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Today’s talk

1. Trauma and its effects
2. Why childhood trauma matters in schools
3. Trauma-informed schools
4. Trauma and Resiliency Lens for Educators
What is childhood trauma?

“Trauma arises from an inescapable stressful event that overwhelms an individuals’ coping mechanisms.”

—van der Kolk and Fisler, 1995

Childhood trauma is an “experience or witnessing of an event that involves (1) actual or threatened death or serious injury to self or others or (2) threat to psychological or physical integrity of self or others.”

—Zero to Three, 2004
Examples of traumatic experiences

- Community Violence
- Complex Trauma
- Domestic Violence
- Car or Bus accidents
- Medical Trauma
- Natural Disasters
- Physical Abuse
- Gang Violence and Threat
- Home or Wild Fires

- Loss of Loved One
- Death
- Incarceration
- Deportation
- Foster Care
- Refugee Trauma
- School Violence
- Sexual Abuse
- Terrorism
- Traumatic Grief
Categories of trauma

• **Acute Trauma**: Event that occurs at a particular time and place and is usually short lived

• **Chronic Trauma**: Experiences that occur repeatedly over long periods of time

• **Historical Trauma**: The collective and cumulative trauma experienced by a particular group across generations still suffering the effects
This picture shows when the robber is pointing a gun to my mom.

Fear Rating = 10
Daddy, why did you cut my Mom???
A startling number of students are exposed to violence and trauma. In many urban areas, this figure approaches 100%.

- Witnessed family violence: 10%
- Witnessed any violence: 25%
- Experienced direct assault: 46%
- Exposed to violence: 61%

Witness: 48%

No violence: 27%

Direct assault & witness: 23%

2% Direct assault

6% No violence

Violence not involving a weapon: 54%

Gun or knife violence: 40%

National Survey of Adolescents 1995

LA Unified School District 6th-Grade Students, 2004
My Dad tried to save his friend. My Dad got shot three times. My Dad and his friend died.
The emotional impact of violence & other trauma can be profound

CHILDREN WHO EXPERIENCE TRAUMA ARE MORE LIKELY TO

- Develop posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD)
- Experience problems with friends and family
- Develop emotional and behavioral problems
  - Substance abuse
  - Aggression
  - Depression
- Perform worse in school
  - Inability to concentrate
  - Flashbacks and preoccupation with the trauma
  - Avoidance of school and other places
Typically functioning brain

Scary Event Occurs → Amygdala produces “alarm” signals and overrides frontal lobe → Response to Crisis: Fight-Flight-Freeze → Hippocampus: Creates Potent Memory of Event

The changes brought about in the brain as a stress reaction are helpful in the immediate face of danger.
Brain impacted by complex trauma

Trauma Reminder

Amygdala produces “alarm” signals and overrides frontal lobe: False Alarm

Response to Crisis: Fight-Flight-Freeze

Hippocampus: Reduction in size and decreased ability to inhibit reactions to stimuli

Same reactions on prolonged basis can cause impaired use of the prefrontal cortex and indiscriminate fear.
The relationship of adverse childhood experiences & adult health


http://www.raisingofamerica.org/watch
ACES impacts learning

51% of children with 4+ ACE scores had learning and behavior problems in school

Compared with only 3% of children with NO ACE score

Traumatic experiences take a measurable toll on academic achievement

- Decreased IQ and reading ability
- More suspensions, expulsions
- More days absent from school
- Lower GPA
- Decreased high-school graduation rates

Sources (left to right): Delany-Black et al., 2003; LAUSD survey, 2006; Hurt et al., 2001; Hurt et al., 2001; Grogger, 1997.
The impact of trauma on students

https://cbitsprogram.org/pretraining
Schools are ideal settings for helping children who have experienced trauma
Why schools: Access & decreasing disparities in care

- Most youth with mental health needs do not seek treatment
- Many internalizing disorders in children go undetected
- Of youth who do receive intervention, 75% access through schools
- Schools are ideal settings for detection and intervention with traumatized children
  - Trauma affects school performance
  - Barriers to access are partially removed
- Disparities: Access for traditionally underserved children
Frameworks for trauma-informed schools
What is a trauma-informed school?

1. REALIZES the prevalence and impact of trauma

2. RECOGNIZES signs of trauma and the need for learning supports

3. RESPONDS to trauma with developmentally appropriate support to enhance student success

4. RESISTS retraumatization by integrating principles of trauma-informed care into classroom practices and responding to student and staff needs for self-care

There are six key foundations of trauma- & resiliency-informed schools:

- Safety
- Trust and transparency
- Peer support
- Collaboration and mutuality
- Empowerment, voice, and choice
- Cultural humility
The trauma-informed school is the foundation for a range of interventions for traumatized students

- A multitier system of support (MTSS) is a continuum of supports for students that provide a range of service and support intensities

- The system is built to facilitate the four R’s:
  1. Realize
  2. Recognize
  3. Respond
  4. Resist
Specific strategies & programs help students at each level

- An individual student will move along the continuum
  - UNIVERSAL: for all students
  - TARGETED: Preventive Interventions for At-Risk Students
  - SELECT: Psychological interventions to remediate adverse effects and avoid retraumatization

- Monitor students to provide appropriate range of least intensive supports
  - What is best for each student will change over time
Culturally responsive, trauma- & resiliency-informed schools

A shift in perspective from: “What is wrong with this child/family?” to “What has this child/family been through?”

History and context (i.e., child welfare, immigration, military,)

Experience with discrimination/marginalization

Now...we have to use this lens in our approach
Resiliency lens: Elevating life course trajectories

A shift from deficit to adaptive strength

Social Justice

Focus on the wins

Honoring and building connections and belonging

Not just stabilizing or catching up ....flourishing
How can our schools create the conditions within which resiliency can emerge?

**Protective Factors that Promote Resilience (and make sense for all students)**

- **External Factors**
  - Caring and supportive relationships
  - High expectations for success
  - Opportunities for meaningful participation

- **Internal factors**
  - Social competence
  - Problem-solving skills
  - Autonomy
  - Sense of purpose and future
What can I do today to support my students?

• Maximize the child’s sense of safety. Accept no bullying, teasing, safety from ...isms and microaggressions.
• Give youth consistency and choices; predictable routines, clear expectations, consistent rules, and immediate feedback.
• Understand that youth process their experiences through their interactions with others (this is a way to cope with trauma).
• Express positive thoughts for the future.
• Help youth to cope with day-to-day problems.
  – Self-regulation
  – Problem solving
  – Conflict resolution
Understanding behavior in the context of trauma experience: Shift from deficit to adaptive strength

• Lying
• Stealing
• Hiding
• Hoarding
• Tantrums
• Running Away
• Fighting

➢ Differentiate trauma-reactions from defiance
How do we create the conditions within which resiliency can emerge?

- Identify and encourage child’s strengths
- Whole Child—spend as much on strengths

“Everyone is a genius. But if you judge a fish on its ability to climb a tree, it will live its whole life believing that it is stupid.”

Albert Einstein
Trauma- & resiliency-informed schools: The power of school relationships

• School is a place where it is possible for traumatized children to forge strong relationships with caring adults and learn in a supportive, predictable and safe environment.

• Mastering both academic and social skills are key to the healing process, the aim is to increase teaching and learning time and reduce time spent on discipline.

• School Administrators can partner with educators and parents and guardians and provide support for adult wellness, access to evidence-based resilience and mental health programs to best understand and protect students and model self regulation and whole person development.
Thank you for your time, attention,

...and what you do each and every day to help students bounce back and thrive.
I have a dream about a nice kind school.

ANSEL