Weathering the Storm
A Trauma-Informed Approach to the Return to School

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IN THIS WEBINAR

What to Expect this Fall and Why

4 Pillars of a Trauma-Informed Approach to Back to School 2020
WHAT TO EXPECT THIS FALL...AND WHY
ACES PRIMER

> Adverse Childhood Experiences stem from 10 different kinds of adversity

HOUSEHOLD DYSFUNCTION

> Incarceration of a Family Member
> Witnessing Domestic Violence
> Substance Abuse by Family Member
> Family Mental Illness
> Divorce or Separation

ABUSE

> Physical
> Emotional
> Sexual

NEGLECT

> Physical
> Emotional

A TYPICAL CLASSROOM OF 30 STUDENTS

> 6 students with no ACE
> 5 students with 1 ACE
> 6 students with 2 ACEs
> And importantly -
> 3 students with 3 ACEs
> 7 students with 4-5 ACEs
> 3 students with 6+ ACEs
ACES HAVE AN ENORMOUS IMPACT ON SCHOOL AGE STUDENTS’:

- Neurological development
- Decreased resilience
- Mental illness (increased rates)
- Academic difficulties
- Problems with Concentration and attention
- Difficulty trusting others
- Higher suicide rates (especially for interpersonal and sexual trauma)
- Long-term health problems and early morbidity
- Low self-worth & self concept, sense of agency
- High risk behaviors (substance abuse, domestic violence, etc)
- Increased stress response (fight or flight)
- Hyper-vigilance
- Social misattributions (hostile bias)
- Low emotional regulation
ACES IMPACTS

- **Students at risk:** Compared to someone with no ACEs students with ACEs are:
  - 3 times more likely to experience academic failure
  - 4 times more likely to have reported poor health
  - 5 times more likely to have severe attendance problems
  - 6 times more likely to evidence school behavior problems

- **Impacts Vary by:**
  - Point in time trauma occurs
  - Nature of adverse experience
  - Relational environment & supports present
  - Students’ resilience
REGULATION

Thinking

Emotional Responses

Attention

Physical Reactions
HUGE WAVE OF STRESS AND TRAUMA = INCREASED DYSREGULATION

• The COVID-19 pandemic
• The loss of predictability, routine, student skills
• The current socio-political climate
POLL QUESTION 1

• How prepared do you feel to address the coming wave of stress and trauma?
  – Totally Prepared
  – Somewhat Prepared
  – Fairly Unprepared
  – Totally Unprepared
  – N/A
STRESSFUL CONDITIONS IN SOCIETY

Associated with:

- Increased rates of mental health conditions like anxiety and depression
- Increased substance use
- Higher domestic violence and child abuse rates
COVID-19 STRESS

- Fear of getting sick
- Concern for family and friends at risk
- Social isolation
- Disruption of extended family network
- Loss of work and financial difficulties
- Stressful togetherness, including having to work and manage school for children
PEOPLE AT GREATER RISK FOR STRESS:

- Children and teens
- People with underlying health conditions
- People with existing mental health conditions
- People with substance abuse disorders
- Essential workers
- People experiencing poverty
- Racial and ethnic minorities
- People experiencing homelessness
- People who cannot access information about COVID in their primary language
THE EFFECTS OF THE LAST SIX MONTHS:

• Children have lost the routine of being in school. This includes:
  – Sleep/wake cycle
  – Having expectations to complete work and engage in non-preferred activities
  – Following a set routine or schedule
  – Following rules and being asked to do things in specific ways
  – Interacting cooperatively with others
THE EFFECTS OF THE LAST SIX MONTHS:

• More time spent online and with electronics
  – Increased screen time is associated with lower psychological well-being (depression and anxiety)
  – Lower curiosity
  – Decreased self-control
  – Lower emotional stability
  – Increased distractibility and task completion
  – Difficulty making friends and social connections
U.S. SOCIAL & POLITICAL CLIMATE

- Social and political tensions around the virus, mask-wearing, and the appropriateness of social distancing.
- The killing of George Floyd in Minneapolis on May 25, 2020 has led to nation-wide protest and racial and political tensions.
- There is an upcoming election cycle in November 2020 that is bound to be contentious.
RETURNING TO SCHOOL
4 KEY PILLARS OF A TRAUMA-INFORMED APPROACH

1. Personal Wellness
2. Creating Relationship & a Sense of Safety
3. Creating Predictability
4. Helping Students Regulate
1. PERSONAL WELLNESS
POLL QUESTION 2

How would you rate your stress level as it relates to back-to-school 2020?

5 – Totally stressed
4
3
2
1 - Not at all stressed
N/A
3 KEY AREAS

- Self-Awareness
- Self-Regulation
- Resiliency
SELF-AWARENESS

Understanding of:

• Your thoughts
• Your feelings
• Your body’s reaction
• Your habits
• Your biases in interpreting information
SELF-AWARENESS

• If you are having a thought or feeling, and you don’t know you are having that thought or feeling, you become that thought or feeling.”
  – Sam Harris
SELF-REGULATION

REGULATION

Thinking  Emotional Responses  Attention  Physical Reactions
THINKING OR SELF-TALK

Are you:

• Encouraging yourself or putting yourself down?
• Focusing more on the problem or on possible solutions?
• Making cognitive errors in examining a problem, especially ones that make the problem seem worse, or your options seem limited?
RESILIENCY

Internal strength is not...

- The absence of or denial of feelings
- Being so tough you don’t need any help or any comfort
RESILIENCY

- Learned behavior and way of thinking
- Develops through practice
- Built through relationships with other people
- Quality of connection
- Fluid and dependent on your physical and emotional state
- Adaptive response in the face of adversity
RESEARCH SHOWS

Resilient people do 3 things:

1. Calmly accept the reality of their circumstances
2. Make meaning of their situation
3. Flexibly adapt to their circumstances
THINGS TO DO:

• Monitor your own regulation
• Be aware of your own stress/trauma and the impact working with students with trauma has on you
• Make sure to start and end the day in a regulated state (develop and use regulation routines!)
• Practice Self-Talk
2. CREATING RELATIONSHIPS (AND A SENSE OF SAFETY)
CREATING RELATIONSHIPS

The key elements of forming relationships are:

• Presence
• Power
• Warmth
POLL QUESTION 3

• How prepared do you feel to build and maintain relationships virtually?
  – Totally Prepared
  – Somewhat Prepared
  – Fairly Unprepared
  – Totally Unprepared
  – N/A
THINGS TO DO:

• Show interest in your students
• Model positive relationships
• Focus on trust and safety

Distance Learning:
• Check your students’ social emotional vital signs before starting a lesson
• Exaggerate your non-verbals (being online dampens non-verbal signals)
• Create space in your routine to check in regarding students’ interests and activities
3. Creating Predictability
Creating Predictability

Predictability is hallmark of trauma-informed environments

- Kids don’t respond well to surprises and can't think flexibly
- They need to know what is going to happen, why, when, and how
- Predictability is also a staff trait - students can predict how you will respond.
THINGS TO DO:
• Post and follow a regular schedule
• Update the schedule daily to reflect changes
• Use visual supports to help students learn and remember routines, schedules and expectations
• Communicate regularly with students and caregivers
• Ensure a predictable and safe response from adults
• Continually clarify expectations for success
• Establish and follow routines that support your schedule
WHY CREATE Routines?

Routines:

• Help kids learn what to do through repetition and help automate a student’s behavior
• Reduce arousal and dysregulation
• Allow structured and predictable interaction with a calm adult
TYPES OF ROUTINES

• Transition routines manage transitions between activities

• Attention Routines help students re-focus – (example: “choral response”)

• Re-focus and re-centering routines help bring a class back being off track or having too high energy (example: deep breathing)
PRE-TEACHING

• Communicate and reiterate expectations before each activity.
• Discuss how you would like students to respond to certain issues.
• Make sure students know how to get materials, start and end class and get attention.
• Frame successful behaviors in a way that makes students want to do them.
4. Helping Students Regulate
As you go, so goes the student.
REGULATION IS A SHARED PROCESS

Regulation is not something you do to someone, it’s something you do with them.
WHAT DOES CO-REGULATION DO FOR YOU?

• Students do better when they are regulated

• They are attentive, calm, more cognitively flexible and available

• Co-regulation is an efficient process to address regulation
THINGS TO DO:

- Teach new coping skills for managing stress and uncertainty
- Schedule and provide opportunities to regulate
- Create safe, calming spaces

Distance Learning:

- Use specific words or phrases along with your routines
- Use these same words and skills at the beginning of an instructional task to allow for practice
- Intersperse regulation breaks within instruction
REGULATION BREAKS

• Build times and activities into your day to help students regulate - quick breaks, check ins, movement etc..

• Structure your day so students don’t get overwhelmed

• Have a process for students when they need a break

• Make social & emotional skills part of your curriculum
POLL QUESTION 4

• Does your school or district have a training plan in place to address the dysregulation we will face this fall?
  – Yes
  – No
  – I don’t know
  – N/A
FINAL THOUGHTS

• Be intentional and really plan out your return - online or in person

• Start with welcoming energy

• Go over the top with predictability, routine, structure

• Have a plan for when things go wrong
THANK YOU
ONLINE TOOLKIT FOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT ON TRAUMA-INFORMED SCHOOLS

- For ALL staff
- Brief videos with discussion guides and job specific tools
- Designed to fit all PD models
- Addresses the impact of COVID-19
- Focused on Self-Care, Relationships, Resiliency, SEL
ONLINE TRAINING FOR PARAPROFESSIONALS

Ready to use online training
3 to 13 minute videos, discussion guides, quizzes
Online tracking
THANK YOU

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