Applying Responsive Trauma-Informed Strategies in Schools

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Agenda
• How Do Trauma “Behaviors” Present in School
• What is Trauma
• How Does Trauma Impact Our Students
• How Can School Communities Support Healthy Relationships, Regulation and Engagement in Our Students
How Trauma Presents in School

Traumatized Somatosensory Systems

- **Medical Concerns**: increased
- **Physical Sensations**: rapid heart rate, trembling, dizziness and/or bladder/bowel control issues
- **Health Symptoms**: inexplicable
- **Muscle Coordination**: movement, sensation, hand-writing issues
- **Hypersensitivity/Insensitivity**

Traumatized Mood Regulation

- **Brain**: cannot shift from feeling to thinking
- **Strong Emotions**: inability to control outbursts
- **Impatient**: easily frustrated
- **Responses**: based on fears
- **Feelings**: difficult to recognize & describe own feelings
Impact on Brain Development

The Capacity to Develop Skills is Challenged:
• Impulse Control
• Focus & Follow-through
• Forethought and Planning
• Cause & Effect Thinking
• Sequencing
• Prefrontal Cortex: unable to take in new info

Traumatized Cognition

Impact –vs- Expectations

Impact of Trauma on Development
• Systemic symptoms
• Mood Dysregulation
• Cognitive impairment

Expectations of Chronological Age
• Healthy, regulated sleeping, eating, toileting
• Regulation of Emotions
• With cues, able to attend, refer to adults for safety & learning

Denise Powers, M.Ed. & Kathy Ryan, PhD, LCSW
Defining Trauma:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u1yYC08zz1o

*Individual trauma results from an *event*, *series of events*, or set of circumstances that is *experienced* by an individual as physically or emotionally *harmful* or *life threatening* and that has *lasting adverse effects* on the individual’s functioning and mental, physical, social, emotional, or spiritual well-being.*

- SAMHSA definition 2014

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**Trauma is…**

- Physical, sexual, or emotional abuse
  - Domestic violence, chronic neglect of self or a loved one
- Severe disasters
- Witnessing violence

- The experience is more than a person can cope with at the time or cope with alone

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**Acute Trauma**
- A single event that lasts for a limited time

**Chronic Trauma**
- The experience of multiple traumatic events, often over a long period of time

**Complex Trauma**
- Multiple traumatic events that begin at a very young age.
- Caused by adults who should have been caring for and protecting the child.

**Neglect**
- Failure to provide for a child’s basic needs
- Perceived as trauma by an infant or young child completely dependent upon adults for care
- Opens the door to other traumatic events
- May reduce a child’s ability to recover from trauma

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NCTSN 2010
Healthy Development
What Children Need:
- Predictable, nurturing attention
- Secure attachment patterns
- Fewer primary caregivers
- Co-regulation

Developmental Trauma
Traumatic experience:
- Abuse by primary caregivers
- Repeated abuse
- Highly aroused, negative environments
- Severe Neglect
- Insufficient nurturing

Impact of Trauma
- Direct correlation between Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) and physical and mental health: www.acestudy.org
- Examples include: Heart Disease, Diabetes, Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease, Alcoholism, Depression, Suicide Attempts, etc.

Self-Care
Give yourself a moment…
Breathe Stretch Breathe

List 5 adjectives to describe behaviors that go on in the class…hallways…school…bus
RESPONSIVE PRACTICES
To Promote Engagement and Participation, Schools Must Begin to Support Students to:
REGULATE & RELATE
BUILD RESILIENCY
ENGAGE

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Setting the Relational Climate
Throughout the day…
…in every way!

Responsive Care is about forming safe and trustworthy relationships.
Responsive Care is about building resiliency.

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Setting the Relational Climate

Take a walk in our Caregivers’ shoes...

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Setting the Relational Climate

- Caregivers - Experts on expectations of their children in the home and community

- Staff - Experts on the mental health/child welfare/educational/healthcare systems’ expectations for the children

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Setting the Relational Climate

Differences will exist.

How do we respectfully bridge the differences?

How do we respectfully create best practices for the children?

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When the child senses from the safe caregiver that we are trustworthy, we have better chances of building a relationship with the child.

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Dangerous until Proven Otherwise

With Complex Trauma:

• You know you are safe.

• Your students’ experiences are that even “safe” people can become dangerous.

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Setting the Relational Climate

YOU ARE

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**I AM**

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SAMHSA definition 2014

Setting the Relational Climate

**I AM**

*Vignette* - *I am an artist...*

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Setting the Relational Climate

You have many strengths!

I want to get to know you and your strengths!

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Setting the Relational Climate

I am confident that I can handle what you bring.
I am confident that I can keep you safe.

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How Can and Do You Relate to Your Students?

What time is built into each year/day to:
• Get to know your students’ strengths?
• Get to know how they feel?
• Get to hear what is happening for each one of them?

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Co-Regulation

Adult Helps Child to Regulate

Child Has Sensory Needs/ Trauma is Triggered

Child Begins to Self-Regulate with Adult’s Coaching

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Regulation with Sensori-Motor Materials

Regulation
Again, don’t think age appropriate…
Begin to think, what helps this child to calm?

Responsive Practices
BUILD RESILIENCY
Resiliency-Building Practices

DEFUSING THE FIGHT

Everyone wants to be heard:
• LISTEN to the child
• WAIT til the child LISTENS to YOU
• LISTEN to EACH CHILD in the GROUP
• BRIDGE the GROUP’S IDEAS
• Go meet sensory needs and try again…

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What about Cognitive Development?

Relationships with Safe Adults

Co-Regulation

Interactions & Engagement

= Embedded Learning


What Do Resiliency-Building Practices Look Like at School?

Our Students have GREAT ideas:
• Encourage them to THINK and SHARE
• LISTEN when they do
• FOLLOW their Great Ideas
• EMBED the learning objectives in the students’ study(ies)

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Responsive Practices

Relationships, Regulation, Ideation, Listening, Planning, Honoring, Follow-through… Yummy Soup!

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Resiliency-Building Practices

Caring for Our Babies!

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Resiliency-Building Practices

“I need a bed. I need a plan!”

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Resiliency-Building Practices

The Bean Bag Toss Game!

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Resiliency-Building Practices

Regulate
Relate
Resiliency
Reason

Share Your STRENGTHS

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Responsive Practices

BRAINSTORM

In what ways do your students express their interests and strengths?

Doodling? Singing? What else?

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Promote Skill Building

- **Think:** lack of skill **not** intentional misbehavior
- **Think:** building missing skills **not** shaming for lack of skills
- **Think:** nurture **not** criticize
- **Think:** teach **not** blame
- **Think:** limit-setting **not** punishment

Children’s Resilience Initiative

Thoughts…Questions…

Responsive Practices

Who is available to help children co-regulate?

Who can be with children when they are dysregulated and unsafe?

Where can this happen?