ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS OF TRAUMA-INFORMED ENGAGEMENT

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Resiliency is not a catchphrase

When we tackle obstacles, we find hidden reserves of courage and resilience we did not know we had. And it is only when we are faced with failure do we realize that these resources were always there within us. We only need to find them and move on with our lives.

A. P. J. Abdul Kalam.
What We Will Cover

- Essential Elements
  - Foster Youth 101
  - Trauma Basics
  - What’s in Their Backpack
    - Recognizing Trauma’s Impact
    - Responding to students
- Building Resiliency
- What’s in Your Backpack
Essential Elements

1. Recognize the impact of trauma on us.
2. Help us feel safe.
3. Help us to understand and manage emotions and behaviors.
4. Help us build positive relationships.
5. Be an advocate for your us.
6. Take care of yourself.

Adapted from the NCTSN
Children and youth in foster care are four times more likely to change schools in a given school year than other students.

Nearly one in five youth in foster care has a disability, twice the rate of the general population.

15 percent of children and youth in foster care attend the lowest performing 10 percent of schools in California, as compared to just 10 percent of the general population.
Trauma Basics

► Trauma affects a person’s behavior, feelings, relationship and view of the world in profound ways.

► Types of Trauma

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<th>Acute</th>
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<td>Chronic</td>
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<td>Complex</td>
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► PTSD - A person experiences hyperarousal, re-experiencing, and withdrawal/avoidance for a long period of time and reactions get in the way of living a normal life.
The Invisible Backpack

Trauma shapes children’s beliefs and expectations about themselves, the adults who care for them, and the world in general.

I can’t trust anyone

- It’s all my fault
- What’s wrong with me
- No one loves me
- Therapy doesn’t help
- I am stupid
- No one understands me or what I have been through

Adapted from NCTSN
Recognizing Trauma’s Impact

**Difficulty with:**

- Safety
- Trust
- Intimacy
- Self-care
- Relationships
- Interference with cognitive development
- Emotions and stress
- Delaying gratification
What Do You See?
Responding to Students

**Helpful**

- Avoid re-traumatization
- Differentiate yourself
- Provide an inclusive environment
- Reinforce social skills
- Teach executive skills
- Catch your students doing good
Responding to Students

Not So Helpful

• Assuming the student is being rebellious
• Tell the student he/she is being dramatic or over-reacting
• Ask why they were in foster care
• Force them to face the reminder
• Expressing anger or impatience
How Can You Respond Differently?
Resiliency is...

... speedy recovery from problems: the ability to recover quickly from setbacks

... is the capacity to withstand stress and catastrophe

... ability of Individuals to rebuild their lives even after devastating tragedies.

... capabilities of humans to adapt and overcome risk and adversity.

... also comes from supportive relationships
You Can Build Resiliency in Your Students

- Acknowledge
- Affirm
- Acquire
- Attain
What’s in Your Backpack?

- How are you affected by working with students who have experienced trauma?
- What are your thoughts and beliefs about youth in foster care?
- What are your thoughts and beliefs about foster parents, caregivers, group home staff, behavioral specialists and social workers?
- What are you beliefs about students with disabilities?
- How do these beliefs affect your ability to respond to students?
What’s in Your Backpack?

- Avoid
  - Compassion fatigue
  - Secondary Traumatic Stress
  - Traumatic Stress Reaction
- Be careful to take care of yourself

Adapted from the NCTSN
Compassion fatigue

- Headaches & stomach-aches
- Mental / physical exhaustion
- Disturbed sleep
- Feeling less satisfied by work
- Moodiness & irritability
What’s in Your Backpack?

- **Secondary Traumatic Stress**

  Trauma Experienced as a result of exposure to a someone else’s trauma and trauma reactions

Adapted from the NCTSN
Traumatic Stress Reaction

- Intrusive images
- Difficulty concentrating or taking in information
- Changes in Your World view
- Feelings of hopelessness and or helplessness
Traumatic Stress Reaction

- Lose perspective
- Identify too closely with your students
- Respond inappropriately or disproportionately
- Withdraw from your students
- Do anything to avoid exposure
Take Care of Yourself

- Maintain a balance between work and relaxation, self and others
- Include activities that are purely for fun.
- Include a regular stress management approach—physical activity, meditation, yoga, prayer, etc.