



Adolescent Development and Trauma: Considerations for Educators

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Webinar Housekeeping

- Everyone is in “listen-only” mode
- Two listen options: phone or web
- Type questions in the sidebar to the right
- The powerpoint, notes, and supporting materials will be emailed to you and available on our website
- The webinar recording will be available on our website
- There will be a few polls during the webinar, which you can respond to in the right sidebar
- Contact me afterwards if you have further questions or want more technical assistance



About California School-Based Health Alliance

The California School-Based Health Alliance is the statewide non-profit organization dedicated to improving the health and academic success of children and youth by advancing health services in schools.

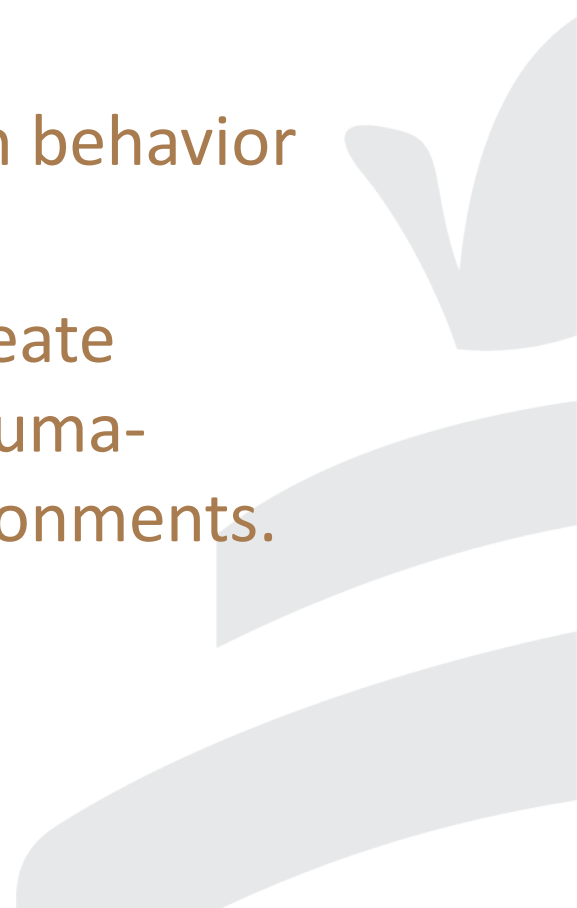
Our work is based on two basic concepts:

- Health care should be accessible and *where kids are*, and
- Schools should have the services needed to ensure that poor health is not a barrier to learning



Objectives

1. Increase our knowledge about adolescent development, particularly thinking, emotions and behavior
2. Explore the impact of trauma on teen behavior and learning
3. Discuss strategies for educators to create developmentally appropriate and trauma-informed classroom and school environments.





Warm-Up Activity

Pile of Books

Hopes versus Fears

Sandwich nametag

Silent reading and reaction

When I was a teen...

Letter to yourself





Brain Development Articles

General Teen Development:

<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=124119468>

<http://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/trouble-in-mind/201112/brilliant-brazen-teenage-brains>

Alcohol/Other Drug Impact:

<http://www.npr.org/blogs/health/2014/02/25/282631913/marijuana-may-hurt-the-developing-teen-brain>

<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=122765890>





Considerations for This Presentation

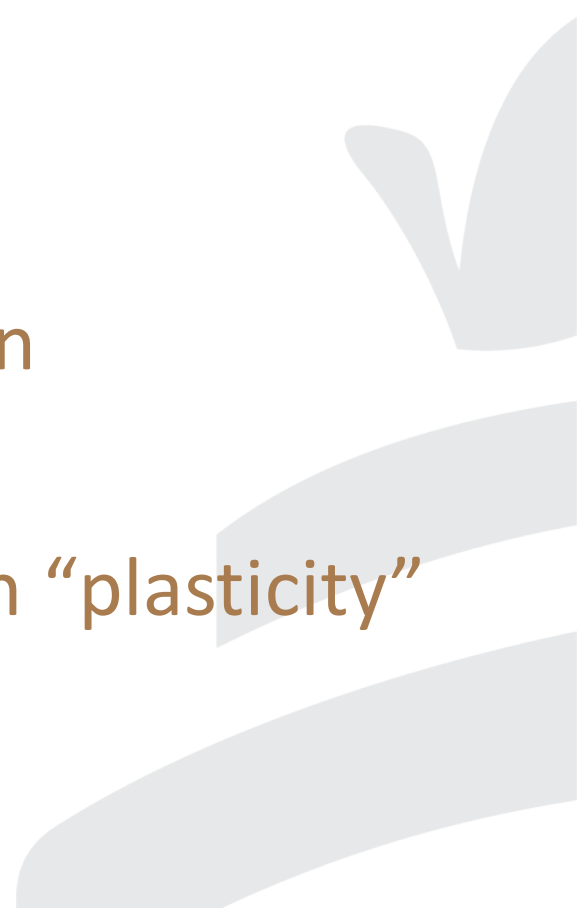
- Builds on existing knowledge
- Sensitive subject matter
- Keep it confidential!
- Check-ins /specific questions afterwards
- Importance of self-care






What Do We Know About the Teen Brain?

1. Major brain growth spurt during teen years
2. Brain develops until mid-20's
3. "Feeling" brain to "Thinking" brain
4. "Use it or lose it" principal & brain "plasticity"





What Do We Know About the Teen Brain?

- 5. Brain matures in an environmental context
 - 6. High risk behavior related to brain growth
 - 7. Shift from concrete thinking to abstract thinking
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Shift Into Pre-Frontal Cortex

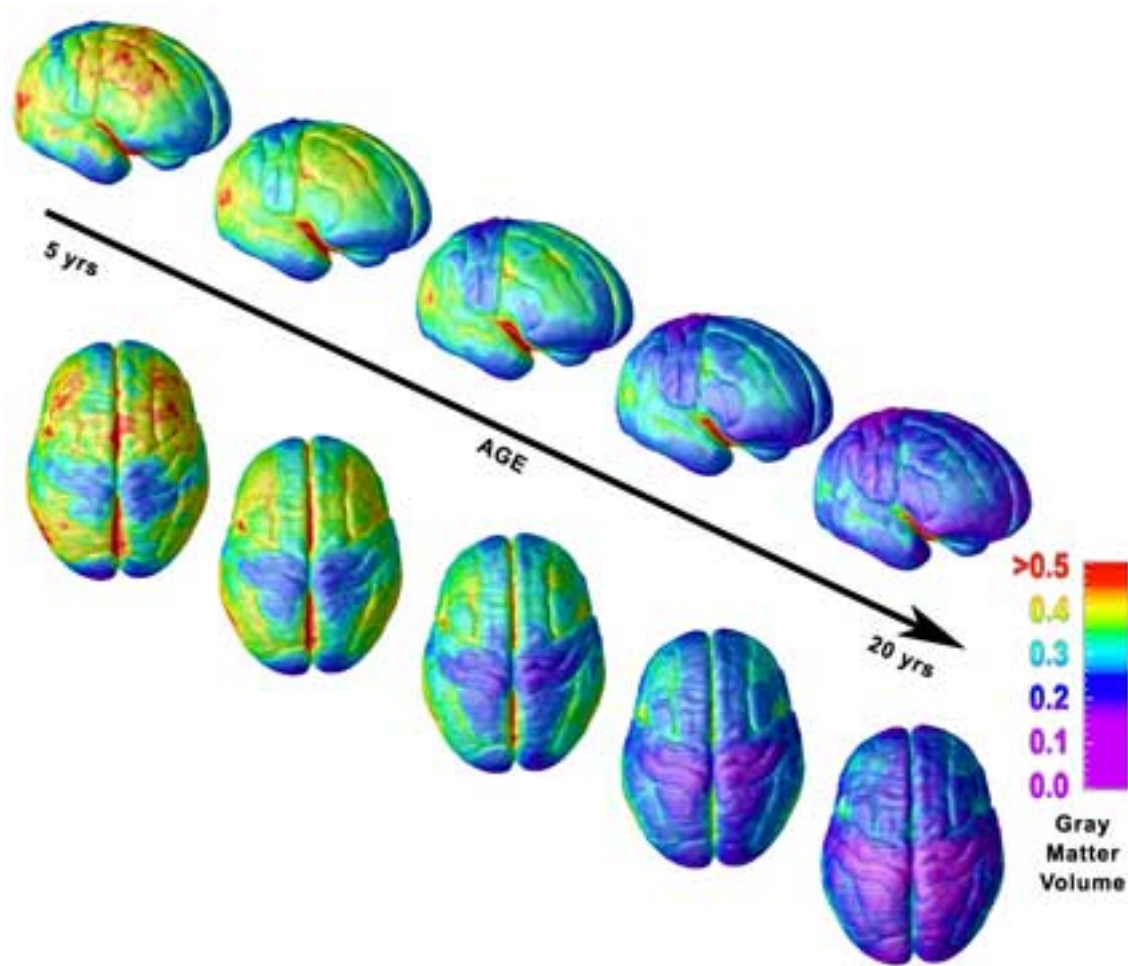
What Is Developing...

- Present-focus to future- vision
- Increased impulse control
- Increased emotional regulation
- Self-centered toward perspective taking
- “Seeing is believing” to imagining the possibilities

Adult Thinking & Behavior

- Planning and goal-setting
- Delay gratification
- Anticipate the future consequences
- Regulate emotions
- Behavior adjusts to situation
- Envision alternatives

Brain Imaging



Brain development from age 5 to 20 / Source: Paul Thompson, professor of neurology, UCLA School of Medicine

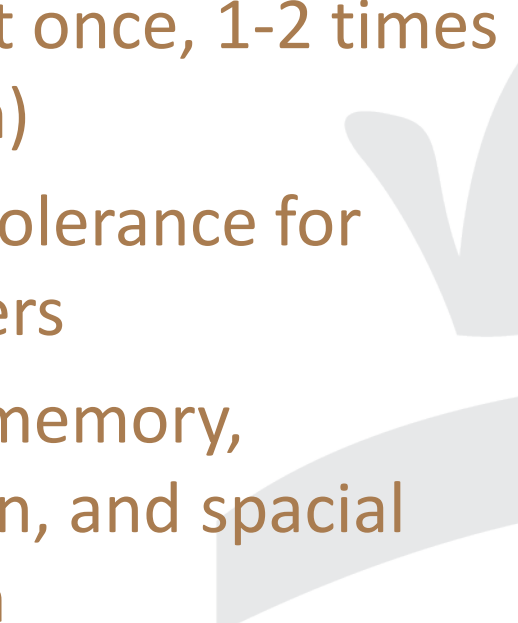


Effects of Drug Use

Marijuana

- 23% of 12th graders have used in last month
- 6% are daily users
- 60% of teens think its safe
- Regular use changes the structure of the brain, affecting memory, problem-solving, and decision-making

Alcohol

- Most used drug
 - Teens tend to binge (4-5 drinks at once, 1-2 times a month)
 - Higher tolerance for hangovers
 - Poorer memory, attention, and spacial function
- 

Psychological & Emotional Development



Empathy
Positive self-regard
Sense of autonomy
Self-regulation skills
Positive coping skills
Conflict resolution skills
Optimism coupled with realism
Ability to comfort self and others
Recognition of right and wrong

DEVELOPMENTAL COMPETENCIES



Physical Development



Healthy Habits

Personal hygiene
Nutrition and exercise
Regular medical and dental care

Risk Management

Seat belts
Condoms
Bike helmets

Sense of belonging to society
Connectedness with parents/cargivers, peers, and other adults
Attachment to pro-social institutions such as school and church
Ability to navigate in multiple cultural contexts
Commitment to civic engagement



Social Development

Essential Life Skills:

Literacy Budgeting and banking
Shopping and cooking
Transportation and Safety planning

Essential Vocational Skills:

Job applications and interviews
Time management
Knowledge of more than one culture
Critical thinking and reasoning
Decision-making and planning

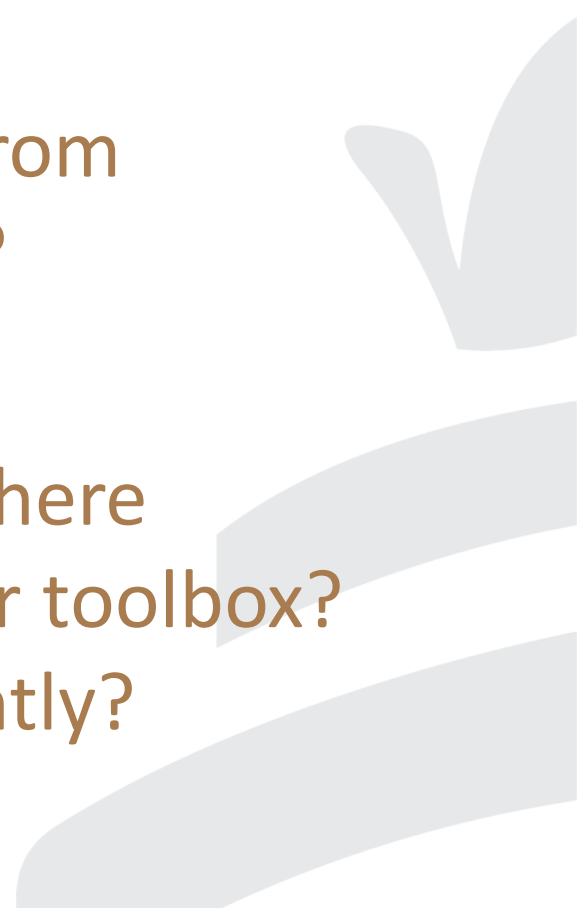


Intellectual Development



Strategies

- What is a strategy you have employed in your classroom/teaching that works with teens?
- What is something you learned from experience that DOES NOT work?
- After reviewing this research, is there something you would add to your toolbox? Something you would do differently?





How Can Schools Support Positive Development?

Classroom Environment

1. Create a safe and stimulating environment in your classroom
2. Provide opportunities for students to meaningfully participate, and decide things like classroom rules/ group agreements
3. Introduce new information by connecting it to known information
4. Allow for opportunities to practice new skills
5. Reinforce new information through multiple stimuli—visual, arts, guest presenters, group work, student presentations
6. Offer students brain “breaks”





Brain Breaks!

1. Deep breathing
2. Progressive relaxation
3. Stretching or Movement
4. Quiet Ball
5. 1 minute Dance Party
6. Group Rock, Paper, Scissors (OR People, Tigers, Traps)

www.brainbreaks.blogspot.com

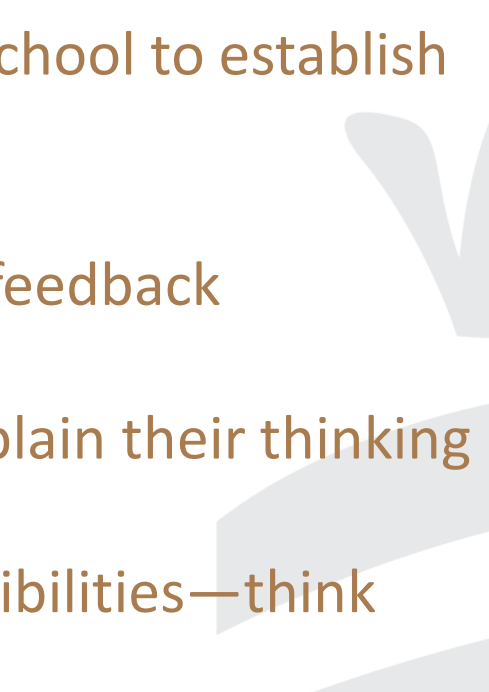
<http://www.coloradoedinitiative.org/resources/teacher-toolbox-activity-breaks/>





How Can Schools Support Positive Development?

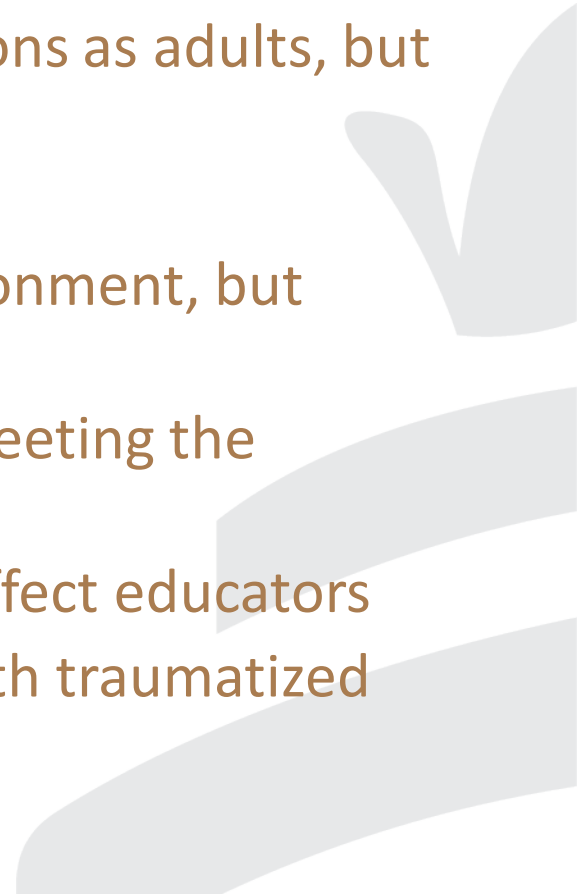
Relational Skills

1. Create opportunities for students to share and connect with one another (i.e. circles)
 2. Provide opportunities for adults in the school to establish mentor-like relationships with students
 3. 3:1 ratio of positive feedback to critical feedback
 4. Help students identify emotions and explain their thinking
 5. Help students explore options and possibilities—think into the future
- 



Considerations About Trauma

- There are students in this school who have, and continue to experience trauma
- Trauma affects learning and school performance.
- Trauma causes physical and emotional distress
- Children/teens experience the same emotions as adults, but may not have the words to express them
- Behavior has meaning and function
- Some behaviors are protective in one environment, but problematic in another
- Schools have an important role to play in meeting the social/emotional needs of students
- Vicarious trauma and compassion fatigue affect educators
- Self care is critical for educators working with traumatized students





What Makes an Experience Traumatic?

1. Overwhelming, very painful, very scary
2. Fight or Flight incapacitated
3. Threat to physical or psychological safety
4. Loss of control
5. Unable to regulate emotions



ACE Study






What Is Trauma?

Types of Trauma

- Acute
- Chronic
- Complex
- Toxic stress
- Developmental trauma
- Compassion fatigue
- Historical/Insidious trauma

Examples

- Natural disasters
 - Abuse
 - Neglect
 - Violence in the home or community
 - Forced displacement
 - Illness, injury of self or caregiver
 - Homelessness, foster care
 - Death and loss
- 



Trauma Impacts on Child Development

Trauma causes brain to adapt in ways that contributed to their survival (i.e. constant fight/flight/freeze)



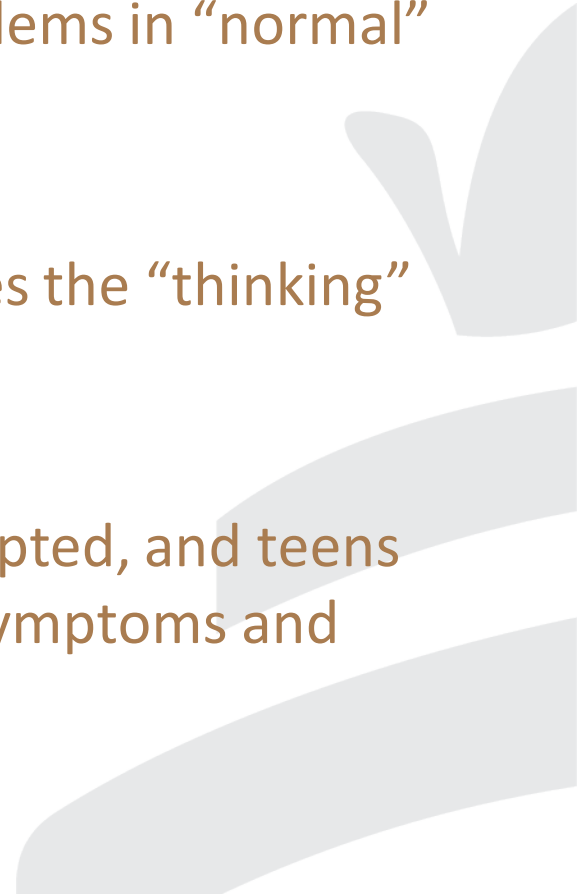
These adaptations can look like behavior problems in “normal” contexts, such as school



When triggered, the “feeling” brain dominates the “thinking” brain



The normal developmental process is interrupted, and teens may exhibit internalizing or externalizing symptoms and behaviors





What Might You Notice?

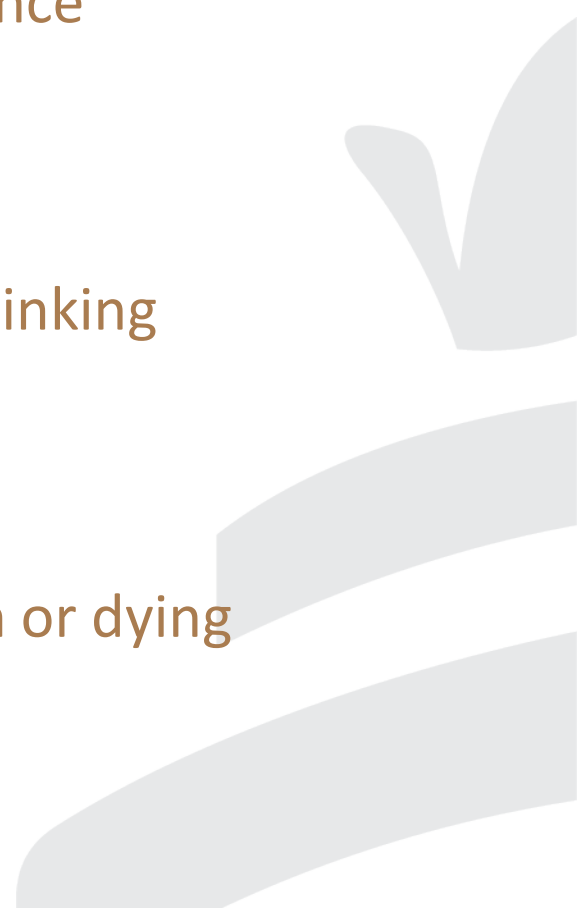
- Physical symptoms
- Poor emotional control
- Blowing up/lashing out
- Confrontational/ control battles
- Overly protective of personal space/belongings
- Over- or underreacting to loud noises or sudden movements
- Difficulty with transitions
- Emotional response doesn't "match" situation





What Might You Notice?

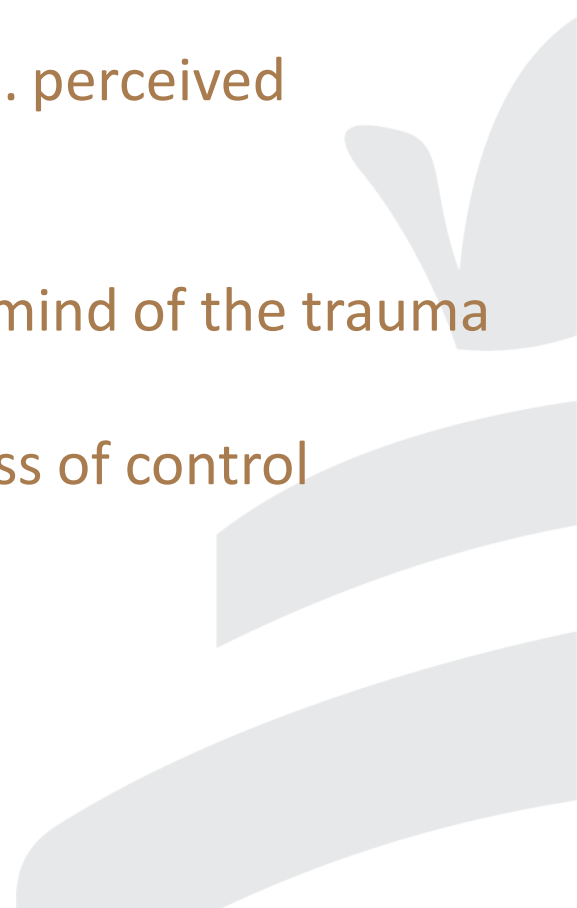
- Depression/ withdrawal
- Anxiety/worry about safety of self and others
- Poor or changed school performance/attendance
- Avoidance behaviors
- Difficulty focusing, with attention, memory, thinking
- Increase in impulsive, risk-taking behaviors
- Repetitive thoughts or comments about death or dying
- Non-age appropriate behavior





Common Triggers

- Unpredictable situations or sudden changes—i.e. substitute teacher
- Transitions—i.e. from middle to high school
- Conflicts, disagreements or confrontation—i.e. perceived mugging, or yelling
- Sights, sounds, smells, or other senses that remind of the trauma
- Feelings of vulnerability , powerlessness, or loss of control
- Experiences of rejection—i.e. break-up
- Even praise, positive attention and intimacy





When a Student Is Triggered...

- Breathe! Be calm and you will help the student be calm
- Do not use this as a time to try to change behavior or demand respect
- Call for help, or ask another student to call
- Notice your tone of voice and personal space
- Remember that the student is probably not engaged in the pre-frontal cortex right now!

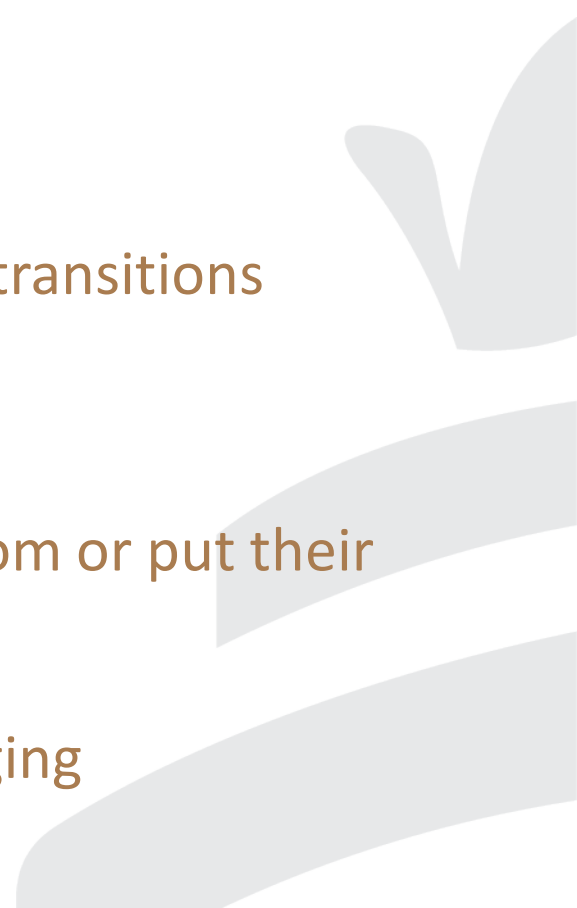




How Can the School Environment Help?

Classroom Considerations

- Build relationships with struggling students
- Clearly communicate and remind about classroom agreements and rules for behavior
- Provide routines and consistency
- Provide explicit preparation for changes and transitions
- Seat students near the front or near you
- Allow students to step outside of the classroom or put their head down
- Attempt to listen and understand before judging





How Can the School Environment Help?

School Based Mental Health Interventions

- Individual counseling services
- Safety/crisis planning
- Functional behavior plans
- Groups
- Youth development activities
- Case/Care management





Resilience

- Responsive caregiving provided to youth from trusted adults can moderate the effects of early stress and neglect associated with trauma
- Building resilience can counter the effects of trauma/ACE's and help lead youth to more effective, productive and healthy adulthoods

St. Andrews, Alicia (2013). *Trauma and Resilience: An Adolescent Provider Toolkit*.
San Francisco, CA: Adolescent Health Working Group, San Francisco, CA





Resilience

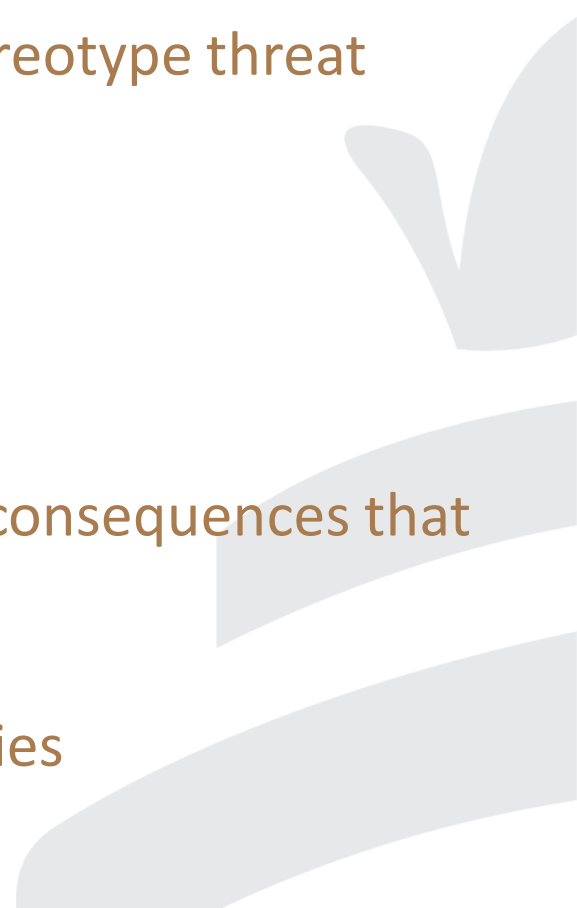
- How are the challenging behaviors and attitudes we see in traumatized students keeping them safe in other areas of their life?
- How can I support building resilience in my students?





Building Resilience

- Encourage positive, caring relationships with adults in school
- Give opportunities for creative expression
- Teach about the power of mindsets and stereotype threat
- Provide high, but attainable, expectations
- Give responsibility
- When mistakes are made, give meaningful consequences that emphasize recovery
- Help youth with developmental competencies





Tips for Educators

- Coordinate efforts with others and make referrals
- Let students know you care by listening, empathizing, and providing structure
- Contribute to programs at your school that build relationships and student assets
- Offer ways for families to connect to your school
- Don't make promises you can't keep
- When you become aware of a student who has experienced trauma, ask for help





Self-Care Is Critical

“It is not uncommon for school professionals who have a classroom with one or more students struggling from the effects of trauma , to experience symptoms very much like those their students are exhibiting.”

-The Heart of Learning and Teaching: Compassion, Resilience, and Academic Success





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We Are Here to Help!

- Trauma Workshop for Educators—conducted by our partner Jenn Rader from the James Morehouse Project at El Cerrito High School
- Technical Assistance Services
- Toolkits (free to members!)—Includes HIPAA/FERPA guide, *Vision to Reality: How to Build an SBHC from the Ground Up*
- Web-based resources—Health & Learning and Startup & Operations www.schoolhealthcenters.org

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