

# SOCRATIC QUESTIONING FOR COMMON TRAUMA-RELATED COGNITIONS OF CHILDREN

**UNHELPFUL THOUGHT:** It's up to me to take care of my brothers and sisters because no one else will.

**POSSIBLE ENDPOINT:** I am important to my brothers and sisters, but it is (the adult's) job to take care of all of us.

## WHAT I WANT TO SAY TO CHILD:

- Your job as a child is to have fun, be pleasant to be around, work hard at school, and follow the rules at home and school.
  - It is not your job (never a child's job) to take care of other children.
  - It would be impossible for a child to fully take care of other children.
  - That is too much responsibility for a child.
  - Brothers and sisters should be able to play and have fun together.
  - There are lots of ways to show you care about your siblings without acting like a parent.
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- The role of parents/DHS/foster parents is to take care of your siblings.
  - Children need to have adults take care of them.
  - There are people in your life who care about you and your siblings and will take care of you.
  - Many adults help kids grow in different parts of their lives (specify with foster parent, teachers, coaches, extended relatives, etc). For example, a teacher helps kids learn.

## QUESTIONS I CAN ASK TO ELICIT THE ABOVE:

- Thinking of the other kids in your class, what would you say their jobs are? What are most \_\_\_ yr UNHELPFULs expected to do?
  - What would you say to a friend your age who thinks she should take care of her siblings?
  - Do most kids your age take care of younger children?
  - What do brothers and sisters enjoy doing together?
  - What things can you do with your siblings that show you care about them?
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- What responsibilities do parents have?
  - Why do DHS and foster care exist?
  - Is it legal for children to live on their own? Why not? Why isn't that a good idea?
  - Kids need to grow and learn lots of different things...Who are the people that help kids grow? Would it be okay for a kid to be a teacher for a class? A soccer coach?
  - Who do you have that cares about you? How do we know when someone cares about us? Who has done \_\_\_\_\_ (use child's example of showing care) recently?
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**UNHELPFUL THOUGHT:** I can't share my narrative with mom and dad because they'll think I am bad and dirty.

**POSSIBLE ENDPOINT:** Talking with mom and dad about this will help me feel better.

**WHAT I WANT TO SAY TO CHILD:**

- It can be scary telling mom and dad, but talking about it shows you are brave. You've already been brave telling me (therapist) about it.
- Mom and Dad will be very proud of you.
- It's normal for kids to worry about telling adults about abuse, but your parents don't think anything bad about you for it happening.
  
- Mom and Dad do not think that you are bad or that the abuse was your fault.
- Mom and Dad are upset with the abuser, not you. Because the abuser is the one who did this.
- This was done to you, not by you. Nothing about you made this happen.
  
- ✓ Not talking to mom and dad about the abuse keeps you feeling distressed. The same way not talking about it at all kept you feeling bad.
- ✓ You felt better after doing the narrative in therapy. You will feel better after you can tell mom and dad too.

**QUESTIONS I CAN ASK TO ELICIT THE ABOVE:**

- It sounds like you feel scared to tell your parents, what does a person need to be able to do something they are scared of?
- How might mom and dad feel if you were able to tell them?
- Have mom and dad ever shown you or told you that they think your bad/dirty because of the abuse? Do you remember worrying about telling anyone about the abuse? What have you learned in therapy about telling? Do other kids worry about telling too? Do you think other kids might worry about sharing their narrative?
  
- Who do mom and dad hold responsible for the abuse? Who caused it to happen?
- How do mom and dad feel about the abuser? Who are mom and dad upset at? Why?
  
- ✓ How did you feel before you ever talked about the abuse in therapy? How did you feel after we did the narrative? I wonder if feeling worried about telling your parents is kinda like how you felt worried before we did the narrative? How did that turn out?
- ✓ How might it feel after telling your parents?
- ✓ What has it been like telling me-the therapist?

**UNHELPFUL THOUGHT:** Something is wrong with me because my mom chose her boyfriend over me.

**POSSIBLE ENDPOINT:** I am lovable and can be part of a family.

WHAT I WANT TO SAY TO CHILD:

- Some parents have their own issues and make bad decisions.
- It has nothing to do with the child. The parent would make the bad decision no matter what the child did. You had no control over your parent's choices.
- It is sad that your mom chose her boyfriend, but that is her mistake.
- Not everyone is meant to be a mother. Your mom wasn't able to be the best mom for you.
  
- There are people who love you. People admire your strength and the things you've done for yourself.
- You are a worthy and lovable individual.
- You deserve a loving family and people who will protect your best interests.
  
- ✓ It is sad that your relationship with your bio mom isn't what you wanted. But, you can still have fulfilling relationships.
- ✓ Family is not always based on biology.

QUESTIONS I CAN ASK TO ELICIT THE ABOVE:

- Do you think your mom might have chosen her boyfriend no matter what? Was there anything you could have done? (besides not telling about the abuse)
- (If child talks about not behaving): Do most kids who do \_\_\_\_\_ (misbehave) get abandoned by their parents? Is that a fair consequence?
- Is everyone cut out to be a parent? What are some reasons people give up their babies for adoption?
- How was your mom at being a parent?
  
- What do your friends say about you? Your teachers? (any other significant people?) How would I (therapist) describe you?
- What do you value in others? What makes a person a good person? How is that like you? Describe yourself. When have you been \_\_\_\_\_ (kind, sharing, loving, fair, etc)?
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- ✓ What makes up a family?

**UNHELPFUL THOUGHT:** It's my fault because if I hadn't been drunk/high, the rape wouldn't have happened.

**POSSIBLE ENDPOINT:** No matter what my mental state, the perpetrator is responsible for victimizing me.

#### WHAT I WANT TO SAY TO CHILD:

- Rape is the responsibility of the person doing the act.
- It's not your fault.
- You may regret some actions that put you at risk, but you did not cause the rape.
  
- Many people get in dangerous situations and aren't victimized.
- You did not deserve or cause the rape to happen because you drank.
  
- ✓ Rape should not be a consequence for getting drunk.
- ✓ You didn't know that someone was going to take advantage of you.
- ✓ You're judging your actions on what you know now. Hindsight is 20/20.

#### QUESTIONS I CAN ASK TO ELICIT THE ABOVE:

- Who is responsible for a rape? Your rape? **\*\*Do responsibility pie graph\*\*** (& do again after)
  - Is it possible to regret decisions or actions, without claiming responsibility for the outcome? Would you have Can you think of other situations where someone may regret their decision but the responsibility lies with another?
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- Do all guys who see drunk girls rape them? Do even 'most guys' rape? Do all girls who get drunk at a party get raped?
  - Do you know of people who have been drunk and not gotten raped?
  - Have there been times when you drank and this did not happen?
  - Your friends were drinking to, did it happen to them?
  - So whose actions determine if a rape will happen?
  
  - ✓ What is an appropriate consequence for getting drunk?
  - ✓ Could the rape have happened even if you weren't drinking?
  - ✓ Did you know that he was going to rape you when you decided to drink?
  - ✓ Is it possible for anyone to know when a rape will happen?
  - ✓ Are you judging your actions on what you knew then or what you know now? Is it realistic to judge our decisions that way?
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**UNHELPFUL THOUGHT:** I'll never be the same person I was before this happened.

**POSSIBLE ENDPOINT:** I would not have wished it to have happened, but I have grown and am still a good person.

WHAT I WANT TO SAY TO CHILD:

People have survived trauma and thrived.

You're not the only one, it has happened to others.

QUESTIONS I CAN ASK TO ELICIT THE ABOVE:

What would you say to a friend who had been through this trauma?

**UNHELPFUL THOUGHT:** I shouldn't have told because I don't get to see my family anymore. I could've handled the abuse.

**POSSIBLE ENDPOINT:** It is sad not to see my family, but there have been good things from my telling.

WHAT I WANT TO SAY TO CHILD:

- Your telling is not what caused removal from your family.
- The abuser is responsible.
  
- There are/were negative impacts of the abuse on you. Saying you could handle it is ignoring those impacts.
- People can heal and recover after the abuse stops.
  
- ✓ You protected yourself. You are safe. You are in a home that provides for you.
- ✓ You protected your siblings.

QUESTIONS I CAN ASK TO ELICIT THE ABOVE:

- Why were you removed from your home? How did DHS decide? Was it just that you told?
- What other people are responsible for you not seeing your family?
  
- How were you feeling when you decided to tell? How was life going? School? Relationships at home?
- How do you feel now after being in therapy for awhile? Would we be able to do this therapy while abuse was going on?
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- ✓ What things have happened since you were removed? Are you safe now?
- ✓ Who else is safe? Will your sibling be abused too now? Why not? What if you hadn't told? How do you feel about having protected your sibling?