THE LENS OF
TRAUMA

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Objectives

● Set a level with understanding what trauma is
● Explore how trauma affects the brain
● Recognize ways trauma can impact your classroom
● Prepare to respond to your students experiencing trauma
Lenses of TRAUMA

Trauma & the Brain
- The effects of trauma on the brain, types of trauma, brief classroom strategies

Student Behavior
- Specific behavior training on responding to trauma in the classroom, trauma-informed teaching, classroom environment

Leadership Practices
- Creating trauma-sensitive culture, recognizing secondary traumatic stress, compassion resiliency

Systems & Supports
- Creating trauma-sensitive schools: policy review, practice, strategy for schools/districts
Training shall address, but shall not be limited to:

I. Recognition of the signs of trauma in students.

II. Best practices for schools and classrooms regarding trauma-informed approaches, including utilization of multi-tiered systems of support (MTSS).

III. Recognition of the signs of the impact of secondary trauma on school employees and appropriate resources for school employees who are experiencing secondary trauma.

IV. The school entity's policies regarding trauma-informed approaches.

V. The school entity's policies regarding connecting students with appropriate services.
Definition of Trauma

01 Exposure to an event, series of events or set of circumstances that is experienced by an individual as physically or emotional harmful or threatening.

02 Lasting adverse effects

03 Creates significant difficulty in cognitive functioning and physical, social, emotional, mental or spiritual well-being.
**TYPES OF TRAUMA**

**Racial**
Potentially traumatic experiences resulting from direct experiences of racial harassment, witnessing racial violence toward others, and experiencing discrimination and institutional racism. Racial trauma can include direct exposure of racial harassment, witnessing racial violence toward others, and experiencing discrimination and intuitional racism.

*(Guarino and Chagnon, 2018; PDE, 2020)*

**Historical**
The cumulative emotional and psychological wounding across generations, including the lifespan, which emanates from massive group trauma. Historical trauma may be used interchangeably with generational trauma. This would include the emerging research on epigenetics.

**Generational**
Trauma that occurs when members of a collective (community) feel they have been subjected to an atrocious event and/or series of experiences that leaves permanent marks upon their group consciousness, marking their memories forever and changing their future identity in fundamental and irrevocable ways.

*(Alexander, 2016)*
THE ACES STUDY

**ABUSE**
- Physical
- Emotional
- Sexual

**NEGLECT**
- Physical
- Emotional

**HOUSEHOLD DYSFUNCTION**
- Mental Illness
- Incarcerated Relative
- Mother treated violently
- Substance Abuse
- Divorce
**DIFFERENT TYPES OF TRAUMA & SOME OF THE INTERPLAYING FACTORS AROUND THE IMPACT & CONSEQUENCES**

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**Sketch by @wterrit**

This is not a prescriptive or exhaustive list. Nor are they mutually exclusive - many are & can be

**LAYERED, INTERLINKED, & INTERWOVEN**

Trauma does not occur within a vacuum; it is influenced by multiple systemic, relational, & contextual elements. Therefore, the impact & consequences of the traumas are likely to be on a continuum, & shaped by a number of interplaying factors including:

- **AGE & STAGE.**
- **TEMPERAMENT & UNIQUE ATTRIBUTES, INCLUDING BIOLOGICAL & GENETIC FACTORS.**
- **RELATIONSHIP WITH THE PERSON.**
- **SEVERITY & NATURE OF THE TRAUMA.**
- **DURATION & FREQUENCY OF THE TRAUMA.**
- **OTHER PEOPLE & THE COMMUNITY'S RESPONSES, SUPPORT, & REACTIONS.**
- **THE MEANING-MAKING & SENSE-MAKING AROUND THE TRAUMAS.**
- **THE BELIEFS, ATTRIBUTIONS, JUDGEMENTS, EXPECTATIONS, & ASSUMPTIONS.**
- **CULTURAL, SOCIAL, & SOCIETAL CONTEXT & CONCEPTUALISATIONS.**
- **IMPACT ON THE PERSON'S DAY-TO-DAY LIFE; INCLUDING THE LOSSES.**
- **OTHER PROTECTIVE & RISK FACTORS INCLUDING PREVIOUS LIFE EVENTS.**

**RELATIONAL ATTACHMENT & INTERPERSONAL**

**DEVELOPMENTAL INCLUDING IN-UTERO**

**ABUSE & MALTREATMENT**

- Physical, sexual, & emotional abuse, neglect, domestic violence, etc.

**CULTURAL & RACIAL**

**INTERGENERATIONAL & HISTORICAL**

**SINGLE EVENT**

- Car accident, burglary, etc.

**WAR, REFUGEE, & POLITICAL**

**COMBAT-RELATED & MILITARY**

**MEDICAL, INJURY, & BIRTH TRAUMA**

**traumatic grief, bereavement, & loss**

**community trauma**

- Including neighbourhood & school violence

**natural disaster**

**organisational, systemic, & institutional trauma**

**secondary & vicarious trauma**

**peer, sibling, & bullying trauma**
Some Groups Are More Likely to Have Experienced ACEs

Multiple studies show that people who identified as members of these groups as adults reported experiencing significantly more ACEs:

- Black, Hispanic/Latino, or multiracial people
- Lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender people
- People with less than a high school education
- People making less than $15,000 per year
- People who are unemployed or unable to work

Source: CDC
WHO IS IN YOUR CLASSROOM?
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.
The Hand Model of the Brain

What happens when we “flip our lid”

When our brain is working efficiently both the upper and mid brain are communicating effectively. Information comes in and is processed logically. Sometimes too much information is coming in for the Upper brain to process and it disconnects. We “flip our lid” and can no longer access the functions provided by the upper brain.

Cerebral cortex

The Cerebrum or Neo Cortex
- Cerebral cortex
- Prefrontal cortex
- Upper brain
  - “Logic centre”
  - “Thinking brain”
  - “Upstairs brain”

Your brain working in harmony. All parts are connected and talking. The upper part of the brain can be accessed for logic, socialising and reasoning. Our upper brain is hugging our mid brain, making it feel safe.

Brain Stem
- Reptilian brain
- Basic functions
- Hind brain

Base of Skull
- Spinal cord

Upper and lower parts of the brain are no longer connected and talking. Logic no longer influence emotions. You’ve “flipped your lid”

The Cerebellum or Limbic Regions
- Hippo campus
- Amygdala
- Mid brain
  - “Big feelings”
  - “Cave man” brain
  - “Downstairs brain”
- Information dump from the Central Nervous System

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TRIGGERS

**FIGHT**
- Acting out
- Behaving aggressively
- Acting silly
- Exhibiting defiance
- Being hyperactive
- Arguing
- Screaming/yelling

**FLIGHT**
- Withdrawing
- Fleeing the classroom
- Skipping class
- Daydreaming
- Seeming to sleep
- Avoiding others
- Hiding or wandering
- Becoming disengaged

**FREEZE**
- Exhibiting numbness
- Refusing to answer
- Refusing to get needs met
- Giving a blank look
- Feeling unable to move/act
IN THE CLASSROOM
YOU ARE THE STRATEGY

~ SUSAH HOPKINS ~
SUPPORTING STUDENT SAFETY

**EMOTIONAL**
- Create an atmosphere of trust
- Teach students how to regulate emotions
- Teach students how to express their emotions
- Teach students about goal-setting

**PHYSIOLOGICAL**
- Designing all physical aspects of the school to set a tone for positive learning environments by being physically welcoming, comfortable, and safe
- Including the signage and messaging, visual look of all areas

**SOCIAL**
- Develop and practice safe social norms
- Digital citizenship
- Bullying prevention programs
- Create cultures that foster equity, inclusion, & belonging—on purpose
RELATIONSHIPS
THANK YOU

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