

If interested, this topic can be learned in greater detail through a full day workshop called “Trauma Informed Classrooms.” Please contact Sara at sara@growingrootstherapy.ca or 204-333-9804 for more information or to book a workshop.

Being Trauma Sensitive

What is Trauma-Informed Practice?

Core Principles (Adapted from: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration: SAMHSA (2014) and Clinic Resource Center (2013)).

1. **Safety:** Ensuring environments provide a sense of physical and emotional safety.
2. **Trustworthiness:** Understanding what will help the individual feel safe and having clear and honest conversations.
3. **Collaboration:** Power-sharing, giving a sense of control rather than being controlled.
4. **Empowerment:** Educating individuals on the results of their trauma can give them a sense of hope and help them find coping strategies.
5. **Strengths based:** Focusing on the individuals’ strengths can help them feel hopeful for the future.

Implementation in the classroom

1. **Create a safe space:** Things that can help children who have experienced trauma feel safe in a space are doors that lock, clear exit pathways, and introducing any unknown visitors. Remember, physical safety will not always translate into emotional safety.
2. **Provide Structure:** Children who have experienced trauma often want to control their environment and unstructured activity can be a trigger for them. Consider having routines and using visual schedules so they can anticipate how the day will go.
3. **Give choices:** When possible, give choices instead of telling the student what to do. If telling them what to do, word it in a way that doesn’t seem like a command.
4. **Manage your reactions:** When children have difficulty caused by trauma, they might display unexpected reactions to everyday situations. Respond in a caring way to help build trust with the students and let them know that you are available for them. If an incident occurs, use statements to let the child know you are still there for them and give an example of contact you will have in the future. This can help build trusting relationships and helps the students understand that you will still be around for them.
5. **Have high expectations:** Push children that have experienced trauma to strive in the same way as all of the other students, while being understanding of difficulties they might encounter.

6. **Model language about triggers:** Triggers are things that set children off. They might have difficulty recognizing or understanding their own triggers. By using language about triggers and things that set you off, it might help students to begin to recognize their own triggers.
7. **Don't make assumptions:** Each child who has experienced trauma will react in a different way. Understand that reactions from each student and their coping strategies will also vary. Get to know students and their families to understand their story.
8. **Teach social skills:** Don't assume that children have social skills expected for their age, as they might not had experience developing those skills. Provide opportunities to develop age-appropriate social skills.
9. **Build relationships:** Get to know students and their families in order to understand the bigger picture. This will also help work towards build trust with the child.
10. **Understand vicarious trauma:** Over time, working with individuals who have experienced trauma can have an impact on one's own well-being, this is often called vicarious trauma. See resource below: *When Compassion Hurts: Burnout, Vicarious Trauma and Secondary Trauma in Prenatal and Early Childhood Service Providers* for more information and strategies to maintain your health and well-being while supporting children who have experienced trauma.

Resources

1. Presidential Task Force on Posttraumatic Stress Disorder and Trauma in Children and Adolescents (2008). Children and Trauma. American Psychological Association. Retrieved from: <https://www.apa-org.uml.idm.oclc.org/pi/families/resources/children-trauma-update.html>
2. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration: SAMHSA (2014). Guiding principles of trauma-informed care. *SAMHSA News*, 22(2). Retrieved from: https://www.samhsa.gov/samhsaNewsLetter/Volume_22_Number_2/trauma_tip/guiding_principles.html
3. McInerney, M. & McKlindon, A. (n.d.). *Unlocking the Door to Learning: Trauma-Informed Classrooms & Transformational Schools*. Retrieved from: <https://www.elc-pa.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/Trauma-Informed-in-Schools-Classrooms-FINAL-December2014-2.pdf>
4. Post Institute. (2013, March 12). Trauma, brain & relationship: helping children heal. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iYyEEMIMMb0>
5. Klinic Community Resource Center (2013). *The Trauma Toolkit: Second Edition*. Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada. http://trauma-informed.ca/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/Trauma-informed_Toolkit.pdf
6. Best Start Resource Centre. (2012). *When Compassion Hurts: Burnout, Vicarious Trauma and Secondary Trauma in Prenatal and Early Childhood Service Providers*. Toronto, Ontario, Canada: author. Retrieved from: https://www.beststart.org/resources/howto/pdf/Compassion_14MY01_Final.pdf

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