



Trauma-Informed Teaching Spring Start Up 2025

Dr. Christine Ermold
Dr. Sarah Niecko



What Is Stress?

- The body's *physical* and *psychological* response to anything it perceives as overwhelming.
- The key factor in determining whether stress is helpful or destructive is its pattern.

Trauma

“Results from an event, series of events, or set of circumstances that is experienced by an individual as physically or emotionally harmful or threatening and has lasting adverse effects on the individual’s functioning and physical, social, emotional, or spiritual well-being.”

SAMHSA, 2019



Why Trauma-Informed Teaching Matters

- Learning does not occur in isolation
- Trauma is often invisible, but widespread
- Creates environments that benefit all students





Early Trauma & Learning

Adverse Childhood Experiences

- Altered brain development
- Heightened stress response
- Difficulty concentrating, retaining information, making decisions
- Challenges with trust, authority, feedback

Later In Life Trauma & Learning

- Re-triggering of stress response
- Fatigue, anxiety, depression
- Intrusive thoughts/ flashbacks
- Avoidance of topics, courses, places, people
- Absenteeism, presenteeism, difficulty with participation

Intergenerational/ Historical Trauma & Learning

- Heightened vigilance or anxiety in institutional or authority-driven settings
- Emotional responses when course content touches on colonization, identity, or cultural loss



Student Experience Example

The trauma-informed regulate, relate, reason approach in our M.Ed.L. program is grounded in work by Dr. Bruce Perry (2017).



Trauma Symptoms In the Classroom

Emotional Responses

- Anger, irritability
- Panic, emotional numbing
- Detachment

Cognitive & Learning Responses

- Withdrawn or disengaged
- Difficulty concentrating
- Perfectionism or hypervigilance

Physical Responses

- Restlessness, fidgeting
- Fatigue
- Frequent headaches, stomach aches, somatic complaints

Behavioral Responses

- Reacting strongly to perceived criticism or uncertainty
- Emotional responses to course materials
- Inconsistent performance despite effort
- Absenteeism or presenteeism
- Late /missing assignments

General Strategies

- Consider the role & impact of trauma
- Notice & observe your students
- Communicate and model consistent expectations for safety and trust
- Validate their *individual* experiences
- Communicate with empathy
- Be aware of your own history & how it influences your actions and reactions



Strategies in the Classroom

- Create & maintain expectations for safety and trust
- Design your course in ways that:
 - Provides transparency in expectations and processes (in grading, group work accountability, work submission, professor contacts)
 - Make class sessions predictable (use the same general format and routine)
 - Begin each class with a *regulating* activity and a *relational* activity, before moving onto activities involving *reasoning/cognition*
 - Provide supportive opportunities for student choice (in assignment or presentation mediums)
 - Incorporate flexibility with assignments and assessments (re-submissions, re-takes, or varied assessment formats)

UAS Resources

- Student Focused
 - Counseling Office
 - Drop in Counseling – Why wait for the crisis or maybe already in crisis
 - Consultation
 - Timely Care
 - Dean of Students - Conduct
 - Care Team – non-emergent, but possibly urgent support
- Staff/Faculty Focused
 - EAP services
 - Mental Health America
 - NAMI



Breakout Groups

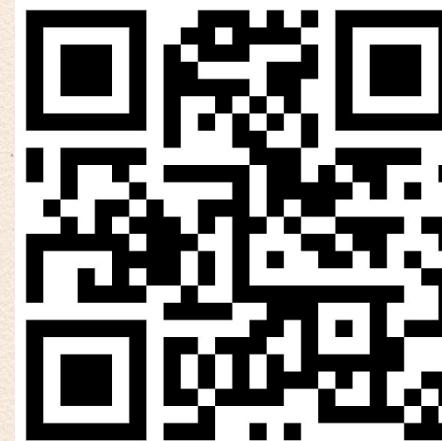


What strategies do you use/could you use?
What are you wondering about related to
trauma-informed practices?

Use the [note-catcher](#) (QR code above and pasted in the chat) to record your group's key conversation points. **You'll have ten minutes in this breakout** then we'll all come back together.

References

- Conolly, M. & Slade, M. (2019). The United States of stress. Retrieved from <https://www.everydayhealth.com/wellness/united-states-of-stress>
- Davidson, S. (2017). Trauma-informed practices for postsecondary education: A guide. *Education Northwest*, 5(1), 3-24.
- McMcGonigal, K. (2016). *The upside of stress: Why stress is good for you, and how to get good at it*. Penguin.
- Perry, B. (2017). *The boy who was raised as a dog and other stories from a child psychiatrist's notebook*. Basic Books.
- SAMHSA. (2019). Trauma and violence. Retrieved from <https://www.samhsa.gov/trauma-violence>
- Selye, H. (1975). Hans Selye, The Stress of Life.
- Van Der Kolk, B. (2003). The body keeps the score. *Trauma*, 2(50), 1-21.
- Winfrey, O. & Perry, B. (2021). *What happened to you? Conversations on trauma, resilience, and healing*. Flatiron Books.



Session Survey

