

TEACHERS AND EDUCATORS

CREATING SAFE AND SUPPORTIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

T R A U M A

The National Child Traumatic Stress Network (NCTSN) defines trauma as a frightening, dangerous, or violent event that threatens the life or bodily integrity of the child or child's loved one.

More than 2/3 of children will report at least one traumatic event by age 16 (SAMHSA, 2017).

Trauma can create a ripple effect, impacting many parts of a child's life including education and learning.

Children who've experienced trauma may display these behaviors, which should be viewed as learned survival :

- Intense and ongoing emotional upset
- Mood changes (depression, anxiety, anger, irritability)
- Difficulty with peers and forming relationships
- Attention and academic difficulties
- Fight, flight, freeze responses (combative, running, spacing out/numbing)
- Physical complaints, aches and pains
- Difficulty eating/sleeping

Working with kids impacted by trauma can affect the caring adults in their lives and can result in Secondary Traumatic Stress and Burn Out. Make sure to take time for your own individual well-being and practice self-care regularly.

WHAT KIDS NEED:

Safety

Kids require a safe environment in order to learn. Make efforts to ensure the physical, psychological, and emotional safety of all students.

Predictability

Create predictable routines and schedules, so kids know what to expect, which helps alleviate anxiety. Give students reminders before transitions occur.

Adaptations

Be flexible. Provide fidgety youth with tools to self-manage in a non-disruptive way. Incorporate movement breaks to increase attention and focus.

TEACHER'S TOOLBOX: A TIERED APPROACH

1

Incorporate mindfulness & movement using www.gonoodle.com. These strategies can benefit all students. For more resources visit mindfulschools.org.

Use calm and consistent responses to problem behavior. Kids impacted by trauma need safe and predictable consequences and limits.

Approach youth with unconditional positive regard. Praise publicly, but give constructive feedback in private. Kids impacted by trauma can have a negative view of themselves.

2

Create coping/calming kits to help regulate emotions. Have students pick one object for each of the five senses to appeal to touch, taste, sound, sight, and smell.

Link students to a mentor to foster positive relationships. Receive training in using check-in/check-out to add more structure & routine while also creating an additional adult connection.

Help students manage triggers. Develop a list of triggering people, places, situations, sounds, and smells. Create a safety plan handle triggers appropriately.

3

Build trust and sense of belonging with families through the Wrap Around process. Strong relationships between school and home helps the student feel more connected to the school community.

Utilize functional behavioral assessments to gain understanding of behavior. Follow up with a behavior support plan and hold reviews to evaluate progress.

Refer students for mental health services for more intensive services and supports. Families can contact Detroit Wayne Integrated Health Network to Request an intake by calling (800) 241-4949.