

# Trauma-informed Classroom Strategies

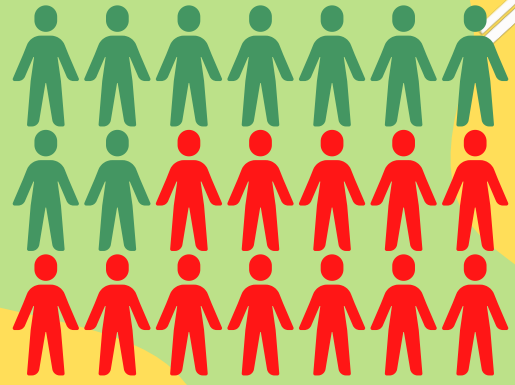
## What is Trauma?

Trauma is an **individuals' experience** of an event (not necessarily the event itself) that overwhelms the nervous system and overrides a person's capacity to cope. Left untreated, trauma can lead to PTSD, and other debilitating mental disorders (addiction, severe depression, generalized or social anxiety disorders, and various phobias).

## Who's Affected?

- 60% of adults have experienced childhood trauma.
- 16% experienced 4 or more traumatic events
- 25% was physical abuse
- 20% was sexual
- 20% witnessed substance abuse
- 10% witnessed violence
- 10% were physically or emotionally neglected.

\*Statistics from Center for Disease Control



From Charts (Canva)



From Woman Feeling Emotional Stress (1506643 Pixabay)

## Causes

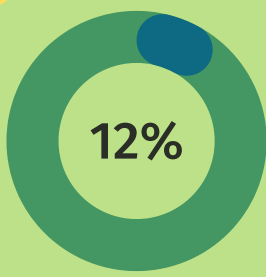
When an event is experienced as being too intense for the victim to fully process, and is left to suffer in isolation. Victims remain in stasis until the nervous system can work through and heal.



From Charts (Canva)

## Effects on Development

As trauma affects brain function, it is especially harmful to a child's developing brain. A recent study revealed a 5-12% decrease in the hippocampus, the area of the brain responsible for long term memory.



From Charts (Canva)

## Increase in Problematic Behavior

**Increased behavioral problems are common among victims. Hyper-vigilance, exaggerated startle response, misperceptions or overreactions, denial or psychological numbing, disassociation, rage, social withdrawal, perpetual mourning or depression, chronic pain, concentration and learning problems, irritability etc.**

## Remember: Traumatized behavior is not controllable!

**Kids are not acting out on purpose, or to be oppositional.**

Traumatized behaviors are caused by triggers, which are *any* circumstances that connect the situation with the original trauma. Survival reactions bring survivors back to the time and place of their traumatization, as if they are living it again for the first time. Triggered children will experience rage, fear, panic, upset, and/or agitation as if from nowhere.

### 3 Trauma Types

**Type 1: Acute, single event**

Eg. Rape, Death, Natural Disaster

**Type 2: Complex, continuous**

Eg. Bullying, neglect, violence

**Type 3: Crossover, 1 intense event w/ lasting effects**

Identifying Trauma

From Geometric Textured Home Office Grid Board (Canva)

# Trauma-informed Classroom Strategies

## The Trauma Informed Classroom

- By identifying the type of trauma, parents and educators can design a Person-centered, trauma-informed, de-escalation strategy for students to feel safe and more grounded.
- **Know Their Triggers.**
- Work with students to better understand and utilize the strategies they already use such as listening to music, talking with peers, using a weighted blanket, breathing exercises, etc.
- Educators create safe spaces in their classrooms by providing grounding stations where triggered students can go to regroup.
- Ask if there's a safe person we can contact, if there are things that might make things worse during an episode (touching, isolation, yelling etc), and if they have a gender preference regarding responding staff.



## Consistency and Predictability is Key



Traumatized children are disconnected from the present and their bodies either over or underreact to their environment and need help reconnecting. **Parents and teachers can help kids reconnect by remaining predictable and constant in our rules, classroom management, expectations and de-escalation strategies.** When they know what to expect, and what is expected of them, they can start to trust what their senses are telling them, and write a new narrative of themselves and their abilities to cope with sensory and emotional experiences.

### Want More Info?

The Crisis Prevention Institute is accredited by the International Accreditors for Continuing Education and Training (IACET). They provide a free download for educators (and parents) with questionnaires to guide you to creating a de-escalation plan. They also provide an informative article by Dr. Ablett on ways to help caregivers manage traumatized children.

**Trauma Informed Care for Educators. (2021).** Retrieved from <https://institute.crisisprevention.com/Refresh-EDTraumaInformedCare.html>

Ablett, M., Dr. (2013) **12 Ways to Help a Developmentally Traumatized Child.** Retrieved from <https://www.crisisprevention.com/Blog/Holding-Shards-Recommendations-for-Helping-the-Dev>

The National Council for Behavioral Health has an informative infographic on how to identify and manage trauma. The National Council of Behavioral Health has been a unifying voice for addiction, mental health and treatment organizations for the past 50 years.

**How to Manage Trauma. (2013).** Retrieved from <https://www.thenationalcouncil.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/Trauma-infographic.pdf?dof=375ateTbd56>

Psych Central is an independent mental health information and news website. Psych Central is overseen by mental health professionals who create and oversee all the content published on the site. The site was created in 1995. This article on relational trauma was reviewed by the Scientific Advisory Board, and has a lot of information on the effects of trauma and the benefits of therapy.

Rev Sheri Heller, L. (2015, August 12). **Loneliness Rooted in Relational Trauma.** Retrieved from <https://psychcentral.com/pro/loneliness-rooted-in-relational-trauma#1>

Empowering Education is part of a broader network of non-profits that support healthy schools and elevated education experiences for students, teachers, and families. Partnering with Generation Schools Network, they bring transformative professional development and inclusive content to schools.. This blog post on Trauma Informed Teaching provides good insight on trauma statistics and inclusive classroom strategies.

Teitelbaum, N., & Sarmiento, B. (2020, September 22). **Trauma-Informed Management.** Retrieved from <https://empoweringeducation.org/blog/trauma-informed-management/>

The US Department of Veteran Affairs has some great information on PTSD, and how trauma affects adults. Though this information is primarily referencing soldiers and veterans, the symptoms of PTSD present the same regardless of the circumstances of their onset.

VA.gov: Veterans Affairs. (2018, September 13). Retrieved from [https://www.ptsd.va.gov/understand/common/common\\_adults.asp](https://www.ptsd.va.gov/understand/common/common_adults.asp)

Statistics on Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE).

**About the CDC-Kaiser ACE Study |Violence Prevention|Injury Center|CDC.** (2021, April 06). Retrieved from [https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/aces/about.html?CDC\\_AA\\_refVal=https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/acestudy/about.html](https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/aces/about.html?CDC_AA_refVal=https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/acestudy/about.html)