VORS PRINCIPLES:

Guiding Families and Professionals Toward Ethical, Developmentally Sensitive, and Family-Oriented Responses After Sibling Sexual Abuse

VOICE

Empowerment, Bear Witness, Anguish

- Does everyone in the family feel like they can speak up and show little fear of the consequences for talking about the sexual abuse?
- Do caregivers take this seriously and support both children?
- Can the family show anguish, emotional distress, validation?
- Does everyone acknowledge that the rules were broken and had an impact on others?

OPENNESS

Listen, Communicate, No Secrets

- Has a “no secrets” motto become part of family communication?
- Can children and caregivers express their thoughts and feelings with each other and cope with these?
- Is there consistent and fair caregiving – with structure, roles, boundaries, and conflict resolution skills practiced every day?

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RESPONSIBILITY

Invitations, “*Both And*” Position, Accountability Axiom

- Are people in the family able to take responsibility for their behaviours and accept natural/logical consequences for their actions?
- Are parents and caregivers able to support and hold children accountable for their behaviours?
- Can everyone acknowledge mistakes or poor decisions, apologize and be honest with themselves about the poor decision or mistake?
- Are people able to focus on behaviours and not attack the person?

SAFETY

Consistent, Predictable, Non-shaming, “*New Normal*”

- Have family members accepted and respected the safety plans or new rules?
- Do caregivers have some guesses about what developed and maintained sexually abusive behaviour in the family and has this been addressed?
- Are caregivers able to identify and address unsafe situations?
- Do family members feel like they have the freedom or permission to say “stop” or “pause” or “I’m not ready” if a change to the safety plan is suggested?

the CLINICAL COLLECTIVE

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VOICE

The Child Who Experienced Victimization Can:

* Acknowledge that the abuse happened
* Feel that they are believed
* Speak their truth from a place of empowerment (no fear of consequences for telling)
* Express their needs and independent wishes
* Speak and act knowing they have a free choice
* Express a willingness for communication & contact to begin

The Caregivers Can:

* Provide authentic validation & belief that sexual abuse happened
* Attach no responsibility to the child who experienced victimization
* Support needs of both children
* Separate how they feel about the youth from their behaviour & hold them totally responsible
* Speak their truth about the impact

*See influence of past communication & behaviour patterns & seek assistance

The Youth Who Engaged in SA Can:

* Acknowledge that the abuse happened
* Speak their truth despite possible consequences
* Express their needs re: Risk, Need, Responsivity principles
* Willingly speak to acknowledge the harm caused to everyone, including self

All Family Members Can:

*Acknowledge that the abuse happened & place the responsibility where it belongs
* Speak freely about the impact, while separating the person from behaviour; freedom to disclose
*Believe that the "new normal" ways of communication and interaction are beneficial & will minimize the potential for further abuse
*Express an independent willingness for communication & contact

OPENNESS

The Child Who Experienced Victimization Can:

* Understand the meaning and function of secrets
* Expect consistency in parenting and clear boundaries / roles within family
* Express their thoughts and feelings, communicate directly and indirectly
* Demonstrate healthy strategies to cope

The Caregivers Can:

* Identify the role of secrecy in their family
* Express developmentally appropriate messages to children
* Provide consistency in parenting practices that are fair and developmentally appropriate
* Model, within couple dynamics, empathetic communication and resolution of conflicts

The Youth Who Engaged in SA Can:

*Communicate effectively directly & indirectly; express thoughts & feelings; cope effectively
* Understand the role of secrecy to gain compliance/maintain abusive behaviours
* Expect consistency in parenting and clear boundaries in the home environment
* Can be empathically attuned to self and others

All Family Members Can:

* Demonstrate open communication of thoughts & feelings directly, e.g., no triangulation in communication
* Recognize the importance of consistent & fair parenting practices, e.g., structure, roles, boundaries
* Demonstrate a "*New Normal*" of communication & conflict resolution is practiced

RESPONSIBILITY

The Child Who Experienced Victimization Can:

* Hold sibling totally accountable (incl. understanding their body's physiological responses)
* Feels validated by the family system
* Demonstrate positive coping demonstrated after parents hold youth accountable
* Directly and indirectly ask questions about the abuse (to youth, parents, family)

The Caregivers Can:

* Verbalize the belief that the abuse happened
* Support all family members distinct needs and place responsibility
* Model accountability, apology, and experience natural consequences
*Address their own thoughts/feelings about abuse

The Youth Who Engaged in SA Can:

* Accept natural and logical consequences for decisions
* Develop internal locus of control & demonstrate a moral code
* Experience a reduction in overwhelming sense of shame
* Feel anguish of the harm caused to others
* Apologize, make amends, have hope & act in congruence with a healthy future

All Family Members Can:

* Speak about the abuse openly with each other i.e., "It's an open book"; "it's a thread in the tapestry"
* Practice the "*Both And* " position: support & hold accountable
* Acknowledge "truths": We make mistakes & can apologize, be honest with oneself about one's faults and flaws
* Acknowledging their role in contributing to the abusive dynamics/patterns
* Focus on behaviours not the person
* Acknowledge ownership of behaviours and the belief that one can change = hope

SAFETY

The Child Who Experienced Victimization Can:

* Identify safe versus unsafe (thoughts, feelings, behaviours, physiological sensations)
* Name and have trust that adults will keep them safe
* Have freedom to express themselves
* Accept the limits of the safety plan

The Caregivers Can:

* Accept responsibility for implementing safety plans, congruent to the level of concern
*Ability to oversee safety plan and meet the physical, emotional, and psychological needs of safety for all children
*Identify and understand the impact of the past unsafe situations

The Youth Who Engaged in SA Can:

* Develop and follow their safety plan
* Be aware of the influences that contributed to the choice to engage in sexually abusive behaviour, high-risk situations and cope differently
* Accept trust building as a process
* Empathically attune to the needs of others – or at least be aware of the potential impact

All Members of The Family Can:

* Understand how or why the abuse was developed or maintained
* Live their "*New Normal*" - having the right to feel safe, expecting adults to keep them safe, ensuring safe behaviours, communication & dynamics
* Model relationships that are consistent, predictable and non-shaming
* Identify and address unsafe situations
* Freedom to pause/stop