

CREATING TRAUMA RESILIENT CLASSROOMS

By

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*“If you never heal from what hurt you, you will bleed on
people who didn’t cut you”*

Intentions give you purpose, as well as the inspiration and motivation to achieve your purpose. The practice of setting an intention can provide powerful support for personal transformation: becoming the teacher you wish to be.

An intention is an idea that you plan (or intend) to carry out. If you mean something, it's an intention. Your aim is your intention. It's something you mean to do, whether you pull it off or not.

My intention for today is:

Permission Slips:

What do you need to give yourself permission to do or be, in order to fulfill your intention

DISCUSSING PERMISSION SLIPS WITH STUDENTS

- When you listened to other students' permissions, were there some that you could relate to?
- Were there some that you would like to add to your permission slips?
- What are some situations where it might be helpful to use permission slips? These might include classroom situations and situations in other areas of life.
- Sometimes people give themselves permission to sleep in class or play on their phones.
This tool shouldn't be used to move us away from engagement or connection, only toward it.

COMFORT ZONES and SAFETY:



WHAT IS TRAUMA

“Prolonged exposure to repetitive or severe events such as child abuse, is likely to cause the most severe and lasting effects.”

“Traumatization can also occur from neglect, which is the absence of essential physical or emotional care, soothing and restorative experiences from significant others, particularly in children.”(International Society for the Study of Trauma and Dissociation, 2009)

Trauma overwhelms the ability to cope. This results in feelings of terror, helplessness, and powerlessness. Interferes with a sense of control, connection, and meaning.

The Brain and Trauma

- When a person undergoes a traumatic event repeatedly, their body produces a stress hormone that reduces the connections between neurons. This deficit happens specifically in the areas of the brain dedicated to reasoning and learning.
- When a person encounters an adverse situation, he or she physically cannot handle the reasoning to deal with it. An adverse situation could be something as simple as a spelling test or the copy machine doesn't work.

What is a Trauma-Sensitive Classroom?

- Trauma sensitive classroom is a class in which students feel safe, welcomed, and supported. Where addressing trauma's impact on learning is at the center of its educational mission.
- Trauma-informed education is a journey, not a checklist. There are no magical programs That are going to fix kids because we are NOT fixing kids. We are supporting kids to be successful.

- ▶ A report of child abuse is made every ten seconds in the United States.
(Childhelp, 2013)
- ▶ Children who experience child abuse and neglect are 59% more likely to be arrested as a juvenile, 28% more likely to be arrested as an adult, and 30% more likely to commit violent crime.
(Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2006)
- ▶ Trauma histories are pervasive among youth in America (especially youth from diverse cultural backgrounds).
(Marcenich, 2009)
- ▶ Children with disabilities are more likely to experience neglect than children without disabilities.
(Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2006)

What You Might See in the Classroom

- Extreme shyness and difficulty engaging with others
- Disproportionate reactions to setbacks and unexpected changes
- Trouble managing strong emotions (extreme anger, excessive crying, etc.)
- Clinginess
- Difficulty transitioning from one activity to the next
- Forgetfulness
- Frequent complaints of feeling sick
- Difficulty focusing
- Lack of safety awareness
- Missed deadlines
- Poor academic performance
- Apathy and lack of effort
- Perfectionist tendencies
- Physical and/or verbal aggression
- Dissociate or freeze which can look like daydreaming

Trauma impacts reasoning, planning, and emotional control

*Survival Mode: What Trauma Can Look Like in the Classroom**

Fight	Flight	Freeze	Fawn
Defiant/Yelling	Withdraw	Refusing to answer	People pleaser
Aggressive/Bullying	Flee	Stuck	Can't say no
Bullying	Seem to sleep	Appearing numb	No boundaries
Controlling	Wandering/Hiding	Unable to move/act	Overwhelmed
Acting Silly	Anxiety/Panic/OCD	Isolating	Codependent

**Adapted from Fostering Resilient Learners: Strategies for Creating a Trauma-Sensitive Classroom, 2016*

What is Your Response? Fight, Flight, Freeze or Fawn?

<input type="radio"/> Clench fists	<input type="radio"/> Want to hide	<input type="radio"/> Want to hide	<input type="radio"/> Want to please people
<input type="radio"/> Heart beating fast	<input type="radio"/> Want to run away	<input type="radio"/> Feel 'stuck'	<input type="radio"/> Pay compliments
<input type="radio"/> Arguing	<input type="radio"/> Restless legs	<input type="radio"/> Heart pounds or slows	<input type="radio"/> Say 'yes' to others
<input type="radio"/> Saying no	<input type="radio"/> Shallow breathing	<input type="radio"/> Trembling or shaky	<input type="radio"/> Have lots of questions
<input type="radio"/> Grinding teeth or jaw	<input type="radio"/> Feel tense	<input type="radio"/> Can't speak	<input type="radio"/> Over-apologise
<input type="radio"/> Want to kick or punch	<input type="radio"/> Feel trapped	<input type="radio"/> Refuse instructions	<input type="radio"/> Don't want to be alone
<input type="radio"/> Shouting	<input type="radio"/> Eyes widen	<input type="radio"/> Want to be alone	<input type="radio"/> Scared to say what I am thinking
Fight 	Flight 	Freeze 	Fawn 

G.F.T. =

TRT=

Benefits all students

Always empower rather than disempower.

Provide unconditional positive regard

Maintain high expectation

Check assumptions, observe, and question- sometimes behavior is the only way to communicate

Be a relationship coach (explicitly teach how to have healthy relationships)

Provide opportunities for meaningful participation

Supporting and Educating Traumatized Students, Rossen and Hull (2013)

VIDEO TAKEAWAYS:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.

Intentional and Transparent

Intentional: **YOU** know why you're doing what you're doing.

Transparent: **STUDENTS** know why you're doing what you're doing.

Reaching the Learning Brain
Dr Bruce Perry's 3 Rs

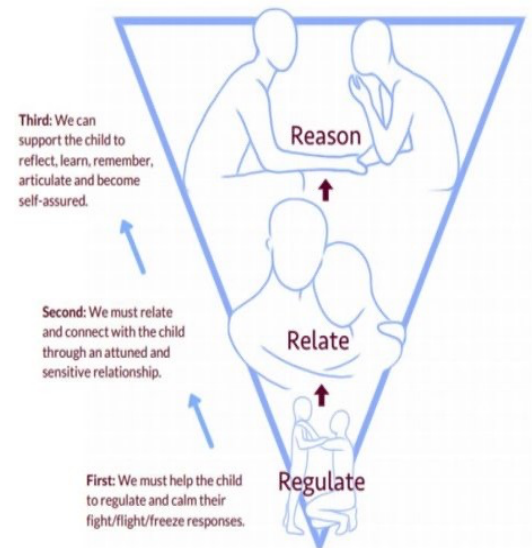
1. Regulate
(Brainstem and midbrain - the sensory motor brain)
Help the child to regulate and calm their stress responses - fight, flight, freeze. Offer soothing comfort and reassurance.

2. Relate
(Limbic brain - the emotional relational brain)
Connect with the child through attuned, sensitive relationship. Empathise and validate the child's feelings so they feel seen, heard and understood.

3. Reason
(Cortical brain - the great human 'thinking' brain)
Now that the child is calm and connected they are able to fully engage in learning.

Heading straight for the reasoning part of the brain cannot work if a child is dysregulated and disconnected from others.

Bruce Perry via Love Pedagogy • Artist: Marcos Rey



“Resiliency is the capability of individuals to cope successfully in the face of significant change, adversity, or risk. The capacity changes over time and is enhanced by protective factors in the individual and environment.”

(Stewart et al., 1991 as cited by Greene and Conrad, 2002)

RESILIENCE IS A PROCESS AND OUTCOME!

What Resilience is Not

- ❖ Being **resilient** does **not** mean that people don't experience stress, emotional upheaval, and suffering
- ❖ It is NOT pulling yourself up from your bootstraps
- ❖ It is NOT grin and bear it
- ❖ It does not mean we expect personal resilience in the face of unjust policies and inequitable systems
- ❖ Focusing on personal resilience or grit avoids solving the structural problems that are causing the suffering that requires resilience in the first place

“One of the most important actions educators can take to help children and teens who have been exposed to trauma and adversity is to build positive relationships with them and to help them build positive relationships with other adults and peers.”

- Patricia A. Jennings.

ACTIONS THAT BEGIN TO BUILD TRUSTING RELATIONSHIPS WITH STUDENTS

Choose what you are comfortable with and what meets your style

1. CALL STUDENTS BEFORE THE SCHOOL YEAR BEGINS
2. GREET STUDENTS AT THE DOOR WITH A FRIENDLY SMILE-USE THEIR NAME AND MAKE EYE CONTACT
3. INQUIRE ABOUT STUDENTS' AFTER-SCHOOL ACTIVITIES
4. STOP BY TO WATCH A STUDENT IN A SPORTING EVENT OR CONCERT
5. ACKNOWLEDGE OR CELEBRATE BIRTHDAYS
6. ASSIGN STUDENTS TO DECORATE THE BULLETIN BOARD
7. SMILE AND SAY HELLO TO STUDENTS IN THE HALLWAY
8. _____
9. DISPLAY STUDENTS' ARTWORK OR CREATIVE WRITING
10. _____
11. RECOGNIZE EFFORT
12. GIVE ENCOURAGEMENT
13. SEND POSITIVE NOTES HOME
14. MAKE POSITIVE PHONE CALLS HOME
15. PHONE HOME WHEN A STUDENT IS SICK
16. GIVE STUDENTS CHOICES OF TASKS THAT NEED TO BE DONE
17. WRITE ENCOURAGING COMMENTS ON STUDENTS' PAPERS
8. REMIND STUDENTS OF PAST SUCCESSES
19. SHARE TOPICS THE STUDENT IS INTERESTED IN.
20. RECOGNIZE WHEN THEY ARE ABSENT AND WELCOME THEM BACK.
- 21. FIND 2 MINUTES EVERY DAY TO CHAT WITH STUDENT (anything other than behavior or academics)**

FOUR S's to Build Resilience

1. Self-

2. Self-

3. Self-

4. Self-

1. **Self-** _____: Allows you to see and reflect on your emotions and behaviors so you can make changes as needed and as you desire.

To be self-aware, you must be able to...

- Identify your EMOTION
- Identify your TRIGGERS
- Recognize your strengths and weaknesses.

Find and Acknowledge Strengths

- What does the student do well?
- Where does this student shine?
- What are this student's talents?
- Where does this student express joy?
- What do you like about this student?

2. SELF - Regulation is a deep, internal mechanism that enables children to engage in mindful, intentional, and thoughtful behaviors. (Elena Bodrvoa and Deborah J. Leong)

- The ability to control one's impulses and STOP doing something, if needed – for example, not blurt out an answer when another child is asked.
- The capacity to DO something (even if one doesn't want to) because it's needed, such as raising your hand or waiting for your turn.

3. SELF—compassion: Having self-compassion means being able to relate to yourself in a way that's forgiving, accepting, and loving when the situation might be less than optimal

“Remember that if you want to motivate yourself, love is more powerful than fear”

Dr. Kristen Neff

MaryAnn Brittingham is available for keynotes and staff development day. For more information or to schedule MaryAnn to speak, contact her directly by phone, email, or visit her website:

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