



Using Trauma-Informed Principles to Infuse Self-Care in Schools

Isaiah B. Pickens, PhD

An iOpening Enterprise



OBJECTIVES



TRAUMA-INFORMED SCHOOL

A trauma-informed child- and family-service system is one in which all parties involved **recognize** and **respond** to the impact of traumatic stress on those who have contact with the system including children, caregivers, and service providers. Programs and agencies within such a system infuse and sustain trauma **awareness**, **knowledge**, and **skills** into their organizational cultures, practices, and policies. They act in collaboration with all those who are involved with the child, using the best available science, to maximize physical and psychological safety, facilitate the recovery of the child and family, and support their ability to thrive.



UNDERSTANDING STRESS IN SCHOOLS

- 20-30% of surveyed teachers report teaching is either very or extremely stressful.
- 30% of all novice teachers leave the profession before their 5th year.
- Common stressors cited by teachers include heavy workload, salary not commensurate to cost of living, and lack of adequate instructional materials.
- An excessive amount of stress can deplete our physical, emotional, and mental resources.



REMINDERS/TRIGGERS & EARLY WARNING SIGNS

- Anything that reminds a person of the trauma can set her stress alarm off...even if she doesn't know it is a reminder.
- Early warning signs are thoughts, behaviors, or body reactions that happen before a person enters crisis mode.
- Recognizing triggers and warning signs give trauma survivors power to better control reactions to stressful situations.



REMINDERS & EARLY WARNING SIGNS

REMINDERS/TRIGGERS

- Being touched
- Time of year
- Particular time of day
- Being blamed
- Being isolated
- Specific person or certain type of person
- Yelling
- Fighting
- Loud noise
- Being forced to talk to men or women

EARLY WARNING SIGNS

- ❖ Restlessness
- ❖ Pacing
- ❖ Shortness of breath
- ❖ Being very quiet
- ❖ Feeling tight in the chest
- ❖ Sweating
- ❖ Nausea
- ❖ Agitation
- ❖ Cursing



VICARIOUS TRAUMA & SECONDARY TRAUMATIC STRESS

- Vicarious trauma (a.k.a. compassion fatigue) is when we over empathize with the individuals we care for or teach significantly depletes us emotionally, physically, or mentally.
- Secondary traumatic stress occurs when the traumatic stories and stress reactions of others adversely impacts an individual.
- School staff may experience:
 - Difficulty concentrating
 - Less enjoyment of activities previously enjoyed
 - Irritability and depressed mood
 - Problems sleeping and eating
 - Isolation and lowered motivation



- Early career burnout has several trajectories.

SELF-CARE, IDENTITY, & RESILIENCE

- Self-care is intentional actions individuals take to promote their physical, mental, and spiritual health.
- Adequately targeting stress involves understanding important aspects of our identity and bolstering our ability to affirm these areas.
- Strengths-based approaches used to help others can be directed toward oneself to reinforce present skills that support stress management.



MINDFUL IDENTITY & CONNECTION

- Becoming aware of which aspects of one's identity are most important can provide insight into stressors.
- Monitoring and recharging the important aspects of identity that are easily depleted can facilitate an ongoing self-care process.
- Thoughtfully consider ways to connect with others and important aspects of oneself.



SELF-SOOTHING INVENTORY

VISION

- Pictures of people you care about
- Seeing nature
- Artwork
- Shiny things or glitter
- Darkness (Close eyes or night mask)
- Postcard of fun memory or somewhere you want to go
- Funny picture

SMELL

- Scented lotion or spray
- Wrappers from favorite snack
- Scented crayons or notebooks
- Gum or mint
- Popcorn
- Fresh laundry
- Soap

TASTE

- Chocolate
- Gum or mint
- Sour candy
- Slowly eat a raisin
- Ice
- Tea or hot chocolate
- Lollipop

SOUND

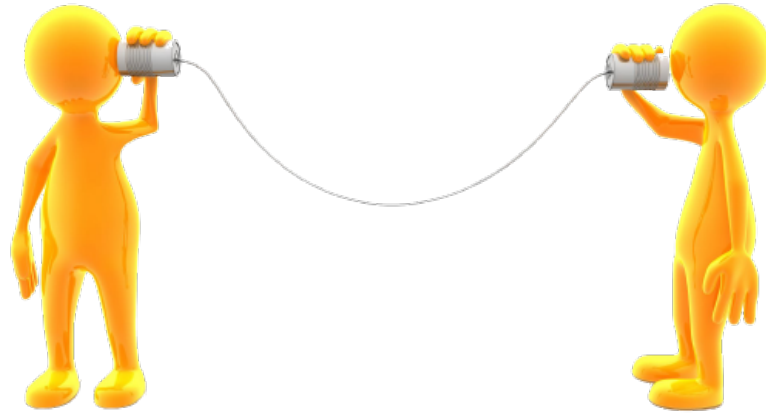
- Music (what kind: _____)
Chimes, bell, or mini gong
- White noise or nature sounds
- Running water
- Soft voice
- Humming
- Crumpling paper
- Silence

TOUCH

- Hold ice
- Weighted blanket
Playdough, clay, putty
- Hold/hug regular blanket or something soft like a doll
- Lotion



ASSESSING STRESS IMPACT AND FORMULATING A PLAN



- Periodically completing individual and organizational self-assessments to monitor resources to promote self-care.
- Develop non-punitive supervisor protocols to debrief after stressful school events.
- Implement communication feedback loops to facilitate proactive action promoting self-care for staff.



STRATEGIES FOR BUILDING AN ENVIRONMENT PROMOTING SELF-CARE

Organizational Strategies

- Creating a classroom environment that promotes self-care can reduce stress for students and teachers.
- Wellness activities integrated into lesson plans have been found to facilitate improved classroom behavior and promote an academic environment more conducive to learning.
- Integrate mindful strategies and the 3 A's of acknowledgement, asking, and adjustment into school culture.



Individual Strategies

- Set boundaries for time and schedule work and pleasure activities.
- Create mini-breaks throughout the day to recharge.
- Identify aspects of teaching that are not within one's control and find ways to shift perspective on these tasks.
- Ensure physical self-care by monitoring health and employing strategies for physical activities.
- Find ways to connect with others to manage stress.

IDENTITY R.A.V.E.

- **Reframe** the stressor to expand how you are thinking about it and strive to explore positive aspects of the stressor.
- **Affirm** important aspects of your identity that are connected to the stressor.
- **Validate** the experience with the stressor by becoming non-judgmentally aware of how it is impacting you and compassionately monitor your experience.
- **Empower** oneself with self-care tools and coping strategies that promote healthy life choices.



R.A.V.E. GAME

I'm tired of being
I give too much of myself
I feel like a failure
in this world that I do.
and regret I choose
something else for
much this job's me.
this job.



REFERENCES & RESOURCES

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www.iOpeningEnterprises.com

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@PickensPoints

pickens@iopeningenterprises.com

