



School Staff Can Help Students Heal from Trauma

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

NEGLECT

ABUSE

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

COMMUNITY VIOLENCE



Traumatic events can impact children's brains, bodies, and behaviors long after the events have occurred. To manage the stress, children adopt coping mechanisms like:

AGGRESSION

LASHING OUT

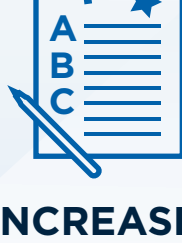
SELF HARM

WITHDRAWING/ESCAPE

FIGHTING



Adults in school settings are uniquely poised to support children and promote resiliency. By addressing trauma we can...



INCREASE READINESS TO LEARN.



INCREASE PROBLEM-SOLVING ABILITY.



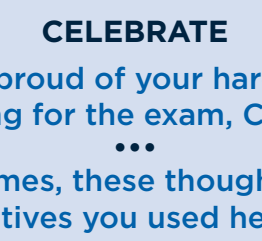
BUILD SAFER, MORE SUPPORTIVE CLASSROOMS.

What can school staff do?

Consider underlying causes of behavior. For example, when faced with defiance, instead of thinking "What is wrong with this child?" ask yourself: "What happened to this student? And how can I help?"

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Use Everyday Gestures to build relationships and promote healing.

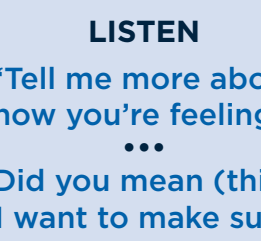


CELEBRATE

"I am proud of your hard work studying for the exam, Celinda."

...

"James, these thoughtful adjectives you used help me understand your favorite food."

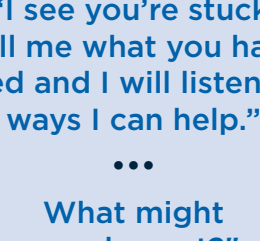


LISTEN

"Tell me more about how you're feeling."

...

"Did you mean (this)? I want to make sure I understand you."

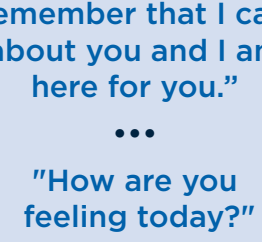


COLLABORATE

"I see you're stuck. Tell me what you have tried and I will listen for ways I can help."

...

"What might you do next?"

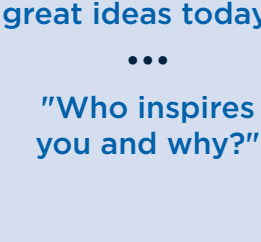


COMFORT

"You seem different today. Remember that I care about you and I am here for you."

...

"How are you feeling today?"



INSPIRE

"I've heard so many great ideas today!"

...

"Who inspires you and why?"

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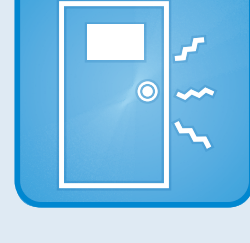
Minimize Triggers.

Sometimes our actions and/or the school environment itself that remind students of a traumatic event can bring on significant stress. Reflect on:



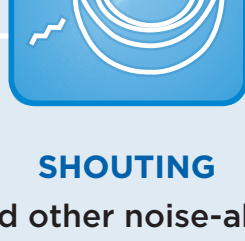
HARSH LIGHTING

Try using lamps or covered overhead fluorescents.



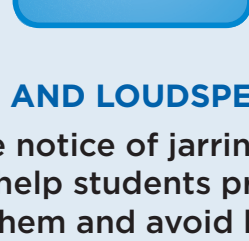
SLAMMING DOORS

Use stoppings; and consider how covered windows or screens may serve the same purpose.



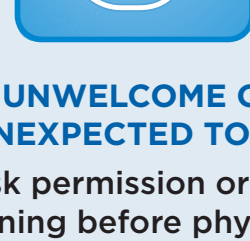
SHOUTING

Rugs and other noise-absorbing fabrics can help reduce and muffle hectic noise from outside or out in the halls.



BELLS AND LOUDSPEAKERS

Advance notice of jarring sounds may help students prepare for them and avoid being startled or triggered.



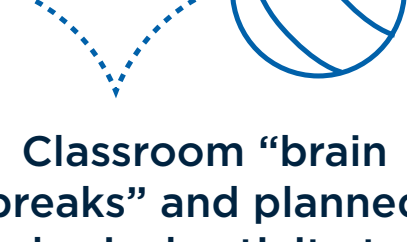
UNWELCOME OR UNEXPECTED TOUCH

Ask permission or give warning before physically touching a student.

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A Whole School Approach.

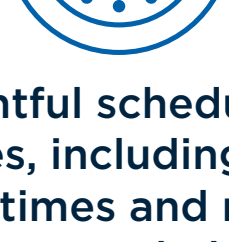
Entire school communities can work together to support healthy child development. Trauma sensitivity may look different in every community and we know it takes funding for certain efforts but do consider what can be done to adopt trauma-informed practices and programs.



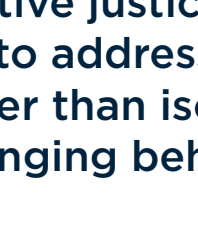
Classroom "brain breaks" and planned physical activity to address the whole child.



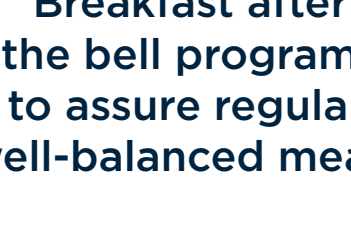
Mindful breathing to promote effective stress management and relaxation.



Thoughtful scheduling of activities, including school start times and major assessments, to help families stick to sleep routines.



Peace rooms and restorative justice circles to address, rather than isolate, challenging behaviors.



Breakfast after the bell programs to assure regular, well-balanced meals.

Taking Care Of Yourself

Your own wellness is an essential resource for success. Trauma-informed educators can ensure that they are prepared to best support students by modeling resiliency:

Stay calm in unpleasant situations

Strengthen supporting relationships

Ask for help

Apologize for missteps, even when no harm was intended.

Accept mistakes as opportunities to learn