

Childhood trauma

Changing minds.



School Nurses Can Help Students Heal from Trauma by using Five Everyday Gestures

Understand how violence impacts child development and how to promote resilience.

Two out of three kids have been exposed to a traumatic event in the past year, like domestic violence, teen dating violence, school violence, food-insecurity, bullying, neglect, emotional abuse. Trauma can impact the physical development of a child's brain, and can have profound effects on a child's long term health. Children who experience chronic trauma demonstrate:

SCHOOL



HIGHER INCIDENCES OF...

Chronic absenteeism/Class avoidance
Suspension/expulsion
Low grades/test scores

HEALTH



HIGHER INCIDENCES OF...

Chronic disease (asthma, heart disease, type II diabetes)
Mental illness (depression, anxiety, acting out, PTSD)
Risky behaviors (smoking, vaping, alcohol use, drug use, self harm)

DEVELOPMENTAL CHANGES



TRAUMATIC STRESS CAN CHANGE...

Genes and how cells read them
Hormones (increases in cortisol, adrenal disorders)
Brain structures responsible for memory, complex cognition, and emotional processing.

Though not all children respond to trauma in the same way, children who have been exposed to traumatic events may show symptoms such as

FEAR AND ANXIETY

FREQUENT VISITS TO THE HEALTH CLINIC

HEADACHES

STOMACH ACHES

SLEEP DISORDERS/FALLING ASLEEP IN CLASS

WITHDRAWAL



What can school nurses do?

School nurses are uniquely positioned as caring, consistent adults, to help youth and promote healing. Consider...

WHAT MAY HAVE HAPPENED IN THE LIFE OF THE CHILD?

HOW CAN YOU CONTRIBUTE TO A CULTURE AND COMMUNITY OF HEALING?

1

Be aware of trauma triggers in the environment and minimize them where possible



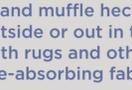
HARSH LIGHTING

Try using lamps or covered overhead fluorescents.



SLAMMING DOORS

Use door stops and if necessary, close the door gently



SHOUTING

Reduce and muffle hectic noise from outside or out in the halls with rugs and other noise-absorbing fabrics.



FIRE/LOCK DOWN DRILLS

Prepare students with advanced notice of jarring sounds so they can avoid being startled or triggered.



UNWELCOME OR UNEXPECTED TOUCH

Ask permission or give warning before physically touching a student.

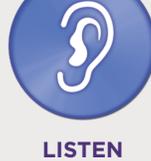
2

Promote healing by using Everyday Gestures



CELEBRATE

"Excellent news, James! You're improving each day."
...
"You're doing well. Keep up the great work!"



LISTEN

"I understand. How did that make you feel?"
...
"I hear what you're saying. It's okay to feel discouraged."



COLLABORATE

"Let's think together how to solve this problem."
...
"Great idea! What would you do next?"



COMFORT

"Let's take a break and we can talk when you're ready."
...
"I see you're upset. I'm here for you."



INSPIRE

"You're doing well. Keep up the great work!"
...
"Let's try this together. I know you can do it."

3

Adopt trauma-informed assessment and intervention practices

Reframe assessment language: When a student visits your office, ask what has happened, rather than what's wrong with them.



Advocate for school based and community resources.



Engage youth and parents as partners.



Identify the strengths and challenges of each child.



Teach self-help skills/calming strategies such as guided imagery, mindfulness, box breathing.



Consider developing IHP goals that promote resilience.

Taking Care Of Yourself

Working with trauma-impacted youth can also have an impact on the mental and emotional health of school staff. It's important to take care of yourself to ensure that you are prepared to best support students.

Recharge yourself



Stay confident

Ask for the support you need



Discover more about the Changing Minds everyday gestures, science of childhood trauma, and the power of a caring, consistent adult at: ChangingMindsNow.org



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