



Northeast and Caribbean (HHS Region 2)

MHTTC

Mental Health Technology Transfer Center Network

Funded by Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration

Video script

Talida :

Hello everyone,

My name is Talida State and I am an Associate professor of Special Education in the Department of Teaching and Learning at Montclair State University. I am here with my dear friend and colleague.

Imad: Hi, my name is Imad Zaheer and I am an Assistant Professor of School Psychology at Saint John's University. We will be guiding you through our course on functional contextual thinking for mental health challenges but before we start, we wanted to give you a little bit more background on us.

Talida: I am a Board-Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA), with over 15 years of research and school-based experience in consulting and providing evidence-based services for students with emotional and behavioral challenges, as well as school professionals who work with the students. I am a member of professional organizations such as the Council for Exceptional Children and Association for Positive Behavior Supports, and a regular presenter at national and international conferences.

Imad: I am a pediatric school psychologist with 10 years of research and practice experience in school consultation for mental health challenges and in particular my work focuses on implementation of evidence-based practices. I'm also a member of Council for Exceptional Children and Association for Positive Behavior Supports. In addition, I am on the steering committee for the Family School Community Alliance which is an international organization dedicated to linking home and school systems. Additionally, Dr. State and I have founded the Nurturing Environments Institute or NEI, an

organization focused on creating nurturing and effective environments for everyone, this includes working in the school context, community and home settings.

Talida: This course on functional contextual thinking has been developed as part of the Northeast and Caribbean Mental Health Technology Transfer Center or MHTTC, housed at Rutgers School of Health Professions, Department of Psychiatric Rehabilitation. The MHTTC is funded by SAMHSA, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, to enhance the capacity of the behavioral health and other related workforces in order to deliver evidence-based and empirically supported practices to individuals with mental health challenges in schools.

Welcome to this online series about Functional Contextual Thinking, a framework designed to help school professionals to problem-solve a range of mental health challenges, from students engaging in outward challenges such as aggression to more internal challenges such as anxiety and depression. As school professionals, we all want to support our students, guide them, mentor them and help them succeed, not only in their academic performance, but also in developing prosocial behaviors, strong social emotional learning skills, and achieve and maintain an overall positive mental health.

Imad: So, we have been consulting in schools in various capacities over the decade and one thing we see again and again is that professionals need brief and effective strategies that they can successfully implement in their practice this include short training with limited resources that can get individuals quick results. Hence, the focus of these three modules will be to address topics of Functional Contextual Thinking or in short, FCT, with a user-friendly, brief and informal method designed to quickly help school professionals hypothesize the function or the reason underlying the challenges students are going through and develop effective strategies to address that function.

Each module in the series will introduce you to new content, thus helping you build the skills in a step-by-step. Throughout the modules, we will guide you through different examples, and case scenarios to help you practice the use of the Functional Contextual Thinking framework. We want to make sure that

by the end of the 3 modules you will feel comfortable trying out FCT in your own practice and daily interactions with students.

Talida: In the first module, we review common school-related social, emotional, behavioral challenges that our students experience and describe the Functional Contextual Thinking (FCT) framework used to understand the root cause of such challenges. This is done by looking at the contexts in which the student experiences the challenges in order to determine the function or reason for those challenges. In module 1, we start by focusing on examples and applications of the FCT framework to externalizing problems, such as aggression.

Imad: In the second module we review and extend the FCT framework to internalizing challenges such as anxiety, depression and trauma. This requires us to take a closer look at not only the external context but also the internal context of the students, such as their thoughts, feelings and sensations.

In the third module, we review the Prevent-Teach-Respond approach that will help us select strategies to help our students based on the information gained using Functional Contextual Thinking. Prevent strategies help us to set up the environment to promote positive behaviors and the use of healthy coping skills while minimizing engaging in unhelpful actions. Teach strategies target the appropriate functional skills instead of unhelpful actions. Finally, respond strategies ensure that appropriate functional behavior is supported and encouraged in order to maintain it over time, while the unhelpful or unworkable actions are discouraged.

Talida : We hope you will find these modules helpful and that you will enjoy this series. Even more, we hope you will give FCT a try in your own practice.

Imad: Thank you and we are looking forward to your feedback.