

Supporting Students Experiencing Trauma

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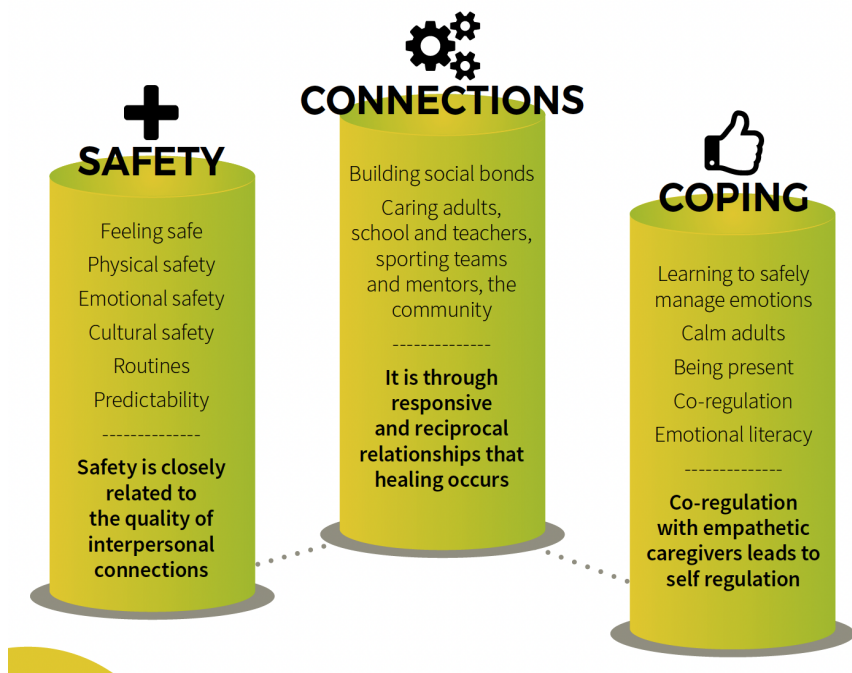
Central to Trauma Informed Practice is the need for:

- Safety, Connection, & Coping [Bath's \(2015\) Pillars of Trauma-Informed Care](#)
- Safety, Trust/Transparency, Peer Support, Collaboration, Empowerment, Awareness and Sensitivity to Cultural/Historical/Gender/Systemic Prejudice Issues (SAMHSA/CDC) [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. \(2020, September 17\).](#)

Short term approaches to working with our students (and each other):

- **Understand that trauma is pervasive and invisible:** We cannot always see on the surface what people are going through and how they are processing what's going on around them. It's like attaching invisible cinder blocks on their feet
 - Trauma is cumulative and compounds - folks may have previous (or current) adversity
- **Safety:** Understanding that many of our students and colleagues do not feel physically safe and their psychological safety has also been impacted.
 - When our perception of safety is threatened, we often go into a state of fight, flight, freeze, or fawn (this is often called stress brain)
 - When we are in this state, we cannot adequately process what's going on or engage in regular activity. We cannot or have great difficulty processing new information and producing work when our feelings of safety are threatened.
- **Connection:** We need to reinforce our connections with our students (and each other). Find ways to create connections - whether it is checking - in, creating space for students and colleagues to express their concerns.
 - Validate their experiences and feelings.
 - Avoid saying things that start with "At least..." or "Be grateful for..."
 - Make specific offers of support - try to avoid "Let me know if..." statements - people rarely let you know what they need (because often they can't see what they need).
- **Trust/Transparency:** Be open with your students (and colleagues) about what you're doing or can do to adapt curriculum.
 - Be mindful of the fact they feel a lack of transparency in the information they're getting about what's happening
- **Cope & Co-Regulate:** Help students find healthy ways to cope and do it with them if appropriate.
 - It can be walking through deep breathing exercises, taking them to access resources, or simply hold space for them in that moment.
- **Resist Retraumatization:** Be mindful about what the students and your colleagues are going through. Things to think about:

- Be mindful that violence embedded in our colloquial language - please think about how you're phrasing what you say.
- Be mindful of how people of various personal backgrounds and identity groups experience news about interpersonal and/or community violence
- **Engaging in Choice:** Trauma happens TO us, and often makes us feel out of control. Providing choices is one easy way to help students feel more in control and therefore safer. These can be simple choices, like working with a partner or alone, choosing between two projects/essay prompts, listening to music or not, etc. We might want to provide the option of coming to class in person, via Zoom, or watching the recording. We might alter our final exams to include choice.
- **Routines and structure:** We never expect trauma to happen, and the unexpected can cause anxiety and stress. Providing routine and structure can help students feel safe- they know what is going to happen next. Posting the daily agenda including breaks is one easy way to provide structure in our classrooms. Using visual timers if appropriate (e.g. "Talk in your group for 7 minutes") can be helpful, too. In our case, emailing or announcing ahead of time what will happen in the class session can help reassure students and let them know what to expect.
- **Trauma impacts attention and memory:** If we can break class activities into chunks of 15-20 minutes that can help students to focus, reset, and engage. Present information in multiple modalities- show and say instructions, for example, and don't be afraid to repeat/explain in different ways as much as needed.
- **Secondary traumatic stress:** is the emotional duress that results when an individual hears about the first hand trauma experiences of another. If you are feeling tired, anxious, hypervigilant, having insomnia, etc. you may be experiencing secondary trauma. Acknowledge it and take steps to care for yourself. Make time for rest, activity, reflection, and doing things you enjoy to relax.



Bath, H. (2015). The three pillars of traumawise care: Healing in the other 23 hours. *Reclaiming Children and Youth*, 23(4), 5-11.

6 GUIDING PRINCIPLES TO A TRAUMA-INFORMED APPROACH

The CDC's [Center for Preparedness and Response \(CPR\)](#), in collaboration with SAMHSA's [National Center for Trauma-Informed Care \(NCTIC\)](#), developed and led a new training for CPR employees about the role of trauma-informed care during public health emergencies. The training aimed to increase responder awareness of the impact that trauma can have in the communities where they work.

Participants learned SAMHSA'S six principles that guide a trauma-informed approach, including:



Adopting a trauma-informed approach is not accomplished through any single particular technique or checklist. It requires constant attention, caring awareness, sensitivity, and possibly a cultural change at an organizational level. On-going internal organizational assessment and quality improvement, as well as engagement with community stakeholders, will help to imbed this approach which can be augmented with organizational development and practice improvement. The training provided by [CPR](#) and [NCTIC](#) was the first step for CDC to view emergency preparedness and response through a trauma-informed lens.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2020, September 17). *Infographic: 6 guiding principles to a trauma-informed approach*. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Retrieved from https://www.cdc.gov/cpr/infographics/6_principles_trauma_info.htm

Caring for Yourself:

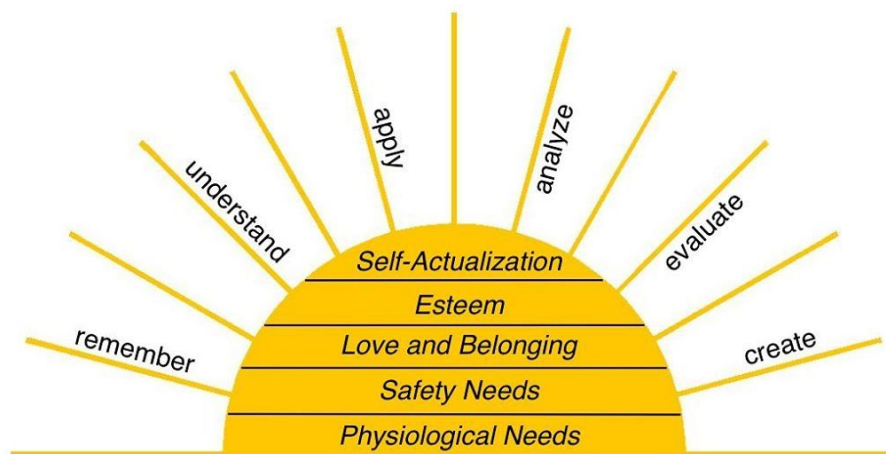
It is also important that you are caring for yourself during this time of crisis, including your emotional, social, physical, and professional wellbeing. Below are some resources to consider.

- Working definition of “crisis” in Higher Ed by Gigliotti (2020): “events or situations of significant magnitude that threaten reputations, impact the lives of those involved in the institution, disrupt the ways in which the organization functions, have a cascading influence on leadership responsibilities and obligations across units/divisions, and require an immediate response from leaders” (p. 49).
- Jack Kornfield - *Honoring Grief* ([2 minute read + 5:45 recorded guided meditation](#))
- [RAIN and Grieving](#), with Tara Brach. 10:45 talk
- [What is Self Care?](#) From My Mind Oasis
- [Self Care and Trauma](#) - blogpost
- [Four Ways We Can Be Sensitive to Trauma at Work](#) - from Greater Good Magazine at Berkeley
- [Post-Secondary Peer Support Training Curriculum](#) published by British Columbia Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Training (includes facilitator’s guide)
- Gigliotti, R. A. (2020). *Crisis leadership in higher education: Theory and practice*. Rutgers University Press. [Available as ebook in our library](#)



<https://opentextbc.ca/peersupport/chapter/samhsas-definition-of-trauma-informed-care/>

Maslow > Bloom



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