THE BARBARA AND JOHN JORDAN CENTER FOR CHILDREN OF TRAUMA AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE EDUCATION

WHEN LEARNING AND SCHOOLS CAUSE TRAUMA: STRATEGIES FOR ALL EDUCATORS

PRESENTATION FOR THE PA BRANCH OF THE INTERNATIONAL DYSLEXIA ASSOCIATION (PBIDA)
NOVEMBER 13, 2021

Presented by Colleen Lelli, Ed.D.
Cabrini University
Barbara and John Jordan Center for Children of Trauma and Domestic Violence Education

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PowToon Introduction

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THOUGHTFUL QUESTION

What do you know about trauma?

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EVERY OPPORTUNITY VIDEO

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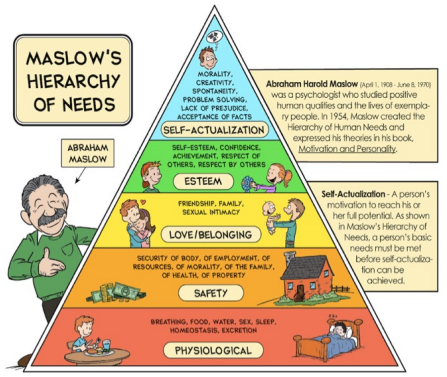

Reference: http://timvandevall.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/Maslows-Hierarchy-of-Needs.jpg

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WHAT IS STRESS?

- Response to stimulus
- Stressor - any stimulation that causes a reaction or response
- No two stress events are experienced in the same way.

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Acute and Chronic Stress

- Acute: Results from a single or limited experience; intense, sudden, unexpected
- Chronic: Includes experiences that are ongoing and pervasive.

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Leveling of Stress

Mild or Positive Stress → Tolerable or Moderate Stress → Toxic or Chronic Stress → Trauma

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Toxic or Chronic Stress

- Long lasting—intensive
  - ✓ Can disrupt the development of brain structure
  - ✓ Increase risk for stress related disease
- Prolonged sense of fear
- Cognitive Impairments
- Produces behaviors associated with hypervigilance and hypervigilance is the priority

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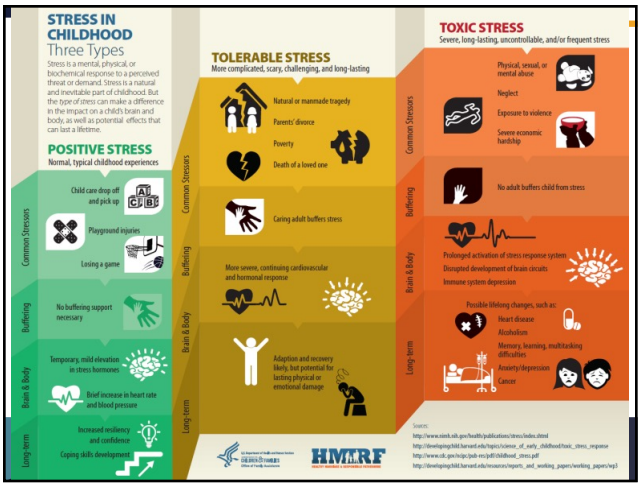

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What is Trauma?

- An event or events that involve actual or threatened death or serious injury to the child or others, or a threat to the psychological or physical integrity of the child or others (Peterson, K. L., 2014).
- Trauma is an exceptional experience in which powerful and dangerous events overwhelm a person's capacity to cope (Rice and Groves, 2005).

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COMPLEX TRAUMA

- First explored in 2003 by the National Child Traumatic Stress Network's Complex Trauma Task Force
- Term emerged from the recognition that many people experience multiple adversities over the course of their lifetime (Souers, K. & Hall, P., 2016).
- Focus on the *impact* of the events, not the *nature* of the events.

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Traumatic situations that cause post-trauma symptoms vary quite dramatically from person to person.

There is no objective criteria to evaluate which events will cause post-trauma symptoms.

It is very subjective and is defined more by its response than by its trigger!

Traumatic events may involve:

- Loss of control
- Betrayal
- Abuse of Power
- Helplessness
- Pain
- Confusion
- Loss

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Emotional signs include:

Sadness

anger

denial

fear/anxiety

shame

These may lead to:

- nightmares
- insomnia
- difficulty with relationships
- emotional outbursts

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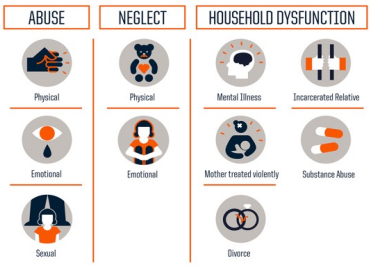
Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) Study

- To assess associations between childhood maltreatment and later-life health and well-being.



TED
Ideas worth spreading
Nadine Burke Harris

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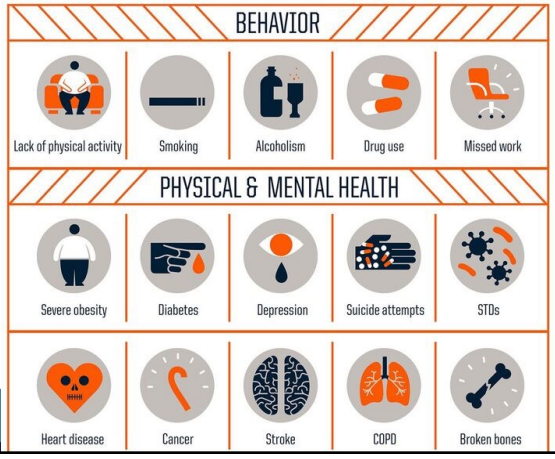

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HOW CHILDREN MAY REACT

How children react to such events and how they express it, depends on the children's age and development.

Preschool and young school age children may:

- Feel helpless
- Feel uncertain about the danger
- Have a general fear that lingers
- Have difficulty expressing themselves
- Lose previously acquired developmental skills

(Have trouble falling asleep on their own, lose some speech and toileting skills, have nightmares)

National Child Traumatic Stress Network

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HOW CHILDREN MAY REACT

School-age children may:

- Have feelings of persistent concern over their safety and the safety of those they love
- Feel the need to constantly talk about the situation
- Feel overwhelmed by their feelings of fear or sadness
- Experience disruption of their developmental tasks (difficulty falling asleep, fear of sleeping alone, or having nightmares)
- Have difficulty concentrating and learning
- Complain about headaches, stomach aches
- Engage in unusually reckless or aggressive behaviors

National Child Traumatic Stress Network

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HOW CHILDREN MAY REACT

Adolescents may:

- Feel self-conscious about their emotional responses
- Experience feelings of fear, vulnerability, and concern
- Withdraw from family and friends
- Engage in self-destructive or accident-prone behaviors

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BREAKOUT QUESTION

- What are some behaviors you've noticed in the children you serve that may be a result of a trauma?
- What are some ways you supported or provided the tools or strategies to support the children you serve?

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LEARNING TO READ AND TRAUMATIZED LEARNING

What happens to children who struggle too long with reading in terms of how it affects who they are and how they feel about how they are functioning?

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SO THE MESSAGE BEING SENT---

If you are not learning to read, you are being left behind in probably the single most important process that occurs in early schooling because it's the key to everything else that occurs.

Emotional Danger

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OTHER CAUSES OF READING TRAUMA

- **High stakes testing**
- **Reading of the "classics"**
- **Shaming reading choices**
- **Book leveling**
- **(Stivers and Torres, 2020)**

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Supportive relationships will buffer or protect young children from the effects of trauma and/or toxic stress

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THE BEST TIC INTERVENTION

"There is no more effective neurobiological intervention than a safe relationship"

-- Bruce Perry, PhD, MD, researcher & child psychiatrist

The relationship works to bring the brain back into regulation

- Safe, predictable, consistent relationships
- Clarify your role with the student
- Establish yourself as a safe individual
- Create an environment of respect
- Give the student opportunities to make choices

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TRAUMA INFORMED CARE (TIC)

- Challenging presentations of students are not necessarily character flaws, but instead may be the consequence of having experienced trauma (Institute of Trauma Informed Care, 2015).
- Considering the actions/behaviors from a place of compassion and curiosity rather than from judgement, blame, or frustration
- Instead of "WHAT'S WRONG WITH YOU?"
- Think "What has happened to you?"
- Trust that our simple compassionate gestures are important elements of healing and surviving.

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Trauma Informed Practices in Educational Settings

- Becoming trauma informed requires a shift in the educational paradigm of classroom management.
- It goes against what you have learned about students' behavioral challenges and classroom discipline approaches.
- It changes how policies are developed and implemented in schools when encountering traumatized students.
- It has a ripple effect across the school environment and culture. It involves administration, teachers, staff, students and families

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STRATEGIES

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OVERALL STRATEGIES FOR CHILDREN

For Young Children:

- Provide support, comfort, rest, and opportunity to play and draw
- Ensure them that they are safe and cared for
- Help them to verbalize their feelings
- Maintain consistency to provide a sense of security
- Be patient with regression in developmental tasks

For School Aged Children:

- Provide encouragement to express fears, sadness, and anger
- Encourage them to discuss their worries
- Acknowledge the normalcy of their feelings and correct and distortions that they express
- Be aware that they may have trouble concentrating and learning

For Adolescents:

- Encourage discussion of the event and feelings about it
- Support them through any of the challenges they are experiencing
- Help them to understand their reaction and feelings
- Address realistic consequences of their actions
- Help them to formulate constructive alternatives that lessen their sense of helplessness

Click here

SESAME STREET in Communities

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WHAT WE KNOW ABOUT CHILDREN OF TRAUMA AND LITERACY

- **Literacy is an emotional context and shared reading is an important piece for learning how to read.**

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TRAUMA INFORMED CARE (TIC)

- Create a safe environment
- Making connections with others
- **Connect** – Focus on Relationships
- **Protect** – Promote Safety and Trustworthiness
- **Respect** – Engage in Choice and Collaboration
- **Redirect (Teach and Reinforce)** – Encourage Skill Building and Competence *Hummer, V., Crosland, K., Dollard, N., 2009*

https://tamresource.weebly.com/trauma-informed-care.html

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GUIDEPOSTS FOR TRAUMA INFORMED STRATEGIES: 4 R'S & P'S

- ***Guidepost 1: Relationships/Partnerships*** (stable adult/agencies)
- ***Guidepost 2: Routines/Predictability*** (with flexibility)
- ***Guidepost 3: Resilience/Perseverance*** (strength focus, mindset)
- ***Guidepost 4: Rest/Pause*** (self-care)

Created by Ballard, Gentile & Lelli, 2021

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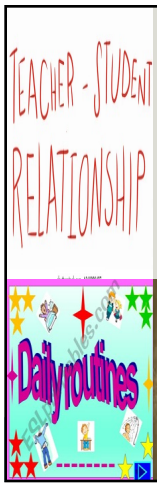
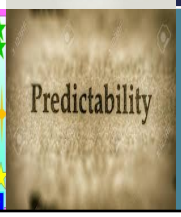


- Provide a safe/comfortable environment
- Connect with outside agencies for support & programming
- "Tuning in" and responding to student needs & interests
- Connect with other educators
- Create communication channels
- Provide daily "check-ins"



- Establish clear routines and procedures
- Show flexibility as needs arise
- Provide daily agendas
- Allow ample transition time
- Provide consistent and frequent communication
- Prioritize clarity in expectations

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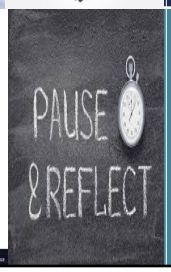
- Model resiliency -share lived experiences
- Recognize strengths
- Teach about growth mindset, role of mistakes in learning, and the power of yet (Dweck, 2006)
- Use effort and strength based feedback
- Use one-on-one conferencing
- Teach goal setting & rewards



- Mindfulness practices
- Practice self-care
- Connect with colleagues
- Provide opportunities to self-reflect
- Use gratitude journals
- Exercise
- Read

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STRATEGIES

TEACH A SOCIAL EMOTIONAL CURRICULUM: TEACH FEELINGS, EXPRESSION, AND IDENTIFYING EMOTIONS

IDENTIFY COPING SKILLS TO HELP DECREASE EMOTIONAL INTENSITY. HELP YOUTH FIND POSITIVE WAYS TO COPE.

Deepen your understanding about the community the student lives in and available resources for the student and family

Think of ways to reach out to parents/caregivers that involves them in the educational process.

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What are some ways you supported the children you serve/served who have struggled with reading and/or learning?

Which TIP or TIC strategies do you plan to begin using or continue to use?

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WHAT IS A TRAUMA-INFORMED SCHOOL PROGRAM?

- Recognizes and responds to the impact of traumatic stress to those who have contact with the school
- Infuses and sustains trauma awareness, knowledge, and skills into the climate, programs, and classrooms
- Collaborates with all who are involved with the child to maximize physical and psychological safety, facilitates adjustments of the child and family, and supports their ability to learn and thrive.
- Identifies students and personnel who are at risk or who might need more intensive support to address their traumatic stress reactions

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TRAUMA INFORMED STRATEGIES FOR SCHOOL PROGRAMS

Use a trauma-informed approach to help children feel safe, supported, and ready to learn during times of adversity

Be deliberate in the implementation of Social Emotional Learning curriculum and skill building (resilience and coping skills)

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RETHINK DISCIPLINE POLICIES

- Discipline policies need to be informed by science.
- Punitive tactics like loss of recess, shaming, suspension will not work for kids with trauma
- Science suggests that school safety policies and policies that support the orderly functioning of the school environment should include in-school suspensions, restorative justice, opportunities to de-escalate and give a child the time and space to allow their adrenaline and cortisol levels to come down. That's a way to work with a child's biology instead of against it.

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THE ROLE OF EDUCATORS

- Delivering that daily dose of buffering care that's so important for healing…healing and nurturing interactions that are the antidote to toxic stress.
- Social emotional learning: Giving children the tools to understand how to recognize what's going on with them, then how to respond, how to be able to calm their bodies down, is healing! Teaching them how to keep themselves safe, how to connect with nurturing relationships-has been show to be life-changing and life-saving!
- Be sure to take care of yourself first….we need you in this struggle! By caring for yourself, you are making yourself available to provide that safe, stable, and nurturing environment for our students

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Using Children's Literature
Jenny Is Scared!
When Sophie Gets Angry—Really, Really Angry...
A Terrible Thing Happened
The Forever Dog
The Invisible String
Have You Filled a Bucket Today?
A Guide to Daily Happiness for Kids
Two Homes
Alex and the Scary Things
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YOUNG ADULT FICTION AND NON-FICTION BOOKS TO TEACH GRIT, RESILIENCE AND GROWTH MINDSET
WHERE THE CRAWDADS SING
DELIA OWENS
HATCHET
GARY PAULSEN
THE SISTERS CHASE
SARAH HEALY
HIDDEN FIGURES
Educated
The Garbage King
UNBROKEN
LAURA HILLENBRAND
Elizabeth Laird
out of my mind
SHARON M. DRAPER
Inside Out & Back Again

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Books
Fostering Resilient Learners
TRAUMA-SENSITIVE SCHOOLS for the ADOLESCENT YEARS
SUSAN E. CRAIG
ANGELA DUCKWORTH
GRIT
THE POWER of PASSION and PERSEVERANCE
the deepest well
HEALING the LONG-TERM EFFECTS of CHILDHOOD ADVERSITY
NADINE BURKE HARRIS
mindset
THE NEW PSYCHOLOGY OF SUCCESS
HOW WE CAN LEARN TO FULFILL OUR POTENTIAL
CAROL S. DWECK, Ph.D.
Reaching and Teaching Children Exposed to Trauma
TRAUMA-SENSITIVE SCHOOLS
SUSAN E. CRAIG
i wish my teacher knew

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Hakuna Matata
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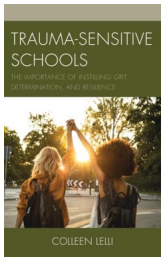

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ADDITIONAL RESOURCES FOR TRAUMA CAUSED BY SCHOOL AND READING

- https://www.learningforjustice.org/magazine/summer-2019/when-schools-cause-trauma
- http://dyslexia-research.com/page25.html
- https://www.kathleendunbar.net/dyslexia-anxiety-and-fear-ptsd-trauma-and-panic-attacks
- https://www.youtube.com/user/ChildrenoftheCode

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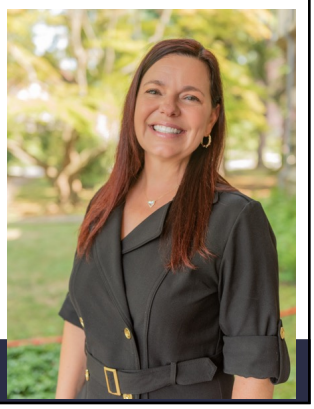
Colleen Lelli, Ed.D.
cl724@cabrini.edu



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