It is easier to build strong children than to repair broken men.

Frederick Douglass
LESSONS FROM 25 YEARS

A Trauma Sensitive School
EXPLAINING THE TWENTY-FIVE YEARS

- Opened Program
- The intent from the beginning
- Best possible program for all students
- All students achieving more than anyone would expect
THE UNEXPECTED PROBLEM

• We soon found we had to repair broken children.
DIAGNOSTIC CATEGORIES WE HAVE SERVED

- Children who lived with constant trauma (developmental trauma)
- Conduct Disorder
- Attachment Disorder
- Generalized Anxiety Disorder
- Intermittent Explosive Disorder
WHAT SED CHILDREN ENDURE

- Numerous foster homes
- Failure in previous programs
- Failure in Therapeutic Foster homes
- Failure in School Programs
- In one instance, a child was beaten into a coma by adoptive parents
BEHAVIORS WE HAVE TREATED

- Violence
- Aggression
- Distrust of all adults
- Constant Fear
- Afraid to Try
- Uninhabited Attachments
OUR GOALS

- Trauma sensitive was not the goal
- We wanted all students to become exceptional learners
- Trauma sensitive, trauma informed, and trauma recovery became necessary
- All of that and more were necessary
The public schools did not have the answer.

Students were struggling academically.

Behavior was a growing problem

We saw that schools were worse off than they had been 10 and 20 years before.

The same could now be said 25 years later.
STANDARD METHODS WERE NOT VERY EFFECTIVE

- Behavior management programs were in great demand.
- Some schools were nearly obsessed with creating contingencies related to everything students liked.
- I believed that a natural reinforcement process would be more powerful.

But classroom management programs were not very effective.
I got the feeling educators thought they had to make students earn everything.
I wondered when students would have to earn the right to breathe.
I got the feeling that most reinforcement systems were artificial.
Many of the methods schools were using were flawed.
MUCH OF MOTIVATION SEEMED ARTIFICIAL

• The processes typical to schools appeared to be artificial.
• Teachers were trying to turn every activity, trinket, and privilege into a contingency.
• We looked further.

Schools frequently use contingencies to give trivial things some motivational qualities.
HUMAN MOTIVATION

- If the motivational methods schools were using, were the best available, the human race would never have survived.
- I was wanted to understand human behavior from the time of cave till current times.
UNDERSTANDING HUMAN BEHAVIOR
WE NEEDED TO BETTER UNDERSTAND MOTIVATION

- I believed that motivation had to be built into humans.
- I felt there had to be a natural process that had equipped humans to survive all possible conditions.

If humans had survived, droughts, famines, wars, and the era of cavemen, there had to be a motivational process built into humans that would allow children to excel in schools.

All of the terrible behavior I saw in schools looked like students’ best attempt to cope with madness.

Much of the madness came from schools trying find consequences to student behavior.
NEEDS ARE THE MOTIVATION THAT DRIVE HUMAN BEHAVIOR

- Survival needs
  - Air
  - Water
  - Food
  - Sleep
  - To maintain body temperature
  - To move

Currently survival needs are generally met by parents and social programs.

Survival needs are a bit more important when talking about neglected children.

Even so few people in this country die from lack of water, food or shelter.

The most important of survival needs for teachers was the need to move.
PSYCHOLOGICAL NEEDS

- Socialization
- Intellectual stimulation
- To please senses
- To avoid pain
- Autonomy
- Sex

These needs have been present throughout the history of mankind.

In the last 75 years these needs have prevailed in driving much of our behavior.

Even when people work long hours, it is mostly to meet psychological needs.
Had to get the needs into a usable form

My list allows us to describe the motivation behind every human behavior.

I was not able to do that from Maslow’s description.
Behaviorists had the concept of primary reinforcers vs learned reinforcers.

That concept corresponded to the psychology of human needs.

Our definition of a primary reinforcer.

This described why social approval was more effective.
UNDERSTANDING NEEDS

- Survival need
  - Need to move

- Psychological needs
  - Socialization
    - Trust
    - Emotional connection (relationship)
  - Need to belong
  - Need for approval from others

The importance of connections; these are both intellectual and emotional connections.

The need to belong can be fulfilled in classrooms.

Social approval is the universal reinforcer of human behavior in a psychological needs society.
Intellectual stimulation
- A constant motivation for humans
- Humans love to learn
- Teacher must nurture not punish that need
- Can be satisfied almost constantly in a classroom
- Adults are satisfying need for intellectual stimulation with twitter and face book.

No satiation
This is so powerful that it is currently responsible for much of the crazy times we are living in. Unfortunately, the concept of truth is not innately connected to learning. Therefore many people will believe anything they learn on the internet or twitter.
• Need to please senses
• Need to avoid pain (psychological and physical)

Please senses. Students must learn to inhibit this need during class hours.

Inhibition of needs is not new to children. They have been inhibiting needs since they were a few months old.

Psychological pain can destroy a classroom. Examples

If even one child is shamed, every child will be vigilant. Students are influenced by every interaction.

A message of the classroom possibly being unsafe can be conveyed by voice, words, consequences, criticism.
• Need for autonomy
  • A need that changes with development
  • This is the need that scares teachers.
  • However, autonomy is the need that makes excellence possible.
  • Autonomy is the most important need for the development of self-control.

Autonomy changes as children grow

Inhibiting one's needs is actually an exercise in autonomy. Look no further than a three year old child waiting to use the toilet.

We are not talking about no rules. We are talking about motivating students to intentionally follow the rules.

Intentionally following rules is a function of autonomy.
The understanding of human needs leads to three essential points for understanding education:

1. The point of education is to teach students to responsibly fulfill their needs.
2. Coercion is based on a fallacious assumption that children cannot manage their own behavior.
3. Coercion, therefore, is the problem.

Students learn very quickly when they are allowed to meet their needs.

Easy to teach students to inhibit their needs.

For teachers, coercion is related to a teacher’s desire to dominate others.

Teachers must learn how to develop responsible students.
Sex

We have mostly worked with children under the ages of 10 and 12.

Nevertheless, we deal with sex play, and children’s favorite version of show and tell.

If ever there was a reason to teach students to be responsible, it is magnified by this need.

The more students have learned to be responsible the better they are equipped to handle the need for sex.
1. This section could go forever.

2. In 1993 we were wishing we had more information on the human brain.

3. Now by the time you learn what is current known, you’ll be 15 years behind.
Emotions
  - Emotions impact behavior
  - Trauma sensitive means teachers to learn to calm emotions.
  - When emotions are aroused, it will be difficult or impossible to rationally engage children.
  - Emotion First, Behavior Second

Behaviorist usually ignored this fact.

Emotions first and behavior second is an imperative issue in becoming trauma sensitive.

The behavior must be dealt with. Later we will distinguish some behaviors that can be ignored.
Helping children learn to control emotions so they can fulfill needs.

Describing that concept to children would not help.

They have to repeatedly experience how much they can learn.

First teachers have to avoid setting off emotional responses.

Learn to quiet the amygdala.

Teachers have to make emotional regulation benefit students.

Recognition of control. Teachers must learn to recognize students being in control of themselves.

Helping students become powerful learners.

Soon students want to be exceptional learners.

Students love learning.
UNDERSTANDING CLASSROOMS
CLASSROOMS ARE GROUP SITUATIONS

- Recognition that interactions function differently in groups is an issue educators must understand.

Working with a group is entirely different than working with an individual child.

Methods that work for parents or therapists, may be ineffective in classrooms.

Every method I will discuss has been designed for and proven in classrooms.

The methods have proven effective in regular classrooms, inclusion classrooms, and with groups of emotionally disturbed students.
The obvious is that classrooms are group situations.

For a group to be successful they must have a unified purpose.

Unless students are unified to accomplish a common goal, the best results are impossible.

The common goal can be simple. Every student works for the best of all students.

Every teacher interaction affects the entire class.

Everything any student does affects the other students.
AFFECTS ARE NOT ISOLATED

- Anything that affects one student affects every student.

Every teacher interaction affects everyone.

This is an imperative concept for a trauma sensitive program.

What students do, affects every student.
· If any student experiences psychological pain, other students will be concerned they might also experience pain.

· A student being successful affects every student.

· Some methods in classrooms would be less harmful when tutoring a child.

Any psychological pain created in a classroom affects other students.

To be trauma sensitive, a school must virtually eliminate psychological pain.

Every Student may not be affected the same.

Instead teachers need methods that make success contagious.
GAINING THE TRUST OF SED CHILDREN

- Children must trust that you are there to help them
- Respect for every student
- The emotional connection
- Success is dependent on the connection not the consequence.

Example of building trust
The connection is imperative for a trauma sensitive program.
Because the concepts of motivation have been so misunderstood, schools are left to coerce students.

But coercion destroys motivation.

In many schools, students have to inhibit their natural motivation and submit to teacher domination.

Students less able to regulate their own behavior.

Coercion is even more harmful to traumatized students.

Coercion is a terrible choice.

Coercion leaves students to forever need someone to manage their behavior.

When I tell teachers they have to give up coercion, they often react as if students would be making all the rules and teachers would be helpless.

Giving up coercion empowers teachers.

Being able to follow rules becomes an avenue of success for students.
Lesson Learned Years Before

- Humans need the approval of others.
- Social approval is the most important reinforcer.
- Social approval is a primary reinforcer.

Building the methods around social approval, makes trauma recovery feasible.

The connection, not the consequence. Praise enhances the connection.

Develop appropriate behavior instead of coercing it.

Avoid all consequences for minor inappropriate behavior.
UNDERSTANDING SATIATION

- Survival needs can be satiated
- Psychological needs are less effected by satiation

When you have enough food or water, you don’t need more.

By learning to store food and water, we made these needs less important for extended periods of time.

However, people are in constant pursuit of satisfying psychological needs.

If you doubt that statement look at your own behavior.

Children may understand this better than adults.

Utilize the fact that the need for intellectual stimulation and social approval will not be satiated, to your advantage.
RESULTS YOU CAN EXPECT FROM OUR METHODS

- Improved self-discipline
- Improved emotional regulation
- Reduced anxiety
- Better able to delay gratification
- Better at forming constructive relationships
- Develop better cooperation

We call these attributes. Each of these issues go beyond behavior problems that students may exhibit.

These are the a few of the goals that teachers can and should achieve with students.

Termination of problem behavior is never the direct goal.

Developing positive attributes is always the goal.

Problem behavior disappears.
THE METHODS
THE TEACHER/STUDENT RELATIONSHIP

- The constructive emotional connection.
- The connection between teacher and student makes every goal of education possible.

Why the constructive emotional connection benefits all students:
- Calms the amygdala
- Opens access to the prefrontal cortex.
- The connection is therapeutic.
ESTABLISH EXPECTATIONS

- Teacher is certain that students know the rules and how she expects them to behave.
- Students can explain the rules and the reason for every rule.
- Rules are frequently reviewed.

This is not free range teaching.
There will be rules of what students shouldn’t do, but stated in the positive as much as possible.
State the rationale for every rule.
Never state a consequence for misbehavior. If an occasional consequence is necessary it works better if it was never stated.
Never state a contingent relationship between following a rule and a reward.
BUILDING APPROPRIATE BEHAVIOR

- Teachers have to have an effective way to increase appropriate behavior.

  Rewards do not work
  Delayed reinforcers do not work.
  You can only reinforce specific instances of behavior.
  You cannot build attributes directly.
  Reinforcers have to be constantly available. Otherwise teachers cannot get students to constantly work.
  Countable reinforcers interfere with the development of a positive culture.
  Students have to care about the behavior not the reinforcer.
SOCIAL APPROVAL

- Teachers can use hundreds of praises per day without missing a moment of teaching.
- Soon teachers find it easy to get excellent behavior from students.
- As good behavior increases, the attitude of students improves.
- Academic learning becomes easy for students.

No contingent statement is needed.

Contingency statements are just another version of coercion.
DIFFERENTIAL SOCIAL ATTENTION

- Teachers direct attention to appropriate behavior.
- Teachers direct attention away from inappropriate behavior.
- Teachers must distinguish between inappropriate behavior and dangerous behavior.

Teachers must resist the temptation to tell students to correct their behavior.

The students soon start correcting their own behavior.

Students can and will responsibly correct their own behavior.

They are fulfilling the need for autonomy without defying the teacher. They are fulfilling need for social approval. They are fulfilling need for intellectual stimulation. All of this is happening while working, listening, and learning.
Teachers often leave students’ success to chance.

We teach teachers to create success.

Explaining exactly what they wanted from students.

Practice

We have found that teachers are often afraid to spend so much time on student behavior.

However, by the end of the year it is time well spent.
Teachers demonstrate what they want
Have students demonstrate
Reinforce as many instances as necessary to create constant success.

Create success in everything from lining up to doing their worksheet.
Mistakes are an enemy of learning.
ROLE OF THE GROUP

- Getting students to celebrate each others success.
- Get students to care about the success of every student
- Eventually the culture does much of the work.

Helps with the unified purpose
Strengthens the culture
Inside voices
The empowerment students experience is comparable to the power adults feel from having hundreds or thousands of people follow them on twitter.
PREVENTING EMOTIONAL OUTBURST

- Get students to successfully control their behavior in multiple situations.
- Students must understand that you care about their emotions and want to understand their feelings.
- Help them understand each other.

Success first
Walking to line up.
Sitting quietly for a few minutes
Listening
Remembering
Remembering from day to day
Students will become empowered by their success of self-regulation.
PREVENTING EMOTIONAL OUTBURST (CONTINUED)

- Getting students to understand the rationales for appropriate behavior.
- Getting students to understand feelings
- Getting students to listen to each others feelings
• Teachers must be sure they do not trigger outburst

• Replace consequences with teaching.

• Model and teach emotional regulation

Avoid
Admonishments
Raising voice
Loudly correcting
Reprimands
You must show that you care about every student.
You care about safety and preventing psychological pain.
DEALING WITH THE EMOTIONAL OUTBURST

- Emotion First, Behavior Second
- Quiet voice or no words
- Extended hand or gentle touch
- Wait. Don’t give instructions
- Let the relationship do the work

Trust

The constructive emotional connection pays huge dividends.

Universal gesture of help.

You do not tell them to quit crying, to settle down or to gain control.

The amygdala cannot respond to instructions.
DE-ESCALATION

- If a teacher tries to take control, the child will escalate
- Allow the child to get control his emotions.
- Teacher is not talking about the behavior or what the child did wrong

When the child is de-escalated, but not before you can ask the child if he is ready to talk about his behavior.

Remember you are dealing with the amygdala not the pre-frontal cortex. The amygdala will understand a threat as potential pain.

Once the child is rational, consequences don’t make any sense. The wrong behavior would be punished.
LOGICAL CONSEQUENCES

- Eventually you should talk about the student’s behavior.
- If he made a mess, he needs to help clean it up.

How to structure the talk about the logical consequences.

A typical mistake is to use the de-escalation properly and then coerce the logical consequence.

The child’s amygdala is still on high alert.

The coercion is almost certain to re-escalate the emotional reaction.
PERSONAL AMENDS

- Apology to those who were hurt.
- Alternative – Child states the reason for not hurting others.

Remember the apology cannot be coerced.

If the child will not talk, teacher can have another child describe why we don’t hurt others.

Teacher is sure to reinforce the appropriate behavior.
PREVENTING VIOLENT AND DESTRUCTIVE BEHAVIORS

- The process thus far will reduce serious behavior by 75 to 90 percent.
- Avoid more trauma
- Build mental composure
- Don’t set off emotional outburst
- Teach students to delay gratification

Teaching excellent communication skills.
Set up success

When violent students are doing fine, take them aside 5 or 6 times a day and recognize their success and set them up for more success.

Teacher has to do this even if the student has been violent 15 minutes earlier.
THE RIGHT WAY TO BEHAVE

- Teacher directs student through the appropriate way to behave in the situation.
- Practice the correct way.

My absolute favorite technique to get a child to regain control of his emotions.
STOPPING EXTREME BEHAVIORS

- Sometimes extreme behaviors must be stopped immediately.
- Describe the interruption

Describe the instant change
Alternatives available to teacher depending on the nature of the situation.
Start the building of appropriate behavior.
THE RESULTS IN OUR PROGRAM

- Reducing violent and aggressive behaviors
- Maintaining consistency in foster placement
- Students doing better in school
- Reaching our stated behavioral, emotional and attribute goals.
WHAT WE HAVE ACCOMPLISHED

- Successful with about 96% of SED children we have served
- Almost totally Stopped Foster home Changes
- Greatly reduced aggression and violence
- Improved Learning
REFERENCES