

Case Example: Agnes

Agnes is the maternal grandmother for Desmond, a four year old American Indian male. Desmond was placed with her about three months ago right after his 4th birthday. He was removed from his biological mom and stepdad due to a history of homelessness and alcohol and prescription medication abuse by his mom and stepdad. Desmond has emotional outbursts on a daily basis, which include throwing himself on the ground and inconsolable crying. He often reacts to his grandmother in anger, which includes hitting and biting. He is in preschool and when given individual attention by the teacher he can be funny and engaging.



- Does this scenario seem familiar to you?
- What do you think is going on with Desmond?
- What specific challenges does this type of situation pose for a caregiver?
- How might Agnes be an emotional container? Is there a cultural value about supporting others that could be infused?

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- ❖ *Facilitator Note: The specific slides for this case example are not in the Participant's Manual. Rather, the case example handouts are in a separate document to facilitate easily changing them out to use a different case example. All of the case examples are available on the Facilitator's web page you used to access the training material at <https://ctac.uky.edu/rpc>. It is suggested that you pass out these case examples at this point in the training, or, if doing virtually, be sure to send them along with the Participant Manual link.*
- ❖ *This should be done as a large group discussion.*
 - We will be using this case example throughout today's session as we discuss the different concepts related to stress and well-being today. You can find the information from this slide on the case example handout.

Discussion- Case Example (5 minutes)

- What do you think is going on with Desmond?
 - ❖ *Facilitator Note: Answers to look for and highlight in "What is going on for the child":*
 - Trauma reactions from his past experience are impacting behavior
 - May not have learned how to communicate safely

The case example on Agnes and Desmond has been adapted in collaboration with the National Native Children's Trauma Center, who developed the case study with community members from one northern plains tribe.



- What specific challenges does this type of situation pose for Agnes?
 - ❖ *Facilitator Note: Answers to look for and highlight in challenges for the caregiver:*
 - Hard to not personalize it
 - Feeling that the Desmond needs to be given a pass based on history
 - Feeling powerless or helpless to support Desmond
 - Feeling scared that he might hurt her or someone else
 - Hard to empathize or be compassionate towards him

- How might Agnes be an emotional container? Is there a cultural value about supporting others that could be infused?
 - ❖ *Facilitator Note: Answers to look for and highlight in “How Might the Adult(s) be Emotional Containers”?*
 - Being able to listen when Desmond shares his feelings and allow him to talk about feelings.
 - Help Desmond express feelings in safe ways (safe ways to be angry and frustrated)
 - Provide support to Desmond about feelings when anger is directed toward her so that she can express her feelings.
 - Don't allow the situation to escalate by reacting with strong emotions. It is okay to have feelings, but in the moment keeping these in check models how we don't have to respond with anger even if we are feeling hurt. This allows us to model self-regulation and keep the event from escalating.

 - ❖ *Facilitator Note: Suggestions to consider for “Is there a cultural value about supporting others that could be infused?”*
 - Respect and compassion particularly could be Lakota values to incorporate into supporting Desmond in respecting elders, self, and all life and showing compassion and care for others. In fortitude, Desmond learns about self-regulation. We could consider what cultural alternatives to hitting /biting would be, such as drumming, etc. incorporating self-regulation with culture.
 - For the grandmother, this would be wisdom that it is her role to guide Desmond in new ways of thinking and behaving and fortitude in knowing that she has the ability to find solutions and won't give up.



Agnes: Discussion on Secondary Traumatic Stress and Coping



Desmond has been having nightmares and recently told Agnes that he dreams about his parents fighting and his mom getting hurt. His preschool is reporting that he has been hitting and yelling at other kids. Recently Desmond has shared several details about the violence that he witnessed between his parents with Agnes.

- How might hearing these details impact Agnes
- How might this impact her parenting?
- What are some ways Agnes might cope with the trauma exposure? What cultural values or supports can be utilized to support Agnes?



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Case Example Part Two

Desmond has been having nightmares and recently told Agnes that he dreams about his parents fighting and his mom getting hurt. His preschool is reporting that he has been hitting and yelling at other kids. Recently Desmond has shared several details about the violence that he witnessed between his parents with Agnes.

Discussion- Case Example (5 minutes)

- ❖ *This should be done as a large group discussion.*
- How might hearing these details impact Agnes?
 - ❖ *Facilitator Note: Answers to look for and highlight in “How might hearing these details impact Agnes”*
 - *Trauma reminders for the caregiver and ways that she can identify if it is bringing up reactions from her.*
 - *Perspective changes in world view after seeing the impacts of trauma on the child.*
 - *Feeling sad that Desmond was exposed to the violence and/or angry at his parents for traumatizing him.*
 - *Feeling that she have been infected by the trauma and can’t unsee/unhear what the child shared with her.*

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- How might this impact her parenting?
 - ❖ *Facilitator Note: Answers to look for and highlight in “Impact on Parenting”*
 - *It may make her have more difficulty setting boundaries for fear of retraumatizing the child.*
 - *It may make her more sensitive to how she reacts to behaviors as she can now link them to the trauma history.*
- What are some ways that she might cope with the trauma exposure? What cultural values or supports can be utilized to support Agnes?
 - ❖ *Facilitator Note: Answers to look for and highlight in “Coping Strategies”*
 - *Trauma reminders for caregivers and how to respond to these (e.g., engaging in ways to get back inside her window of tolerance- taking deep breaths, grounding etc.).*
 - *Desmond needs to see that she can handle hearing about these details and be supportive of him. How she reacts is important. This is a good lead into the next slide that focuses on coping strategies.*
 - ❖ *Facilitator Note: Suggestions to consider for “Cultural Values/Supports”*
 - *Thinking culturally due to being a collectivistic peoples, ideally Agnes would not be alone. Who is the emotional container for Agnes? Who can be an emotional container alongside Agnes? Imagine a physical circle of Agnes along with other extended family members and friends coming together regularly to encircle Desmond in positive engagement.*

This is just for one tribe but might be helpful for considering cultural implications.

[Seven Lakota Values : Aktá Lakota Museum & Cultural Center \(stjo.org\)](http://stjo.org).

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