



Six Principles of Interacting with Students Impacted by Trauma

#1: Always empower, never disempower

- Students affected by trauma compete with teachers for power
- Controlling their environment is the way to stay safe
- The more helpless and dependent they feel, the worse their behavior will become

Do this:

- Avoid power struggles at all cost!!
- Use discipline that does not resemble the trauma
- Stay away from public shaming
- Use consistent, respectful and non-violent discipline should be consistent, (unconditional positive regard)

#2: Provide Unconditional Positive Regard

- Traumatic events make it difficult for children to trust
- Unconditional Positive Regard serves to combat children's belief that adults are dangerous

Do this:

- Provide genuine respect
- Show sustained kindness despite responses
- Act with empathy and not sympathy

#3: Maintain High Expectations

- Lowering expectations sends messages such as "you are too damaged to behave" or "you are different so I am giving up on you."
- These messages can increase children's feelings of powerlessness

Do this:

- Use consistent expectations and limits to send students the message that they are worthy
- Teach students the reasoning behind rules that are in place for their safety and well-being.
- Create limits that are immediate, related, age-appropriate and proportional.
- Deliver limits in a calm and respectful voice

#4: Check Assumptions; Observe, and Question

- Abuse is not specific to any one ethnicity, income, gender, religion, or ability
- Trauma is an individual response—the impact of trauma looks different in every person.

Do this:

1. Identify your own assumptions
2. Catch yourself and make an observation instead
3. Ask questions: be willing to listen to the response

#5: Be a Relationship Coach

- Relationships established with and among students influence the tone and demeanor in classrooms

Do this:

- Take every opportunity to teach students relationships skills.
- Relationships help students feel safe and supported, so they can put more energy into learning
- By being a relationship coach, teachers can help students mend perceptions of community and friends

#6: Provide Guided Opportunities for Helpful Participation

- When students contribute they improve feelings of self-worth, strengthen resiliency, and feel like they belong.
- Belonging provides opportunities to be heard, make choices, have responsibility, and engage in problem solving.

Do this:

Guided” and “Supervised”

- Carefully plan, model and observe ongoing interactions