

Trauma-Informed Steps That Build Relationships With Students Experiencing Trauma

OVERVIEW

Listen



The ability to understand what is being communicated verbally and nonverbally.

Reassure



The ability to transfer value to the perspectives of vulnerable students.

Validate



The ability to acknowledge what is being communicated by students.

Respond



The ability to communicate an explanation and not a defending statement.

Repair



The ability to repair relationships and establish trust between staff and students and improve peer-to-peer communication.

Resolve



The ability to come to terms with what happened and collaborate to prevent future misunderstandings.

Students' experiences with trauma, their trust issues and past letdowns make healthy communication extremely difficult. Recognizing some of the signs can help you identify children and adolescents who may need assistance and support. These strategies help build trauma-informed learning environments.

TEACHERS

Trauma-Informed Steps that build relationships with students experiencing trauma

More than two thirds of children will experience a potentially traumatic event by the age of 16. Adverse childhood experiences (**ACEs**) can impact a child's cognitive abilities and have a negative effect on their academic performance. Forming positive relationships with your students and promoting trauma-sensitive approaches in your classroom will help struggling students while allowing all students to build resilience and confidence. With the right support, all students can successfully navigate adverse events and thrive in school. Teachers are a critical connection in this process. Try using these trauma-informed best practices in your classroom.

Listen



Relationships with students start with the act of listening without judgement. This is the first critical step in building trust and transparency with students and their caregivers. Take time to listen and **know your students**.

Reassure



Reassuring your students and making them feel their perspective matters is profoundly **healing and comforting**. Provide a safe place and way for students to talk and share; be cultural aware. Providing consistency and clear expectations in your classroom like a daily agenda of what's ahead reduces stress. Normalcy along with **reliable warmth and love** makes students feel safe opening the door to learning.

Validate



Unconditional positive regard for students is part of building a relationship and lets students know they are worthy. **Validating that their worth** is not contingent on good behavior or grades lets students know you care about them. When students feel safe, they take more risks--this is how resilience is learned.

Respond



Create a list of non-defensive statements for students to visibly see in the classroom. Encourage students to use when explaining their actions or positions. This **builds better peer-to-peer relationships** and reduces negative interactions. Use accountability partners that discuss ways to respond to situations that do not produce undesired or inappropriate actions.

Understand



Teachers are the most important connection between home and school. Take note of sudden changes in appearance or behavior and be sensitive and understanding. Verbally restate the perceived emotional state of students and confirm observation is correct. Work with other school professionals to secure the resources needed.

Resolve



Allow for students to have a time-out process: some way to take a personal pause if they need to talk, discuss concerns, or if they just need silence to gather their thoughts and refocus. You can use social-emotional learning tools like meditation, breathing exercises, simple yoga poses, and self-awareness techniques to help students **avert their negative emotions and behaviors**.

Repair



Reflect as a class on incidents that occur and talk about the value of repairing relationships in the classroom. Use restorative practices over zero tolerance policies. Restorative justice helps traumatized students deescalate and **restores a student's belief in fairness and integrity**. This process helps them understand their actions and teaches them healthy communication skills for resolving conflicts and how to take responsibility for their role.