

Safe Classrooms: Trauma Responsive Approaches

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Grew up in Vermont

MA in Conflict Resolution, MAT in Secondary Ed
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Taught in public and private schools in
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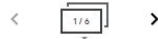
Taught elementary school in Lawrence, MA

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Using Jamboard



Getting to know you!

Name,
Title,
Where you
grew up



Agenda

- Definition and overview of trauma.
- Key principles of the trauma responsive approach.
- Universal strategies for application.

Definition of a Traumatic Experience

Exposure to actual or threatened death, serious injury, or sexual violence in 1 or more of the following ways: (DSM-5)

- Direct
- Witnessing (not only electronic/other)
- Learning about traumatic event for caregiver
- Repeated exposure to aversive details

Event

- A singular event
- Series of events
- Set of circumstances

Experience

How an individual experiences an emotionally or physically harmful event.

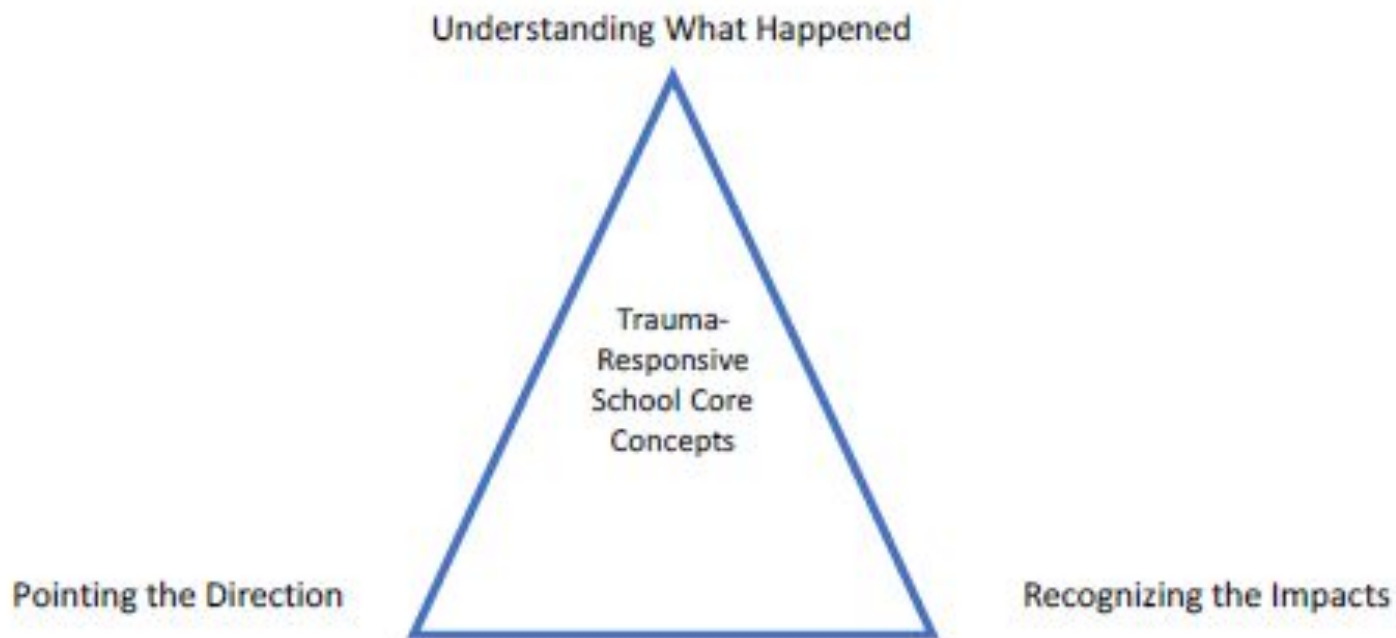
Effects

- Can be immediate or in the future
- Can last long-term and short-term
- Can affect mental, physical, social, emotional, or spiritual well being.

The “Trauma-Responsive Framework”

(Yackley, 2018)

Connecting Experiences with Distress and Building A Future Together



The Brain & Trauma

Fear and Anxiety Affect the Brain Architecture of Learning and Memory

PREFRONTAL CORTEX

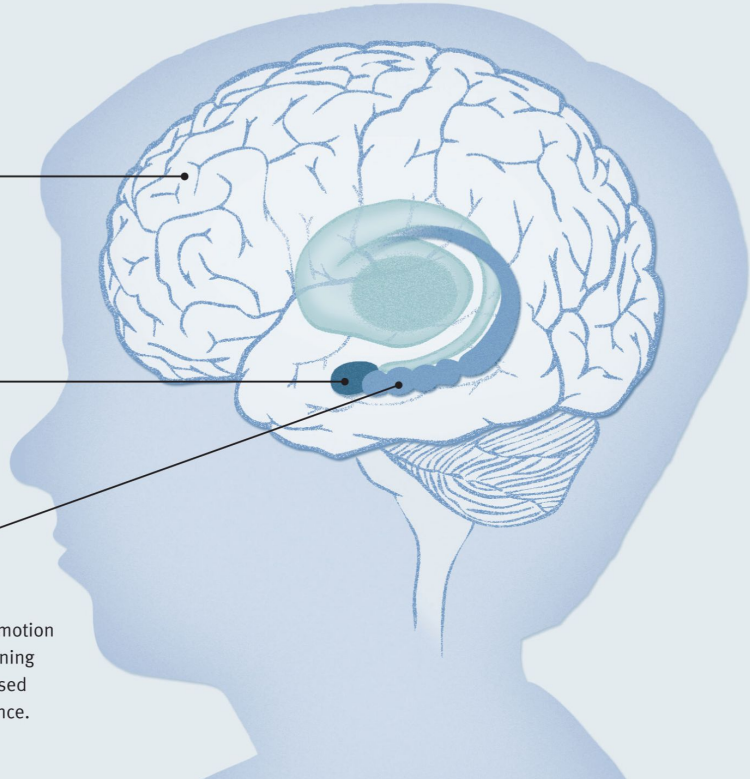
Center of executive functions; regulates thought, emotions, and actions. Especially vulnerable to elevation of brain chemicals caused by stress. Matures later in childhood.

AMYGDALA

Triggers emotional responses; detects whether a stimulus is threatening. Elevated cortisol levels caused by stress can affect activity. Matures in early years of life.

HIPPOCAMPUS

Center of short-term memory; connects emotion of fear to the context in which the threatening event occurs. Elevated cortisol levels caused by stress can affect growth and performance. Matures in early years of life.





Key Principles of Trauma-Responsive Approach

1. Safety
2. Trustworthiness and transparency
3. Collaboration and mutuality
4. Empowerment, voice and choice
5. Resilience and strengths-based

Safety

Trauma survivors often feel unsafe, due to unpredicted or repetitive boundary violation or an abuse of power.

Physical v. Psychological safety

Routine & predictability; clearly communicated expectations

Be sensitive to the cues in the environment that may cause a reaction

Calming the brain through safety - engaging the thinking & remembering brain



Trustworthiness & Transparency

Trust is the strong belief in the reliability, truth, ability or strength of someone or something. Trauma can disrupt the emotion of trust.

Be consistent over time

Warn students if you will be doing something out of the ordinary

Perceptive & caring adult (Search Institute)



Collaboration & Mutuality

Collaboration and mutuality reduces the likelihood of a problematic power dynamic; healing happens in relationships and in meaningful sharing of power and decision making.

Increase the level of support and encouragement given to students. Designate an adult who can provide additional support if needed.

Recognizing the abilities of the child

Agency over decisions being made

Family partnerships

Peer support



Empowerment, Voice and Choice

Those who have experienced trauma may have had their voices diminished.

Disconfirm beliefs based on trauma; reaffirm truth based on strengths

Positive Self Talk

Often traumatic events involve loss of control and/or chaos, so you can help children feel safe by providing them with some choices or control when appropriate.



Resilience & Strengths-Based

Those who have faced trauma are working to manage their experiences the best way they know how. Recognizing effort supports skill building and healing.

Everyone is an Asset Builder (Search Institute)

Positively framing feedback

Acknowledge effort

Build confidence



"People don't care how much you know until they know how much you care"

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<https://www.education.nh.gov/who-we-are/division-of-learner-support/bureau-of-student-wellness>



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