

# Teaching to Trauma

## Responding to Students' Needs in the Classroom

Creating a trauma-informed classroom starts with an understanding of how trauma can impact learning and behavior. With this approach, educators think about what underlies student behavior and reflect on their teaching practices to find ways to better support students who may be experiencing trauma.



### How Does Trauma Impact Students in the Classroom?

#### Distractibility or Inattentiveness

Student may show difficulty focusing on tasks or be easily distracted in the classroom.



#### Difficulty Managing Emotions

Student may demonstrate emotional responses like tantrums, anger that seems excessive, or seemingly unexplained crying.

#### Difficulty with Changes in Routine

Student may have difficulty with transitions or with unexpected changes in routine.

#### Signs of Nervousness

Some students may have heightened vigilance, fidgeting, nail biting, or other signs of anxiety or nervousness.



#### High Expectations of Self

Some students may appear as "perfectionists" or present with a need to always excel.



### What Can Teachers Do?

Notice signs and symptoms of trauma early and often. If you see a student struggling, do your best to be patient and offer support.

- Talk with a child about what helps them to calm down in moments of overwhelm, they know their emotions best.
- Help students prepare as early as possible for changes in the schedule.
- Ask for support from guidance counselors and other school staff.
- Create a judgment free and flexible environment
- Manage your own responses to trauma and difficulties by engaging in self-care

# Trauma-Informed Practices

## Practical tips for your classroom

### CREATE SAFETY

Create environments where students feel emotionally and physically safe

**Try This:** Create a calming area in your room and allow the child to choose when they need "self-time" or a short break in the event that they are feeling overwhelmed or agitated.



### PLAN FOR THE INDIVIDUAL

Consider making accommodations and modifications to academic work

**Try This:** You might shorten assignments, allow additional time to complete assignments, give permission to leave class to go to a designated adult (i.e., counselor or school nurse) if feelings become overwhelming, and/or provide additional support for organizing and remembering assignments.

### SUPPORT EMOTIONAL REGULATION

Supporting emotional regulation skills in the classroom will help your students to learn self-regulation and their ability to control their thoughts, emotions, and behaviors in relation to their environment.

**Try This:** Encourage your students to name their emotions in a space that is comfortable and appropriate- naming is the first step to regulating.

