



California  
Community  
Colleges



# Developmental Trauma Tool

2024

# Introduction & Overview

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This toolkit spotlights the unique strengths and challenges students with involvement in foster care experience as they navigate the transition into college. We explore the impact of developmental trauma on their academic journey and how NextUp practitioners play a pivotal role in creating a supportive environment that addresses both the academic needs and the holistic well-being of students. We uncover strategies, resources, and best practices to better understand and support foster youth in their pursuit of academic success and well-being, while also acknowledging their strengths, assets, resources, talents, and resilience.

## Why is it Important to Understand These Students' Unique Challenges and Strengths?

NextUp practitioners play a crucial role in shifting patterns towards positive outcomes by offering ongoing care and tailored interventions. By acknowledging both the underlying challenges and the remarkable resilience of these students, NextUp practitioners create a nurturing environment that promotes healing and growth. Providing individualized support helps students develop effective and adaptive coping strategies, build resilience, and access appropriate resources for healing. This support fosters a sense of safety and trust, essential for students to thrive academically and personally.

## What is Developmental Trauma?

**Developmental trauma** refers to the chronic exposure to adverse experiences during critical periods of childhood development, such as abuse, neglect, or instability in caregiving relationships. Unlike single-event traumas, developmental trauma typically occurs within the context of ongoing, interpersonal relationships, profoundly impacting the child's sense of safety, trust, and attachment. However, with appropriate support and interventions, the negative patterns associated with developmental trauma can be shifted, highlighting the importance of resilience, healing, adaptation, and recovery.

Characteristics of developmental trauma may include:

- Disrupted attachment patterns
- Difficulties regulating emotions and behavior
- Diminished self-worth
- Challenges forming healthy relationships

These experiences can have enduring effects on cognitive, emotional, and social development, often persisting into adulthood if left unaddressed. Yet, it is crucial to recognize that foster youth possess inherent strengths and resilience, which can be nurtured. Moreover, addressing developmental trauma reinforces a culture of empathy and inclusivity within educational institutions, demonstrating a



commitment to the diverse needs and experiences of all students, particularly those who have faced adversity, and promotes the systemwide goal of reducing disparities and advancing equity.

## How Does the Foster Care Experience Impact Developmental Trauma?

The experience of foster care can significantly exacerbate developmental trauma in children and adolescents. Placement disruptions, changes in caregivers, and unstable living environments can disrupt attachment bonds and undermine feelings of safety and security. These disruptions and adverse experiences can profoundly affect a child's emotional regulation, interpersonal relationships, and sense of self, contributing to long-term difficulties in coping, forming trusting relationships, and achieving academic and personal success. By focusing on resilience and providing individualized care, it is possible to promote healing, foster a sense of safety and trust, and support these students in achieving their full potential academically and personally.

### » Differentiating Between Developmental Tasks and Trauma-Related Issues

It's beneficial to differentiate between typical developmental tasks, such as establishing independence, and trauma-related issues, such as difficulty forming trusting relationships or managing emotions, to provide targeted support and intervention for foster youth students as they navigate this critical developmental period.

### » The Emerging Adult Developmental Stage

The emerging adult developmental stage, typically spanning from late teens to early twenties, is characterized by significant transitions and self-discovery. Understanding this stage is crucial for providing effective support to foster youth, who often face unique challenges as they navigate these formative years.

#### Overview of the Emerging Adult Stage

During the emerging adult stage, typically spanning from late teens to early twenties, individuals undergo significant transitions in various life domains, including education, career, and relationships.

#### Common Characteristics of Emerging Adults

Common characteristics of emerging adults include exploration of identity, increased autonomy, and a focus on self-discovery and personal growth.

#### Challenges Faced by Foster Youth Students in the Emerging Adult Stage

Foster youth students often face unique challenges during this stage, including navigating the transition to independence without stable familial support and addressing unresolved trauma from their past experiences.

## How Can We Ensure That Students' Issues Are Appropriately Addressed?

A nuanced understanding of the interplay between system-impact and typical developmental tasks is crucial for appropriately addressing foster youth students' needs. Differentiating between developmental trauma and developmental challenges involves recognizing the impact of adverse

experiences on emotional and cognitive development while also acknowledging that some issues may stem from typical developmental tasks of their age group rather than solely from their foster youth status.

**Key points to consider:**

- **Developmental Trauma:** Arises from adverse experiences like abuse, neglect, or caregiving instability, disrupting emotional regulation, attachment, and self-esteem. With support and appropriate interventions, these effects can be mitigated, fostering resilience and healing.
- **Developmental Challenges:** Some challenges faced by foster youth may be related to typical developmental tasks, such as forming identity, seeking independence, and building relationships. Understanding these as normal developmental processes helps in providing age-appropriate support without pathologizing their experiences.

By understanding the underlying causes and manifestations of developmental trauma versus typical developmental challenges, we can offer more effective and compassionate support. This approach acknowledges the strengths and resilience of foster youth, focusing on their potential for growth and success rather than solely on their struggles.



**Example: Understanding and Supporting Alex’s Journey**

Consider a student named Alex who entered the foster care system at the age of five due to severe neglect and occasional physical abuse. Throughout childhood, Alex experienced multiple placements, each with varying degrees of emotional support and stability. By the time Alex aged out of the system and entered college, they had lived in ten different foster homes. Despite these challenges, Alex has shown remarkable resilience and determination to succeed academically and personally.

**Emotional Regulation**

Alex often struggles to manage their emotions, frequently experiencing intense anxiety and anger. This has made it difficult for Alex to focus in class and participate in group projects, leading to academic challenges. However, with appropriate support and interventions, Alex has the potential to develop effective emotional regulation strategies, enhancing their academic and social experiences.

## Attachment

Due to a history of inconsistent caregiving relationships, Alex finds it difficult to trust others and build close relationships. This makes it challenging for Alex to form friendships and seek help from professors or campus support services. Recognizing Alex's strengths in seeking stability and providing consistent emotional support can help Alex build trust and form meaningful connections.

## Self-Worth

The repeated experiences of neglect and abuse have left Alex with a pervasive sense of unworthiness and self-doubt. Alex often questions their abilities and feels like an imposter in the college environment, which undermines their confidence and academic performance. By fostering a sense of belonging and celebrating Alex's achievements, NextUp practitioners can help enhance Alex's self-worth and academic success.

By understanding the profound impacts of developmental trauma, NextUp practitioners can better support students like Alex by providing consistent emotional support, facilitating access to mental health services, and fostering a sense of belonging and stability within the college community. Emphasizing the role of resilience and highlighting the student's strengths can shift the narrative from one of deficit to one of potential and growth.

## Differentiating Developmental Trauma from Developmental Challenges

**Developmental Trauma:** Stems from adverse experiences like abuse and neglect, leading to disruptions in emotional regulation, attachment, and self-esteem.

**Example:** Jamie, a college freshman, experienced significant abuse and neglect during early childhood. Despite these adverse experiences, Jamie has shown significant academic progress and resilience. However, the impact of this trauma has resulted in struggles with emotional regulation, trust in relationships, and maintaining self-worth. Jamie often finds it difficult to form connections with peers and professors and experiences frequent anxiety and flashbacks that interfere with academic performance. With consistent emotional support and access to mental health resources, Jamie can develop coping strategies and build resilience, leading to improved academic and social outcomes.

**Developmental Challenges:** Arise from typical developmental tasks and environmental influences. Recognizing these challenges as part of normal development allows for age-appropriate support without pathologizing the experiences of foster youth.

**Example:** Samantha, another college freshman, has a learning disability that was identified in elementary school. Samantha's developmental challenge is primarily academic; she struggles with reading comprehension and needs extra time to process written information. Despite this, Samantha has developed strong relationships and demonstrates resilience in seeking out resources and support. Her primary need is for academic accommodations, such as extended test time and access to assistive technology, to ensure her academic success.

## Key Differences

### Origin:

- Developmental trauma stems from adverse experiences such as abuse, neglect, or instability in caregiving, leading to disruptions in emotional regulation, attachment, and self-esteem.
- Developmental challenges can arise from a variety of factors including environmental influences, individual differences, or specific learning disabilities, impacting the acquisition of age-appropriate skills or milestones.

### Support Needs:

- **Students with developmental trauma may need emotional and psychological support to address the trauma's impact on their relationships and self-worth.** This includes consistent emotional support, access to mental health services, and creating a stable and nurturing environment. Note that developmental trauma may also lead to developmental challenges and so students may need academic accommodation in addition to emotional and psychological support.
- **Students with developmental challenges may require specific academic accommodation and support to help them succeed in their studies.** This includes extended test time, assistive technology, and tailored instructional strategies.

## Differentiating Between Developmental Tasks and Trauma-Related Issues

**Developmental Tasks:** typical tasks for young adults, including establishing independence, forming an identity, and developing intimate relationships.

**Example:** Maria, a 19-year-old college sophomore, is navigating typical developmental tasks. She is working on establishing her independence by managing her finances, making decisions about her major, and living away from her family for the first time. While Maria faces some challenges, such as learning how to budget effectively and balancing her social life with academic responsibilities, these are considered normal developmental tasks for her age. Maria's ability to tackle these tasks demonstrates her resilience and capacity to adapt to new environments and responsibilities.

**Trauma-Related Issues:** specific challenges that arise due to past adverse experiences.

**Example:** John, also a 19-year-old college sophomore, is dealing with trauma-related issues stemming from his time in foster care. John experienced multiple placements and significant instability during his childhood. As a result, he struggles with forming trusting relationships, often feeling that people will abandon him or cannot be trusted. This challenge stems from his past experiences with caregivers who could not be relied upon for consistent care and safety. However, with the right support, John can develop trust in others.

John also has difficulty managing his emotions, frequently experiencing intense anxiety and anger that can disrupt his daily life and academic performance. His early experiences did not provide him with healthy coping mechanisms or attuned caregiving responses. Fortunately,

it's not too late for John to receive understanding, attuned responses, and skills to manage his emotions. By providing consistent support and fostering resilience, John can learn effective ways to cope and thrive in his academic and personal life.

## Key Differences:

**Developmental Tasks:** Include establishing independence, forming an identity, and developing intimate relationships. These tasks are part of the normal growth process and are generally not impeded by a history of trauma.

**Trauma-Related Issues:** Specific challenges that arise due to past adverse experiences, such as difficulties with emotional regulation, forming trust, and maintaining self-esteem. These issues often require specialized support and intervention.

## Integrated Example: Supporting Sarah's Journey

Consider Sarah, a college freshman who entered the foster care system at age six due to neglect. Like her peers, Sarah is navigating the developmental task of establishing independence, which includes managing her finances, making academic decisions, and building new relationships. However, her history of trauma adds a layer of complexity to this process.

Sarah finds it hard to trust her roommates and professors, often feeling isolated and misunderstood. These feelings stem from her past experiences with unstable caregiving, which have impacted her ability to form trusting relationships. Despite these challenges, Sarah has shown resilience by seeking out support systems and striving to succeed in her new environment.

Sarah's trauma-related issues, such as managing her emotions and self-esteem, make it challenging for her to engage in typical developmental tasks effectively. She might experience intense anxiety or self-doubt that interferes with her academic performance and social interactions. However, with appropriate support, Sarah can develop coping strategies and social support that enhance her ability to manage these emotions.

## Support and Growth

By understanding the interplay between Sarah's trauma-related issues and her developmental tasks, NextUp practitioners can provide targeted support that fosters her resilience and growth. This includes:

- **Building Trust:** Creating a supportive environment where Sarah feels safe expressing herself and seek help.
- **Emotional Support:** Offering counseling and mental health services to help Sarah develop healthy coping mechanisms.
- **Skill Development:** Providing resources and workshops that assist Sarah in managing her finances, making informed decisions, and balancing her responsibilities.

## Asset-Based Framing

Acknowledging Sarah's strengths and resilience is crucial. Despite her past challenges, Sarah has demonstrated the ability to adapt and strive for success. By focusing on her potential and providing

the necessary support, we can help Sarah shift these patterns and thrive both academically and personally.

### Key Takeaways

- **Resilience:** Emphasize the inherent resilience and strength foster youth like Sarah possess, which can be harnessed with the right support.
- **Support Needs:** Understand that trauma-related issues require emotional and psychological support, while developmental tasks may need practical guidance and skill-building.
- **Holistic Approach:** Integrate emotional, social, and academic support to address both the trauma-related issues and developmental tasks effectively.

## Assessment and Identification of Student Needs

### Recognizing Signs of Developmental Trauma

Recognizing signs of developmental trauma in foster youth students involves being attentive to behavioral, emotional, and relational cues that may indicate underlying trauma, such as hypervigilance, emotional dysregulation, or difficulties forming secure attachments. Screening tools are available to identify what social and emotional challenges students are experiencing.

### Assessing Maturity, Time Management, and “Big Picture” Thinking Skills

When assessing maturity, time management, and “big picture” thinking skills in foster youth students, it is crucial to consider their individual developmental trajectories and the significant impact of adverse experiences on these areas. Foster youth often face dual challenges: they must not only develop these skills like their peers but also overcome the setbacks caused by their past experiences, which can be limiting and taxing.

#### Example: Typical Developmental Trajectory

Emily, an 18-year-old freshman, grew up in a stable environment with supportive parents. She learned time management and planning skills in high school, participated in extracurricular activities, and received guidance on setting long-term goals. Upon entering college, Emily continues to develop her maturity, improves her time management, and starts to think about her career path and future, exemplifying “big picture” thinking.

#### Example: Dual Trajectory of Foster Youth

Michael, also an 18-year-old freshman, spent most of his childhood in foster care, experiencing frequent relocations and inconsistent support before exiting to guardianship at age 14. Despite these challenges, Michael has shown resilience and strength. However, he struggles with time management because he did not have a consistently stable environment to develop routines. His maturity and “big picture” thinking are affected by the trauma and instability he endured,



making it difficult for him to plan for the future or set long-term goals. With the right support, Michael can address and overcome the setbacks from his past experiences, building the skills he needs for success.

## Key Considerations

- **Individual Developmental Trajectories:** Recognize that foster youth may be at different stages of development compared to their peers due to their unique experiences. Assessing their current skills should consider their background and the challenges they have faced.
- **Impact of Adverse Experiences:** Understand that adverse experiences, such as neglect, abuse, and instability, can significantly delay or disrupt the development of maturity, time management, and “big picture” thinking skills. Foster youth may need additional support to address these setbacks before they can progress.
- **Dual Trajectories Approach:** Foster youth need support not only to develop these essential skills but also to undo the negative impacts of their past. This involves providing trauma-informed care, emotional support, and practical resources to help them catch up and move forward.

## Understanding the Educational Challenges Faced by Foster Youth Students

Foster youth students encounter a range of academic, behavioral, and emotional challenges that can significantly impact their educational outcomes. The following points highlight key areas where foster youth students often experience difficulties:

### Academic Performance:

- **English and Math Proficiency:** California students in foster care demonstrated significantly lower proficiency rates compared to their peers on state tests, with only 24% meeting the standard in English language arts, compared to 51% for other students, and 15% meeting the standard in mathematics, compared to 40% for their peers. These disparities were exacerbated among highly mobile foster students, those facing suspension, those belonging to multiple high-need groups (such as English learners in foster care), and those attending high-poverty schools (Burns et al., 2022).
- **Graduation and College-Going Rates:** Foster care students in California graduated at a lower rate compared to their peers (56% vs. 85%). Despite this disparity, the graduation rate for foster care students improved by 5 percentage points from 2016–17 to 2018–19, rising from 51% to 56%. Additionally, among high school graduates and completers, foster care students were less likely than their peers to enroll in college (48% vs. 64%) (Burns et al., 2022).

### Instability and Study Skills:

- Frequent school changes disrupt the continuity of education, making it challenging for foster youth to develop consistent study habits and organizational skills (National Working Group on Foster Care and Education, 2018).

### School Conditions

- In California, almost half of foster care students attended schools with the highest poverty rates, where over 80% of students qualified for free or reduced-price meals. These schools often face significant resource challenges such as higher teacher turnover, which can impact student achievement negatively. Additionally, foster care students were more frequently enrolled in the lowest-performing schools based on the state’s accountability measures compared to their peers (Burns et al., 2022).

## Strategies for Supporting Foster Youth Students

Accommodating developmental challenges in foster youth students involves personalized approaches to meet their specific needs and circumstances.

### Building life skills in foster youth students is essential for their success beyond academia.

- Teach effective time management techniques to help students prioritize tasks and balance responsibilities. Developing strong decision-making skills equips students with the ability to make informed choices and navigate challenges with confidence. By imparting these vital life skills, practitioners can support foster youth students in achieving independence and fulfilling their potential.
- Communicate to students that you genuinely believe in their ability to develop these skills. Showing them that you trust they can succeed helps build their confidence and motivation.

### Promoting self-awareness and self-advocacy among foster youth students is integral to their personal development and success.

- Nurture their confidence and self-worth by recognizing and celebrating their strengths and achievements, fostering a positive self-image. *How often do we intentionally affirm the specific strengths and achievements of students? Can we do more of this?*
- Praise their efforts, not just the results. For example, saying, “You came in to see me today, and that tells me a lot about your commitment and effort. You’re trying really hard.” This approach reinforces their persistence and dedication.
- Encouraging communication and assertiveness empowers students to express their needs, preferences, and boundaries effectively, advocating for themselves in various settings. . . . .

### Collaborative Approaches and Resources

Collaborative approaches and resources are vital in providing comprehensive support to foster youth students. By collaborating with foster care agencies and support networks, practitioners can access valuable insights and resources tailored to the unique needs of these students, ensuring a holistic approach to their well-being.

- Be actively involved in collaborations: avoid simply referring the student, role play what student can say and what will happen next, consider attending appointments with the student.
- Utilizing external resources and community partnerships expands the range of support available, offering students access to services such as counseling, housing assistance, and educational programs.
- Peer support and mentorship programs provide invaluable emotional support, guidance,

- How can we model and teach self-advocacy and assertive communication to students in our regular interactions? This may start by modeling – help the student draft an email to their instructor, walk with the student to the tutorial center, or call Disability Support Services (DSS) with the student and show them how to communicate and advocate for themselves.
- By promoting self-awareness and self-advocacy skills, practitioners help foster youth students navigate challenges, build resilience, and take ownership of their academic and personal journeys. What opportunities do we have (or can create) to model and practice these skills with students?
- When a student brings a problem or challenge to you, first ask them what they think they should do. Then praise the idea, affirm the personal awareness and approach of the student, then ask questions to move things forward.

and role modeling from individuals who have navigated similar experiences, fostering a sense of belonging and empowerment among foster youth students.



### Support Strategies

This toolkit concludes by offering support strategies designed to empower foster youth on their journey towards success. These approaches exemplify the type of specialized support that NextUp practitioners are uniquely positioned to provide, empowering foster youth to achieve their full potential despite the challenges they may have faced.

- **Trauma-Informed Care:** Ensure foster youth have access to counseling and mental health services tailored to help them process and overcome their past trauma. This approach underscores the importance of understanding, recognizing, and effectively responding to the effects of various types of trauma.
- **Skill Development Workshops:** Offer comprehensive workshops and resources designed to enhance crucial skills such as time management, goal setting, and effective planning. These workshops can go beyond basic instruction, incorporating strategies that cultivate resilience and promote a growth mindset among foster youth.
- **Personalized Support Plans:** Create personalized support plans that address the developmental needs and unique challenges faced by each foster youth. These individualized plans may be crafted to ensure that foster youth receive the holistic support necessary to thrive, academically and personally.
- **Career Readiness Programs:** Implement programs focused on career exploration, resume building, interview skills, and job readiness. These programs can equip foster youth with the necessary skills and confidence to enter the workforce successfully.
- **Educational Advocacy:** Provide advocacy and support within educational settings to ensure foster youth receive appropriate accommodations, academic guidance, and access to educational resources. This includes liaising with departments and administrators to address any barriers to academic success.
- **Financial Literacy Workshops:** Offer workshops that teach foster youth about budgeting, managing finances, understanding financial aid and credit, and preparing for financial

independence. These workshops can empower foster youth with practical financial skills essential for their future stability.

- **Mentorship Programs:** Establish mentorship programs where foster youth are paired with caring adults who provide guidance, support, and encouragement. Mentors can help foster youth navigate challenges, set goals, and build positive relationships.
- **Community Engagement Initiatives:** Facilitate opportunities for foster youth to engage with their communities through volunteering, civic participation, and cultural activities. These initiatives foster a sense of belonging and help build social connections outside of the foster care system.
- **Motivational Interviewing Techniques:** Motivational Interviewing (MI) techniques offer a client-centered approach to fostering behavioral change by exploring and resolving ambivalence. In the context of supporting foster youth students, MI can be a powerful tool for eliciting intrinsic motivation and facilitating positive outcomes.

### Practical Strategies for Engaging and Motivating Students

Practical strategies for engaging and motivating students through MI may include active listening, reflective questioning, and affirming autonomy, allowing students to explore their goals, values, and aspirations in a supportive and nonjudgmental environment. Through the application of MI techniques, practitioners can empower foster youth students to identify and pursue their own pathways towards success.

If MI is a new approach for you, it may feel awkward at first. It's a way to have conversations with students that helps them connect with their internal motivations. What is it that made them sign up for college? What do they dream of being and doing? Who do they want to be? Those aspirations will be much more motivating than anything we can tell them to do as practitioners. You can follow up with "What do you think you need to do every day to work towards that bigger goal?" (they might say, study, time management, tutoring etc.). By introducing practitioners to the foundational principles of MI, including empathy, collaboration, and evoking change talk, NextUp practitioners can learn to effectively apply MI in their interactions with foster youth students.

### Illustration Using MI

Sarah, a 19-year-old foster youth student, has recently transitioned to college through the California Community Colleges NextUp program. She has experienced significant developmental trauma due to a history of neglect and abuse in her childhood. Sarah struggles with low self-worth, difficulty trusting others, and a fear of failure, which have hindered her academic progress and social interactions.

To support Sarah effectively, her NextUp practitioner applies Motivational Interviewing (MI) techniques during their sessions. Initially, the counselor establishes rapport with Sarah by demonstrating empathy and active listening. Through open-ended questions, the counselor explores Sarah's values, interests, and aspirations, creating a safe space for her to express her thoughts and concerns.

**For example:** (Open ended question with the goal of identifying motivation) "What made you decide to come to college?" or "What do you want to be doing in five years? Why do you want to do that?"

During their conversations, the counselor helps Sarah recognize her strengths and resilience, affirming her ability to overcome past challenges. Using reflective listening, the counselor acknowledges Sarah's fears and uncertainties while gently guiding her towards exploring her goals and aspirations for the future. Let's say Sarah wants to be a social worker.

**For example:** (Affirmation) “You had a good (or bad) experience, and you want to be able to go help other people who experience things like you” or if it's another career – “you want something different for yourself!”

As Sarah begins to engage more actively in the counseling process, the counselor employs MI strategies to evoke Sarah's intrinsic motivation for academic success and personal growth. By highlighting the connections between her values and her educational goals, the counselor helps Sarah identify concrete steps she can take to achieve her aspirations.

**For example:** “So, we know what you want to be doing five years from now and why. What do you think you can do this week to start to make all of that happen? What do you think you need to do to be a good student? “

Over time, Sarah's confidence and self-belief grow as she starts to see herself as capable of overcoming obstacles and pursuing her dreams. Through ongoing support and encouragement, Sarah develops a sense of agency and empowerment, ultimately thriving academically and socially in college.

**Special Note:** Remember the importance of tying back to the student's motivations and progress over time. This process may take time but is a critical aspect of fostering growth. Ensure to take detailed notes during your meetings. For instance, reflecting on Sarah's journey from nervousness to success can be a powerful motivator. Consider saying, “When you first started here, you were so nervous. But look at you now! You worked so hard, it's not easy to pass all of your classes but you did it. What do you think you did this semester that made you successful?”

This case study illustrates how Motivational Interviewing techniques can be effectively applied to support foster youth students like Sarah, fostering intrinsic motivation and facilitating positive outcomes in their academic and personal lives.

### List of MI questions that the counselor used to interview Sarah:

#### Open-Ended Questions:

“Tell me about your goals for college.”

“What do you envision yourself doing in five years? Is there a particular career path that excites you? And what drives your interest in that career?”

“What are some of the challenges you've faced in adjusting to college life?”

“Tell me about some times when you were successful at something – school, a hobby, etc. – what did you do to be successful in that? What do you think about applying those same skills to your class? “what do you think you can do this semester to be successful?”

“Where do you see yourself heading academically and personally in the next few years?”

**Affirmations:**

“You know, I really admire your resilience. Despite all the challenges you’ve faced, you’re still determined to pursue your goals.”

“It’s amazing to see how much potential you have and the strengths you’ve already shown. I believe you can achieve great things.”

“You’ve got so much potential, and you’re incredibly bright. You’ve overcome a lot, and those experiences can really help you succeed in college.”

“I’m grateful for your openness in sharing your experiences and thoughts with me.”

“I just want to say, you were really brave to open up like that. Thank you for trusting me with your story and thank you for taking the time to meet with me.”

**Reflective Listening:**

“You’ve been through a lot, but you still made it here. What gives you hope for the future?”

“It seems like you’re feeling both excited and anxious about starting this new chapter in your life. What are you anxious about? What are you excited about? Let’s focus on the positive changes you’re looking forward to.”

“You’ve mentioned that you value independence and self-reliance. How do you think those values align with your goals for college?”

**Eliciting Change Talk:**

“What are some reasons why succeeding in college is important to you?”

“How do you envision your life being different if you were able to overcome some of the challenges you’re facing right now?”

“What small steps do you think you could take to move closer to your goals?”

These MI questions are designed to elicit Sarah’s thoughts, feelings, and motivations, facilitating a collaborative and empowering conversation that supports her intrinsic motivation and self-discovery. If you are interested in diving deeper into MI, check out, “From Theory to Practice: Fostering Relationship-Building Approaches in NextUp Programs” found at this link: <https://jbay.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/From-Theory-to-Practice-July-2023.pdf>

# Glossary

- An **ACEs (Adverse Childhood Experiences) Score** is a measure used to quantify the amount of stress or trauma an individual experienced during their childhood. This score is derived from a questionnaire that assesses various types of adverse experiences before the age of 18.
- **Attachment** is the emotional bond between a caregiver and a child, crucial for the child's sense of security and emotional development. Secure attachment is formed through consistent and responsive caregiving, fostering trust and emotional regulation.
- **Developmental trauma** refers to the chronic exposure to adverse experiences during critical periods of childhood development, such as abuse, neglect, or instability in caregiving relationships. Unlike single-event traumas, developmental trauma typically occurs within the context of ongoing, interpersonal relationships, profoundly impacting the child's sense of safety, trust, and attachment.
- **Developmental challenges** can arise from a variety of factors including environmental influences, individual differences, or specific learning disabilities, and primarily impact the acquisition of age-appropriate skills or milestones.
- **Developmental Tasks:** Typical tasks for young adults include establishing independence, forming an identity, and developing intimate relationships. These tasks are part of the normal growth process and are generally not impeded by a history of trauma.
- **Emotional Regulation** refers to the ability to effectively manage and modulate one's emotions in response to internal and external stimuli. This process involves understanding, recognizing, and appropriately responding to emotions in order to maintain emotional balance and well-being. Emotion regulation skills are essential for supporting students in foster care as they navigate the complex emotions and challenges associated with their academic and personal journeys.
- **Motivational Interviewing:** Motivational interviewing (MI) is a client-centered, collaborative approach to fostering behavioral change by exploring and resolving ambivalence. MI is characterized by its empathetic and non-confrontational style, aiming to elicit intrinsic motivation for change within individuals. Through techniques such as reflective listening, open-ended questions, and affirmations, practitioners help individuals explore their motivations, values, and goals, ultimately empowering them to make positive changes in their behavior. MI is widely used in various settings to support individuals in achieving their desired outcomes and overcoming resistance to change.
- **Self-worth** is the intrinsic value and sense of worthiness that individuals attribute to themselves based on their beliefs, attitudes, and perceptions of their own abilities, achievements, and qualities. It reflects a person's overall evaluation and acceptance of themselves, influencing their self-esteem, confidence, and resilience in the face of challenges and setbacks. Developing a positive sense of self-worth is essential for psychological well-being and healthy relationships, as it shapes how individuals perceive and interact with themselves and the world around them.

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