

Mental Health: Trauma Informed Practices

“People start to heal the moment they’ve been heard.” — Cheryl Richardson

INTRO

“The question we should ask is not ‘*what’s wrong with you,*’ but rather ‘*what happened to you?*’¹ The American Psychological Association describes trauma as “an emotional response to a terrible event like an accident, rape or natural disaster.”² Immediate reactions can include shock and denial, while longer-term reactions include unpredictable emotions, flashbacks, strained relationships, and even physical symptoms like headaches or nausea.

“Traumatic events are extraordinary, not because they occur rarely, but rather because they overwhelm the ordinary human adaptations to life.”
— Judith Herman, *Trauma and Recovery*

Traumatic experiences can directly and immediately impact the way a child’s brain develops (how they learn) as well as how they behave (how they cope) inside and outside of your classroom. *Between half and two-thirds of all school-aged children experience trauma.*³ This leaves many children feeling alone, misunderstood, and powerless to move on with their lives. Psychologists can help students impacted by trauma manage their emotions, but only IF the child has been properly diagnosed. Unfortunately, most go undiagnosed for childhood trauma.

As an educator, regardless of your student’s race or socioeconomic background, many youth in your class/school will experience and/or are impacted by trauma. Learning to be sensitive to your student’s needs and experiences with trauma can be overwhelming, however, you are not alone. Continue reading below for resources, experts and networks that can help transform your class/school into a trauma sensitive learning environment. Be a part of the movement that ends the cycle of trauma!

WHAT THE EXPERTS ARE SAYING: Videos, Websites, Reports, Resources

Need help in creating an environment to address trauma? Check out some of the most recommended websites!

[Trauma and Learning Policy Initiative \(TLPI\) website](#). “Helping Traumatized Children Learn.” Dedicated to ensuring children traumatized by exposure to family violence and other adverse childhood experiences succeed in school, this website offers resources to CREATE and ADVOCATE FOR trauma-sensitive schools.

¹ <http://www.elc-pa.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/Trauma-Informed-in-Schools-Classrooms-FINAL-December2014-2.pdf>

² <http://www.apa.org/topics/trauma/>

³ Felitti, V.J., Anda, R.F., Nordenberg, D., Williamson, D.F., Spitz, A.M., Edwards, V., Koss, M.P., & Marks, J.S. (1998). Relationship of childhood abuse and household dysfunction to any of the leading causes of death in adults: The Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) Study. *American Journal of Preventative Medicine*, 14(4), 245-258.; Copeland, W.E., Keeler, G., Angold, A., & Costello, E.J. (2007). Traumatic events and posttraumatic stress in childhood. *Archives of General Psychiatry*, 64(5), 577-584.

Short on time? Check out their short [VIDEO on "Why We Need Trauma Sensitive Schools"](#), free downloadable documents (research, reports, regulations, etc.), and coalitions/online learning community for becoming a trauma-sensitive school.

[Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction website](#). "Creating Trauma-Sensitive Schools to Improve Learning."

A one-stop shop! Widely recognized for its comprehensive model and resources (i.e. learning modules, checklists, presentation materials, PD, evaluation, etc.) for creating trauma-sensitive schools, the state of Wisconsin is definitely doing something right. Their trauma component works within a PBIS framework and gives practical, straightforward guidance for each tier. Did we mention it can also incorporate RJ practices?

[National Child Traumatic Stress Network \(NCTSN\)](#). "Child Trauma Toolkit for Educators."

This national Network offers a robust and easy-to-navigate list of research and resources for school personnel, including a [Child Trauma Toolkit for Educators](#).

A thorough and integrated website – by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services – addresses trauma from many perspectives (health, mental health, education, law enforcement, child welfare, juvenile justice, and military family service systems) with multiple resources (awareness, trauma-informed developmentally and culturally appropriate programs, community sharing and building).

TED Talk VIDEO: Dr. Nadine Burke Harris on "How Childhood Trauma Affects Health Across A Lifetime." Sit back and have your heart and mind opened by this TED talk on the history and significance of the health effects of Adverse Childhood Events (ACES) on children and adults. Also featured on *New America Ed Central*, there is a website offering insight and analysis from New America's Education Policy program as part of the blog: "[Five Ways Policymakers Can Support Children's Mental Health](#)." May 25, 2016.

WHAT THE EXPERTS READ and WRITE: Highly Recommended Books & Articles

Wondering where to start to learn more about trauma informed school resources? Scroll down for a list of great reads!

Adams, J.M. "[New Campaign Promotes Power Of Teachers To Reduce Stress Of Traumatized Students](#)." *EdSource*. Nov 7, 2016.

If you have a lot of questions, this one article may provide you with many helpful answers. Offering videos that personalize the issue, links to Teacher Tools, and tips from the [Changing Minds website](#), "The message to teachers is that we care about how stressful this is for you . . . Teacher supports have a very clear focus on addressing stress, burnout and trauma in educators. . . It's an invitation to teachers to take better care of themselves and each other."

Adams, J.M. "[Schools Promoting 'Trauma-Informed' Teaching To Reach Troubled Students](#)." *EdSource*. Dec 2, 2013.

A synthesized and reader-friendly overview full of links to trainings, regionally appropriate resources, and PBIS supports that can be adapted to include RJ.

Craig, SE. *Reaching and Teaching Children Who Hurt: Strategies for Your Classroom*. Maryland. Brookes. 2008.

A classic read with practical suggestions that show educators how to "reach and teach" students exposed to trauma. Learning is easy with categories like "What You Know"; "What's New"; and "What You Can Do." This strategy-filled book draws you in with real vignettes of actual experiences with students.

Counts, N. & Gionfriddo, P. [“New Initiative Explores the Intersection of Education and Mental Health.”](#) *Health Affairs Blog*. August 23, 2016.

Read about some of the latest innovative initiatives that hold promise for preventing and addressing mental health issues in children. More importantly, learn about how different initiatives overlap and what this means for you as an educator (i.e. social and emotional learning, mindsets, school climate, and trauma-informed schools.). Like what you read? Stay tuned for even more to come from this national collaborative.

Perry, B. P. [“Commentary: The Brain Science Behind Student Trauma”](#) *Education Week*. Dec 14, 2016. A favorite of “Brainiacs,” this commentary discusses the science behind how the brain responds to stress and how trauma can inhibit students' ability to learn. “When teachers understand the effects of trauma, they can begin to better understand the children who experience it and effectively address behavioral problems.”

Reyna, V. *The Adolescent Brain: Learning, Reasoning, and Decision Making*. Washington D.C. American Psychologists Association. 2012.

“This book brings together an interdisciplinary group of leading scientists to examine how the adolescent brain develops, and how this development impacts various aspects of reasoning and decision-making, from the use and function of memory and representation, to judgment, mathematical problem-solving, and the construction of meaning.”

Winslade, J. & Monk, G. *Narrative Counselling in Schools: Powerful & Brief*. Sage. 2007.

Help students shed negative labels and develop healthy behaviors! This updated edition will assist students in narrating stories that “redescribe” who they are and who they can be. “Another way to say all this is that *a narrative perspective locates problems in the cultural landscape*, which implies the counselors who are seeking to help need to consider their own and the client’s cultural position.” p. 3

Yoder, C. *The Little Book of Trauma Healing*. Intercourse. Good Books. 2005.

Strategies for Trauma Awareness and Resilience (STAR) director, Carolyn Yoder, has shaped the collective strategies from its program and learnings from the horrific events of September 11, 2001 into a book for all who have known terrorism and threatened security. “Indeed, the primary premise and challenge of this Little Book is that traumatic events and times have the potential to awaken the best of the human spirit and, indeed, the global family.” p. 6

WHEN IN DOUBT, ASK THE EXPERTS: Site Support, Consultants, & Workshops

[Mindful Schools](#)

Looking to take courses or find a like-minded community focused on creating trauma-sensitive schools? In need of resources including articles, multimedia, or a certified instructor directory? Founded in 2007, Mindful Schools started out as a program of a single school in Oakland, CA and expanded into a non-profit training organization that offers online and in-person courses, content, and a network of mindful educators spanning all 50 U.S. states and 100+ countries.

[UCSF Healthy Environments and Response to Trauma in Schools \(HEARTS\) Project](#)

UCSF's HEARTS program is a comprehensive multilevel school-based prevention and intervention program for schoolchildren who have experienced trauma. Learn how UCSF HEARTS successfully partners with schools throughout San Francisco USD to offer:

- school-based intervention and prevention work with children and adolescents directly and indirectly affected by trauma;
- training, consultation and support for adult members of the caregiving system (school personnel and parents/guardians); and
- school and district-level to help improve policies and procedures.

WHAT Trauma Informed STANDARDS & EXPECTATIONS DO I ALIGN TO?

Administrators (Educational Leaders)

[California Administrator Content Expectations \(CACE\)](#)

CACE A. DEVELOPMENT & IMPLEMENTATION OF A SHARED VISION

A-18. Understand the roles of a broad range of support staff and mental health professionals.

A-19. Understand how to facilitate a strong network of support of all school staff including physical and mental health professionals.

CACE B. INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP

B-2. Recognize and identify mental health conditions that support or hinder student achievement.

CACE C. MANAGEMENT AND LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

C-3. Culturally responsive, research-based, student centered classroom management and school-wide positive discipline intervention and prevention strategies that address the social and mental health needs of the child with the goal of keeping all students in school and on course toward graduation

[California Administrator Performance Expectations \(CAPE\)](#)

CAPE 2: INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP -- Education leaders shape a collaborative culture of teaching and learning informed by professional standards and focused on student and professional growth.

2B: Promoting Effective Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment: New administrators understand the role of instructional leader and use the state-adopted standards and frameworks to guide, support, and monitor teaching and learning. During preliminary preparation, aspiring administrators learn how to:

4. Recognize discriminatory practices, signs of trauma, manifestations of mental illness, and promote culturally responsive, positive and restorative strategies to address diverse student and school needs.

CAPE 4: FAMILY AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT -- Education leaders collaborate with families and other stakeholders to address diverse student and community interests and mobilize community resources.

4A: Parent and Family Engagement: New administrators engage families in education and school activities and understand the benefits of and regulations pertaining to their involvement. During preliminary preparation, aspiring administrators learn how to:

1. Engage family and community members in accomplishing the school's vision of equitable schooling and continuous improvement that includes the academic, linguistic, cultural, social-emotional, mental and physical health, and/or other supports needed to succeed in school.

4B: Community Involvement: New administrators recognize the range of family and community perspectives and, where appropriate, use facilitation skills to assist individuals and groups in reaching consensus on key issues that affect student learning, safety, and well being. During preliminary preparation, aspiring administrators learn how to:

3. Access community programs and services that assist all students, including those who require extra academic, mental health, linguistic, cultural, social-emotional, physical, or other needs to succeed in school.

[California Professional Standards for Educational Leaders \(CPSEL\)](#)

CPSEL 4C: Community Resources and Services: Leaders leverage and integrate community resources and services to meet the varied needs of all students.

4C-1 Seek out and collaborate with community programs and services that assist students who need academic, mental, linguistic, cultural, social-emotional, physical, or other support to succeed in school.

Teachers

[Teaching Performance Expectations \(TPEs\)](#)

TPE 2: Creating and Maintaining Effective Environments for Student Learning

Elements: Beginning teachers:

3. Establish, maintain, and monitor inclusive learning environments that are physically, mentally, intellectually, and emotionally healthy and safe to enable all students to learn, and recognize and appropriately address instances of intolerance and harassment among students, such as bullying, racism, and sexism.

4. Know how to access resources to support students, including those who have experienced trauma, homelessness, foster care, incarceration, and/or are medically fragile.

**A CALL TO ACTION: Be more than a great teacher
Be a champion for education!**

Do you want to change the lives of even more students? Not just those in your course, classroom or school, you are more powerful than that! We're talking about improving educator credentialing processes so that those who follow in your footsteps will be equally equipped to join you in serving the next generation of students.

It's simple,

1. Encourage schools of education to adopt and incorporate signature practice themes found on this website throughout their credentialing programs;

2. Recommend other educators, coaches and mentors to visit and use this website, it's here to support faculty at schools of education, teachers, administrators and educational leaders like yourself.
3. If you have other exceptional resources that you would like to recommend, please let us know by contacting bstrong@childrennow.org.