

# *Their Challenge is Our Challenge: SEL and Trauma*

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## Objectives

- ▶ In this session, educators will
  - ▶ Explore evidence-based practices in teaching social-emotional learning (SEL)
  - ▶ Analyze SEL practices and how they provide needed support for students who have been exposed to trauma.
  - ▶ Construct foundational knowledge needed to build resiliency in students.
  - ▶ Reflect on pre-conceived thoughts and biases in terms of personal social and emotional growth and development.

## What is Trauma?

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.

SAMHSA and HRSA

## Perception is Reality

- ▶ Events alone are NOT traumatic.
- ▶ Perception and the emotional interpretation of the event is what classifies an event as trauma.

## Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE)

- ▶ ACE-This term refers to traumatic or disruptive things that happen in childhood.
- ▶ Original study published in 1998
- ▶ More than 17,000 members of Kaiser Permanente
- ▶ Largest investigations of childhood abuse and neglect and household challenges and later-life health and well-being
- ▶ Looked at ten different categories of ACEs
  - ▶ physical and emotional neglect; physical, verbal and sexual abuse; parental abandonment through separation or divorce; a parent with a mental illness or substance abuse problem; and a family member in jail.
- ▶ Later ACE studies have included experiences such as racism and living in a violent neighborhood.

## Trauma's Impact on Brain Function

- ▶ Sustain attention
- ▶ Learn and communicate information
- ▶ Recognize cause and effect
- ▶ Manage self and resources to achieve a goal
- ▶ Engage in work tasks
- ▶ Regulate emotion
- ▶ Take another's perspective
- ▶ Show empathy

All of these  
affect learning.

## Trauma's Impact on Behavior

- ▶ Reactivity
- ▶ Impulsivity
- ▶ Aggression
- ▶ Defiance
- ▶ Withdrawal
- ▶ Perfectionism
- ▶ Appeasement

Truman Medical Centers

## Summary of Impacts

- ▶ Trauma damages our sense of control, understanding, and purpose.
- ▶ Trauma shapes neuro-physiological development.
- ▶ Trauma affects physical, social, and emotional health and wellbeing over the lifetime.

# ACEs and School Performance

## Traumatized children:

- ▶ Are 2.5 times more likely to fail a grade
- ▶ Have achievement test scores below grade-level
- ▶ Score lower on IQ and reading tests
- ▶ Have receptive and expressive language difficulties
- ▶ Are more likely to be suspended, expelled, and/or designated for special education services

Grevstad, 2007; Sanger et al., 2000; Shonk & Cicchetti, 2001; Blackburn, 2006; Delaney-Black et al., 2002; Duplechain, Reigner & Packard, 2008)

## What do we do?

We change the question

“What’s wrong with you?”  
becomes  
**“What happened to you?”**

We understand all behavior has meaning

Recognize symptoms as survival skills

We create a trauma-sensitive culture

Safe, nonjudgmental, collaborative, relational

## Trauma-Informed Culture

- ▶ Realizes the prevalence of trauma
- ▶ Recognizes how trauma affects people
- ▶ Responds by infusing knowledge about trauma and recovery into policies, procedures, and practices
- ▶ Resists re-traumatization

<http://www.samhsa.gov/nctic/trauma-interventions>

## Ask the Right Questions

- ▶ What is driving this student's behavior?
- ▶ What can I do at this very moment to improve my relationship with this student?
- ▶ What happened to you?

Forbes, 2012

## Responding Instead of Reacting

Traditional Reactions	Trauma Sensitive Reaction
It's not that difficult.	I need to know how hard this is for you.
Go to the principal's office.	I'm here. You're not in trouble.
Stop crying.	It's okay to feel.
You're so dramatic.	You need to be heard.
You need to learn to be responsible.	Let's chunk this down so it is more manageable.
I can't help you with this issue- I've got thirty other children in this classroom.	We'll get through this together. Every single student in this class is important.
Don't talk to an adult like that.	You're allowed to have a voice. Let's talk together.
You should never have acted like that.	Sometimes life just gets too big, doesn't it?
I'm calling your parents. Wait until they find out.	Let's get everyone involved to support you. You're not in trouble. I want your parents involved so we can all find a way to make this better.
You need to take ownership/responsibility for this.	I'm sorry this is so hard.
Nobody is going to like you if you keep misbehaving.	I know you want to be well liked, so let's make that happen.

Forbes, 2012

## Ineffectiveness of Traditional Social Skills

Social Skills Techniques Taught to Students	Student With Trauma Mindset
1. Walk Away	I'm in survival and I have gone into a "fight" response. Walking away is not even an option in my mind.
2. Talk to the other person in a calm way.	I have no ability to self-regulate. I'll yell and make my point known to you. I will NEVER again have someone treat me like garbage.
3. Talk to someone about how you feel.	Every time in the past when I've expressed myself, I have been minimized or told how I should feel differently.
4. Ask someone for help in solving the problem.	Nobody is safe in my eyes, not even the teachers. I trust NOBODY. I'm on my own and I'll take care of this on my own.
5. Find your "Happy Place" inside you and calm down.	There is no "Happy Place" inside of me. There is only an internal volcano going on within me. I'm doing an amazing job containing it all...what I need is reassurance and emotional safety.
6. An apology is a good way to have the last word.	Nobody ever apologized to me for anything. I was always the one who got blamed. Making an apology would make me feel like it is my fault, once again.
7. It is never as bad as it seems. Keep things in proportion and don't create a mountain out of a molehill. Toughen up and stop being so sensitive.	It is a BIG deal to me and it needs to be a big deal to you. I'm not going to sit back and take it anymore. I'm going to make sure you know it is a big deal, no matter the consequences.

Forbes, 2012

## Tips for Creating Emotional Space

### How to Create Emotional Space

Give acceptance without solving the issue.

Ask exploratory questions to create a deeper understanding.

Allow the child to be upset without insisting the child stop being upset.

Accept that the child's reality may be skewed, and do not try to convince him of a different reality.

Tolerate the negative and exaggerated feelings the child is expressing for the moment in order to help him calm down.

Give understanding to the child's issue but not necessarily agree with it.

Be kind, loving, safe, and patient.

Listen with no agenda of teaching a life lesson. Simply listen. The life lesson will come afterward.

Validate the child's struggle without identifying what he needs to do differently. That will come later when the child is calm, regulated, and ready for change.

Engage in the conversation but do not force or insist on answers.

Focus on the relationship. Strive for emotional safety and stay regulated. Trust in the process.

Forbes, 2012

## Trauma Sensitive Practices

### 1. Safety

- ▶ Take time to familiarize the person with the physical environment
- ▶ Ask about comfort level with lighting, environmental surroundings
- ▶ Share control
- ▶ Show respect
- ▶ Use a warm and compassionate manner to build rapport
- ▶ Speak in a calm, caring tone
- ▶ Actively listen without judgment



## Trauma Sensitive Practices

### 2. Choice

- ▶ Ask if you can close the door
- ▶ Allow the person to decide where to sit / stand in the room
- ▶ Provide as many choices without compromising safety
- ▶ Make sure you can follow through with choices provided
- ▶ Explain rationale for your intervention and obtain consent

## Trauma Sensitive Practices

### 3. Trustworthiness

- ▶ Explain all interventions in terms the person can understand
- ▶ Tell the person what to expect and how long it will take
- ▶ Ask the person what they want or how you can help them
- ▶ Actively listen
- ▶ Do what you say you are going to do; apologize if you are not able to or if you made a mistake

## Trauma Sensitive Practices

4. Collaboration
  - ▶ Share information
  - ▶ Encourage the person to make decisions about treatment
  - ▶ Allow the person to problem-solve
  - ▶ Provide opportunities to take on a leadership role

## Trauma Sensitive Practices

5. Empowerment
  - ▶ Ask "What happened to you," not "What is wrong with you?"
  - ▶ Take time with the person so they feel genuinely heard
  - ▶ If the person appears to have difficulty with an intervention, ask if there is a way you can help the person relax
  - ▶ Pay attention to body cues; many survivors have been conditioned to be passive and defer to authority and so may not disclose distress
  - ▶ Model and build self-confidence (acknowledge even the smallest positives)

## Increased Resilience

- ▶ Several factors contribute to increased resilience and hope for adults and protective factors among children, including:
  - ▶ caring and supportive relationships
  - ▶ capacity to manage strong feelings and emotions
  - ▶ communication
  - ▶ problem-solving skills

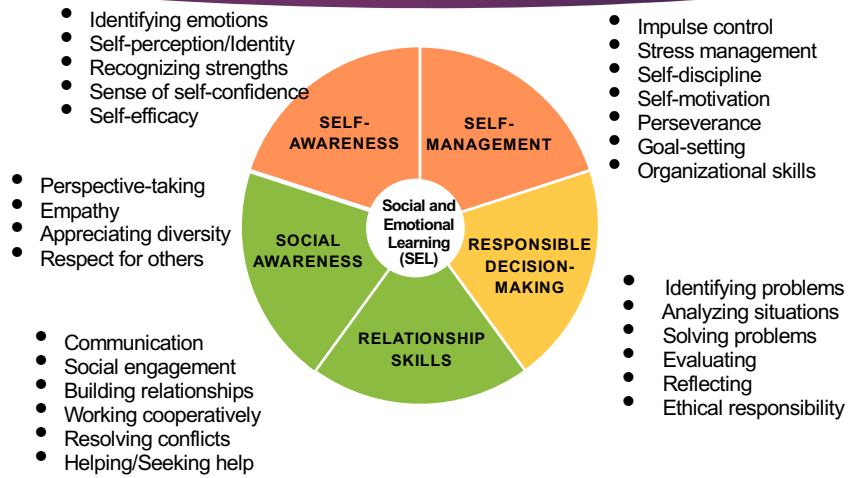
Souers & Hall, 2016

## SEL is...

- ▶ The process through which children and adults acquire and effectively apply the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions.

CASEL

# Social and Emotional Learning



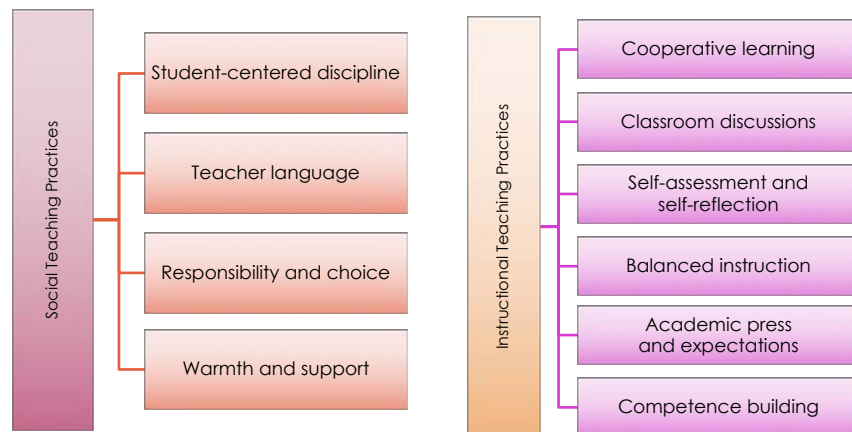
CASEL

# Teaching Practices

- ▶ After conducting an extensive review of existing research, the Center on Great Teachers and Leaders identified 10 teaching practices that occurred most frequently across the six SEL programs and eight SEL scholars.

(American Institute for Research, 2014)

## Introducing the 10 Teaching Practices That Promote SEL



## These 10 practices are NOT

- ▶ A comprehensive set of professional teaching standards.
- ▶ Meant to be a checklist or one-size-fits-all strategy or prescribed approach to pedagogy.
- ▶ Inclusive of all important teaching practices, competencies, skills, performances, and dispositions.

## 1. Student Centered Discipline

- ▶ Developmentally appropriate
- ▶ Motivate students to want to behave.
  - ▶ Self-directive
  - ▶ Have some say
- ▶ NO punitive measures.
- ▶ Proactive and NOT reactive
  - ▶ If you can predict it, you can change it
  - ▶ Think medical emergency!
- ▶ Logical and natural consequence
  - ▶ Does it fit the "crime"?
  - ▶ Where do you go from here? Haven's Story

(American Institute for Research, 2014)

## 2. Teacher Language

- ▶ Encourage student effort and work.
  - ▶ "I see you worked hard on your paper. When you really think about your work, and when you explain your thinking, you get more correct answers."
- ▶ Should not be simply praise.
- ▶ Should encourage students how to monitor and regulate their own behavior.
- ▶ Don't steal a student's accomplishment. Give it to them to celebrate.

(American Institute for Research, 2014)

### 3. Responsibility and Choice

- ▶ Allows students to make responsible decisions about their work in the classroom.
- ▶ Democratic norms are utilized.
- ▶ Students provide meaningful input into development of norms and procedure as well as academic content or how it is learned.
- ▶ Not everything goes...teacher provides structure.
  - ▶ Jen's story...have to be okay with what the student chooses
  - ▶ So much harder on themselves than we would ever be as educators
- ▶ Peer tutoring, cross-age tutoring, service learning, community service.
- ▶ Give students a job and a reason to be at school.

(American Institute for Research, 2014)

### 4. Warmth and Support

- ▶ Create a classroom where students know that teachers care about them.
- ▶ Ask students questions, both academic and non-academic.
- ▶ Follow up with students when they have a problem or concern.
- ▶ Provide your own stories.
- ▶ Make the classroom safe so students can take risks and ask questions.
- ▶ Make students feel included and appreciated by peers and teachers.
- ▶ Morning meetings, small moments, projects that allow students to share learning.
- ▶ Your class must be more appealing than the world beyond it.
- ▶ Bottom line: Would you want to be a student in your classroom?

(American Institute for Research, 2014)

## 5. Cooperative Learning

- ▶ Students work together toward a collective goal.
- ▶ More than group work; students are actively working with peers around content in a meaningful way.
- ▶ Includes five basic elements
  - ▶ Positive interdependence, individual accountability promoting one another's successes, applying interpersonal and social skills, and group processing
- ▶ Students need to collaboratively process how they work together and monitor their progress toward goals.

(American Institute for Research, 2014)

## 6. Classroom Discussions

- ▶ Conversations students and teachers have around content.
- ▶ Teachers ask more open-ended questions.
- ▶ Ask students to elaborate on their own thinking and on the thinking of their peers.
- ▶ Students build upon each other's thoughts.
- ▶ Dialogue is student driven.
- ▶ Teach students to extend own thinking.
- ▶ Listen attentively and pick out main ideas of peer dialogue.
  - ▶ Take notes and summarize so you can teach and recap later.
- ▶ Ensure content knowledge to foster discussion and teach discussion skills.
- ▶ Students should be talking more than the teacher!

(American Institute for Research, 2014)



## 7. Self-Reflection and Self-Assessment

- ▶ Ask students to actively think about their own work.
- ▶ Teach students to assess work against performance standards.
- ▶ Teach students to think about how to improve their work on basis of their self-assessment.
- ▶ Help develop goals and priorities with students.
- ▶ Students need to know what they are working toward, how to accomplish goals, and when they have been accomplished.
- ▶ Students need to learn how to monitor their progress.
- ▶ Need to be taught how to seek help and where to search for resources.
  - ▶ Ask, "How are you going to solve that problem?"

(American Institute for Research, 2014)

## 8. Balanced Instruction

- ▶ An appropriate balance between active instruction and direct instruction.
- ▶ Balance between individual and collaborative learning.
- ▶ Directly learn material as well as engage with material.
- ▶ Does not have to be equal split.
- ▶ Project based learning.
  - ▶ Students actively involved in solving a problem either collaboratively or independently.
  - ▶ Students plan, monitor, and reflect on progress toward completion.

(American Institute for Research, 2014)

## 9. Academic Press and Expectations

- ▶ Implementation of meaningful and challenging work.
  - ▶ Do not waste time doing what's always been done!
  - ▶ "This is what we do." "This is how it has always been done."
    - ▶ Be the challenge.
- ▶ Expectations focus on belief that all students can and will succeed.
- ▶ Students should sense:
  - ▶ Academics are important.
  - ▶ Teacher wants them to succeed.
  - ▶ That they have to exert effort in challenging work in order to succeed.
- ▶ Feel pressure and feel responsible for accomplishing or failing.
- ▶ Teacher must know what students are capable of and how they will emotionally respond to challenging work.
- ▶ Students will rise. Students will fall.

(American Institute for Research, 2014)

## 10. Competence Building-Modeling, Practicing, Feedback, Coaching

- ▶ Use typical instructional cycle: goals/objectives of lesson, new material/modeling, group and individual practice, conclusion/reflection.
  - ▶ I do. We do. You do.
- ▶ Reinforces social-emotional competencies.
- ▶ Encourages positive social behaviors and coaching students on positive social behavior in group settings.
- ▶ Provide feedback to students on how they are interacting with peers and how they are learning content.
- ▶ Guides students through problem-solving and conflict-resolution strategies.

(American Institute for Research, 2014)

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## Questions

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