared some of the things they help people with – such as anonymous emotional support, self-care guidance, stress and anxiety management tools, problem-solving and goal setting, referrals and linkage to community services and resources. They shared an activity 'rate the weight' where participants could score themselves as to how heavy their current burdens feel:

- 00 – Calm, peace
- 01 – A little bit sad or depressed
- 02 – Moderate anxiety and worry
- 03 – Upset, uncomfortable, still functioning
- 04 – Panicky, lose focus, anxious in the body
- 05 – Unbearable, cannot function

They reminded everyone that you can move up and down on this scale and that no matter where you are, you can reach out and ask for help.

They also shared an anchoring breathing exercise:

1. Get comfy, relax your muscles, unclench your jaw, and drop your shoulders.
2. Start to concentrate on your breathing, you can close your eyes if this helps.
3. When you start to notice your mind wandering, bring it back to focus on your breathing.

Breathing is a powerful tool that helps to bring you back to the present moment. Focused breathing that anchors you to the now can help prevent feelings of overwhelm or that you are 'losing control'. It is not about thinking about nothing, it is about bringing your thoughts back to the breath.

Stay Positive Arkansas invited us all to an event on Tuesday December 15th 6.00-6.30pm, [Stress Recess – An Evening of Merrymaking](#) on Zoom for light-hearted fun and connection. There is also live videos Monday-Friday on the [Burrell Behavioral Health](#) Facebook page that talk about wellbeing.

Leslie Corbell began her discussion by reminding everyone that there are two parts to Conscious Discipline – being conscious of what is going on within ourselves and making intentional actions, anchoring ourselves in the moment and being aware of our own brain states. She invited everyone to look back at their action plans that they made and to create a new one for those who were not in attendance in November. Being conscious and aware of changes that have occurred due to you following the plan – what have you felt success with? What have your stress loads been like during this time? What can you adjust or change to be successful next time?

Please continue to add any resources you come across to our Google Doc: bit.ly/NWAECAGoogleDoc

Please reach out to your colleagues, friends, and us here at NWAECA. You are not alone! We are all in this together!

Meeting was adjourned by Jennifer Bowman

Next Meeting: Tuesday 9th February 6.30-7.30pm

Link: bit.ly/NWAECARFeb

Topic: Exploring the Explorers Curriculum

Presenter: Marcy White

Minutes shared by Emma Tempest