

# GLAD House Tool Shed

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## You're a Tool: Connection and Attachment

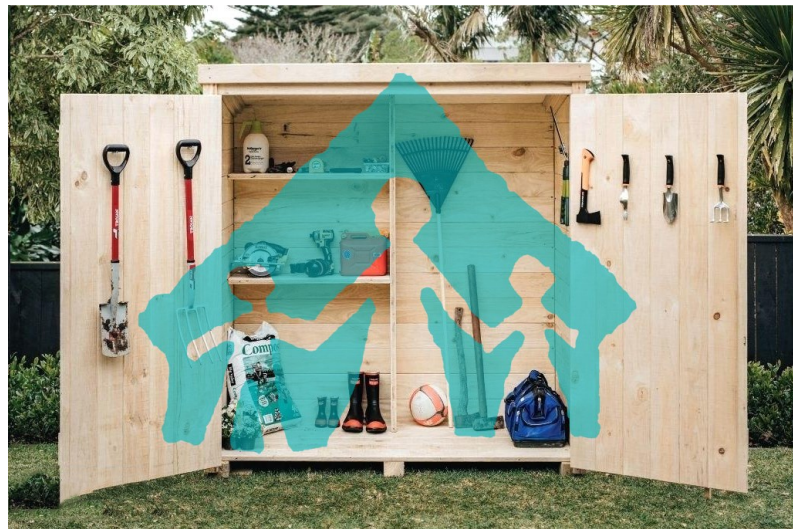
Therapeutic interventions work best when the relationship between provider and child is strong. This makes YOU the most important, effective tool in the toolbox of therapeutic skills. Kids that experience trauma at a young age typically have attachment-related problems due to inconsistent care or abuse from their primary parental figure.

This leads to children that have trust issues, struggle with feeling safe, and related symptoms/behaviors such as defiance, emotional/behavioral outbursts, low moods, anxiety and more. Effective parenting strategies work best when a child feels safe and secure in their environment and within the caregiver/child relationship.

This concept is rooted in the biology of our brains, where newer research into *polyvagal theory* has found that when safe-

ty is communicated through certain expressed markers of social engagement, defensiveness is reduced.

What this means is that as a child begins to feel safer within a relationship with a provider, their ability to communicate and rationalize increases. You can help the child feel safe, and subsequently build connection, through how you interact and engage with the child. Through your warmth and tone of voice, soft eye contact, open body posture and getting at the child's level, unconditional expression of caring, and validation of feelings, you truly become a powerful tool. Add in engaging activities such as playing ball, arts and crafts, taking walks and just playing together, and a healing connection can be made.



These pages are full of therapeutic tools that we are teaching the GLAD House kids.



## Flipping Your Lid from Whole Brain Child

Many of the children at GLAD House have had scary experiences that are sometimes triggered by a noise, smell, or interaction with a peer/staff.

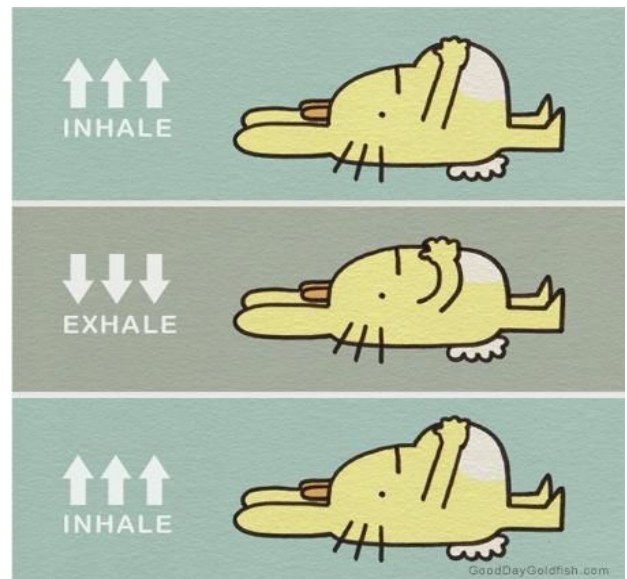
We teach them how these triggers may cause them to “flip their lids.” We teach them how their upstairs and downstairs parts of the brain are supposed to work together. The upstairs part holds the positive coping and social skills they have learned, and it helps them to make good decisions, whereas the downstairs part is where the really big feelings come from.

When a child is really scared or anxious,

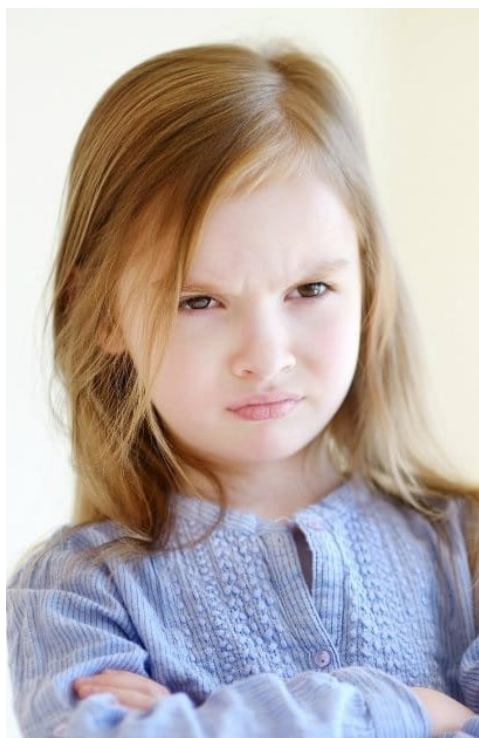
the fear response part of the brain reacts telling them to FIGHT, FLIGHT or FREEZE, and it prevents the two parts of the brain from working together. When kids flip their lid, they have really big feelings, such as fear, anger, and anxiety, and they make bad choices based on these

feelings because they can’t get to the upstairs part of the brain.

We work with the kids on recognizing if they have flipped their lid, and to relax their mind and bodies so they can get the two parts of their brain working together again.



## Emotional vs. Behavioral Outbursts



It is important to know the difference between emotional and behavioral outbursts because there are different ways to respond. If you choose the wrong response, your child's outburst or tantrum may get worse and last longer. It is okay if you make the wrong choice because you can quickly fix it.

A behavioral outburst is when a child is testing limits by making poor choices. An adult should respond with a clear direction you want them to follow and praise them for listening or give a

consequence for not following the direction.

An emotional outburst is when a child is acting out because of upset, sad, anxious, or angry feelings he/she is struggling to manage. An adult should connect and validate the feeling the child is having and then redirect the behavior. For example, "I see that you are upset because you had a bad day at school today. I would love to hear about it, but it is bedtime. Can you give me a 5 minute summary? Then I will think about how to help you and we can talk more tomorrow morning when we are both rested."

## Mindfulness Activities

Mindfulness is being present-moment awareness, an open and friendly willingness to understand what is going on in and around you. It means living in the present moment without judging or ignoring anything or getting carried away by the pressures of everyday life.

Mindfulness is beneficial not only for children. Adults also like to have a way to free themselves from their relentless stream of consciousness. Thoughts never stop, but you

can stop interacting with them, stop listening to them.

Try some of these simple activities with your children, staying mindful and present with them in the moment: coloring, nature walks, stretching and breathing exercises, guided meditation, journaling, etc.

Anything can be done mindfully, just remember to focus on the present moment and your five senses.

Mindfulness is very beneficial to help with kids with transitions!



# G.L.A.D.

**G**ather yourself in a calm demeanor to respond to the child

**L**isten to child's words and validate feelings

**A**sk child for solutions to problem

**D**etermine best solution and provide praise for working through the problem



*“GLAD House’s vision is that children impacted by addiction in their families will reach their personal wellness potential (mentally, emotionally, socially, and physically) and lead fulfilling and purposeful lives free from substance abuse.”*

## GLAD House Contact and Referrals

We serve children ages 5-12 years old with 10 children in each of 3 treatment groups within our comprehensive mental health and AOD prevention after school and summer program.

If you are interested in referring a child who has been impacted by parental addiction our referral form can be found at [www.gladhouse.org](http://www.gladhouse.org).

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