

TRAUMA TRAINING FOR EDUCATORS

From Communities In Schools of Central Texas

Facilitator's Guide

Trauma Proofing Your School – Facilitator’s Guide

Tips for Using This Guide:

First, be sure to view the 43 min. video before facilitating it with a group.

- Considering your time and audience: pick and choose which Post Video Discussion Questions you want to use. You may select all, or find a few that are a particularly good fit for your group.
- Select activity ideas that you and your group are open to. Use your best judgment to determine what will further learning and helpful discussion.
- Emphasize that some strategies may work better than others for different people, depending on a teacher or administrator’s comfort and style of communicating. They should pick and choose what works for them. But the one area that will make the most difference is using a soft tone of voice – so that should get extra attention as the most effective way for us to communicate safety in a school setting, since touch may not be a comfortable option, and can be tricky with traumatized students if we don’t have a strong and safe relationship with them already.
- Choose which handouts you want to copy and share with everyone – based on the needs and interests of the group as well as your level of comfort with them. For example, the grounding script is something that teachers can use in class; the picture / words poster for grounding can be put on the wall in a quiet part of the classroom; and Trauma Informed Accommodations can be important additions to 504 Plans and BIPS. If possible, take the time to review handouts and how they might be used.
- You may want to begin with this short video: <http://amysmartgirls.com/short-film-just-breathe-helps-kids-deal-with-emotions/>

Post Video Discussion Questions

These questions can be shared out as a large group or in small groups (4-6) after the video.

- 1) What was one thing that you heard about trauma that stood out to you; perhaps something new, or different, or surprising?
- 2) What strategies did you learn that would be helpful for you, and you'd be interested in trying? What strategies do you already use that are helpful in calming a student?
- 3) What did you hear that doesn't seem like it would fit with your teaching or behavior management systems? Why? (Group may share ideas to work around the challenges)
- 4) What experiences have you had with students who have overwhelming reactions (**Do Not Identify the student**)? How did/does it affect you? What has worked to make things better and helped them to settle successfully? What hasn't worked, or made things worse?
- 5) If you were going to create a quiet place / calming corner in your classroom – what would you put in it? (share ideas: refer to the handout - pgs. 8-9 - in this guide).
- 6) What are some good places in our school to send a student who is having an “overwhelm” reaction, and needs to restore a feeling of safety? What makes that a good place?
- 7) What are some things that you do to settle yourself, as a teacher/admin, when you get overwhelmed or things just get too hectic? This is human! Share ideas and strategies that work. (Examples: Walk the track during off period, run warm water over your hands, keep some calming or happy pictures in your desk to look at.)
- 8) Give examples of Empathy Statements that you heard in the video. How do they differ from Sympathy Statements? An empathy statement doesn't mean that you agree, but that you understand what the student is feeling.
- 9) What is the difference between intentional misbehavior, and a trauma reaction? Should consequences be handled differently? How can you help the student to “repair” the situation and their relationships without shame? If trauma reactions are an automatic response and not a conscious choice, how could BIPs focus on safety building rather than addressing difficult behavior as either attention seeking or avoidance?
- 10) Review the **Trauma Informed School Accommodations List** in this packet and share thoughts about using these in 504 Plans or on BIPS. Are there other accommodations to consider?

Extended Training Activity Ideas: Before and During the Video - *pause after the slide to discuss the subject.*

- 1) **Before starting the video**, have participants partner up and each take just ONE MINUTE to share a positive / feel good experience that happened recently – give only the newspaper headline version . Then share what changed for them physically (breath, muscles, temperature) by just talking about it. Share out. Then show 4 min. You Tube video <http://mysmartgirls.com/short-film-just-breathe-helps-kids-deal-with-emotions/> Ask: What did you hear from these children?
- 2) **Single Incident Trauma Slide**: Emphasize that many people (w/out complex trauma) recover naturally from a single event trauma within their own support systems. But if trauma related symptoms persist, such as intrusive thoughts, trouble sleeping / eating, feeling fearful or easily startled, Trauma Informed Therapy such as Trauma-Based Mindfulness Cognitive Behavioral Therapy is important for recovery to avoid on-going symptoms of post trauma.
- 3) **Dissociation Slide** – Ask: Who has experienced a student that dissociated? Often times restraints, post extreme rage, or sudden actions will bring on dissociation. What did you do to help bring the student out of their dissociative state?
 - a. Emphasize: find a quiet solitary place, no interruptions, reduce stimulation (light / sounds), use a calm voice “take all of the time that you need” and “I’m right here”.
 - b. As the student begins to return to the present: allow them to slowly orient around the space. May offer a pillow or blanket, and a glass of water.
 - c. Normalize: “It seems like you needed some time to be alone and just shut everything else out.” Track how you see them coming back into the present: “I notice you’re looking around and your eyes are brighter.” (Don’t pathologize)
 - d. When they are ready to move, take a few breaths together, help them stand up slowly, walk slowly with them and help them orient (Example: “We are in the counselor’s office right now – I like her picture of the waterfall.”). Don’t rush.
- 4) Stop after **both parts of the Guided Experiential Slides**. Have volunteers share what changed in their bodily sensations after the first experiential part – **holding an unpleasant memory**. (ask them NOT to share the content of the memory – ONLY the physical changes). Share out before going to the 1st body slide. Then have them share what changed in their body after the **grounding** – did anything shift or change? Share out before going to the 2nd body slide.
- 5) **Perception Slide**: Internal and external sensory and memory – “snake slide”. Discuss false associations – a neutral sensory stimulus (something you see, hear, smell, taste, touch, or feel) that triggers the student’s memory of the trauma and a threat response.
 - a. **Activity**: Identify the Neutral Stimuli that may be a “Trigger” in School: Share the example of a child who has a father who is an alcoholic, and often gets violent and abusive with the family when he’s been drinking. Each night, the father comes home

just after the mom and kids sit down for dinner at the kitchen table. The dad comes through the kitchen door which is next to the kitchen table.

- b. What are some of the “external and internal sensory triggers or false associations” that might happen in school and set off a fear reaction in this student? (Example – when student walks into the loud cafeteria and smells food – may trigger danger) With your table: brainstorm at least 3 “false association” triggers. Share out.

6) **Triune Brain Slide:** The greater the stress, the more we move down the evolutionary brain and the less capacity we have for using our thinking skills. Review the different languages: Reptilian Brain understands the Language of Sensations / Physical Feelings (Strategy: breath & ways to settle energy and bring more calm to the body), MidBrain/ Mammalian Brain understands Language of Emotions (Strategy: empathy statements, feeling connected and cared for). We may have to learn a *new vocabulary* – we may not be used to asking about sensations or making empathy statements.

- a. **Activity:** Ask what words children or youth use when describing physical feelings / sensations. Start to build awareness and vocabulary.

When a student is “triggered”, we need to move away from asking the student to problem solve and discussing consequences in the moment.

7) **Window of Tolerance Slide:** Review Green / Yellow / Red Zones (pg. 14) handout included in this packet. Stress time allowed for “recovery” to get back into the “Green Zone” from yellow and red zones. Yellow – 1 + hour/s, Red – next day.

- a. **When they’re in the Green Zone:** Discuss “What can we do differently next time? Is there anything you’d like to do to feel better about what happened? Are there any relationships that need “repairing”? Get creative – using strengths-based rather than shame-based strategies - to repair someone’s hurt feelings or damaged property. (Example: “How about we make a card together for the cafeteria monitor?”)

8) **After the Video Scenarios:** Ask what specific strategies they saw being used. (tone of voice, empathy statements, practicing ways to settle energy, distract and orient to present – *Example: notice the mural colors, how the teachers stayed connected – Examples: I’ll help you catch up on your work, or time you running around the track, and let me know how I can help*).

9) **Building New Neural Networks Slide:** Emphasize the point that we want these children to feel connected and cared for BOTH after a trauma reaction and in their everyday experiences with us. It is extremely important for these children to feel safe connections with adults and their peers on a day to day basis, and experience the importance of healthy, caring attachment at school. This is critical to support new neural connections and build emotional regulation skills.

Handouts

- 1) Grounding Script (pg. 6)
- 2) Trauma Informed School Accommodations / Recommendations (pg. 7)
- 3) Ideas for Creating a Calming Corner in the Classroom (pgs. 8-9)
- 4) Free Trauma Related Articles and Video Resources for Teachers / Administrators (pg. 9)
- 5) Time In Poster / Lanyard Insert (pgs. 10 – 11)
- 6) School Interventions for Working with Traumatized Students: Building Safety, Belonging and Competence (pgs. 12 – 13)
- 7) Green Zone / Yellow Zone / Red Zone (pg. 14)
- 8) STEPS / Strategies for Building Safety (pg. 15)
- 9) General Guidelines for De-Escalation ([Trauma Through A Child's Eyes](#), Levine & Kline, 2007 , pg.341) – Helping Students Get Into the Green Zone for Learning (pg. 16)

Grounding Script – This script can be used in the classroom – it is a great tool to practice every day with students! You may also choose to read this live during the training, rather than listen to it on the video. Whoever will be reading the script should listen to it first, and get a sense of the relaxed pacing and rhythm of the reading.

- *Read slowly, if you're not used to doing grounding or guided imagery – our tendency is to speed up. It helps to go slowly to allow time for people to shift their attention internally and find a good connection with their breath and bodily sensations. This may be unusual for some people, or feel awkward. Going at a slow pace with a soft voice helps to support comfort.*

Take a moment to get comfortable in your chair. You may want to push back from the table and free your hands of any objects. Then, shift around in your chair until you find a spot that feels just right.... You may want to either close your eyes, or soften them and find a neutral point to look at – like a place on the floor. Now, I invite you to bring your attention to your breath. You don't have to change anything about it, just notice the rhythm of it as it comes in and out. You might feel it enter at the tip of your nose.Then, when you're ready, you can move your attention to your feet. You might wiggle your toes and push down into your shoes - and really feel how they connect to the ground. You can imagine roots coming down from your feet and planting themselves deep into the earth..... Then slowly, bring your attention to the back of your legs, your seat, and your lower back, and notice all of the places where they contact the chair..... Notice if you're holding yourself up using your own muscles, or if you're allowing the chair to completely hold and support you..... Now I invite you to bring your attention to your hands. You might start by stretching them out and then curling them into a fist, wiggle your fingers a bit, and rub them together and feel the warmth that you generate. And then let them rest and notice where they contact another surface, feel their warmth on your legs or arms, or perhaps you're holding your hands together. And now, let your attention come back and rest in your breathing, be aware of the rise and fall of your chest and stomach, and the area around your heart..... When you're ready, you can open your eyes and bring your attention back into the room. As you do so, I invite you to slowly look around and find something that your eyes want to look at; something that you like that naturally draws your attention. It might be a color, or an object, or a friendly face.... Take a moment to wonder if whatever you're looking at reminds you of anything, perhaps the sweater that someone is wearing reminds you of something or someone warm, or a color reminds you of a special place. Be curious if there is any connection to something you like, something that feels good.

Trauma Informed School Accommodations / Recommendations

_____ (student) I recommend the following accommodations in the classroom and school environment, to support their being successful in the school learning environment.

Respect student's boundaries, allow _____ feet of personal space.

Allow _____ minutes to calm & settle before discussing behavior & consequences. (calming corner)

Communicate with a calm voice tone & facial expression. Do not use raised voice or shaming tone.

Plan with student the most comfortable way for them to enter the classroom and how to be greeted or acknowledged by the teacher to reinforce comfort.

Verbally reassure student's safety and allow plenty of time and personal space for student to regain a sense of calm when they are distressed or agitated.

Provide a quiet, neutral (non-punitive) space for calming & settling, daily school work when requested, testing, and other high stress school activities.

Teach and reinforce strategies for settling the student, such as grounding, breathing, and other guided activities for calming the student's nervous system. _____

Allow student to chew gum, use a stress ball, weighted pillow, or other soothing manipulatives during class. Insure student's feet either touch the ground or a foot stool for stability and grounding.

Provide an OT Evaluation & Intervention Plan to identify and reduce sensitivity to sensory overstimulation / integration difficulties and triggers in the classroom.

Provide frequent water and stretch breaks and daily recess (Elementary) or walks (Secondary) for movement as needed, or when requested by the student.

Provide a calm, nurturing, predictable and structured classroom environment.

Provide a list of relaxation strategies (w/ visual graphics) at student's desk.

Prepare student and allow extra time for transitions. For secondary students, consider changing classes a few minutes early so that they do not have to negotiate crowded, loud hallways.

Assign a student partner / study buddy to work with student in class or walk between classes.

Enhance student privacy wearing hood to block peripherals, turn lights down and sit in back of class or less lit area, exempt from group work w/ individual options provided.

Recommend adding to 504 Other Recommendations: Please Specify:

School Faculty (teacher, counselor, admin)

Date

Ideas for Creating a Calming Corner in the Classroom

Quiet Calming or Peace Corners might include:

- a. Soft lighting (a string of small white Christmas lights work great)
- b. Colorful and calming artwork or pictures, especially nature scenes
- c. Soft and heavy / weighted pillows
- d. Bean Bag chairs or big pillows to sit on the ground are nice – soft furniture encourages rest and relaxation.
- e. Picture books that have positive and interesting images, or coloring books and mandala worksheets w/ age appropriate drawing materials. Sometimes just a cozy reading, writing and drawing space is very helpful.
- f. A visual poster with words & symbols of ways to settle and calm our bodies. (See the “Time In To Find Your Ground” example included in this packet)
 - Dr. Becky Bailey, a leading expert on reducing stress in early childhood, published a book called I Can Calm. Her book promotion states: *“Children who are stressed or upset cannot access the higher brain states necessary to problem-solve or learn. The I Can Calm book includes six simple deep breathing techniques proven to help shut off the fight or flight response.”*
 - Teach the “Keep Calm” Activity. This simple, four-step breathing activity comes from the book Emotionally Intelligent Parenting by Maurice Elias, Steven Tobias, and Brian Friedlander (2000). It can be used whenever young people are upset and self-control is needed. Students can practice these four simple steps. Perhaps these steps can even be posted in the peace corner as a reminder:
 - Stop and take a look around.
 - Tell yourself to “keep calm.”
 - Breathe in through nose & count to five, breathe out through mouth to five count.
 - Repeat these steps until you feel calm
- g. Section off the area, with a low book case or hanging curtain, which allows the teacher to visually check in but provides the student with a sense of privacy and safe space.

- h. Sensory Objects: Soft materials provide children with the opportunity to self soothe through tactile stimulation. Sensory objects might include [pom poms](#), moonsand or silly putty (not too sticky, won't dry, and can be modeled), stress balls, a plastic bin of blue or green play sand or dry beans, plastic glitter bottle/jar.
- i. Soothing music, nature sounds, or guided imagery recordings with head phones.

Free Readings or Videos for Teachers and Administrators wanting more information:

Lincoln High School in Walla Walla, WA, tries new approach to school discipline
ô suspensions drop 85% By [Jane Ellen Stevens](#)

<http://acestoohigh.com/2012/04/23/lincoln-high-school-in-walla-walla-wa-tries-new-approach-to-school-discipline-expulsions-drop-85/>

<http://www.socialjusticesolutions.org/2015/06/01/resilience-practices-overcome-students-aces-trauma-informed-high-school-say-data/>

Free Classroom Mindfulness Activities App: <http://smilingmind.com.au>

YouTube: Room to Breathe (Mindful Schools)

<http://amysmartgirls.com/short-film-just-breathe-helps-kids-deal-with-emotions/>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7AYiojxBg4g>

The Atlantic:How Teachers Help Students Who've Survived Trauma By Jessica Lahey

<http://www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2014/12/how-teachers-help-kids-heal/383325/>

TED Talk: The ACES Study

http://www.ted.com/talks/nadine_burke_harris_how_childhood_trauma_affects_health_across_a_lifetime

Nurturing Inner Calm in Children

By Linda Lantieri A noted peace educator describes activities that help children cope with stress.

<http://www.innerresilience->

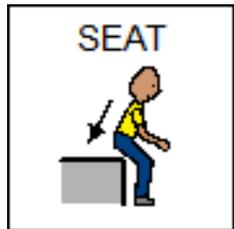
[tidescenter.org/documents/Nurturing%20Inner%20Calm%20Encounter%20-%20Fall%202008.pdf](http://www.innerresilience-tidescenter.org/documents/Nurturing%20Inner%20Calm%20Encounter%20-%20Fall%202008.pdf)

Take "Time In" to Find Your Ground

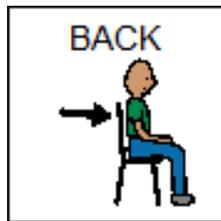
Feel Your...



(on the ground)



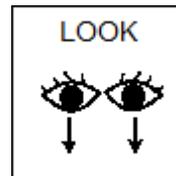
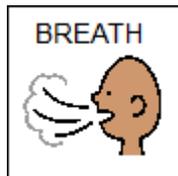
(in the chair)



(against the back of the chair...)



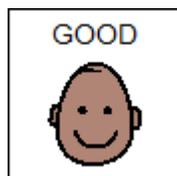
(wherever they might be resting...)



Now Check Your

... And

Around



Find something to look at that makes you feel good! ™

Take “Time IN” To Find Your Ground ...Now Check Your Breath and Look Around!

Take time in to find your ground:
Feel your

- ❖ FEET (on the ground)
- ❖ SEAT (in the chair)
- ❖ BACK (against the back of the chair..)
- ❖ HANDS (wherever they might be resting)

Check your Breath

Now take some time to look around.
Find something that you like to look at, and makes you feel good!

These illustrated steps for Grounding and Self-Regulation / Settling the Nervous System have been used in “Safe Spaces” or “Calming Centers” in the classroom. The above “script” has been provided to teachers on lanyards to wear around their neck for easy access to ground themselves as well as their students when they become dysregulated.

School Interventions for Working with Traumatized Students

Keep in mind that as a teacher you may not see a specific antecedent. When students have been traumatized, a single facial expression, words, smells, etc. can set off the student's internal alarm. Once this happens, the "thinking/rational" part of the brain shuts off and the "instinctual" part (seeking to protect itself against a perceived threat) kicks in. At this point, asking a student to "Stop and think" will not work. The nervous system of a student who has been traumatized has become compromised (Trauma Through A Child's Eyes, Levine & Kline, 2007).

In his book Beyond Time Out, John Stewart Ph.D., states that for healthy emotional development, students must have: an atmosphere that creates a fundamental and pervasive sense of safety, a [classroom] climate where all students can enjoy a sense of belonging and circumstances that provide frequent and expanding experiences of competency.

1. Safety

- a) Establish a safe spot in the classroom, direct teach and remind student how to use this; reinforce and praise student for using it; ensure a calm and reassuring presence
- b) Direct teach and practice calming/relaxation strategies.
- c) Consistency of expectations, procedures and routines creates safety (remind student frequently of these); make student aware as much as possible of changes in schedule, routine, etc.
- d) Respect student's physical boundaries. Many students who have been traumatized may react strongly to touch, or feeling cornered.
- e) Have built in breaks for movement (movement is regulating). Many students who have been traumatized get overwhelmed easily and movement allows them to get rid of excessive energy and regulate.
- f) Give student breaks if you notice initial overwhelm or agitation

2. A sense of belonging

- a) Have specific times of day to check in with student;
- b) Include student in small group with peers
- c) Provide opportunities for student to be involved in class/school (class job, run errands, etc.)
- d) Verbal/non-verbal praise often
- e) Smile often at them and help them feel connected to you

3. A sense of competency

- a) Provide many opportunities for student to be successful in non-academic activities
- b) Label student's feelings often ("You worked hard on your math test. You must feel proud.") Traumatized students often have difficulty labeling/recognizing feelings
- c) Allow student opportunity to express concerns/frustrations and help student problem-solve
- d) Praise efforts to communicate needs

If the student has become "triggered", the nervous system has become dysregulated and aggression or shutting down is his/her (dysfunctional) method for coping. The goal at this point is to help the student to regulate (rather than punish or give consequences). *Compiled by Gabi Garcia, AISD

3 Basic Needs

“Safety

“Belonging

“Competence



From John Stewart's book Beyond Time Out

Green Zone

- “ Ready to learn
- “ Body focused on repair and growth
- “ Relaxed
- “ Open/Flexible
- “ Self regulated
- “ Engages easily with others/feels cared about
- “ Feels a part of a group/Feel like belongs
- “ Content/satisfied
- “ Rational thinking/Planful/Cooperative
- “ Compassionate/Caring

Green - Ready to problem-solve and discuss how to repair the consequences of their actions and rejoin their community.

Yellow Zone

- Scared/Fearful
- Sad
- Controlling
- Angry
- Guarded/Defensive
- Feels uncared about
- Stressed, anxious
- Immediate gratification
- Seeks to change mood
- Don't care attitude
- Distracted

Red Zone

- Terrified / Panic
- Depressed
- Rage
- Isolated
- Overwhelmed
- Geared up for
Emergency
- Rational Mind Offline
- Body Focused on
Protection

Yellow— Need help and time (hour+) to settle before discussing repair / consequences.

Red - Need help to settle and wait a day to discuss repair & consequences.

From the Trauma Proofing Your School Video: STEPS for Building Safety

These strategies were demonstrated in the video to help students return to their Thinking Brain (Green Zone) – so that they CAN talk and problem solve with you.

Check the strategies (v) that work for you.....

___ Invite them to slow down and take a breath.

___ Give them choices like, “Where would you like to sit?”

___ Use a soft tone of voice and soft facial expression.

___ Ask them if they want to move around or get a drink of water.

___ Take a breath with them and model ways to settle.

___ Invite them to rub their hands together, or cross their arms over their chest and either pat or rub or squeeze their upper arms, and do this with them.

___ Offer ear plugs or heavy pillows to help calm their system.

___ Take a step back to give them more space.

___ Make an empathy statement.

___ Get down on their level, so that you appear less intimidating.

___ Encourage them to take all of the time that they need.

___ Let them know that it’s OK to shake or tremble, and encourage them to let that energy just move on out of their system.

___ Reassure them that you are there to help, and ask them how you can help.

___ Help them orient to something else – something that is relaxing or cheerful, like a poster or mural with nice colors, or an interesting object.

___ First, slow down, take a breath, check your internal state, put on your own oxygen mask, and get yourself grounded, feel your feet on the floor.

These skills will help prevent us from unintentionally re-traumatizing our students.

General Guidelines for De-Escalation (Trauma Through A Child's Eyes, Levine & Kline, 2007 , pg.341) – Helping Students Get Into the Green Zone for Learning

1. Be aware of your own activation or triggers in this situation. Take a step back and a deep breath to let your energy settle. Feel the energy settling into your feet, and the support of the ground. (It is only natural that if a student has become aggressive, shut-down, etc., our adrenaline will begin to surge).
2. Remind yourself that you know what to do because you understand this list.
3. Adopt a soothing tone of voice: raising your voice provokes more adrenaline.
4. Check your posture and facial expression. Avoid threatening behaviors or gestures.
5. Take another step back and state the behavior you observed without shaming or exaggeration. "You tore your worksheet and got under the desk."
6. Show that you understand your student by reflecting her overwhelming feelings. "I can see that was frustrating and really uncomfortable for you."
7. Avoid threatening or punishment.
8. Make a statement that shows the student that she is not alone: this will assist her in calming down. "I'm right here and I'm going to help you feel better."
9. Make a statement that shows that the relationship between you can be repaired. "Take all the time you need and we'll figure it out."
10. Make a statement that gives a choice to save face. "When you're ready, you can let me know how you want to handle the worksheet."
11. Make a statement that states the misbehavior without chastisement.
12. Make a statement that shows the correct behavior, and/or what can repair the infraction. "We can figure out how you can let me know when you get frustrated and use that next time."

All of the above interventions can be used on a student's BIP. The most important thing that you can do is to "lend the student your regulated and calm nervous system." That will allow them to calm and settle.