

Trauma Informed and Restorative Educational Practices



PREPARED AND PRESENTED BY;

**JOYCE COY
WENDY CIONI**

Outline for today



- What is Trauma?
- Why should we care about Trauma?
- Impacts on Brain, Behavior & Learning
- Viewing schools through the lens of trauma
- What we can do
- A few more things...

Video

<https://youtu.be/z8vZxDa2KPM>

What is trauma?



- An event that overwhelms an individual's coping strategies, causing extreme emotional, psychological and physiological distress
- Traumatic events can be single occurrences, recurring events; or multiple unrelated events
- Repeated exposure can magnify the effect on brain and nervous system development.

The impact of a traumatic event depends on:



1. Age and developmental stage
2. Perception of the danger faced
3. Victim or witness
4. Relationship to the victim or perpetrator

5. Past experience with trauma
6. Adversities faced following the trauma
7. Presence/availability of adults who can offer help and protection

Adverse Childhood Experiences Study (ACEs)



- 10 year study (Kaiser and CDC)
- 17,000 HMO members (middle class, 72% college educated, 77% white)
- Link between adverse childhood experiences and health/wellness over the lifespan
- Largest study ever done on this subject

What are Adverse Childhood Experiences



Growing up (prior to age 18) in a household with:

- Physical abuse
- Sexual abuse
- Verbal abuse
- Physical neglect
- Emotional neglect
- caregiver who's an alcoholic
- caregiver who's a victim of domestic violence
- family member in jail
- family member diagnosed with a mental illness
- disappearance of a parent through divorce



The Hidden Epidemic



Of the 17,000 HMO Members:

- 64% had an ACE score 1 or more
- 1 in 4 exposed to 2 categories of ACEs
- 1 in 12 exposed to 4 categories of ACEs
- 1 in 4 were sexually abused, physically abused or lived in a household with substance abuse.

The higher the ACEs score the more likely:



- Severe and persistent emotional problems
- Health risk factors
- Serious social problems
- Adult disease and disability
- High health and mental health care costs
- Poor life expectancy
- ACE score of 6 or more results in a 20 year decrease in life expectancy.

An ACE score of 4 or more

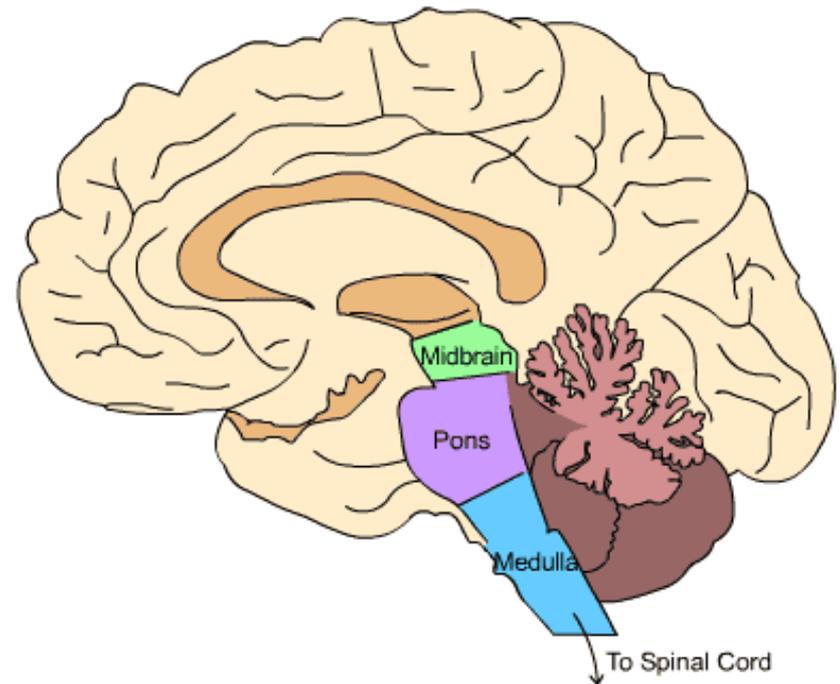


- 12x more likely to attempt suicide
- 7x more likely to become alcoholic
- 4 ½ x more likely to have depression
- 3x more likely to use IV drugs
- 2x as likely to smoke
- Children are **32x** more likely to have learning or behavior problems in school (Nadine Burke Harris)

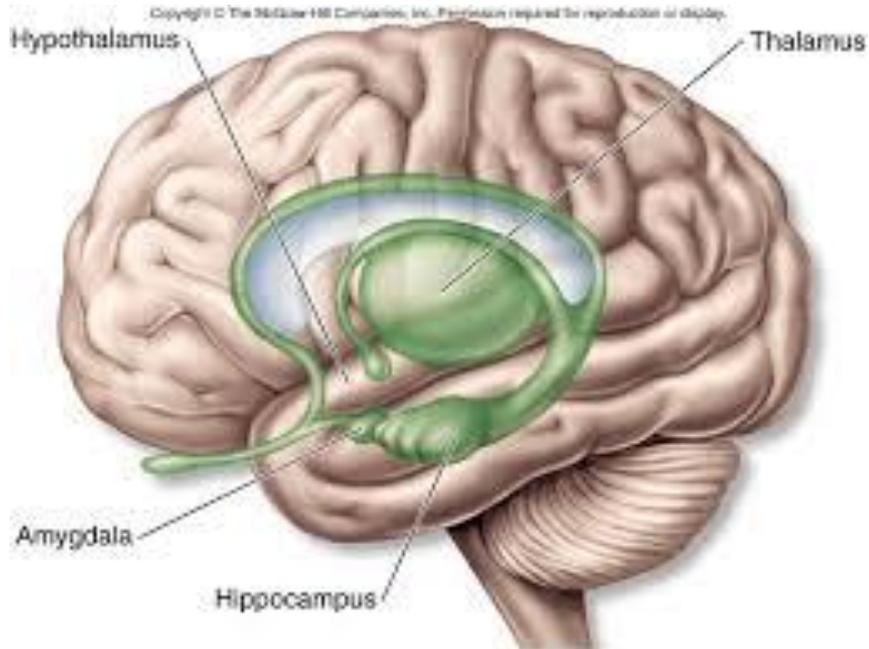
Primitive or Reptilian Brain

- Plays a major role in trauma
- Instinct & survival
- Formed earliest
- Breathing, circulation, digestion, startle response
- Fight, flight, freeze
- Responds to sensations & body memory
- Does NOT respond to language and conscious thought

Figure AB-25: Brainstem



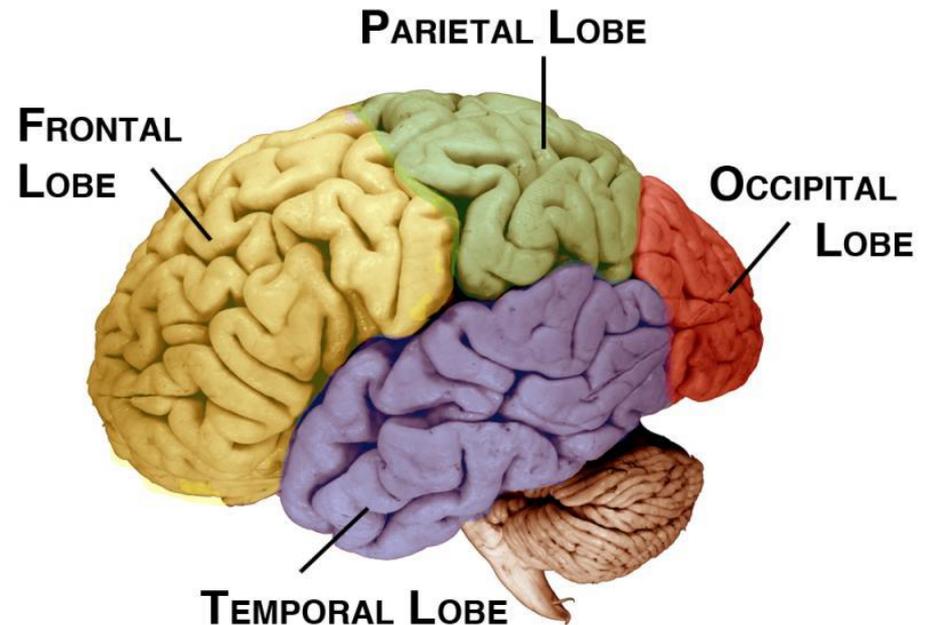
Limbic System



- Assesses risk...negative emotions
- Expression & mediation of emotions and feelings
- Processing and storing emotional reactions
- Mobilized in the face of threat
- Fight or Flight

Neocortex

- Conscious thought & choice making
- Self-awareness
- Integration of feeling, thinking and sensing
- Seat of executive functions such as organizing, inhibition, attention
- Last to develop
- Most easily disturbed

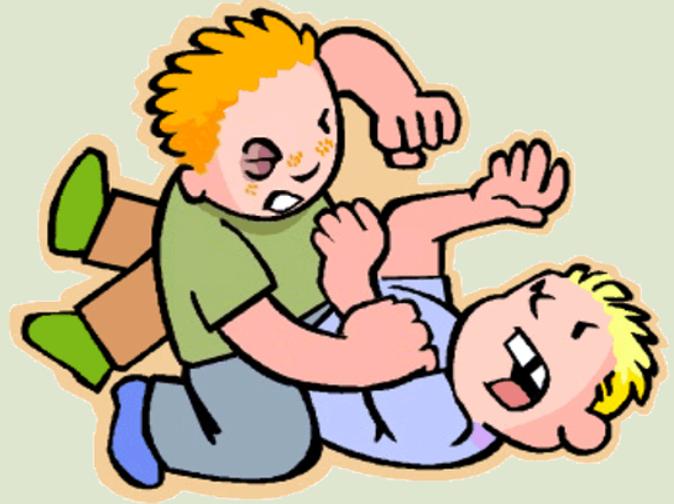


Trauma and the Brain



- **Amygdala**-The brains emotional computer and alarm system.
- **Hippocampus**-Brains storage for explicit memories. Stores initial fear memory.
- **Thalamus**-Translates sights, sounds, smells into the language of the brain
- **Pre-frontal cortex**-Where information is used to make decisions about cognitive and emotional responses. Processes information by cross referencing and making various associations between experiences.

Fight or Flight 1



- Information from the senses is received by the **Thalamus**.
- If based on our past conditioning, memories or temperament the stimuli is recognized as dangerous, the **thalamus** directs it to the **amygdala**, which initiates the fight/flight response.
- The activated **amygdala** bypasses the logical mind and triggers a body-wide emergency response within milliseconds
- Impulses from the **amygdala** are sent to the **hypothalamus** to activate the CNS (heart rate, respiration) and **pituitary gland** (to secrete hormones which signal other glands to secrete stress hormones like epinephrine, norepinephrine, cortisol, etc).

Flight or Fight 2

- There are multiple effects on the mind and body.
- Past conditioning leads to fearful thoughts which lead to feelings of anxiety, anger, worry, panic, etc.
- The body shuts down digestion and other nonessential functions.
- Stress hormones act on the brain to form a memory of the stressful event.
- Amygdala tells the brain to make a strong memory of the perceived threat.



Freeze

- An altered state of reality
- Time slows down
- Pain/fear awareness diminished
- May appear calm outside, but not inside
- The body or parts of it feel numb
- Vacant eyes
- Inescapable fear can overwhelm biological and psychological coping mechanisms
- May be part of dissociative disorders



Chronic Toxic Stress



- Children who experience chronic stress live much of their lives in fight, flight or fright (freeze) mode
- Children respond to the world as a place of constant danger
- The brain overloaded with stress hormones doesn't function properly and learning and behavior are affected
- Children fall behind in school, fail to develop healthy relationships with peers or have challenging behavior because they are unable to trust adults

Trauma and the Brain

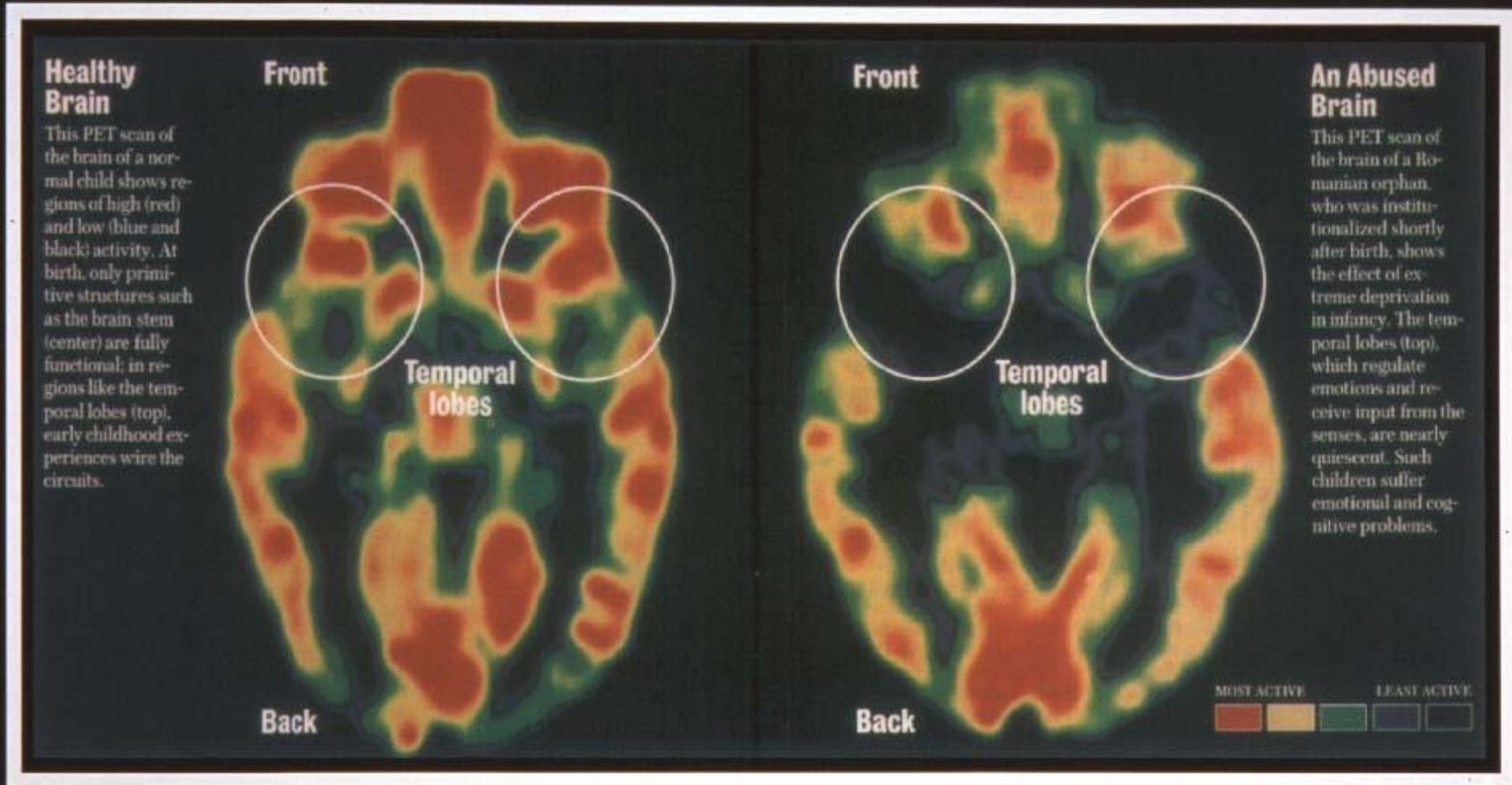


- Trauma alters the brain
- Traumatic experiences trigger a state of arousal in the body – a heightened state of alertness and fearfulness for one's safety
- Short term and prolonged arousal can effect cognitive and behavioral function
- In an arousal state, changes in the brain are triggered by a variety of stress related functions
- Repeated exposure to a number of traumatic events can magnify the effect on brain and nervous system development.

Brain Effects



- Hippocampus and amygdala tend to be smaller
- Lagging Left brain development = ↓ pleasurable experiences, decision making & language development.
- More R brain activation = ↑ perception and expression of negative emotion.
- Smaller corpus callosum (R-L connection)
- Brain stem is dysregulated creating a host of problems (such as inattention, arousal level, pain sensitivity, ...)
- Real vs imagined danger



Traditional approaches to discipline punish children for behaviors they may not have had the luxury of developing.



The Adaptive Responses to Threat

The Alarm State



Trauma throws the system out of balance, creates a persisting set of compensatory responses that in turn create a new, but less flexible state of equilibrium.

Symptoms of Un-Discharged Traumatic Stress



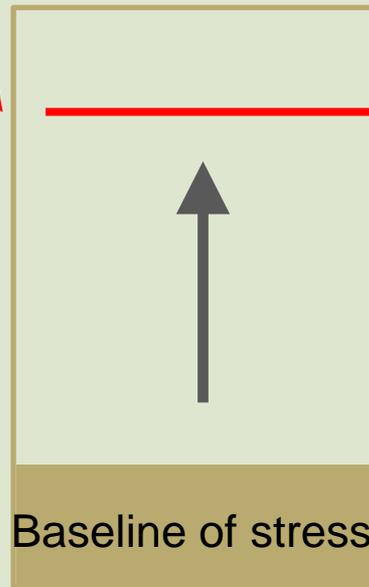
Window of “*Stress Tolerance*”

Why are students escalating & disrupting?

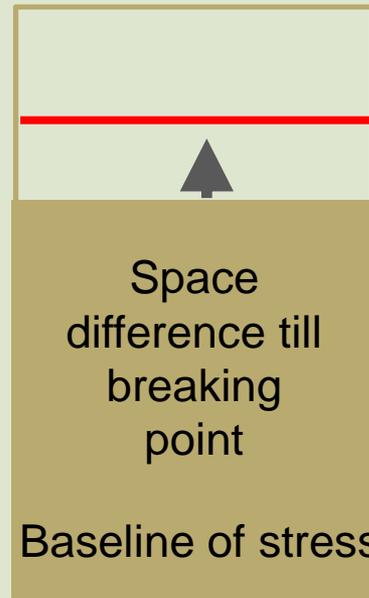
Healthy Brain
Development

Trauma-impacted
Brain

Breaking
point



Breaking
point



Traumas Effect on Learning



Attention

Frequent “downshifting” to survival mode and intrusive memories cause lack of focus.

Sequencing

Inconsistency and lack of routines in early years may lead to:

- Difficulty with sequential ordering
- Difficulty with multi-step directions or algorithms
- Impulsivity

Traumas Effect on Learning



Language

Lack of talk around ideas, thoughts, feelings may lead to difficulty with:

- Engaging socially
- Organizing thoughts
- Processing thoughts

Memory

Chronic stress affects working memory and ability to process information accurately

Can Trauma look like ADHD?



- Hypervigilance and disassociation associated with Trauma can look like “inattention”
- Impulsivity might be brought on by a “stress response” in overdrive
- Often difficult to control symptoms with behavioral therapy and medication

Trauma Exposed Students:



- Are easily triggered
- May be disengaged
- May be disruptive
- Have a poor attendance
- Have a downward slope of failure
- Seem disconnected and withdrawn
- Feel hopeless



These students are living with

- an insufficient regulatory system,
- a negative belief system
- difficulty trusting things will be safe

Toxic Stress and Self-Regulation



Self-regulation: the act of managing one's thoughts and feelings to engage in goal-directed actions

- Organizing behavior, controlling impulses, solving problems constructively
- Umbrella term for: executive control, executive functioning, self-control, self-management, willpower, grit
- Related to resilience, coping, stress management

Self-regulation can be derailed by chronic and toxic stress

Development of Self-Regulation

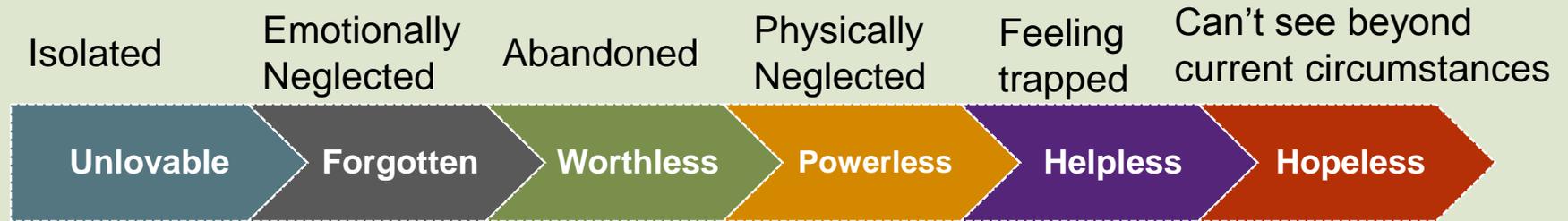


These skills increase dramatically during early childhood and adolescence

Particular opportunities for intervention

- Can be strengthened and taught (like literacy)
- Need support, instruction, reinforcement and coaching
- Develops in context of social relationships
- Dependent of co-regulation

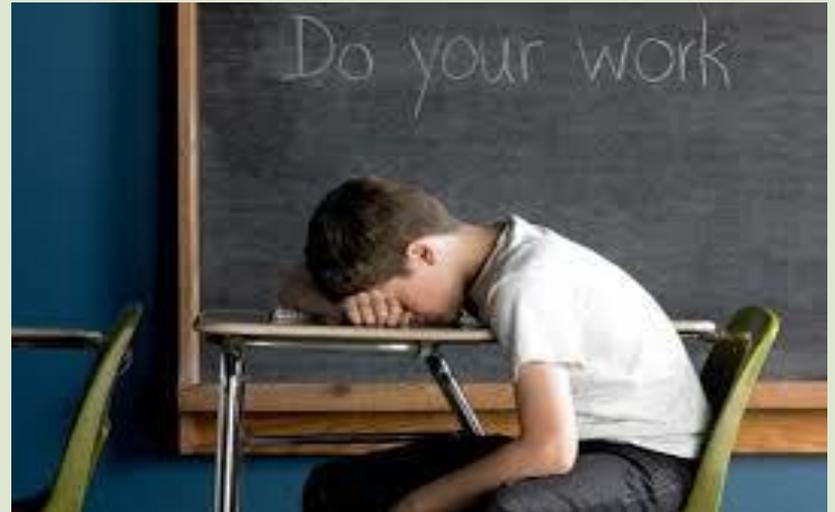
A negative belief system develops



A negative belief system develops



- I'm not lovable
- I'm not good enough
- I'm stupid
- I screw up every time
- I'm worthless



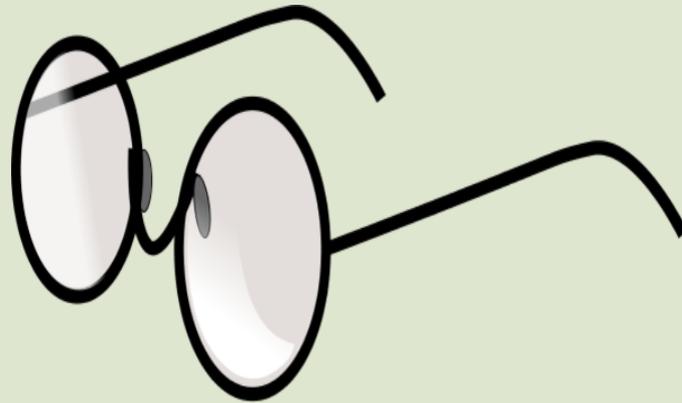
This is not choice

“Schools can **no longer limit interventions** to individual children with **known trauma histories**, but must create instructional frameworks that integrate **a trauma-sensitive approach** into ALL aspects of the school day.”

It starts with an

ATTITUDE SHIFT

Look at students through a Trauma
Informed/Restorative lens



***In order to be ready to learn,
students must feel safe,
So that they can
stay regulated***

Trauma informed School Staffs



- Understand that causes and effects of trauma on students
- Understand the potential to re-traumatize individuals IF...
 - Interventions and interactions ARE NOT sensitive to their experience or needs
- Create a culture that builds community

Trauma Informed Schools



- Foster positive school climate and classroom design
- Build relationships
- Build social competence
- Use restorative practices
- Build resiliency
- Move toward compassionate discipline



Positive School Climate



- Create a sense of safety, connection, assurance
- Staff **and** students feel valued and part of the school community
- Create safe spaces for de-escalation
- Recognize social skills & academic skills are equally important

Building Relationships



Greet students at the door

- Builds connection
- Touch Use name Make eye contact Smile (TUMS)
- Allows you to gauge students mood

Link at-risk students with supportive staff members who can be:

- Calm and consistent
- Firm and accepting
- Model self regulation

See the individual underneath the behavior

- Look for the positive

Be curious rather than critical: 10x10



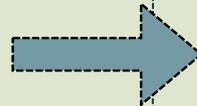
Compassionate Communication

(watch tone of voice & body language)



Traditional Response

- “It’s not that difficult”
- “You’re 10 now, learn to deal with life”
- “You should never have acted like that”
- “You need to be responsible”



Compassionate Response

- “I need to know how hard this is for you”
- “What is it you need help with”
- Sometimes life just gets too big, doesn’t it
- I’m sorry this is so hard

Build Social Competence



- Point out student's strengths, competencies
 - Help them see themselves as resilient
- Children are often told what they are doing wrong, rather than what they are doing right
 - Affirmations
 - Catch them being "good"
 - Teach self-regulation skills
- Validate...what have they done well, right, what worked
- Give opportunities to help others, teach empathy

Self-Regulation Development



- Model caregiver co-regulation skills
- Use social emotional learning curriculum to teach self-regulation skills (Social skills are necessary for common core)
- Mindfulness activities in the classroom
- Music, yoga, allowing students to move
- Give child space and time to re-regulate

What Builds Resiliency



- Close relationships with family, friends
- Positive view of yourself, confidence in your strengths and abilities
- Ability to manage strong feelings and impulses
- Good problem-solving and communication skills
- Feeling in control
- Seeking help and resources
- Seeing yourself as resilient (not a victim)
- Coping with stress in healthy ways
- Helping others
- Finding positive meaning in your life despite difficult events

Compassionate Discipline/ Restorative Practices



- Holds students accountable for misbehavior
- Seeks to understand the underlying cause of misbehavior
- Has compassion/acknowledges what the student is going through
- Understands students who are triggered **don't have control** over their behavior in the moment.
- Student outbursts are a test to pass, not a show of disrespect. It's **not** personal, it **is** a cry for help.

De-Escalation



- Identify triggering events to **prevent** escalation
- Avoid confrontation by giving **choices**
- Use proximity, touch student on the shoulder or eye contact
- Use calm, quiet voice & model breathing (regulate yourself)
- Give them time to **regulate their emotions**

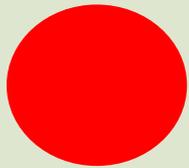
De-Escalation



- Have a place where student can **de-escalate and regulate** without fear of punishment (healthy coping)
 - safe zone in the classroom,
 - step outside, take a walk
 - Go to office/counseling
- Talk with student privately once they are calm

De-escalating shifts a student from survival mode:

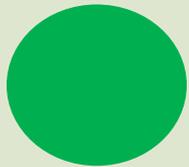
Cannot problem solve with child in fight, flight or freeze!:



Let student take time to regroup,
give time, take breaths, walk



Guarded, but may be able to
gently talk



Calm, ready to process and
discuss alternative actions

Visual cue card for classroom or administration

“I’ve learned that people
will forget what you said,
people will forget what you did,
but people will never forget
how you made them feel.”

Maya Angelou
1928 - 2014



Schools can be

Playful

Loving

Accepting

Curious

Empathic

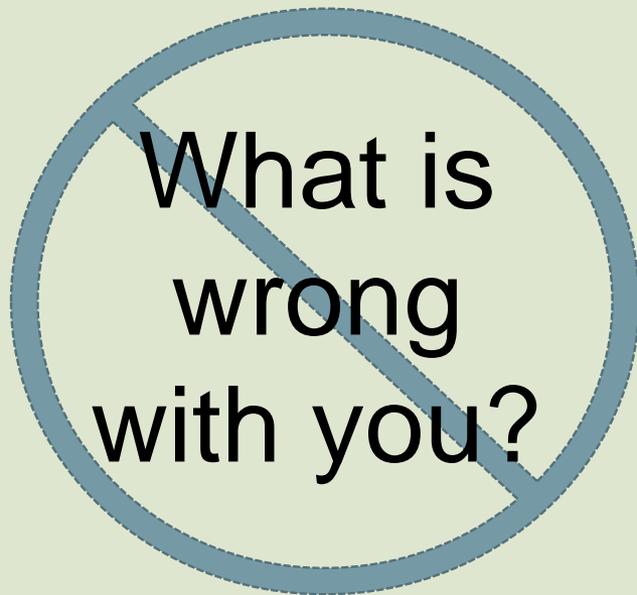
Where everyone

Listens

Understands

Validates

We move from ...



TO



Some hurting kids won't provide you a single feel good moment...

Until they feel how much you **VALUE** them

- Develop a mindset that views misbehavior not as a personal attack but as a language signaling children's neurological state.
- Discover what is causing the behavior
- Find what is getting in the way of your "Behavior is not a choice" mindset.

Compassion Fatigue

Symptoms:

- Emotional Exhaustion
- Mental/Physical exhaustion
- Reduced sense of personal accomplishment or meaning in work
- Isolating self

Self-Care:

- Find time for yourself everyday
- Have a transition from work to home
- Learn to say no more often, ask for help
- Support each other
- Exercise



Last thoughts:

- Don't personalize behavior: It's not about us, it is within the child.
- Recognize your own ACE score and its impact
- Identify your trauma triggers
- Practice emotional regulation (breath!!)
- Empathy doesn't mean taking on the other's emotional process/pain
- Support one another, you will sink alone.

References

- Easy to Love, Difficult to Discipline, Dr. Becky Bailey
- Reaching and Teaching Children who Hurt: Strategies for your classroom, Susan Craig 2008”
- Conscious Discipline, Dr. Becky Bailey
- Help for Billy: A Beyond Consequences Approach to Helping Children in the Classroom, by Heather Forbes 2013
- Building Bonds of Attachment: Awakening Love in Deeply Troubled Children, by Daniel A. Hughes
- Helping Traumatized Children Learn: A Report and Policy Agenda, Massachusetts Advocates for Children
- Helping Traumatized Children Learn: Volume 2: Creating and Advocating for Trauma Sensitive Schools Trauma and Learning Policy Institute
- “The International Resilience Project: Promoting resilience in children” Edith H. Grotberg
- The Heart of Learning and Teaching: Compassion, Resiliency and Academic Success , Ray Wolpow, PhD, Mona M. Johnson, MA, CPP, CDP, Ron Hertel, BS, Susan O. Kincaid, PhD
- “Arc Model”, Avis Smith
- Brooke Bouchet- Beyond Trauma: Building a Resilient Sacramento Conference 2015
- National Child Traumatic Stress Network (www.nctsnet.org)
- Regional Child Abuse Prevention Councils 2011
- www.cdc.gov
- www.childtrauma.org
- www.childhelp.org
- www.acesconnection.com
- www.kidsLINKcares.com
- Bessel van der Kolk, MD Boston University
- The Trauma Center at Justice Resource Institute: www.traumacenter.org
- The Body Keeps Score, Bessel van der Kolk MD
- OPRE Report 2015-97, November 2016, “Self-Regulation and Toxic Stress Report 3, 4”

Thank you for listening!!

Feel free to contact either of us at:

Wendy Cioni: wcioni@egusd.net

Joyce Coy: jcoy@egusd.net