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?

What can school nurses do?

- 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.

CELEBRATE

"Excellent news, James! You’re improving each day."

"You’re doing well. Keep up the great work."

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."

COLLABORATE

"Let’s think together how to solve this problem."

"Great idea! What would you do next?"

LISTEN

"I understand. How did that make you feel?"

"I hear what you’re saying. It’s okay to feel discouraged."

Promote healing by using Everyday Gestures

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

FEAR AND ANXIETY

Frequent visits to the health clinic

HEADACHES

STOMACH ACHES

SLEEP DISORDERS/FALLING ASLEEP IN CLASS

WITHDRAWAL

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

HIGHER INCIDENCES OF...

Chronic absenteeism/class avoidance

Suspension/expulsion

Low grades/test scores

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)

Genes and how cells read them

Hormones (increases in cortisol, addrelian disorders)

Brain structures responsible for memory, complex cognition, and emotional processing.

TRAUMATIC STRESS CAN CHANGE...

SCHOOL HEALTH

DEVELOPMENTAL CHANGES


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

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