




# TRAUMA AWARENESS



IT IS POSSIBLE TO PREPARE  
FOR THE FUTURE WITHOUT  
KNOWING WHAT IT WILL BE.  
THE PRIMARY WAY TO PREPARE  
FOR THE UNKNOWN IS TO  
ATTEND TO THE QUALITY OF  
OUR RELATIONSHIPS, TO HOW  
WELL WE KNOW AND TRUST  
ONE ANOTHER.

”

Margaret  
Wheatly, 2004



# WHAT IS TRAUMA?

And why is it important right now?



**"The experience of an event by a child that is emotionally painful or distressful, which often results in lasting mental and physical effects."**

*National Institute of Mental Health*

Why is it important to prepare for this?




## **What about us? Teachers?**

What are we feeling?  
What makes you say that?



SAD, EXCITED, ANXIOUS,  
LOSS OF CONTROL

How will kids be feeling?



*WE NEED WARM, WELCOMING ENVIRONMENTS, WHERE STUDENTS FEEL CONNECTED AND SAFE, AND TEACHERS FEEL SUPPORTED AND VALUED...AND WHERE WE CAN FOCUS ON BUILDING AND SUSTAINING MEANINGFUL RELATIONSHIPS THAT TRANSCEND THE PHYSICAL WALLS OF CLASSROOMS.*

Christine Cipriano, Director of the Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence



# Importance of SEL

"It is next to impossible to expect teaching and learning to occur in a crisis without attending to our emotions."

Christine Cipriano,  
YCEI

# Signs of Trauma in Children

## Physical



[This Photo](#) by Unknown  
Author is licensed under [CC BY-NC-ND](#)

## Social and Emotional



[This Photo](#) by Unknown  
Author is licensed under [CC BY](#)

## Cognitive



[This Photo](#) by Unknown  
Author is licensed under [CC BY](#)

## Language and Communication



[This Photo](#) by Unknown Author  
is licensed under [CC BY](#)

## Learning



[This Photo](#) by Unknown  
Author is licensed under [CC BY](#)

<https://bit.ly/3yswGXI>

# Physical



- Increased somatic complaints (e.g., headaches and stomachaches)
- Over- or under-reacting to stimuli (e.g., getting startled easily [or not at all] by bells, physical contact, doors slamming, sirens)
- Increased activity level (e.g., fidgeting, getting out of seat)

Withdrawal from other people and activities

# Cognitive



- Recreating the traumatic event (e.g., repeatedly talking about or "playing out" the event) or avoiding topics that serve as reminders
- Difficulties with executive function (e.g., impulse control, attention)  
Worry and fear about safety of self and others
- Dissociation (e.g., disconnected from surroundings, "spacing out")

# Social and Emotional



- Rapid changes in heightened emotions (e.g., extremely sad to angry)
- Change in ability to interpret or respond appropriately to social cues
- Difficulties with emotion regulation and impulse control (e.g., angry outbursts, aggression, increased distress)
- Emotional numbness, isolation, and detachment

# Language and Communication



- Language development delays and challenges
- Difficulties with expressive (e.g., expressing thoughts and feelings) and receptive language (e.g., understanding nonverbal cues)
- Difficulties with nonverbal communication (e.g., eye contact)
- Use of hurtful language (e.g., to keep others at a distance)

# Learning



- Absenteeism and changes in academic performance/engagement
- Difficulties with authority, redirection, or criticism
- Difficulties listening and concentrating during instruction
- Difficulties with memory (e.g., may require more repetitions)
- Difficulties generalizing learned material in different contexts



# WAYS TO HELP

Preventative and In the Moment

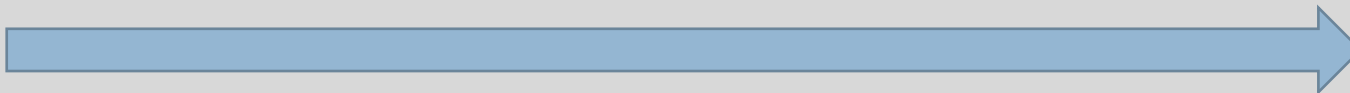
# Create a Safe and Predictable Environment

## **Preventative:**

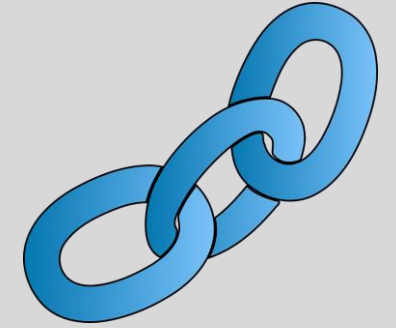
- Create a welcoming classroom environment (e.g., greet students by name, do show and tells)
- Create and post class expectations at the front of the classroom
- Display a daily schedule and explain any deviations
- Prepare students for transitions (e.g., give a signal)
- Communicate clear safety procedures

## **In the Moment:**

- Be aware of the student's body language, tone of voice, and emotional state
- Direct other students to follow outlined safety procedures
- Provide student with the opportunity to go to a safe space (e.g., meditation room, counseling office)
- Alert appropriate support staff, when necessary



# Build Relationships

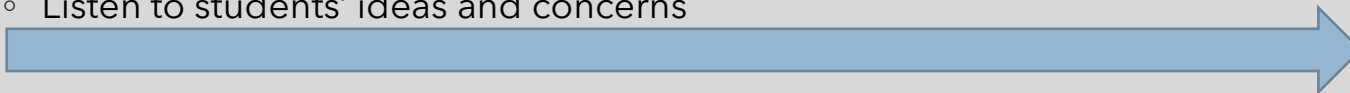


## **Preventative:**

- Talk to students about their hobbies and interests
- Use a respectful tone during interactions
- Involve students in developing behavior/safety plans
- Create a sense of belonging
- Emphasize a common purpose
- Provide opportunities for agency (voice and choice)
- Try the 2x10 strategy with challenging students (talk with the student for at least 2 minutes each day for 10 days in a row)
- Listen to students' ideas and concerns

## **In the Moment:**

- Project calmness while approaching student using verbal and nonverbal techniques (e.g., using a respectful tone, sitting beside the student instead of standing over them)
- Show you are listening and giving your full attention
- Express that you care for the student and that they are safe



# Self-Regulation

## Preventative:

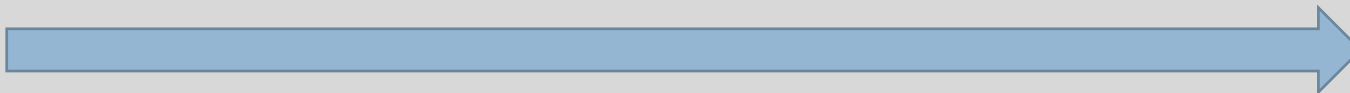
- Incorporate activities that build coping strategies (e.g. identifying and validating emotions, deep breathing)
- Create calming spaces or break times with constructive activities that are not used as a punishment/time-out
- Model and practice appropriate social skills
- Teach students how to name and scale their emotions: Zones of Regulation

## In the Moment:

- Relax before responding (deep breath, count to 10)
- Encourage student to use relaxation and coping skills, and “comfort” objects
- Validate student emotions (e.g., “You seem frustrated right now. Is that correct?”)
- Assist the student in identifying reasonable and safe response options (e.g., go to the counselor’s office)

What Zone Are You In?			
Blue	Green	Yellow	Red
			
Sick Sad Tired Bored Moving Slowly	Happy Calm Feeling Okay Focused Ready to Learn	Frustrated Worried Silly/Wiggly Excited Loss of Some Control	Mad/Angry Mean Yelling/Hitting Disgusted Out of Control

[This Photo](#) by Unknown Author is licensed under [CC BY-NC-ND](#)



# Teaching and Learning



This Photo by  
Unknown  
Author is  
licensed under  
CC BY-SA-NC

- Set clear behavioral expectations. Explicit
- Keep instructions as brief as possible and allow for questions.
- Use a matter-of fact, business-like tone. Remain in silence if necessary.
- State the expectation as a directive, not a question.
- Avoid long explanations or justifications.
- "Wait time" is not just an academic strategy! Give students an appropriate amount of time to demonstrate appropriate behavior.
- Emphasize what students should be doing (positive). 5 positive to any 1 corrective comment
- Give specific praise about concrete behaviors. "You got our your materials and were ready to listen."
- Praise growth mindset. Focus on students' efforts. "You came up with so many different strategies of learning."

<https://studentbehaviorblog.org/strategies-for-communicating-effectively-with-students-across-learning-environments/>


# In Crisis

When a child is in crisis, DO NOT:

- Argue or get into a power struggle
- Raise your voice
- Handle the situation in public or in front of student's peers
- Use punitive punishment

# After the Moment

- Provide the child with a safe place to talk about what happened
- Engage in a discussion with the child that includes:
- Praise for any relaxation or coping skills the child used
- Appropriate responses and strategies to use if the situation arises again
- Potential consequences or negative outcomes if negative behavior continues



"IT WILL BE IMPERATIVE FOR SCHOOLS TO TAKE THE TIME TO REALLY LOOK AT WAYS TO SUPPORT STUDENTS. THAT MEANS SEL INCORPORATED WITHIN THE CLASSROOMS, LESS ACADEMIC PRESSURE AND MORE COUNSELING SUPPORT...WHEN OUR STUDENTS FEEL SAFE, THEY'RE ABLE TO LEARN."

Jaclyn Eppright, Counseling Social Worker, Millville, New Jersey, [Supporting Our Students | NEA](#)

# Resources

[SEL Resources](#), including Zones of Regulation on SharePoint

[A 4-Step Process for Building Student Resilience](#)

[Strategies for communicating effectively with students across learning environments](#)

[Supporting Students and Community](#)

[Leveraging SEL as schools reopen](#)

[Supporting Students Experiencing Trauma During the COVID-19 Pandemic \(ed.gov\)](#)

[Helping Students and Educators Recover From COVID-19 Trauma | NEA](#)

[Common Trauma Signs and Strategies to Help](#)

[Toolkit to help students and staff return during the pandemic](#)

[Supporting yourself during these times](#)