

SEEK FIRST TO UNDERSTAND:

Using the 7 Habits to Connect With Students From
a Trauma-Informed Approach

Nikima D. Stewart, M. Ed

Habit 2: Begin With the End in Mind

Objectives:

- Identify symptoms of trauma and understand how trauma affects student learning and behavior
- Examine triggers and de-escalation strategies for intervening in the traumatic response and supporting trauma impacted youth.
- Learn strategies for supporting and connecting with challenging students who may have a history of trauma.

What is Trauma?

Individual trauma is a response that results from an event, series of events, or set of circumstances experienced by an individual as physically or emotionally harmful or life-threatening with lasting adverse effects on the individual's functioning and mental, physical, social, emotional, or spiritual well-being.

- Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)



Spectrum of Trauma

Acute Trauma: A single time limited event

Chronic Trauma: Repeated and prolonged such as domestic violence or abuse

Complex Trauma: Exposure to varied and multiple traumatic events, often of an invasive, interpersonal nature.

Toxic Stress: Adverse experiences that lead to strong, frequent, or prolonged activation of the body's stress response system

Secondary/Vicarious Trauma: Exposure to the trauma of others by providers, family members, partners or friends in close contact with the traumatized individual

Source: Trauma and Resilience: An Adolescent Provider Toolkit; Adolescent Health Working Group, 2013

What types of trauma do students experience?

- Physical, emotional, or sexual abuse
- Neglect*
- Domestic violence*
- Death of a loved one*
- Community Violence*
- Serious accident, illness, medical procedure
- Natural disaster
- Sexual assault/Exploitation*
- Prenatal drug exposure*
- Physical injury
- Severe bullying*
- Homelessness
- Immigration
- Disrupted attachment from parent or caregiver*
- Unstable caregiver*
- War or armed combat*
- Home fire
- Early intrusive medical interventions

Trauma Facts for Educators

- One out of every 4 children attending school has been exposed to traumatic event that can affect learning and/or behavior.
- Trauma can impact school performance. (Lower GPA, higher absence rate, decreased reading ability, increased behavior problems).
- Trauma can impair learning. (Chronic exposure can adversely affect attention, memory, and cognition, interfere with problem solving, result in overwhelming feelings of frustration and anxiety).
- Traumatized children may experience physical and emotional distress.

Source: National Child Traumatic Stress Network, 2008

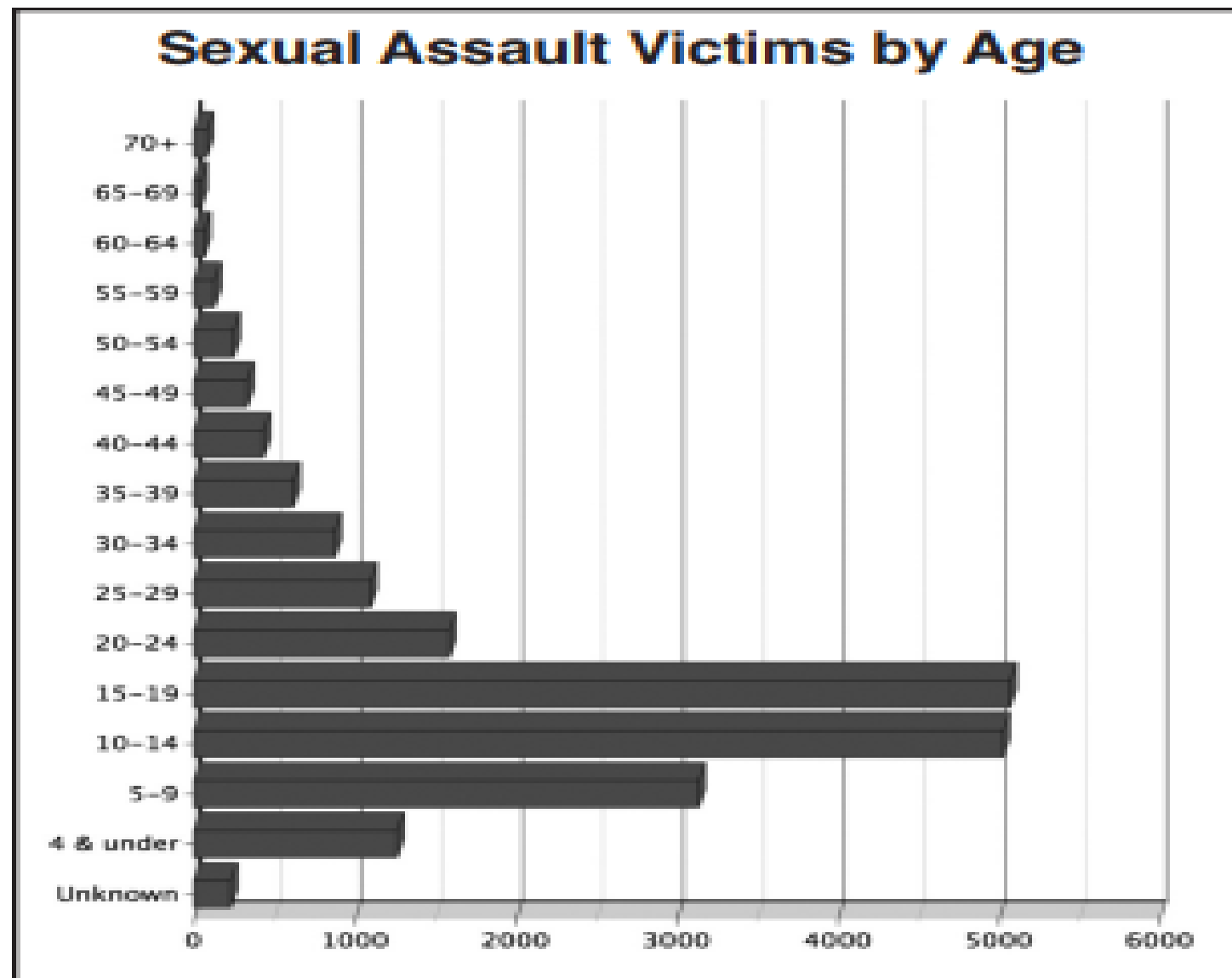


CPS Completed Investigations: Confirmed Types of Abuse, 2016

▪ Neglectful Supervision	46,187
▪ Physical Abuse	8,249
▪ Sexual Abuse	5,640
▪ Physical Neglect	3,740
▪ Medical Neglect	1,196
▪ Emotional Abuse	343
▪ Sex Trafficking	25



DPS Statewide Statistics



Texas Department of
Public Safety, 2017

Statistics in Abilene/Taylor County

- CAC staff conducted 360 forensic interviews of child abuse victims in 2016. 70% of the interviews were related to sexual abuse and 30% for physical abuse.
- The Youth Division handled 281 runaways, and worked 202 Interference with Child Custody cases, for the same year.
- The Regional Victim Crisis Center served 124 child victims 17 and under between 1/1/2017 and 8/1/2017.

Abilene Police Department, 2017; Regional Victim Crisis Center, 2017

Habit 5: Seek First to Understand

- Anxiety, fear, and worry
- Changes in behavior (anger outbursts, change in academic performance, irritability, absenteeism)
- Heightened difficulty with authority, redirection, or criticism
- Emotional numbing
- Over or under reacting to environmental stimuli (sirens, physical contact, doors slamming, bells)
- Repetitive thoughts and comments about death or dying (including writing and artwork)



Habit 5: Seek First to Understand – Trauma Triggers

- Activate the “survival brain,” causing youth to react as though a “there and then” experience (previous traumatic event) is happening “here and now” (in current reality).
- Common Triggers include:
 - Unpredictability (e.g. a fire drill)
 - Sensory overload
 - Feeling vulnerable or frustrated
 - Confrontation

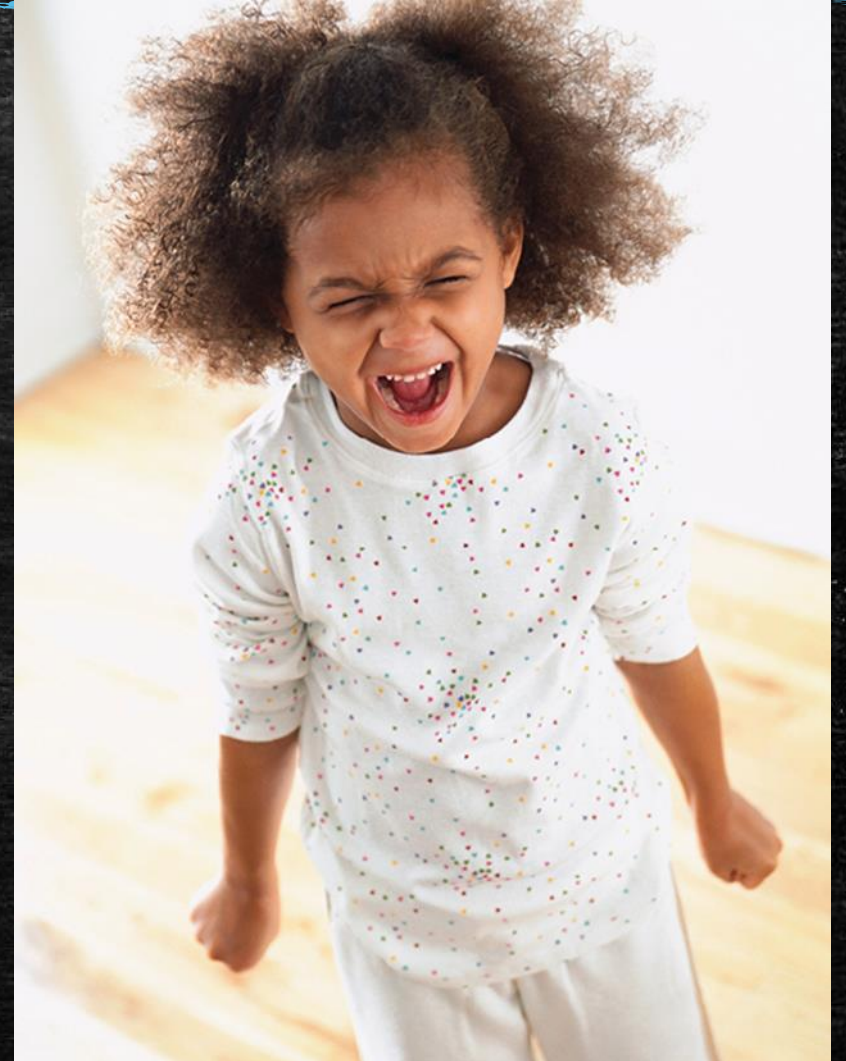


Trauma: Fight, Flight, or Freeze

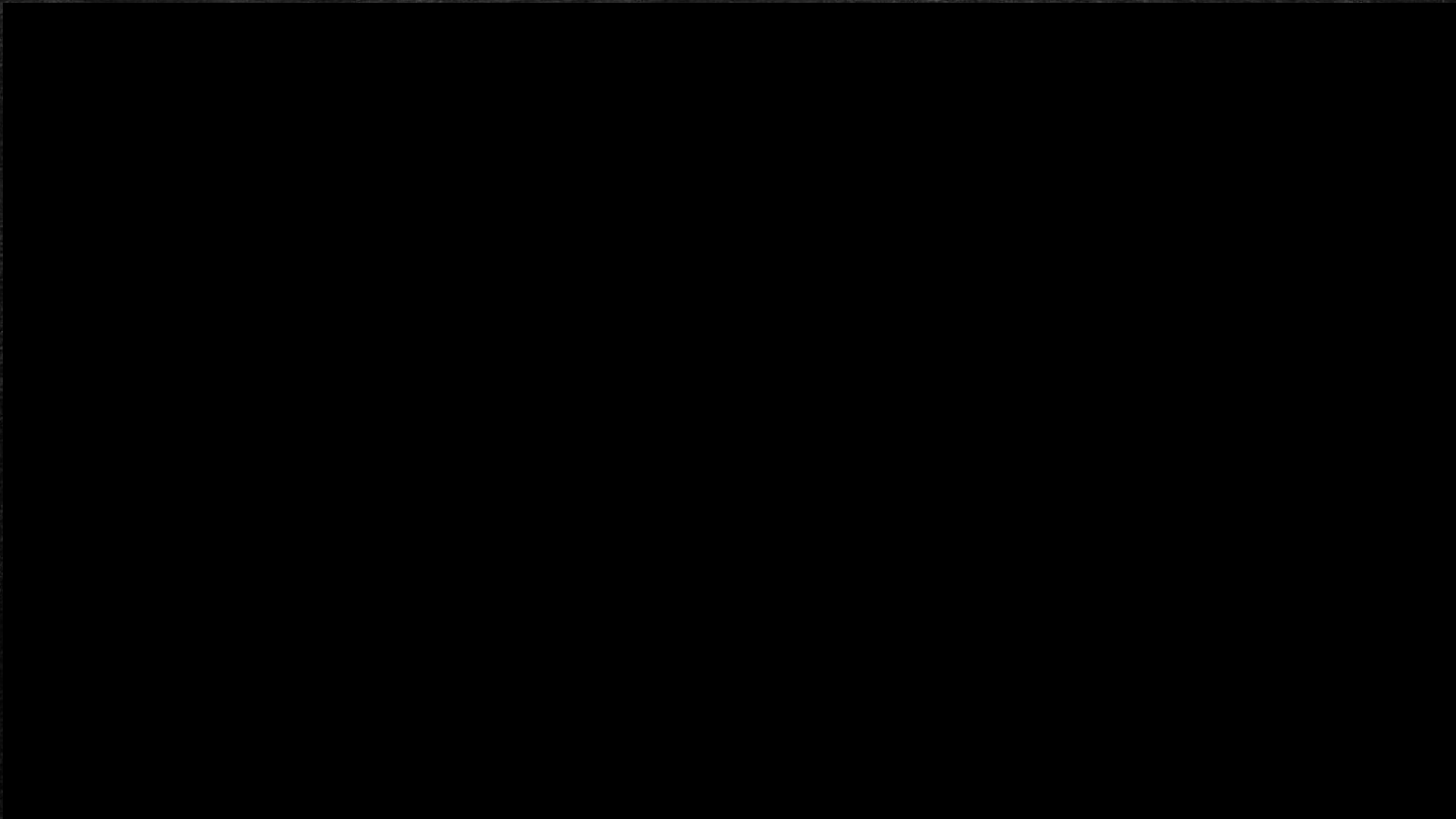
Because of constant exposure to violence and trauma, children and youth can become locked into a permanent state of Fight/Flight/Freeze.

This makes these children and youth react to normal experiences as if they were life and death threats.

This is not a rational/cognitive process. It is wired into their physiological response.

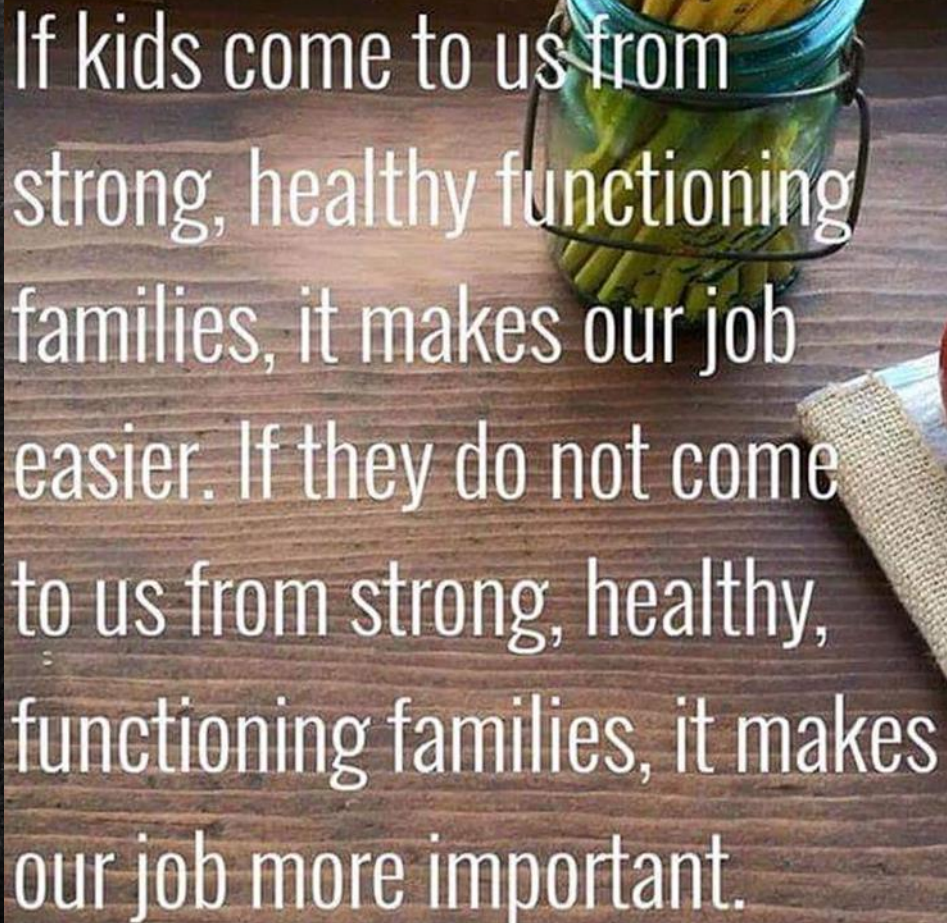


5 Things to Know



ADVERSE CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES

Questionnaire



If kids come to us from strong, healthy functioning families, it makes our job easier. If they do not come to us from strong, healthy, functioning families, it makes our job more important.

Barbara Colorose

ADVERSE CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES (ACEs) STUDY

Kaiser Permanente and CDC, 1998

THE STUDY:

- 17,000 college-educated adults were screened for 10 prominent childhood traumatic experiences as part of their routine healthcare at Kaiser. Each type of trauma was awarded one point.

THE RESULTS:

- 70% of participants experienced at least one type of trauma.
- ACE scores of 4 or more resulted in four times the risk of emphysema or chronic bronchitis; over four times the likelihood of depression; and 12 times the risk of suicide.
- ACE scores were directly related with early initiation of smoking and sexual activity, adolescent pregnancy, and risk for intimate partner violence.

ACEs and School Performance

Those of us who work in the schools already know, intuitively, that there is a dose-response relationship between adverse childhood experiences and student learning. Several studies (Delaney-Black et al, 2002; Sanger et al., 2000; Shonk & Cicchetti, 2001), including one conducted here in Washington (Grevstad, 2007), reveal that students dealing with trauma and trying to play chess in hurricanes . . .



- are two-and-one-half times more likely to fail a grade;
- score lower on standardized achievement test scores;
- have more receptive or expressive language difficulties;
- are suspended or expelled more often; and,
- are designated to special education more frequently.



**The Heart of
Learning and Teaching:**

Compassion, Resiliency, and Academic Success

Resiliency Factors

“Having a secure, supportive relationship in early childhood is one of the best predictors of whether you’d be resilient later in childhood and into adulthood. If you had at least one relationship where people were able to do that soothing, protecting...or help you build strength, if you had at least that one relationship at least that could protect you from many other stress exposures. ...It basically takes one good relationship that teaches you from experience that you are safe, lovable, capable, meaningful.”

- Dr. Mark Rains

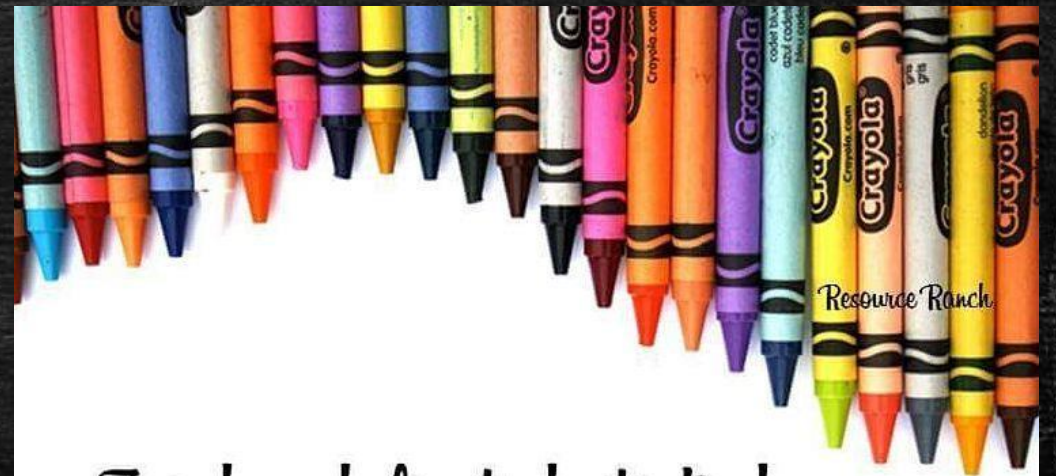


Habit 1: Be Proactive, Habit 4: Think Win Win

Relationships

- Establishing Safety
- Connect with Social Supports

Stress Management/Relaxation



Teachers help students find important things they've lost every day. Sometimes it is a paper, backpack, or jacket... other times it is courage, confidence, or a smile.

Habit 1: Be Proactive, Habit 4: Think Win Win

Relationship Building

- The Amazing Who? – introductory game for building relationships
- Google Forms and student surveys
- Restorative Circles/Classroom Circles
 - Relationship building and maintenance
 - Calming and focusing
 - Academic, teaching/reviewing concepts



Habit 4: Think Win-Win

Establishing Safety

- Clarifying your role with the student.
- Establish yourself as a safe individual. Create an environment of respect.



- Give the student opportunities to make choices.
- Talk about safety and what steps you will take to help the student be safe.
- Connect the student to the appropriate resources/people.
- Reinforce – “You are not alone.”

Habit 4: Think Win-Win

Connect With Social Supports

- Identify and provide opportunities for peer support.



- Be a source of support yourself.
- Identify/Access family and community supports.

Habit 4: Think Win-Win

Behavior Management

- Use of specific praise
 - “You did a great job paying attention in class today..” vs “Good job today..”
- 10x2 - Ratio off positive to negative statements for traumatized children/adolescents
- Consistent expectations and behavior plans
- Behavior plans based on rewards systems, not punishment.



Habit 1: Be Proactive

Stress Management and Relaxation

Deep Breathing

- Reduces stress, calms the body, helps the brain, helps you relax.

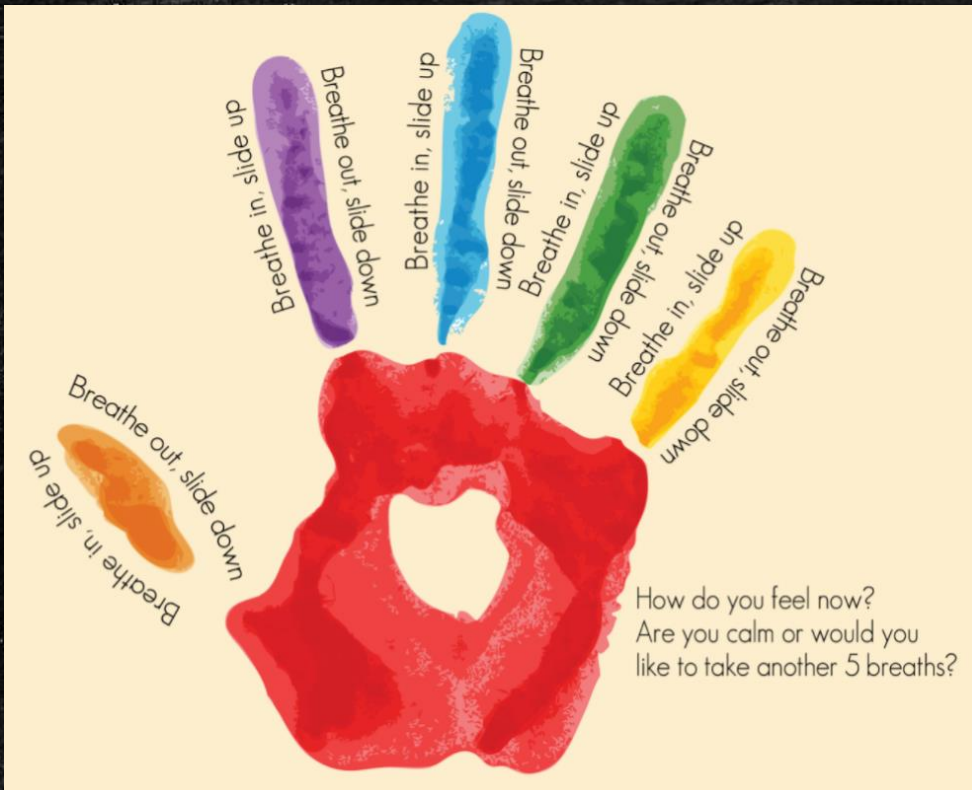
Hoberman Sphere



Habit 1: Be Proactive

Stress Management and Relaxation

Take 5 Breathing



5-Count Breathing Star



BALLOON BREATHING



Sitting in a comfortable position, place your hands around your mouth as if you were about to blow up a balloon. Take a deep breath in through the nose and, as you slowly exhale through your mouth, start to spread your hands out as if you are blowing up a great big balloon. Hold your hand position as you inhale again and then spread your hands further as you exhale. Once your balloon is as big as it can be, gently sway from side to side as you release your balloon up into the sky.

SHOULDER ROLL BREATHING



Choose a comfortable sitting position. As you take a slow deep breath in through your nose raise your shoulders up towards your ears. Breathe slowly out through your mouth, lowering your shoulders as you exhale. Repeat slowly, rolling your shoulders up and down in time with your breath.

BACK TO BACK BREATHING



Find a partner and sit on the floor back to back. Sit tall and close your eyes if you want to. Decide who will start - that person begins by inhaling deeply and then exhaling slowly, and then continues to breathe slowly and deeply. Their partner should feel the expansion in their partner's back each time they breathe in and then try to sync their own breathing so that both partners are breathing in time together.

TUMMY BREATHING



Lie on the floor and place a small stuffed animal on your stomach. Breathe in deeply through your nose and feel the stuffed animal rise, and then feel it lower as you slowly exhale through your mouth. Rock the stuffed animal to sleep using the rise and fall of your stomach.

TAKE 5 BREATHING



Sit comfortably, resting one hand in front of you with fingers outstretched like a star and the pointer finger of your other hand ready to trace your hand. Starting at the base of your thumb on the outside of your hand, breathe in slowly through your nose as you slide your pointer finger up to the top of your thumb. Breathe out slowly and slide your pointer finger down the inside of your thumb. Breathe in as you slide your finger up the next finger and out as you slide down. Continue breathing in and out as you trace your whole hand.

BUMBLEBEE BREATHING



Sitting comfortably, gently place the tips of your pointer fingers in your ears and close your eyes. Breathe in through your nose and then hum quietly as you slowly breathe out.

ELEPHANT BREATHING



Stand with your feet wide apart and your arms dangling in front of your body like an elephant's trunk. As you breathe in deeply through your nose, raise your arms up high above your head. Then slowly swing your arms down again as you breathe out through your mouth.

BUBBLE BREATHING



Sit comfortably with your eyes closed. Begin by imagining you are holding a bubble wand. Breathe in deeply and then, as you breathe out slowly and gently, imagine you are blowing bubbles into the room. Imagine the bubbles are filled with peace or love or happiness and that you are filling the whole room with a peaceful, happy feeling. As you keep breathing slowly and blowing your imaginary bubbles, feel your body become calm and relaxed.

CALM DOWN YOGA FOR KIDS



I am strong.



Use your strength to catch tricky waves.



I am kind.



Stretch high and spread kindness all around.



I am brave.



Be brave and fearless as you fly down the ski run.



I am friendly.



Stretch like a dog wagging its tail.



I am wise.



Be a wise owl perched on a tree branch.

Habit 4: Think Win-Win

Stress Management and Relaxation

- **BREATHE!**



- Provide students with a calm or quiet place to sit or talk.
- Offer suggestions on self-calming techniques.
 - Breathing
 - Rapid Relaxation
 - Music, exercise, stretching
- Remain calm, quiet, and present. Use **LOW** and **SLOW** when needed.

LOW and SLOW

LOW

- Lower the volume and pitch of your voice.
- Keep a matter off fact tone regardless off the situation.
- Speak in short sentences without a lot off questions.
- Don't preach- this is about talking with the student, not at the student.

SLOW

- Slow your self down by slowing down your heart rate.
- Take slow, deep breaths.
- Slow down your rate off speech and make sure to pause between sentences.
- Slow down your body movements.
- Slow down your agenda and take your time.

Habit 4: Think Win-Win

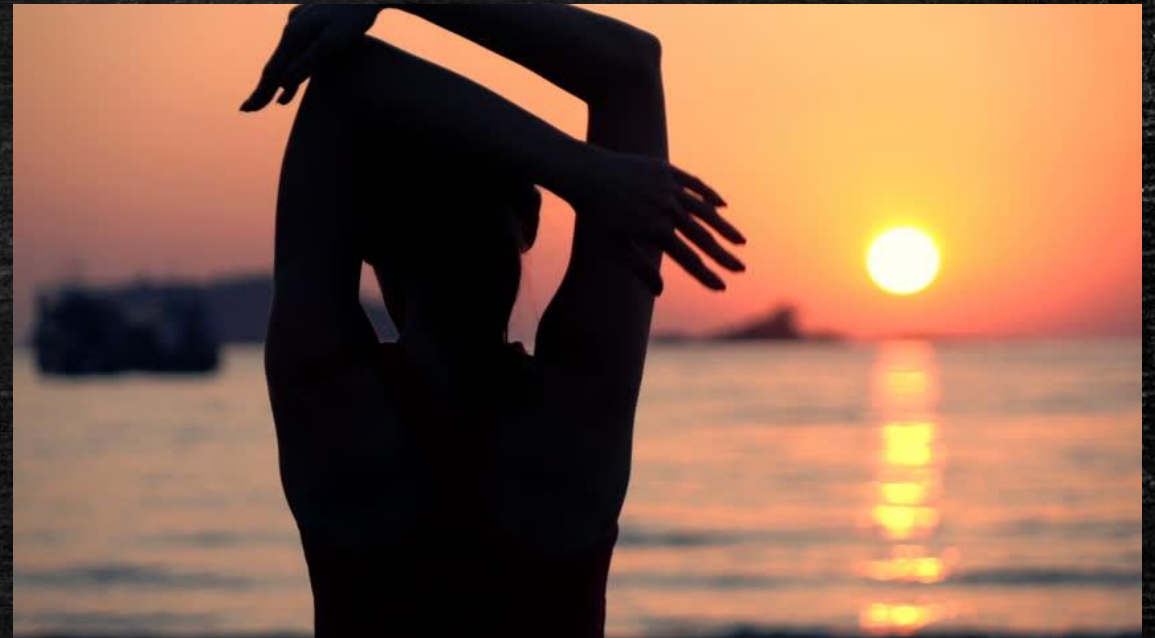
Patience

- Recognize that change happens very slowly.
- You may never see the outcomes of your efforts.
- Trust that our simple compassionate gestures are important elements of healing and surviving.
- Consider the “bigger picture.”



Habit 7: Sharpen the Saw

- Exercise and eating healthy
- Engaging in a hobby or activity
- Knowing your limits.
- Improving your understanding of trauma and secondary trauma.
- Seeking support from co-workers, family, friends
- Taking a time out.*
- Professional counseling
- Vacations



Don't Underestimate Your Impact!



Thank You!

Nikima Stewart, M.Ed.

www.thegoldencounselor.weebly.com

Resources

Brown, R. ("Applying Trauma Informed Strategies to Classrooms and Student Interactions" The Children's Initiative Community Counseling Center

HobermanSphere -https://www.amazon.com/Original-Hoberman-Sphere-Rainbow-Discontinued-manufacturer/dp/B00000JN49/ref=sr_1_5?ie=UTF8&qid=1503294209&sr=8-5&keywords=hoberman+sphere

Printable Breathing Cards - <http://childhood101.com/fun-breathing-exercises-for-kids/>

Calm Down Yoga and Take 5 Breathing <http://childhood101.com/managing-big-emotions-best-resources-to-use-with-kids/>

5 Count Breathing Star -<https://omazingkidsllc.com/2013/10/05/five-count-breathing-visual-support/>

Resources

Google Forms/Student Surveys -

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2Y0Gm02XGis>

Restorative Practices in Secondary -

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RdKhcQrLD1w>

Restorative Practices in Elementary -

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qTr4v0eYigM&list=PL7c9mXM8TH8va-mxjSEDBaA5DjDBUxlx_&index=2

Thumballs-

<https://youthlight.com/search.php?find=THUMBALL&searching=yes&pagenum=1>

Resources

Texas Crime Report for 2016. (2017). Texas Department of Public Safety
http://www.dps.texas.gov/administration/crime_records/pages/crimestatistics.htm

Sexual Assault Victims by Age, 2016. (2017).
<http://www.dps.texas.gov/crimereports/16/citCh7.pdf>

CPS Completed Investigations: Confirmed Types of Abuse, 2016. (2017).
Department of Family and Protective Services.
http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/About_DFPS/Data_Book/Child_Protective_Services/Investigations/Types_of_Abuse.asp