

Empathetic Foundations: Crafting Trauma-Informed Classrooms for Children

Presenter

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I am a doctor, but not your doctor.

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Welcome!


Session Description

"Empathetic Foundations: Crafting Trauma-Informed Classrooms for Children," designed to immerse participants in the foundational aspects of trauma-informed educational practices. This session is a brief journey through the profound impacts of trauma on children's development and learning, providing insights into crafting supportive and inclusive learning environments.

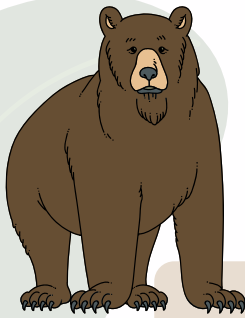
Participants will collaboratively explore the essential principles of trauma-informed classrooms, focusing on safety, stability, cultural humility, empowerment, collaboration, and a strengths-based approach. Through interactive presentations, scenario-based activities, and enriching discussions, attendees will gain practical knowledge on implementing trauma-sensitive strategies and interventions, fostering positive relationships, and building collaborative and empowering learning spaces.

The workshop emphasizes actionable insights and reflective practices, enabling participants to identify challenging behavior and weave informed responses seamlessly into their learning environments. Attendees will leave with a refined awareness and strategies to address the "Modern Bear" traversing the classroom hallways.

This session is a balanced blend of knowledge, shared experiences, practical applications, and reflections, aiming to respect and empower each participant in their journey to foster holistic well-being and resilience in every student. The workshop concludes with a reflection on insights gained and a discussion on the continuous journey of learning and implementing trauma-informed practices in educational settings.



The Modern Bear: From Forests to Lecture Halls



In the heart of an ancient forest, a prehistoric human heard a rustling. Their senses sharpened, adrenaline surged, and the body prepared for one of four reactions: fight, flight, freeze, or fawn. In that moment, survival depended on the ability to react to the impending threat - often, a literal bear.

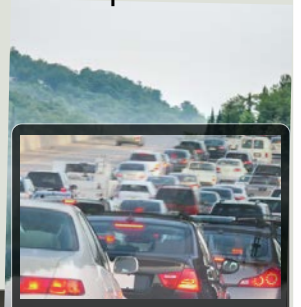
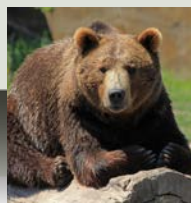
Fast forward to today. The forests have transformed into bustling cities, college campuses, and office spaces. Yet, the 'bear' remains, though it wears different guises. For some, the bear manifests as the looming rent bill, the impending college debt, the volatility of a job market, or the unpredictability of relationships.

The bear is more insidious for others: an abusive partner, bullying, or systemic discrimination. Regardless of its form, the bear continues to induce a primal fear, triggering our brain to release a cocktail of hormones and chemicals to deal with the perceived threat.

The Evolution of Threat

Throughout history, the human brain has actively hardwired itself for survival. When predators threatened our ancestors, their brains immediately released stress hormones such as cortisol and adrenaline. These hormones prepared their bodies to either confront the threat (fight), run away from it (flight), become paralyzed by it (freeze), or appease it to ensure safety (fawn). The same is true for you today. Although the threat has changed, our bodily response is the same.

This system was efficient for physical threats. A heightened state of alertness increased the chances of survival. However, many of the 'bears' we face are not immediate physical threats in our modern world. They are psychological, emotional, or social. Yet, our bodies often react to these modern stressors like our ancestors responded to a bear.



Trauma-Informed Care

“Adopting a trauma-informed approach is not accomplished through any single particular technique or checklist. It requires constant attention, caring awareness, sensitivity, and possibly a cultural change at an organizational level” (CDC and the National Center for Trauma-Informed care).



What does it mean to be trauma-informed?

Why is it essential to incorporate trauma-informed practices into our classrooms? *Within your group describe three.*

The Principles of Trauma-Informed Teaching

Trauma-informed refers to an approach or framework that acknowledges and understands the widespread impact of trauma, recognizes the signs and symptoms of trauma in individuals, and integrates this knowledge into policies, procedures, and practices to actively avoid re-traumatization. This approach is guided by the principle of "do no harm" and emphasizes creating safe, supportive, and empowering environments for all individuals, especially those who have experienced trauma.

Being trauma-informed means considering how traumatic experiences might affect a person's behavior, emotions, and decision-making processes. It involves being aware that anyone may have a history of trauma, regardless of whether it is immediately visible or disclosed. In practical terms, this approach entails the following principles.

Principles 1: Safety

Principles 2: Trustworthiness & Transparency

Principles 3: Peer Support

Principles 4: Collaboration & Mutuality

Principles 5: Empowerment and Choice

Principles 6: Cultural, Historical and Gender Issues

Trauma-informed approaches are applicable in various settings, including education, healthcare, social services, and community organizations, and they advocate for practices that are responsive to the effects of trauma in order to support healing and resilience.

Principles 1: Safety



Safety

The First Principle: The first principle of trauma-informed care, emphasizes the importance of safety in fostering a secure learning environment.

For example, here is how one team creates safety in their classroom:

- Teacher: Establishes a predictable routine and clear rules to create a stable environment.
- Teacher's assistants: Notices signs of distress in students and provides a reassuring presence, offering comfort or guiding them to a quiet space.
- Student assistants: Helps maintain a calm atmosphere, perhaps leading peers in a calming breathing exercise before a test

Reflecting on Your Current Situation: How do you currently ensure that your classroom is a safe haven where every child feels secure and comfortable?

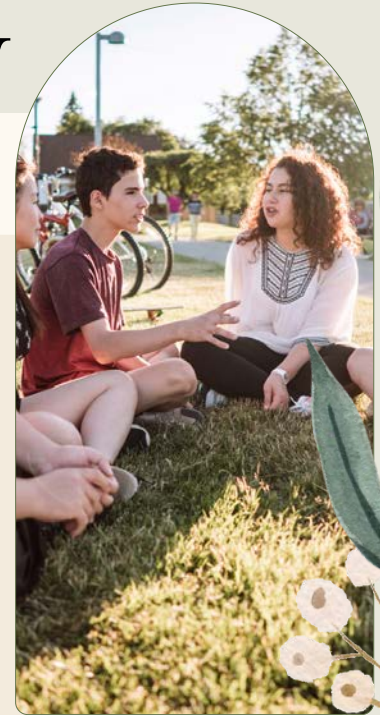
Looking Forward: What additional measures or practices could you implement to further enhance the sense of security and comfort for every child in your classroom?

Principles 2: Trustworthiness & Transparency

The second principle, focuses on building trust and fostering transparent relationships with students.

For example, here is how one team creates trust and transparency in their classroom:

- Teacher: Communicates clearly about the day's activities and maintains consistency in rules and expectations.
- Teacher's assistants: Builds trust by consistently assisting students in a reliable manner and following through on promises.
- Student assistants: Acts as a role model for honesty and integrity among peers.



Reflecting on Your Current Situation: In what ways do you currently build trust and foster transparent relationships with your students?

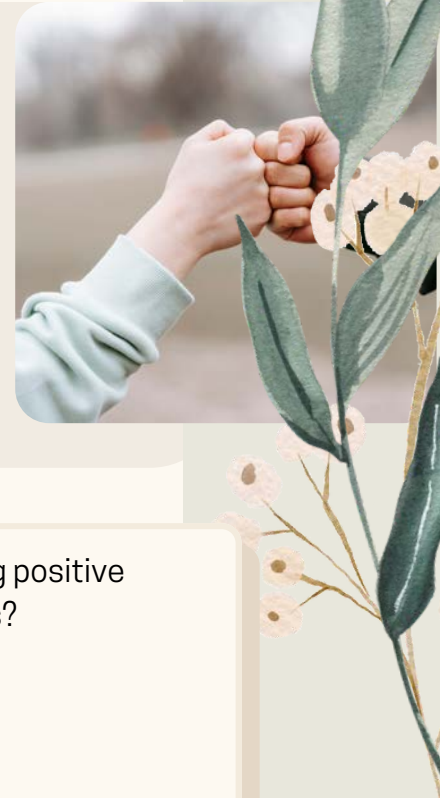
Looking Forward: What steps can you take to further strengthen transparency in your relationships with students in the future?

Principles 3: Peer Support

Peer support is the third principle and it can be a powerful way to positively impact students and their behavior.

For example, here is how one team creates assist student with utilizing peer support in their classroom:

- Teacher: Facilitates group work and peer-learning opportunities.
- Teacher's assistants: Encourages students to support each other, perhaps overseeing a buddy system.
- Student assistants: Leads peer study groups or tutoring sessions.



Reflecting on Your Current Situation: How are you currently encouraging positive peer interactions and fostering support networks among your students?

Looking Forward: What new methods or strategies might you implement to further promote positive peer relationships and stronger support networks within your student community?



Principles 4: Collaboration & Mutuality



This fourth principle, highlights the value of collaboration and mutual respect in providing support to students. Everyone's input is valued.

For example, here is how one team assist students in building their skills for collaboration and promote partnership and equality in the classroom.

- Teacher: Invites students to participate in setting classroom rules or choosing group activities.
- Teacher's assistants: Works alongside students, participating in activities and showing that everyone's contributions are valued.
- Student assistants: Collaborates with classmates on projects, ensuring each voice is heard.

Do you believe that every student's contribution is valued in your classroom? If so, could you share the strategies you employ to foster this sense of equality? If you feel there's room for improvement, what steps could you take to enhance the sense of belonging among your students?

Reflecting on Your Current Situation: How does your team currently assist students in developing their collaboration skills and promote partnership and equality in the classroom?

Looking Forward: What additional approaches or techniques could your team employ to further enhance students' abilities in collaboration and reinforce the values of partnership and equality in your classroom environment?



Principles 5: Empowerment and Choice

The fifth principle delves into assisting students in reclaiming a sense of control and examines the importance of autonomy in establishing a trauma-informed classroom.

For example, here's an example of how one team fosters student empowerment and offers opportunities for choice-making in their classroom:

- Teacher: Offers choices in learning activities, allowing students to select based on their interests and strengths.
- Teacher's assistants: Provides personalized encouragement, highlighting each student's unique abilities and contributions.
- Student assistants: Encourages fellow students to voice their opinions and make choices in group assignments.

Reflecting on Your Current Situation: How do you currently foster student empowerment and provide opportunities for choice-making in your classroom?

Looking Forward: What additional methods or initiatives could you explore to further empower your students and expand their opportunities for making choices in the classroom environment?



Principles 6: Cultural, Historical and Gender Issues



The sixth principle focuses on the significance of cultural sensitivity and understanding how matters related to historical and gender-related trauma are addressed in the classroom.

For example, here is how one team actively ensures cultural recognition and addresses historical and gender-related matters in their classroom:

- Teacher: Integrates diverse materials into the curriculum and ensures inclusivity in classroom discussions.
- Teacher's assistants: Demonstrates cultural sensitivity, by helping to organize and participate in cultural awareness events.
- Student assistants: Demonstrates for students by acknowledging the diverse cultural backgrounds of their peers, promoting an inclusive environment.

Reflecting on Your Current Situation: How do you currently demonstrate awareness and sensitivity towards the cultural, historical, and gender-related issues that students bring into your classroom?

Looking Forward: What steps can you take to further enhance your understanding and sensitivity to the diverse cultural, historical, and gender backgrounds of your students in the classroom?



The Principles of Trauma-Informed Teaching --Debrief--

What are your thoughts? By applying these principles, how do you think or feel they could transform the classroom environment and students.

How do you think it could impact on you work with students?

Now that we have come to the end of the session what is your plan of action?
How will you implement some of the ideas that you heard in this session?

Thank you!

We want to take a moment to express our sincere gratitude for your dedication and engagement throughout this workshop. Your commitment to understanding and implementing trauma-informed practices in the classroom is not just a professional achievement but a meaningful contribution to the lives of countless children.



Key Highlights of Your Session included:

- Understanding Trauma: You've gained insight into the nature of trauma and its profound impact on young learners.
- Principles of Trauma-Informed Care: We explored the six key principles, equipping you with the knowledge to create safer, more responsive, and empathetic learning environments.

We trust that these experiences and learnings have been enlightening and will significantly influence your approach used in the classroom and with your students. Remember, the journey toward crafting trauma-informed classrooms is ongoing and evolving. Every step you take towards incorporating these practices makes a difference.

We encourage you to keep this workbook as a resource and a reminder of your commitment to creating empathetic, informed, and nurturing educational spaces. Your role in shaping a trauma-informed approach in education is invaluable, and we are grateful for your willingness to embark on this journey.

Thank you once again for your participation and for being an integral part of this transformative workshop. We look forward to hearing about your successes and learning from your experiences as you apply these principles in your classrooms.

With heartfelt thanks,

Dr. Cheryl
Mental Wellness Coach

A business card for Dr. Cheryl Williams-Jackson, CEO of WJ DevelopMental. The card has a dark green background with a white and gold logo in the top left corner. The logo consists of the letters 'WJ' in a stylized font, with 'DevelopMental' written below it. In the center of the card is a QR code. To the right of the QR code are several icons representing different contact methods: a phone, a hand holding a phone, an envelope, a globe, and a person icon. Next to these icons is the following contact information:

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