Handle with Care:

Practical Strategies that Support Trauma-Informed Teaching

Laura Holyoke, Ph.D. & Heather Ebba Maib
BARTON, QUIT HUMANING AROUND! WE GOT OFFICIAL BUSINESS TO ATTEND TO.
Why it matters...

I've learned that *people will forget* what you said, *people will forget* what you did, but *people will never forget* how you made them feel.

~ Maya Angelou
4 R’s of a Trauma Informed [& Aware] Approach

Realization  Recognize  Respond  Resist Re-Traumatization
Awareness

Realization

Strategy
What is Trauma?

...it is subjective.
Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)
Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)
Prevalence of ACEs

Many People Report ACEs

According to data collected from more than 144,000 adults across 25 states between 2015 and 2017:

- 61% reported experiencing AT LEAST ONE type of ACE.
- 16% reported experiencing FOUR OR MORE types of ACEs.
Out of 17,337 participants...

- 21.5% reported no ACEs
- 30.2% reported 1-3 ACEs
- 48.4% reported 4+ ACEs

69.9% reported at least one ACE.

Out of 1,784 participants...

- 37.3% reported no ACEs
- 16.8% reported 1-3 ACEs
- 45.9% reported 4+ ACEs

83.2% reported at least one ACE.

Original ACE Study

Expanded ACE Study
26% of adults have *Three* or more ACEs

Women, Indigenous peoples, young adults 18-34 years old, and people who are financially under-resourced and/or have less education were more likely to report having had three or more ACEs.

In Washington
Trauma-informed teaching considers **how** trauma impacts learning and behavior.

Trauma can slow down or **completely stop** our ability to learn.

Trauma can **increase** likelihood of experiencing learning and the educational system negatively.
Realization to Awareness Practice
Increase awareness of prevalence and our response to it.

Change our own assumptions:
from: What is wrong with them?
to: What happened to them?

Ask yourself:
How might this person’s behavior be perfectly reasonable?
Acceptance

Recognize

Strategy
Window of Tolerance

Hyper-aroused State

Optimal Level of Functioning

Hypo-aroused State
Window of Tolerance

Optimal Level of Functioning

- Function effectively
- Able to readily receive, process, and integrate information
- Respond to demands of everyday life
Hyper-aroused State

- Fight/Flight Response
- Emotional Reactivity, Panic, Rage,
- Difficulty concentrating,
- Hyper-vigilance
Window of Tolerance

Hypo-aroused State

Freeze response
Lethargic, low energy
Numb, Lack of emotions
Zoning out, Shut down
Recognizing Trauma in Learners
What we might see...

Difficulty focusing, attending, retaining, and recalling
Challenges with emotional regulation
Fear of taking risks
Heightened anxiety about deadlines, group work, or public speaking
Anger, helplessness, or dissociation when stressed
Withdrawal and isolation
Involvement in unhealthy relationships

Hoch et al., 2015
Recognizing Trauma in *Learners & US*
What we don't see...

The Visible Self

The Invisible Self

(Hoch et al., 2015)
A QUICK AND SIMPLE WAY TO THINK ABOUT THE BRAIN

Learning Brain vs Survival Brain
From Recognizing to Acceptance

Recognizing there is a difference between a person’s inner needs and outer behavior.

Accepting: what we have control over, and what we don’t.

Practice on the Weather!

IT’S RAINING

I don’t like rain.
It makes me gloomy.
I wanted it to be sunny
and head to the beach.
Why is it raining?

IT’S RAINING

Yup

@speakinggrey
Bath’s 3 Pillars of Trauma-Informed Care

**SAFETY**
- Feeling safe
- Physical safety
- Emotional safety
- Cultural safety
- Routines
- Predictability

Safety is closely related to the quality of interpersonal connections

**CONNECTIONS**
- Building social bonds
  - Caring adults, school and teachers, sporting teams and mentors, the community

...It is through responsive and reciprocal relationships that healing occurs

**COPING**
- Learning to safely manage emotions
- Calm adults
- Being present
- Co-regulation
- Emotional literacy

...Co-regulation with empathetic caregivers leads to self-regulation

Pillars of **Trauma-Informed Care**

**Meeting Basic Human Needs**
Safety in the Learning Space

“Safety refers to two big ideas: Physical Safety and Emotional Safety. The reality is, if we don’t feel safe, we can’t lead, parent, teach, partner, or learn effectively. Our need to feel safe supersedes everything else.”

~ Van Marter Sauers & Hall, 2019
Elements of Psychological Safety
Elements of Psychological Safety

- Inclusion Safety
- Learner Safety
- Contributor Safety
- Challenger Safety
Explain Your Thought Process

Work Collaboratively

Make Space (& time) for Students

Ask What Others Need From You

Keep Confidences

Reward Honest Interaction

Foster Connection
Empathy & Connection - Brené Brown
Reviewing Qualities of Empathy

- Perspective taking.
- Staying out of judgment.
- Recognizing emotions.
- Communicating.

Empathy... Emotional Intelligence in action

~ Dr. Teresa Wiseman
Respond by integrating what we’ve learned into practice

from Brené Brown:

*Learning the skill and valuing the “assumption of positive intent”*

That people are doing the best that they can.
Understanding Reactivity & the Relational Space
...from Reacting to Responding
Know Thyself

- Reactivity
- Know your Triggers
- Pause
- Engage in awareness-
Boundaries

Communicate “what’s okay and what’s not okay”

Boundaries ≠ Preferences

Boundaries ≠ Demands
Setting Professional Boundaries

- Emotional
- Physical
- Time
- Mental
We may invalidate without realizing it...

You'll pass the test. Don't make a big deal out of it.

You really tanked this assignment.

No one else had any problems with the assignment.

It's not going to make a difference to your grade.

It's stated clearly in the syllabus.

Just do better on the next test.

Just read my comments.

Don't worry about it—it's an easy A.
Invalidation is like saying:

What NOT to say:

Your emotional experience is inaccurate, insignificant, unreasonable, and/or unacceptable.
Validation ~ says
- I hear you.
- I see you.
- I get it.
- I care about your feelings.

Recognition of a person’s
Thoughts
Feelings
Emotions
Behaviors
As Valid & Understandable
How to Validate Feelings / Emotions

- Acknowledge *their* feelings
- Identify with the emotion
- Accept *(their feelings are not yours)*
- Reflect your understanding
- Remain present: physically and emotionally
Would working with a class peer feel helpful?

How would you like to receive feedback?

It makes sense that you feel anxious. Speaking before an audience the first time is scary for anyone.

Let's schedule a time when we can review your paper.

What has helped with your test anxiety in the past?

Sounds like that was a harsh comment and hurtful to you.

I hear you.

Validation Sounds like...
DOs

DON'Ts

of Trauma-Informed Instruction
Validate with compassion and empathy.

Engage in self-awareness.

Understand that there will be people with trauma enrolled in your courses.

Take on a counseling role.

Perseverate on the actions of others.

Administer ACE assessment or bait people into revealing their trauma backgrounds.

Adapted from the Online Learning Collective (2020)
Value diversity and adopt practices that support equity & inclusion.

Invest time learning multiple ways to teach and deliver course content.

Ignore or minimize the concerns and needs of people who have experienced discrimination.

Assume that what works for you works for all learners.

Adapted from the Online Learning Collective (2020)
thank you!

Laura & Heather