

Teacher Handout for Trauma-Informed Care

What is Trauma?

Trauma is an event that overwhelms our central nervous system, altering the way we normally process memories. It impacts the way we feel, what we think, and how we respond.

Neurobiological Effects of Trauma

- Increases
 - Blood pressure, heart rate, and respiration
 - Size of amygdala, increasing the interpretation of stimuli as fearful
 - Fight, flight, or freeze response
 - Startle response
 - Inflammation
 - Cortisol levels (stress hormones)
 - Blood pressure, heart rate, and respiration
- Decreases
 - Hippocampal volume, impacting learning and memory
 - Corpus callosum volume, making it difficult for integration
 - Short-term memory
 - Calming system
 - Ability to form social attachments
 - Ability to regulate mood and affect

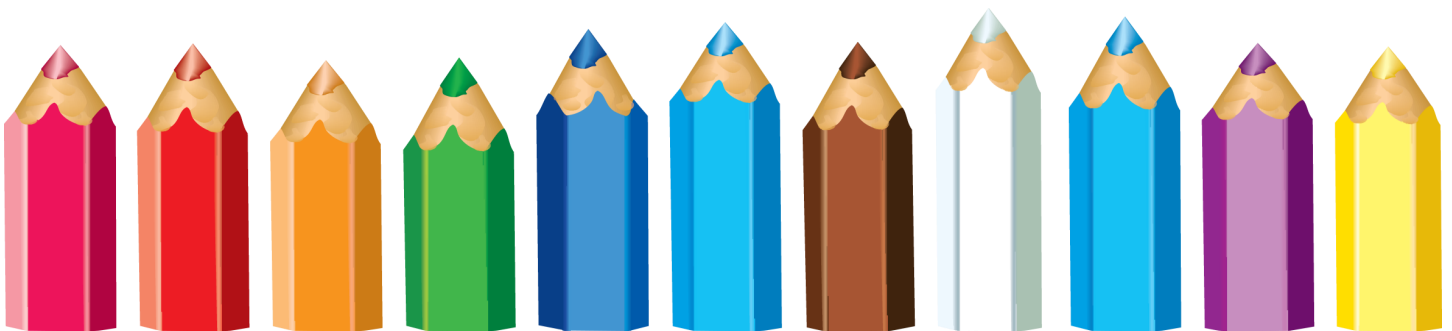
* Think about a time you experienced a stressful event. Do you remember what happened to your body? Maybe you were shaking, your heart felt like it was racing, or you jumped? If your body and mind had difficulty processing the trauma due to the central nervous system being overloaded, you may still be experiencing these symptoms.

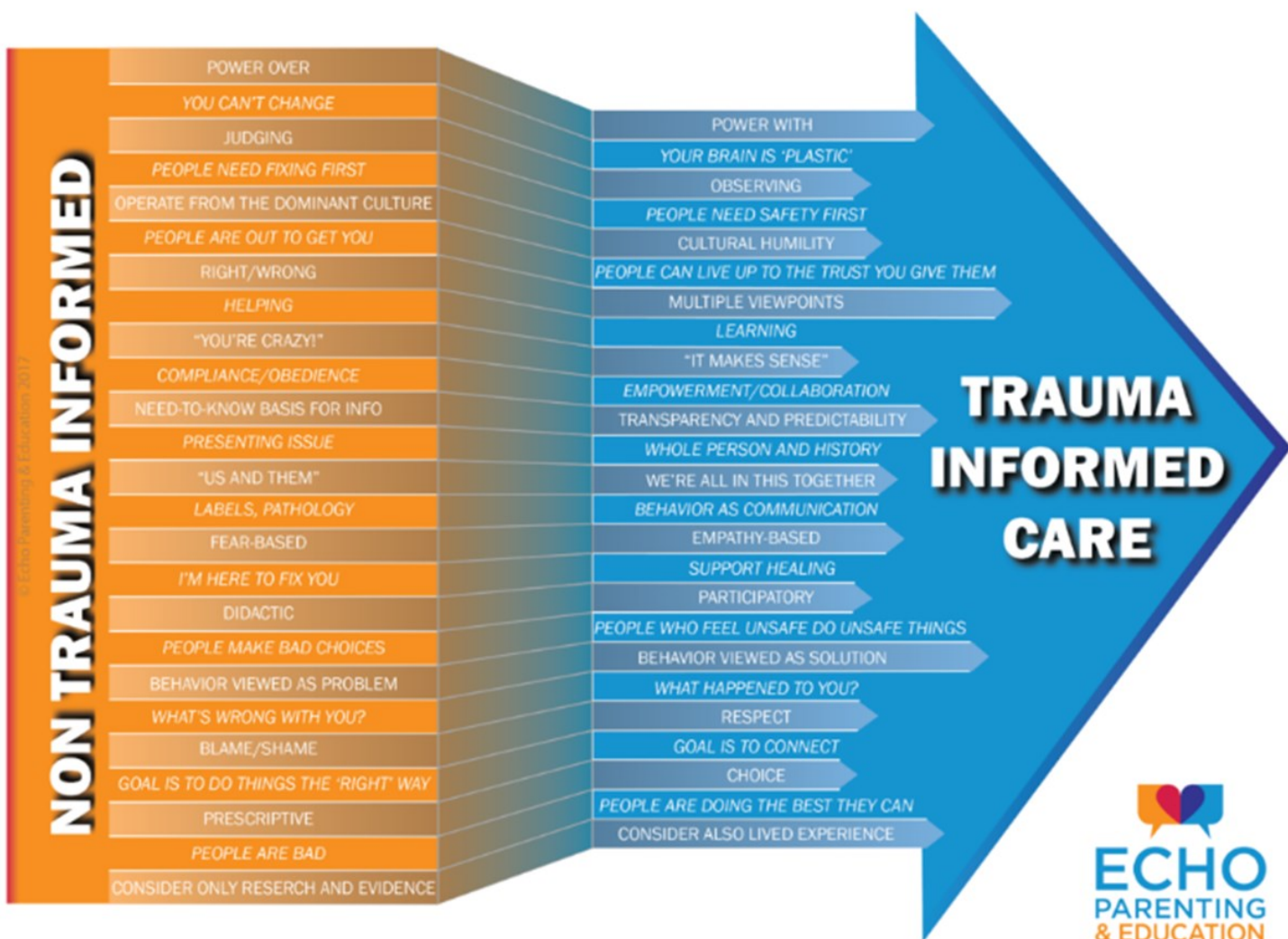
Behaviors We See in Children

- Ages 0-5
 - Fear of being separated from parent
 - Crying, screaming
 - Immobility
 - Trembling and excessive clinging
 - Regressed behaviors (thumb-sucking, bed wetting, fear of darkness)
 - Self-soothing (head-banging, rocking)
 - **Resembles Attachment disorders and Autism**
- Ages 6-11
 - Withdrawal
 - Disruptive behavior
 - Inability to pay attention
 - Regressed behaviors
 - Nightmares
 - Irritability
 - School refusal
 - Anger outbursts or fighting
 - Somatic complaints (headaches, stomach aches)
 - Poor academic achievement
 - Depression, anxiety, guilt, emotional numbing
 - **Resembles Attachment Disorders, Autism, ADHD, Depression**
- Ages 12-17
 - Flashbacks
 - Nightmares or sleep problems
 - Depression or emotional numbing
 - Substance abuse
 - Suicidal ideation
 - School problems
 - Isolation
 - Problems with peers
 - **Resembles ADHD, Autism, Depression**

How to Creatively Engage with Your Students

1. Greet each student at the door, saying hello and welcoming them into your room!
2. Conduct check-ins with each student weekly. Please see “Teacher Check-In Form” for younger kids.
3. Use “SeeSaw,” a free platform to empower and engage your students online. Go to <https://web.seesaw.me/>
4. Get to know your students on a personal level. Connection is invaluable. Have them write a letter to you with everything they want you to know about them. This helps facilitate engagement and connection.
5. Follow any discipline with at least two positive affirmations
6. Have your students create a class values list, and post in the classroom.
7. Incorporate stress reduction outlets in your classroom. See attachment “Creating a Mindful Space.”
8. See your students from a trauma-informed lens.
9. Say good-bye to each student at the end of class.
10. Go the extra-mile and attend your student’s extra-curricular activities when possible.





Dear _____. I need...

☐ To eat



☐ Help with
my work



☐ To move
around



☐ To feel
cared for



☐ Help to
feel calmer



☐ Help with a
problem at
home



☐ To talk with a
school counselor



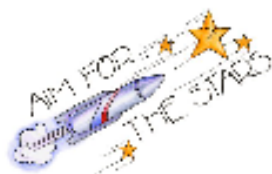
☐ To talk about
my feelings



☐ Help solving
a problem at
school



☐
Encouragement



☐ To feel
safe



☐ A second
chance



Creating a Mindful Space

1. Use “GoNoodle” at www.gonoodle.com to integrate movement and mindfulness into your student’s day.
2. Have some scenic posters in your classroom.
3. Create a bin with assorted sensory items.
4. Have some journaling and art supplies available.
5. Put in a book shelf with a variety of self-help books.
6. Use a comfortable rug in your classroom.
7. Have some beanbag chairs or exercise balls available for your students to sit-in.
8. Visit “Sesame Street in Communities” at <http://sesamestreetincommunities.org> for mindfulness resources.
9. Have play-dough available for students to use during lecture as needed.
10. Play relaxing music at the beginning or end of class as possible.