

ASSISTING TEACHERS
IN CREATING A
TRAUMA-INFORMED
CLASSROOM





HELLO!

Cynthia Povall

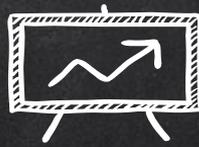
Lisa White

1.

WHAT IS A TRAUMA
INFORMED CLASSROOM?

Trauma-Informed becomes... Relational-Informed!





LET'S TALK ACES

Most counselors are aware of the ACE study.



Many **educators** are still not aware of what **ACES** are or what impact they have.

Adverse Childhood Experiences

Traumatic events that can have negative, lasting effects on health and wellbeing



People with 6+ ACEs can die

20 yrs

earlier than those who have none



1/8 of the population have more than 4 ACEs



www.70-30.org.uk
@7030Campaign

4 or more ACEs

3x the levels of lung disease and adult smoking 

11x the level of intravenous drug abuse 

14x the number of suicide attempts 

4x as likely to have begun intercourse by age 15 

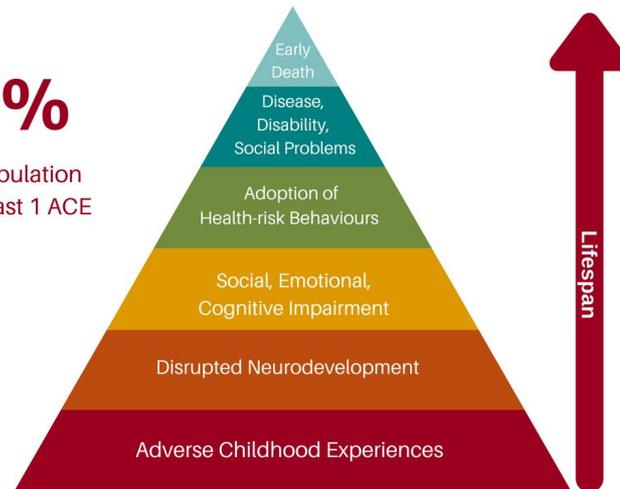
4.5x more likely to develop depression 

2x the level of liver disease 

“ Adverse childhood experiences are the single greatest unaddressed public health threat facing our nation today ”

Dr. Robert Block, the former President of the American Academy of Pediatrics

67%
of the population have at least 1 ACE



WHAT'S THE IMPACT

- The Body
- Emotions
- Actions
- Thinking
- Self-Concept
- Relationships

It may look different depending on the student

- Aggression, anxiety, defiance, dysregulation, perfectionism, inattention, learning problems, and/or withdrawal.
- Maybe we see nothing at all!

Childhood Trauma

Affects



(At Least 1 in 4 Students)

In Every Single Classroom... Every Day...



What Trauma is...

A psychologically distressing event outside the range of usual human experience. It involves a sense of intense fear, terror, and helplessness, and may lead to a variety of effects, depending on the child.

- Bruce Perry

Examples include child neglect, abuse, domestic violence, parental incarceration or abandonment, a family member's serious mental illness or substance abuse problem, highly conflicted divorce situations, as well as experiencing serious accidents, disasters, war, or acts of terrorism.

What Trauma Does to...*



The Body

- Fight/flight/freeze reactions
- Sensory/motor challenges
- Unusual pain responses
- Physical symptoms



Emotions

- Hypervigilance
- High distress
- Self-regulation problems
- Difficulty communicating feelings and needs
- Possible dissociation



Actions

- Poor impulsive control
- Aggression/ dangerous actions
- Oppositional behavior
- Self harm
- Overly compliant
- Sleeping problems
- Eating problems
- Substance abuse



No Signs

Some traumatized youth show little to no signs at school but may have difficulty at home in relationships with primary caregivers.



Relationships

- General mistrust of others
- Clingy/overly dependent
- Withdrawn
- Problems with peers
- Overly helpful/solicitous of attention
- May lack empathy



Self Concept

- Low self-esteem
- Toxic shame and guilt
- Grandiose ideas/bragging
- May blame others or self
- Body image problems
- Self-sabotaging behaviors



Thinking

- Lack of curiosity
- Learning/processing problems
- Language development problems
- Difficulty regulating attention
- Executive functioning problems
- Problems with planning and organization
- Difficulty understanding cause and effect

What Trauma-Sensitive Schools Do...

Help Students

- Feel safe
- Get regulated
- Be connected
- Learn

They Benefit Everyone!

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TRAUMA

- Feelings of fear, helplessness, uncertainty, vulnerability
- Increased arousal, edginess and agitation
- Avoidance of reminders of trauma
- Irritability, quick to anger
- Feelings of guilt or shame
- Dissociation, feelings of unreality or being "outside of one's body"
- Continually feeling on alert for threat or danger
- Unusually reckless, aggressive or self-destructive behavior

OVERLAP

- Difficulty concentrating and learning in school
 - Easily distracted
 - Often doesn't seem to listen
- Disorganization
- Hyperactive
 - Restless
- Difficulty sleeping

ADHD

- Difficulty sustaining attention
 - Struggling to follow instructions
- Difficulty with organization
 - Fidgeting or squirming
 - Difficulty waiting or taking turns
 - Talking excessively
- Losing things necessary for tasks or activities
- Interrupting or intruding upon others

TRAUMA AFFECTS LEARNING

It undermines executive functioning and memory.

Perfect et al. (2016) studies found significant risk for **impairments** across various **cognitive functioning**, including IQ, memory, attention, language/verbal ability which parlayed into **poorer academic performance** and **behaviors** that impact discipline, **attendance** and **higher dropout rates**.



BEYOND ACES



to

BEST PRACTICE



GAINING **TEACHER** BUY IN

“Educating the mind without educating the
heart is no education at all.”

– Aristotle



TEACHER BUY IN THROUGH:

EDUCATION:

Share ACE study
information, the
prevalence and
impact.

&

Neuroplasticity

CONNECTION:

Build Relationships

&

Be a

Storyteller

COLLABORATION:

Work hard to help
teachers recognize

&

implement changes.



5 PRACTICAL STRATEGIES TO ASSIST TEACHERS

Build
Relationships

Set the
Tone

Self
Awareness

Manage
Challenging
Behaviors

Create a
Safe Space

Relationships
Relationships
Relationships

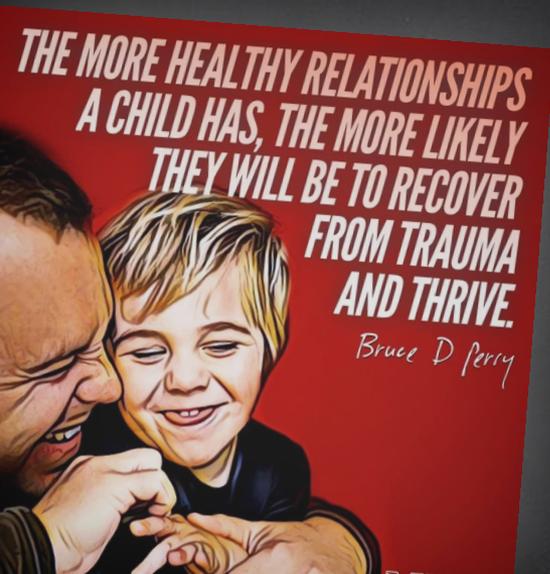
Assist teachers in understanding the importance and the lasting impact of building a **relationship** with **ALL students**.

Healthy connections made with caring adults are **healing & transformative**.

You don't have to be a therapist to be **therapeutic**.

Small things = Big Impact.

Neuroplasticity! We can change our students brain through safe, loving, and affirming relationships.





People don't care how
much you know, until they
know how much you **care**.

- *Theodore Roosevelt*
- *John Maxwell*

Set the
Tone

Assist teachers in **creating safe environments**.

Build a sense of **community** in the classroom (morning meetings).

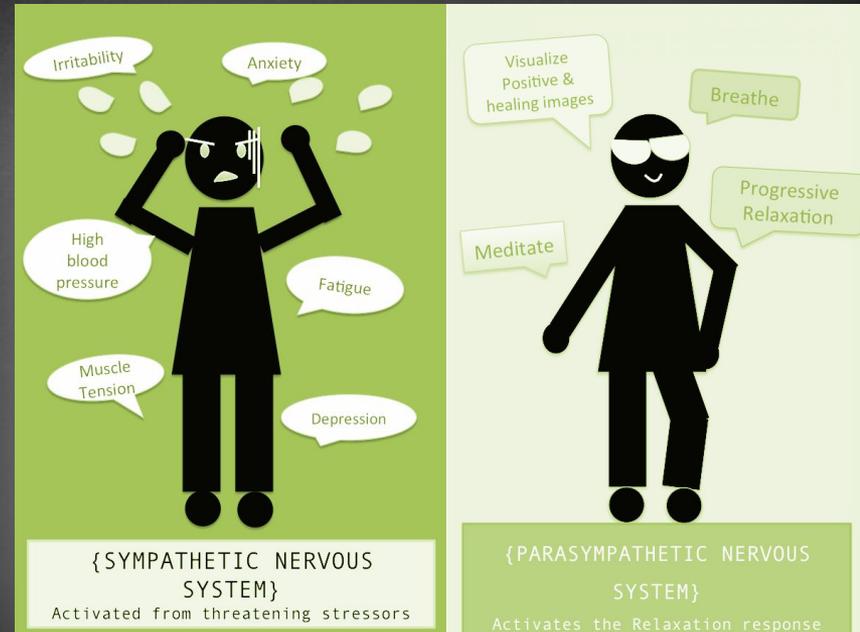
Set **clear and consistent expectations**.

Schedules & Routines

Social Emotional Learning

Talk about emotions & **model** appropriate expression and management of emotion.

Incorporate **Mindfulness** into classrooms (being sensitive to trauma triggers)





Self
Awareness

Create awareness of teacher's
own responses, reactions,
and communication.

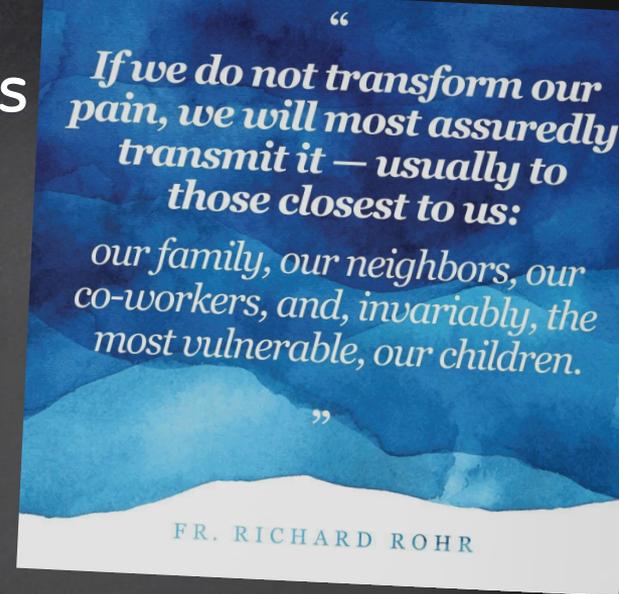
CALM is CONTAGIOUS

Communicate and listen with EMPATHY,
non-judgement, acceptance, and de-escalation

Use Positive Language

Be aware of nonverbal and
paralanguage communication

Mindful adjusting of your communication will positively impact the environment.
Stay Safe, Stay Regulated, Stay Present



Manage Challenging Behaviors

Assist teachers with how to manage challenging behaviors.

Respond with **curiosity** not judgement or criticism

Ask questions

What do you need?

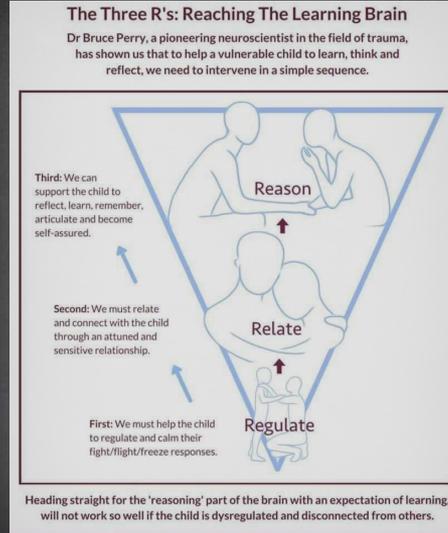
What might help you right now?

What happened?

Tell me how you're feeling?

Tell me more about...

Help me understand...



Stay Safe,
Stay Regulated,
Stay Present

Regulation through Co-regulation

Don't take it personally

&

Separate the behavior from the student



Create a
Safe Space

Assist teachers with creating a **safe space** & **permission** to calm down and regulate.

Provide Calming Tools:

Glitter jar, playdoh,
puddy, coloring,
pinwheels, bubbles,
stress balls, fidgets,
sensory objects



Create a **Calm Down Corner**, a place to remove themselves and be still and regulate.

Provide **Resources:**
Feelings chart
How to calm down poster
Calming strategies



THANK YOU!

Any questions?

You can reach us at:

cpovall@https.us

lgryllswhite@https.us

ONLINE RESOURCES

- ✘ <https://wmich.edu/sites/default/files/attachments/u57/2013/child-trauma-toolkit.pdf>
- ✘ https://safesupportivelearning.ed.gov/sites/default/files/Trauma_101_Activity_Packet.pdf
- ✘ <https://www.acesconnection.com/blog/training-exercises-for-use-in-staff-meetings-and-refreshers>
- ✘ <https://www.weareteachers.com/classroom-trauma-triggers/>
- ✘ <https://www.weareteachers.com/10-things-about-childhood-trauma-every-teacher-needs-to-know/>
- ✘ https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/the_silent_epidemic_in_our_classrooms
- ✘ https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/the_silent_epidemic_in_our_classrooms?sfns=mo#.XMzNUObucPw.facebook
- ✘ <https://developingchild.harvard.edu/science/key-concepts/resilience/?sfns=mo>
- ✘ <https://ciscentraltexas.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/Trauma-Training-Toolkit-8-29-2016.pdf>
- ✘ <https://child.tcu.edu/tbri-for-teachers/#sthash.4eYsyhee.dpbs>
- ✘ https://www.samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/programs_campaigns/nctsi/nctsi-infographic-full.pdf
- ✘ <https://thetraumainformedteacher.com/>
- ✘ <https://www.edutopia.org/article/how-and-why-trauma-informed-teaching>
- ✘ <https://www.edutopia.org/article/trauma-informed-practices-benefit-all-students>

ONLINE RESOURCES

- ✘ <https://education.cu-portland.edu/blog/classroom-resources/trauma-informed-strategies/>
- ✘ <https://www.aft.org/ae/summer2019/jennings>
- ✘ <http://www.nea.org/tools/tips/creating-a-trauma-sensitive-classroom.html>
- ✘ <https://www.kqed.org/mindshift/52566/how-to-build-a-trauma-sensitive-classroom-where-all-learners-feel-safe>
- ✘ http://www.ascd.org/publications/educational_leadership/sept16/vol74/num01/The_Trauma-Sensitive_Teacher.aspx
- ✘ <https://chronicleofsocialchange.org/subscriber-content/what-exactly-is-a-trauma-sensitive-classroom/32099>
- ✘ <https://thecornerstoneforteachers.com/truth-for-teachers-podcast/trauma-informed-teaching/>
- ✘ <https://traumasensitiveschools.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/Research-Snapshot.pdf>
- ✘ <https://burkefoundation.org/highlights/new-report-by-the-new-jersey-funders-aces-collaborative/>

RESOURCES

Books

Burke Harris, Nadine (2018). *The deepest well*. New York, New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.

Forbes, Heather T. (2012). *Help for Billy*. Boulder, Colorado: Beyond Consequences Institutes, LLC

Jackson Nakazawa, Donna (2015). *Childhood disrupted: How your biography becomes your biology, and how you can heal*. New York, New York, Atria Paperbacks

Perry, B. & Szalavitz, M. (2006) *The boy who was raised as a dog:: What traumatized children can teach us about love, loss, and healing*. New York, New York: Basic Books.

Rossen, E., Hull, R (2013). *Supporting and educating traumatized students: A guide for school-based professionals*. New York, New York: Oxford.

Sporleder, Jim & Forbes, Heather T. (2016). *The trauma-informed school: A step-by-step implementation guide for administrators and school personnel*. Boulder, Colorado: Beyond Consequences Institutes, LLC

Van Der Kolk, B. (2014) *The body keeps score: Brain, mind and body in the healing of trauma*. New York, New York: Viking Press.

Childhood Trauma Affects



Attachment
& Trauma
Network, Inc.



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“What do I do?”

Trauma-Informed Support for Children

1 Create safety

If the child is overwhelmed, perhaps guide them to a quiet corner or allow them to decompress by visiting the restroom. If you are in a classroom, maybe you have a peace corner that you've outfitted with blankets or a screen so that it feels like a safe place.

2 Regulate the nervous system

Stress brings a predictable pattern of physiological responses and anyone who has suffered toxic stress or trauma is going to be quickly stressed into hyperarousal (explosive, jittery, irritable) or hypoarousal (depressed, withdrawn, zombie-like). No matter how ingenious our regulation strategies, how artsy-crafty we get with tools, the child has to find what works for them.

3 Build a connected relationship

This is the number one way to regulate the nervous system. When we are around people we care about, our bodies produce oxytocin, which is the hormone responsible for calming our nervous system after stress. If we stay connected, then eventually the calm discussion of each person's feelings and needs can take place.

4 Support development of coherent narrative

Creating predictability through structure, routines and the presence of reliable adults helps reduce the chaos a child may feel and allows them to start creating the kind of logical sequential connections that not only help them understand their own narrative, but are also the fundamental requirement of many types of learning.

5 Practice 'power-with' strategies

One of the hallmarks of trauma is a loss of power and control. When someone is wielding power over you with no regard to your thoughts or feelings, the toxic shame of the original trauma may come flooding back. As adults, we should use our power well. If we model a 'power-with' relationship with children it's our best chance of creating adults who will treat others with dignity and respect.

6 Build social emotional and resiliency skills

Trauma robs us of time spent developing social and emotional skills. The brain is too occupied with survival to devote much of its energy to learning how to build relationships and it's a good chance we didn't see those skills modeled for us. Learning to care for one another is the most important job we have growing up.

7 Foster post-traumatic growth

We know that there are qualities and skills that allow people to overcome the most devastating trauma and not just survive but find new purpose and meaning in their lives. Problem solving, planning, maintaining focus despite discomfort, self-control and seeking support are all known to lead to post-traumatic growth and are skills we can foster in children.