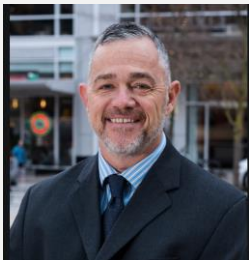




WEATHERING THE STORM

RETURNING TO SCHOOL AFTER
COVID-19



DR. WILL HENSON

IN THIS WEBINAR

What to Expect Returning to School

4 Pillars of a Trauma-Informed Approach to Back to School 2021

ACES PRIMER

> Adverse Childhood Experiences stem from 10 different kinds of adversity

HOUSEHOLD DYSFUNCTION



- > Incarceration of a Family Member
- > Witnessing Domestic Violence
- > Substance Abuse by Family Member
- > Family Mental Illness
- > Divorce or Separation

ABUSE



- > Physical
- > Emotional
- > Sexual

NEGLECT



- > Physical
- > Emotional

A TYPICAL CLASSROOM OF 30 STUDENTS



> 6 students with no ACE

> 5 students with 1 ACE

> 6 students with 2 ACEs

And importantly -

> 3 students with 3 ACEs

> 7 students with 4-5 ACEs

> 3 students with 6+ ACEs

ACES HAVE AN ENORMOUS IMPACT ON SCHOOL AGE STUDENTS':

- Neurological development
- Decreased resilience
- Mental illness (increased rates)
- Academic difficulties
- Problems with Concentration and attention
- Difficulty trusting others
- Higher suicide rates (especially for interpersonal and sexual trauma)
- Long-term health problems and early morbidity
- Low self-worth & self concept, sense of agency
- High risk behaviors (substance abuse, domestic violence, etc)
- **Increased stress response (fight or flight)**
- **Hyper-vigilance**
- **Social misattributions (hostile bias)**
- **Low emotional regulation**

ACES IMPACTS

- **Students at risk:** Compared to someone with no ACEs students with ACEs are:
 - 3 times more likely to experience academic failure
 - 4 times more likely to have reported poor health
 - 5 times more likely to have severe attendance problems
 - **6 times more likely to evidence school behavior problems**
- **Impacts Vary by:**
 - Point in time trauma occurs
 - Nature of adverse experience
 - Relational environment & supports present
 - Students' resilience

REGULATION



Thinking



Emotional
Responses



Attention



Physical
Reactions



HUGE WAVE OF STRESS AND TRAUMA = INCREASED DYSREGULATION

- The COVID-19 pandemic
- The loss of predictability, routine, student skills
- The current socio-political climate

STRESSFUL CONDITIONS IN SOCIETY

Associated with:

- Increased rates of mental health conditions like anxiety and depression
- Increased substance use
- Higher domestic violence and child abuse rates

COVID-19 STRESS

- Fear of getting sick
- Concern for family and friends at risk
- Social isolation
- Disruption of extended family network
- Loss of work and financial difficulties
- Stressful togetherness, including having to work and manage school for children



PEOPLE AT GREATER RISK FOR STRESS:

- Children and teens
- People with underlying health conditions
- People with existing mental health conditions
- People with substance abuse disorders
- Essential workers
- People experiencing poverty
- Racial and ethnic minorities
- People experiencing homelessness
- People who cannot access information about COVID in their primary language

THE EFFECTS OF THE LAST YEAR

- Children have lost the routine of being in school. This includes:
 - Sleep/wake cycle
 - Having expectations to complete work and engage in non-preferred activities
 - Following a set routine or schedule
 - Following rules and being asked to do things in specific ways
 - Interacting cooperatively with others

THE EFFECTS OF THE LAST YEAR

- More time spent online and with electronics
 - Increased screen time is associated with lower psychological well-being (depression and anxiety)
 - Lower curiosity
 - Decreased self-control
 - Lower emotional stability
 - Increased distractibility and task completion
 - Difficulty making friends and social connections



RETURNING TO SCHOOL

4 KEY PILLARS OF A TRAUMA-INFORMED APPROACH

1. Educator Wellness
2. Creating Relationship & a Sense of Safety
3. Creating Predictability
4. Helping Students Regulate

1.

**PERSONAL
WELLNESS**



3 KEY AREAS

Self-Awareness

Self-Regulation

Resiliency

SELF-AWARENESS

Understanding of:

- Your thoughts
- Your feelings
- Your body's reaction
- Your habits
- Your biases in interpreting information



SELF-AWARENESS

- *If you are having a thought or feeling, and you don't know you are having that thought or feeling, you **become** that thought or feeling.”*
– Sam Harris





SELF-REGULATION

REGULATION



Thinking



Emotional
Responses



Attention



Physical
Reactions

THINKING OR SELF-TALK

Are you:

- Encouraging yourself or putting yourself down?
- Focusing more on the problem or on possible solutions?
- Making cognitive errors in examining a problem, especially ones that make the problem seem worse, or your options seem limited?

RESILIENCY

Internal strength is not...

- The absence of or denial of feelings
- Being so tough you don't need any help or any comfort

RESILIENCY

- Learned behavior and way of thinking
- Develops through practice
- Built through relationships with other people
- Quality of connection
- Fluid and dependent on your physical and emotional state
- Adaptive response in the face of adversity

RESEARCH SHOWS

Resilient people do 3 things:

1. Calmly accept the reality of their circumstances
2. Make meaning of their situation
3. Flexibly adapt to their circumstances

THINGS TO DO:

- Monitor your own regulation
- Be aware of your own stress/trauma and the impact working with students with trauma has on you
- Make sure to start and end the day in a regulated state (develop and use regulation routines!)
- Practice Self-Talk

**2 .
C R E A T I N G
R E L A T I O N S H I P S
(A N D A S E N S E
O F S A F E T Y)**



CREATING RELATIONSHIPS

The key elements of forming relationships are:

- Presence
- Power
- Warmth

THINGS TO DO:

- Show interest in your students
- Focus on trust and safety
- Manage Energy, not behavior
- Chase relationships, not behavior
- Lead instead of follow behavior

**3 .
C R E A T I N G
P R E D I C T A B I L I T Y**



CREATING PREDICTABILITY

Predictability is hallmark of trauma-informed environments

- Kids don't respond well to surprises and can't think flexibly
- They need to know what is going to happen, why, when, and how
- Predictability is also a staff trait - students can predict how you will respond.

THINGS TO DO:

- Post and follow a regular schedule
- Update the schedule daily to reflect changes
- Use visual supports to help students learn and remember routines, schedules and expectations
- Communicate regularly with students and caregivers
- Ensure a predictable and safe response from adults
- Continually clarify expectations for success
- Establish and follow routines that support your schedule

WHY CREATE ROUTINES?

Routines:

- Help kids learn what to do through repetition and help automate a student's behavior
- Reduce arousal and dysregulation
- Allow structured and predictable interaction with a calm adult

TYPES OF ROUTINES

- Transition routines manage transitions between activities
- Attention Routines help students re-focus – (example: “choral response”)
- Re-focus and re-centering routines help bring a class back being off track or having too high energy (example: deep breathing)

PRE-TEACHING

- Communicate and reiterate expectations before each activity.
- Discuss how you would like students to respond to certain issues.
- Make sure students know how to get materials, start and end class and get attention.
- Frame successful behaviors in a way that makes students want to do them.

4.
HELPING
STUDENTS
REGULATE



CO-REGULATION

A woman is sitting on the left side of a seesaw, and a young boy is sitting on the right side. The seesaw is balanced on a central pivot. The background is a dark teal color.

Only a well-regulated adult can help a student regulate

3 2 1 insight
ESSENTIAL TRAINING

As you go, so goes the student.

REGULATION IS A SHARED PROCESS

Regulation is not something you do to someone, it's something you do with them.

WHAT DOES CO-REGULATION DO FOR YOU?

- Students do better when they are regulated
- They are attentive, calm, more cognitively flexible and available
- Co-regulation is an efficient process to address regulation

THINGS TO DO:

- Teach new coping skills for managing stress and uncertainty
- Schedule and provide opportunities to regulate
- Create safe, calming spaces

Distance Learning:

- Use specific words or phrases along with your routines
- Use these same words and skills at the beginning of an instructional task to allow for practice
- Intersperse regulation breaks within instruction

REGULATION BREAKS

- Build times and activities into your day to help students regulate - quick breaks, check ins, movement etc..
- Structure your day so students don't get overwhelmed
- Have a process for students when they need a break
- Make social & emotional skills part of your curriculum

FINAL THOUGHTS

- Be intentional and really plan out your return
- Start with welcoming energy
- Go over the top with predictability, routine, structure
- Have a plan for when things go wrong

THANK YOU





Q AND A

THANK YOU



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