

Trauma

**The impact on the mind, body, and
behavior**

Cheryl Turner, MA, LIMHP, LPC
Center on Children, Families, and the Law
University of Nebraska

What I can't give you...

A treatment plan.

A concrete answer for everyone.

A step by step instruction guide.

Success with trauma is created by a consistent attitude, an approach, and a professional expectation.

Defining Trauma

An Overview

Definition

What is Trauma?

TRAUMA =



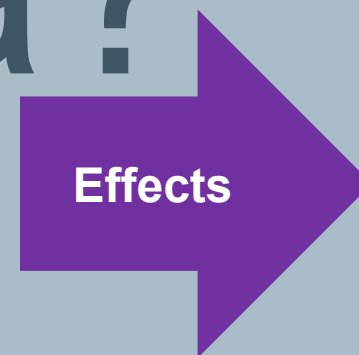
Event

+



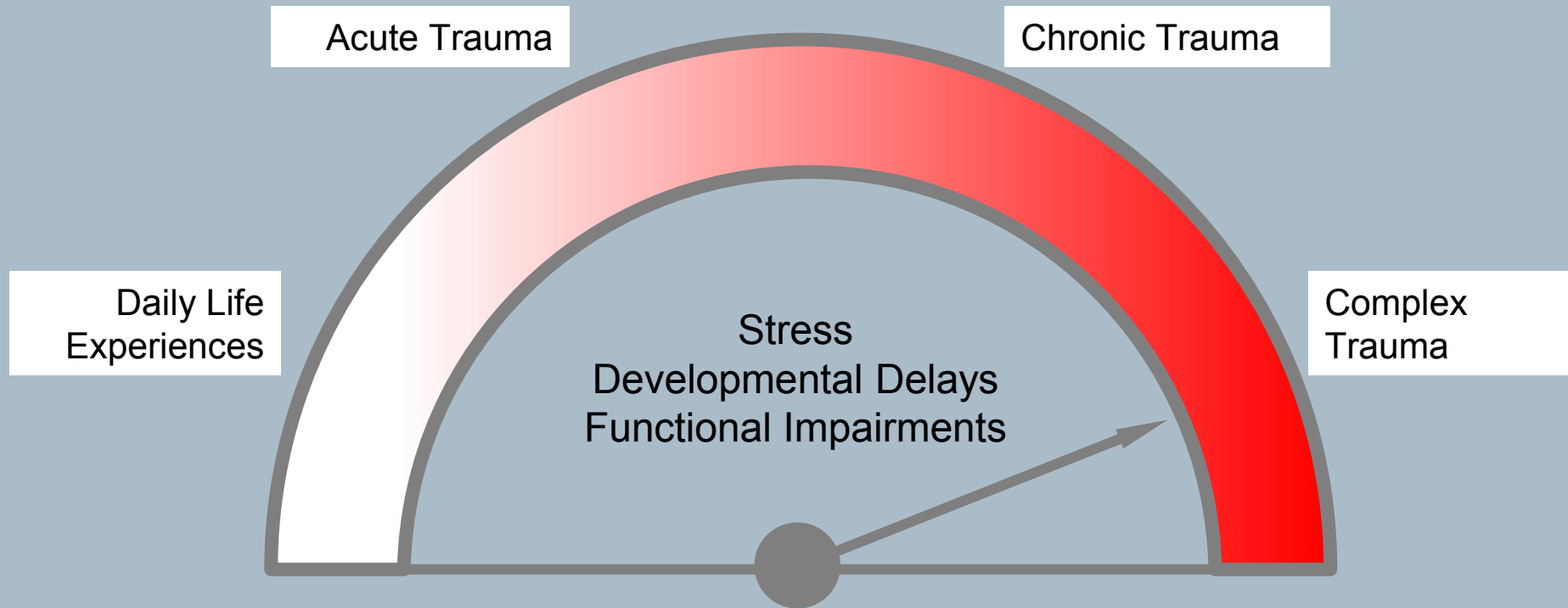
Experience

+



Effects

Traumatic Stress



Everyone's experience is different. Every individual has their own level of coping and their own level of resiliency.

Sources of Stress

Poverty

Discrimination

Loss of Family

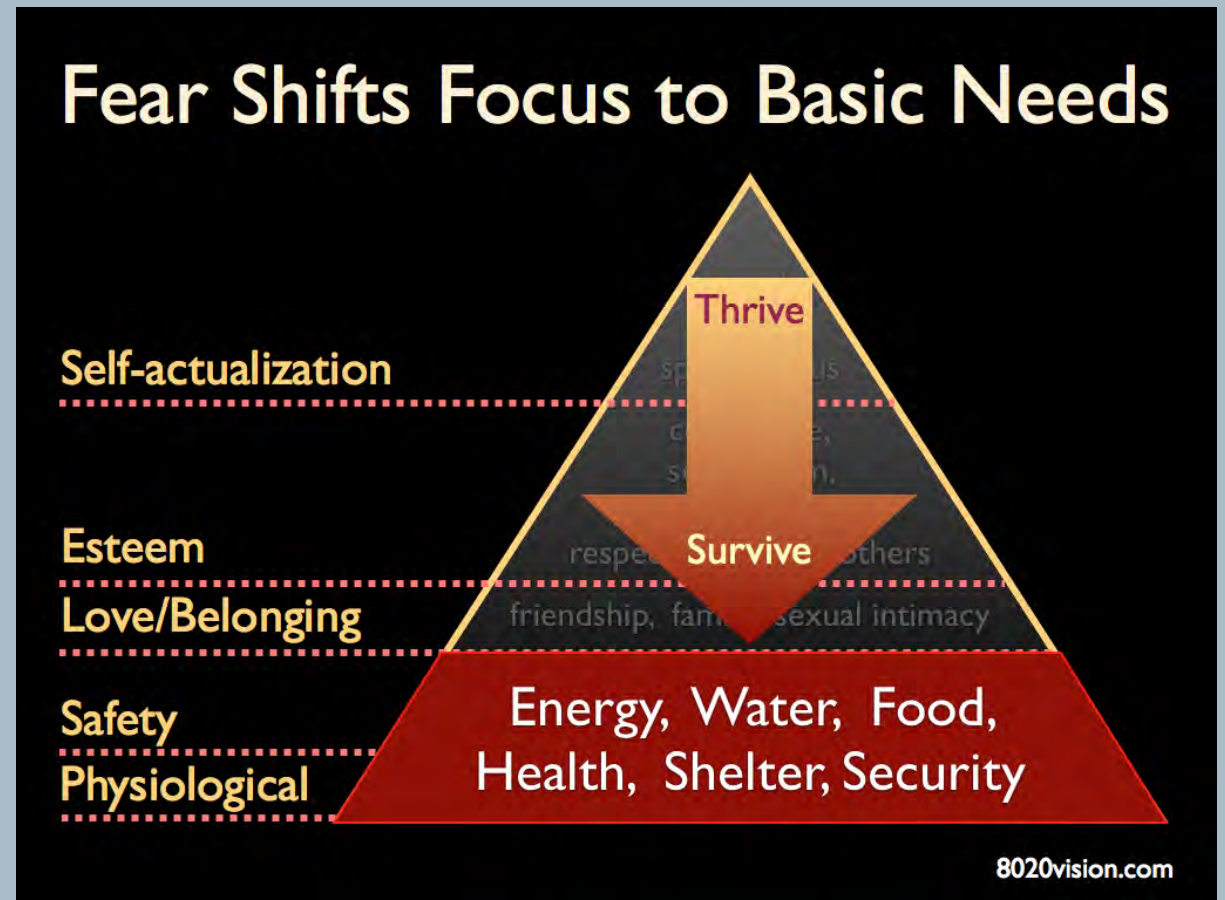
Frequent Moves/Losses

Education Concerns

Refugee/Immigrant Experiences

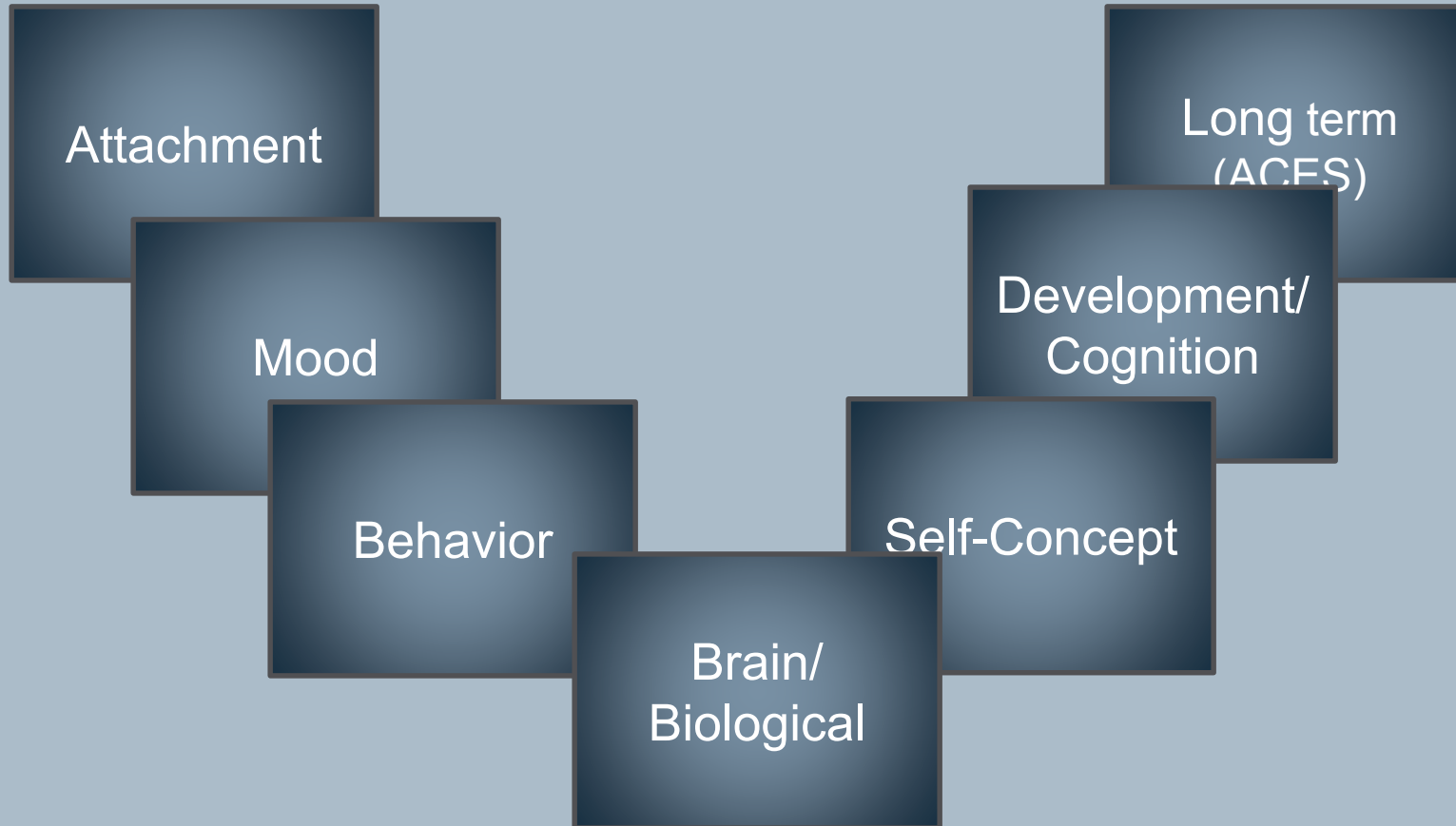
What do kids need

Shelter
Food
Clothing
Safety from danger
Security
Sleep
Energy
Limits
Knowing what's next



Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

Impacts



Key Areas of Impact

Impulsivity

Moods

Regulation success

Problem Solving

Short Term Memory

Adverse Childhood Experiences

Today's youth

ACEs in the Classroom

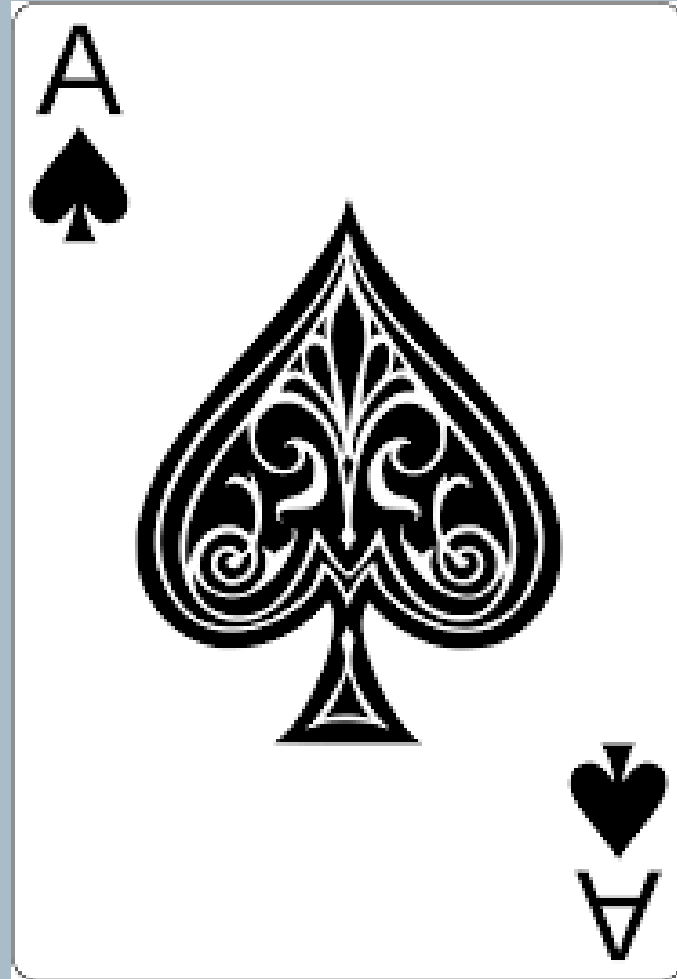
“4 out of 10 students have been exposed to a traumatic event”

Students are:

- 2.5 times more likely to fail a grade
- Score lower on standardized assessments
- Have receptive and expressive language deficits
- Suspended or expelled more often
- Designated special education more frequently

Recognition can be the first step in decreasing the long term impacts

Resiliency Trumps ACEs



Initial Steps

It's the small things that can make a big difference

Never an excuse...

Trauma **isn't** an excuse for behavior

It's an understanding

Hold students **accountable** with respect and
dignity

**“Life is 10% what happens to use
and 90% how we react to it.”**

-Charles Swindoll

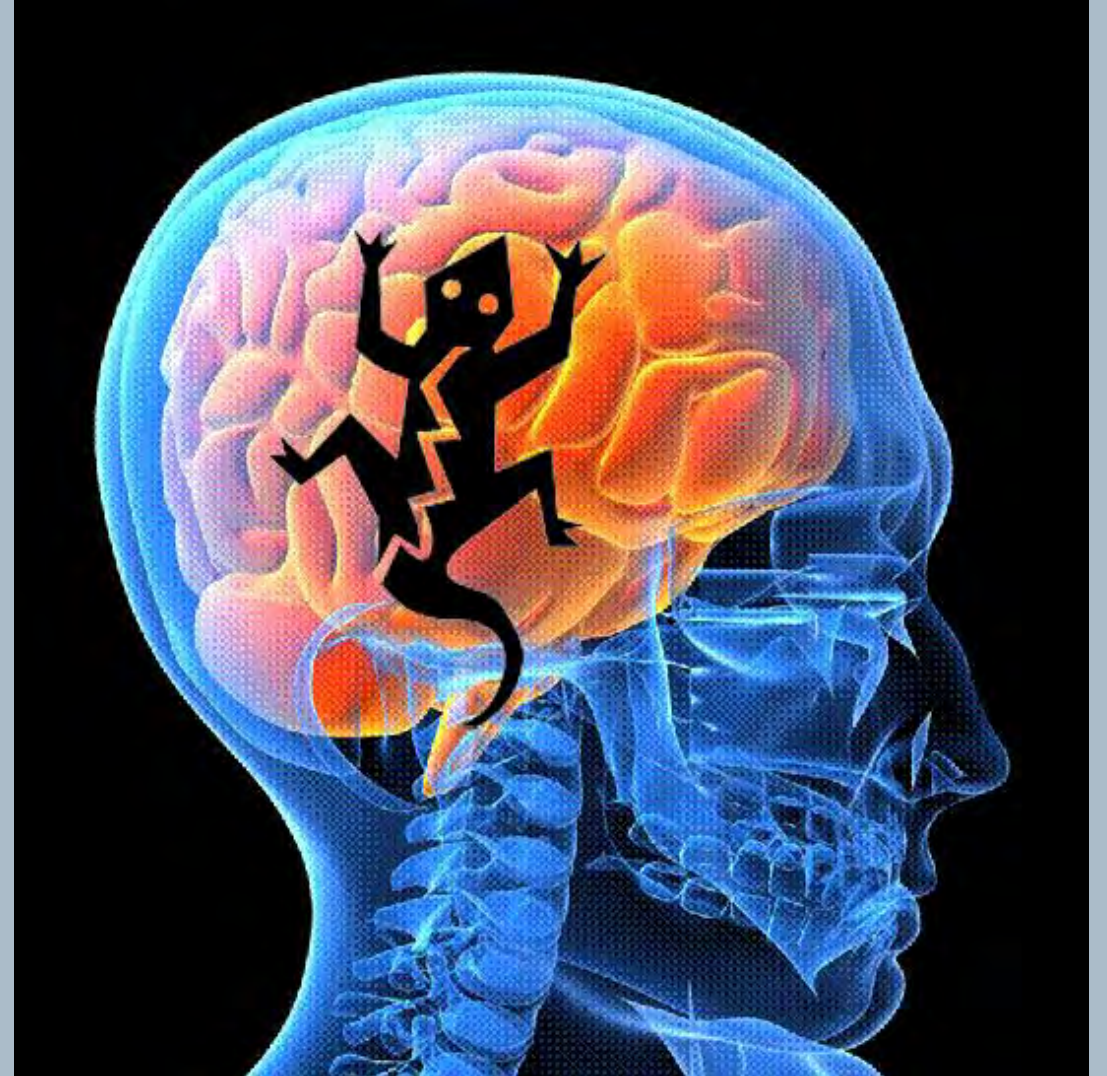
Small Steps = Big Changes

Understanding the fuel that keeps the
fires burning

Lizard Brain

Executive Functioning
to
Survival

“Is it flipped?”



Triggers

No sense of control

Vulnerability

Fear

Responding to the Lizard Brain

Reason



Regulate



Relationship

Regulate



Relationship



Reason

Responding to the Lizard Brain

Regulate

```
graph TD; A[Regulate] --> B[Relationship]; B --> C[Reason];
```

A vertical flowchart with three rounded rectangular boxes. The top box is brown and contains the word 'Regulate'. A brown arrow points down from this box to a teal box containing the word 'Relationship'. Another brown arrow points down from the teal box to a maroon box containing the word 'Reason'. All boxes have a thin white border.

Relationship

Reason

You must focus on...

Calming my brain through:

**Relationship
Connection
Acceptance**

Regulate



Calming Area

Soft music

Buckets of beans or rice

Bean bags/Weighted Materials

Mindfulness

Play Doh/Kinetic Sand

Scented Markers

Soft materials

Responding to the Lizard Brain

Regulate

```
graph TD; A[Regulate] --> B[Relationship]; B --> C[Reason];
```

Relationship

Reason

Don't just see me...

Know me.

Care about me.

Let me know I can be ok.

I am not my behavior.

I am a child who is scared.

Promote Resiliency

- Support capacity to learn, to relate to others, to use imagination, to see self as part of community
- Develop awareness and regulation of feelings; skills for letting others know how he feels
- Encourage relationships with peers, caregivers, parents
 - Svalavitz and Perry, 2010

Don't just hear them...

What happened or is happening to
you?

Identify the need and address it

Don't just hear them...

Healing is found in
the moments a
voice is heard



Allowing students
to express their
feelings is the
beginning to
changing a belief



The platform in
which trust and
relationship can
begin

A trauma-informed model builds positive caring adult relationships through holding kids... ACCOUNTABLE

Responding to the Lizard Brain

Regulate

```
graph TD; A[Regulate] --> B[Relationship]; B --> C[Reason];
```

Relationship

Reason

Reason

Behavior is what we see, we need to know what we don't see.

- **Triggers**
- **Alternatives**
- **Replace unacceptable behavior**

Apologies

Apologizing with actions builds empathy

Fix

Repay

Repair

Planning

Create a plan that I understand

Take the time to talk WITH me, not AT me

I may lack skills, build them with me

Do I have the empathy skill?

Behavioral Modification may not work for me

Taking it with you...

Working with Traumatized Children in a School Setting

The foundation for all children with trauma

The right questions to ask

1. What is driving the student's behavior?
 - What else is really going on here?
 - What does this child need?
 - How can I change *my* perspective?
 - What keeps me only looking at the behavior?
 - What is the behavior communicating?
 - What in the environment could be triggering the behavior?
2. What can I do at the very moment to improve my relationship with this student?
 - How can I make this relationship safe?
 - Does _____ need me to validate him/her?
 - What does _____ need from me?
 - How can I respond so the student isn't threatened?
 - How can I physically position myself to create safety in the relationship?
 - Can the student respond to exploratory questions, not solutions I give?
 - How can I convince the student that I truly want to understand their struggle?
 - How I can be more authentic?
 - Can I stop talking and start listening?
 - Am I being sympathetic or empathetic?

Don't forget, that the later in the school year the less stress tolerance children have, they are no different than you. *The later in the year the more you need to check in with them and yourself!*

When traditional motivators fail

We know that most children respond to positive and negative motivators such as sticker charts, coupons, free time, treats, suspension, raised voices, time outs, loss of something. When trauma is a primary factor in a child's inability to regulate and calm, traditional motivators increase stress, vulnerability, and decrease control. As a result, we end up with the opposite desired reaction or response.

1. Forthuis, H. T. (2012). *Help for 21C: A beyond consequences approach to helping challenging children in the classroom*. Boulder, CO: Beyond Consequences Institute.
2. NCTSN Learning Center for Child and Adolescent Trauma. (n.d.). Retrieved February 22, 2016, from <http://learn.nctsn.org/>
3. Trauma-Sensitive Schools: A Whole-School Approach - Trauma Sensitive Schools. (n.d.). Retrieved February 22, 2016, from <http://traumasensitiveschools.org/>

What can you do?

Create a sense of belonging: The class becomes the "family" that supports, validates, tolerates, and takes care of each student. When an individual is isolated, alienated, or otherwise pinpointed, the stress response system begins to fire and they may feel "not a part of the class". When one student is dysregulated, stop and regulate everyone together.

- Acknowledge each student when they enter your classroom
- Recognize the mood, help to regulate
- LISTEN to your students, you don't have to agree – just listen.
- Take an interest in what is important to each student
- Ask the student for help, and let them help
- Keep an attitude of "your always welcome here"
- Share a student's ideas with others

Create a classroom designed for regulation: For students to be motivated and ready to learn, they have to be regulated. You cannot have one without the other.

- **Movement:** Repetitive motor movement can be key to helping some students regulate. This can include rocking, pacing, standing exercises, sitting exercises, movement through space, or bilateral activities.
- **Sound:** Music can be exceptionally calming and it has been shown to actually change an individual's brain waves.
- **Animals:** Animals have a calming effect on human beings.
- **Breaks:** Some students need frequent breaks and will create behavior to leave the classroom. Provide passes that are appropriate and encourage use of an identified regulation skill.
- **Simplicity:** Decrease wall and ceiling decorations. Some students can become overwhelmed by the amount of information on a wall or ceiling.
- **Lighting:** Consider the use of warm lighting in the classroom. Stress and anxiety increase when working in intense lighting.
- **Food and Water:** If you know a student has a history of neglect, a simple drink maybe all that is necessary to regulate them.
- **Safety:** Always the number one concern. Even in the best of circumstances there are times a student, can't regulate. Secluding a student who does not have sufficient regulation skills to calm themselves is counterproductive and will result in increasing escalation. Movement to a safe space with a *trusted and regulated* adult is most effective.

Develop a relationship: The most effective "tool" for motivating students. Think back to your days in school, what teacher were you most successful with? Why? Often times it has to do with the relationship you developed with that individual. A teacher-student relationship addressed two of the most primary fears that every human has; I'm not enough and I won't be loved.

There are several small ways you can enhance this relationship:

- Leave a note on the student's desk, especially on a tough day
- Give understanding and empathy, not sympathy
- Listen to them; Give them a voice
- Provide the support and resources they need
- Give each student personal attention
- Express an attitude of "I care about you as a person"
- Be structured and consistent
- Determine how you truly know the relationship exists, be sure the student has a voice in this

Involve parental support, not parental fear: Individuals living with trauma are already living in fear of the unknown and fear of those that can harm them. We want to empower parents and students to work together towards increasing regulation, not increasing stress by threats.

Adults need to be regulated too: We often look to the student first in a reactive or disruptive time, it is vital that we check in with our adults also. Classrooms that address the adults needs decrease overall compassion fatigue which can result in increased success.

1. Forthuis, H. T. (2012). *Help for 21C: A beyond consequences approach to helping challenging children in the classroom*. Boulder, CO: Beyond Consequences Institute.
2. NCTSN Learning Center for Child and Adolescent Trauma. (n.d.). Retrieved February 22, 2016, from <http://learn.nctsn.org/>
3. Trauma-Sensitive Schools: A Whole-School Approach - Trauma Sensitive Schools. (n.d.). Retrieved February 22, 2016, from <http://traumasensitiveschools.org/>

Don't change things

School is my safe place

Consistency and structure keeps me safe

If something will change, let me be a part of it

Don't forget I exist, I am not a behavior, I am a child who is scared. Would you talk to your own child that way?

6th grade student, 2012

Questions?

Thank you!

Cheryl Turner, LIMHP, LPC

Cheryl.Turner@unl.edu

References

1. National Child Traumatic Stress Network - Child Trauma Home |. (n.d.). Retrieved June 09, 2017, from <http://www.nctsn.com/>
2. Child Trauma Toolkit for Educators / Caja de Herramientas Para Educadores Para el Manejo de Trauma Infantil. (2010, May 12). Retrieved June 09, 2017, from <http://nctsn.org/resources/audiences/school-personnel/trauma-toolkit>
3. Violence Prevention. (2016, April 05). Retrieved June 09, 2017, from <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/childmaltreatment/riskprotectivefactors.html>
4. Got Your ACE Score? (2017, June 02). Retrieved June 09, 2017, from <https://acestoohigh.com/got-your-ace-score/>
5. Health and Safety Webinars. (n.d.). Retrieved June 09, 2017, from <https://www.nysut.org/resources/special-resources-sites/workplace-health-and-safety/webinars>
6. Wwww.spiraldesign.com, S. D. (n.d.). Give Your Support. Retrieved June 09, 2017, from http://www.aceresponse.org/give_your_support/ACEs-in-Education_25_68_sb.htm

References (continued...)

7. Trauma-Sensitive Schools: A Whole-School Approach. (n.d.). Retrieved June 09, 2017, from <http://traumasensitiveschools.org/>
8. B. (2013, April 09). Perception is the enemy of prevention. Retrieved June 09, 2017, from <https://blog.nebraskachildren.org/2013/04/05/perception-is-the-enemy-of-prevention/>
9. Community and Environment. (n.d.). Retrieved June 09, 2017, from <http://www.doh.wa.gov/CommunityandEnvironment/EssentialsforChildhoodInitiative>
10. Beyond Consequences Institute, LLC | Heather T. Forbes, LCSW. (n.d.). Retrieved June 09, 2017, from <http://www.beyondconsequences.com/>
11. Forbes, H. T. (2013). *Help for Billy: a Beyond Consequences Approach to Helping Children in the Classroom*. Cork: BookBaby.
12. Inside the Collaborative Classroom. (n.d.). Retrieved June 09, 2017, from <https://inside.collaborativeclassroom.org/>
13. Opportunities to Change the Outcomes of Traumatized Children (2008). (2011, June 27). Retrieved June 09, 2017, from <http://www.nctsn.org/products/nctsn-affiliated-resources/opportunities-change-outcomes-traumatized-children%20>
14. Sporleder, J., & Forbes, H. T. (2016). *The trauma-informed school: a step-by-step implementation guide for administrators and school personnel*. Boulder, CO: Beyond Consequences Institute, LLC.
15. Forbes, H. T., & Sporleder, J. (n.d.). *A Study Guide for Help for Billy*. Boulder, CO: Beyond Consequences Institute, LLC.