



## Trauma in the Classroom: Helping Hurting Kids Learn

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Piecing It All Together 2015

## Learning Objectives

1. Discuss three ways instability and trauma can impact childhood growth and development.
2. Describe how traumatized children learn differently and at least two ways to improve the learning experience for hurting children.
3. Explore ways to apply concepts at the individual/family level as well as to promote systems change.

## Agenda

- Overview of Instability & Trauma
- Child Development in the Face of Trauma
  - Behavior
  - Biology
- Strategies for Helping Hurting Kids Learn
  - Whole person approach
  - Emotion regulation
  - Environment
- Trauma-Informed Schools
- Wrap-Up

## What is Trauma?

### What makes an experience traumatic?

- Involves a threat to one's physical or emotional well-being.
- Is an overwhelming experience.
- Results in intense feelings of fear and lack of control.
- Leaves people feeling helpless.
- Changes the way a person understands himself/herself, the world, and others.

Guarino, K & Basak, E. (2010). Working With Families Experiencing Homelessness: Understanding Trauma and Its Impact. Zero to Three, 30(3), p. 11-20.  
[http://main.zerotothree.org/site/DocServer/Working\\_With\\_Families\\_Experiencing\\_Homelessness.pdf](http://main.zerotothree.org/site/DocServer/Working_With_Families_Experiencing_Homelessness.pdf)

## Adverse Childhood Experiences

### Abuse and Neglect

1. Physical abuse (by parents)
2. Emotional abuse (by parents)
3. Sexual abuse (by anyone)
4. Physical neglect
5. Emotional neglect

### ACE Score:

The number of categories of adverse childhood experience to which a person was exposed

### Indicators of Family Dysfunction

6. Witnessing domestic violence against the mother
7. Mentally ill, depressed, or suicidal person in the home
8. Alcoholism or drug use in the home
9. Loss of biological parent before 18 – indicated by divorce, separation, abandonment
10. Incarceration of any family member

## Other Possible Traumatic Experiences

- Chronic bullying
- Homelessness
- Pervasive community violence
- Forced to seek refugee status
- Multiple foster care placements
- Natural disasters
- Live with a parent traumatized by combat
- Others?

Cole, S. et al. (2013). Helping Traumatized Children Learn: Creating and Advocating for Trauma-Sensitive Schools. Trauma and Learning Policy Initiative. <http://traumasensitiveschools.org/tlpi-publications/>

## Child Development in the Face of Trauma

- Studies of children who are homeless have documented many developmental delays, including:
  - Delays in fine and gross motor skills
  - Difficulties with attention
  - Speech delays
  - Language disabilities
  - Immature peer interactions
  - Cognitive delays

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## Childhood Trauma & Academic Performance

### Trauma can disrupt:

- Language and Communication Skills
  - Learning and retrieving new verbal information
  - Social and emotional communication
  - Problem solving and analysis
- Organizing Narrative Material
- Cause-and-Effect Relationships

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## Childhood Trauma & Academic Performance

### Trauma can disrupt:

- Taking Another's Perspective
- Attentiveness to Classroom Tasks
- Regulating Emotions
- Executive Functions
- Engaging in the Curriculum

Cole, S. et al. (2005). *Helping Traumatized Children Learn: A Report and Policy Agenda*. Trauma and Learning Policy Initiative.  
<http://traumasensitiveschools.org/tlpi-publications/>



## Childhood Trauma & Classroom Behavior

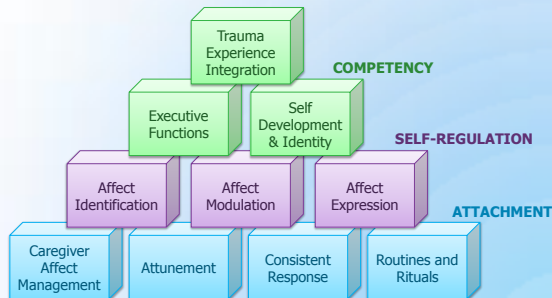
Challenging behavior often originates in immense feelings of **vulnerability** and **feeling out of control**, and can look like:

- Reactivity and Impulsivity
- Aggression
- Defiance
- Withdrawal
- Perfectionism

Cole, S. et al. (2005). *Helping Traumatized Children Learn: A Report and Policy Agenda*. Trauma and Learning Policy Initiative.  
<http://traumasensitiveschools.org/tlpi-publications/>



## ARC Model



Blaustein, M., & Kinniburgh, K. (2010). *Treating traumatic stress in children and adolescents: How to foster resilience through attachment, self-regulation, and competency*. New York, NY: Guilford Press.



## More on Teaching Students

Teachers and parents can help diminish trauma symptoms by:

- Helping children regulate emotions in order to master social and academic skills
- Maintaining high academic standards
- Helping children feel safe
- Managing behavior and setting limits

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<http://traumasensitiveschools.org/tlpi-publications/>



## More on Teaching Students

Teachers and parents can help diminish trauma symptoms by:

- Reducing bullying and harassment
- Helping children have a sense of agency
- Building on strengths
- Understanding the connection between behavior and emotion
- Avoiding labels

Cole, S. et al. (2005). *Helping Traumatized Children Learn: A Report and Policy Agenda*. Trauma and Learning Policy Initiative. <http://traumasensitiveschools.org/tlpi-publications/>

## traumasensitiveschools.org



## Vision for a Trauma-Informed School

In a trauma-informed school, adults:

- **share an understanding** of how trauma impacts learning and why a school-wide approach is needed for creating a trauma-sensitive school
- **support all students to feel safe** — physically, socially, emotionally and academically
- **address students' needs in holistic ways**, taking into account their relationships, self-regulation, academic competence, and physical and emotional well-being

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## Vision for a Trauma-Informed School

In a trauma-informed school, adults:

- **explicitly connect students to the school community**, providing them with multiple opportunities to practice newly developing skills
- **embrace teamwork** with a sense of a shared responsibility for every student
- **anticipate and adapt** to the ever-changing needs of students and the surrounding community

What does your school do well already?

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## Questions?

### Contact Information:

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## Program Overview



### Services

#### Birth to 11 years old Family-focused treatment approach

- Therapy for children and families
- Case management, parent education, & support
- Parenting classes
- Community awareness & education
- Professional collaboration & capacity building

### Contact

Main: (618) 251-9790 x203

#### Referrals:

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#### Presentations/Consultation:

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