

# Traumatized Students: School-Based Interventions



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**Clear View**  
COUNSELING AND CONSULTING



*...Let's not assume that we've all been or will be traumatized... Trauma is not the same as pain. Trauma is not the same as fear. Those are natural responses to events. - Mate*



- 1) What is the TRUTH about trauma?
- 2) What skills can I use to help myself?
- 3) What skills can I use to help my students?



*Recovery Does  
Not Always  
Require Heavy Lifting*



## What Is Wrong With Me?

- \* We Don't Have Access to Information & Resources (community)
- \* We Lack Support and Understanding (disconnected)
- \* We Are Overwhelmed
- \* We Are Experiencing Chronic Trauma
- \* We Are Not Regulated (trauma response/state)
- \* We Feel Alone and Unsafe (if I'm not understood)
- \* We Are Marginalized (systems put in place to help)

What's wrong with me is the wrong question.





“...So, some of the discomfort that the client is experiencing is not about her ‘not being enough’ but an appropriate and natural reaction to systems which have defined her as ‘not enough,’ and the client has internalized harmful narratives like this.”

-Band

## What are the MYTHS about trauma?

- It doesn't happen to everyone
- It is a sign of weakness (independence)
- It requires too much work to heal
- It shouldn't be talked about
- It can't be healed (hopelessness)
- It could get worse if I talk to someone
- It only involves big events not small ones



# What Is The Truth About Trauma?

“Once you know better you do better.”  
-Maya Angelou

Acknowledge  
Correct  
Integrate



## The Trauma Truths

1. Trauma Knocks Us Off Balance
2. Immediate Intervention Limits Impact
3. People Are the Solutions to Their Own Problems
4. The Only Way Through It is Through It
5. Post Traumatic Growth Happens
1. Find a Corrective Course
2. Work to Limit Impact
3. Have a Strengths Based Mind Set
4. Understand the Purpose of Emotions
5. Trust Your Ability to Heal

## How Do I Know I Have Experienced Trauma?

- \* When I experience a psychological injury (TBI)
- \* When I am in physical danger (or someone else/no one asked me)
- \* When my experience is invalidated, minimized, or dismissed (hits)
- \* When I experience a stressful event without prior context (movie)
- \* When I experience physical symptoms such as stomach aches or headaches (The Body Keeps the Score-Van Der Kolk)
- \* When I have overwhelming emotions (or I'm numb)
- \* When my relationships become strained (can't pick and choose)
- \* When my world view has changed (it's all bad! attendee comment)

## Signs and Symptoms of PTSD

(symptoms lasting longer than 30 days - **most of us will be ok!**)

- Intrusive thoughts about the event
- Irritability and somatic complaints
- When my world view has changed
- Trouble sleeping
- Excessive worry about the future (hyperarousal)
- Dreams about the event
- Perseverating about the event (don't doesn't work)
- Physiological reactivity to cues that symbolize the event
- Delayed response (shock and misunderstood)
- When friends and family are not enough



-DSM

# Signs and Symptoms of Chronic Stress

- ★ Phobias
- ★ Anxieties
- ★ Physical Complaint
- ★ Behavioral Problems (their brain is working!)
- ★ Hallucinations
- ★ Regression/Falling Off Growth Curves
- ★ Crying
- ★ Clinginess (know development)
- ★ Irritability
- ★ Head Banging
- ★ Sleep Issues/Increased Feeding Issues



# Symptoms of Distress in Children

- Eating too much or too little
  - Sleeping too much or too little
  - Physically more more less active
  - Being more talkative or less talkative
  - Being afraid to go to sleep
  - Becoming more angry, tearful, or aggressive
  - Changes in elimination (bed wetting and diarrhea)
  - Somatic complaints
  - Fear or big responses to loud or sudden noises
  - Difficulty separating from parent or other important people in child's life
  - Rituals of patterned behavior like rocking, thumb sucking, or humming
  - Other sudden, new changes in the child's baseline behavior
- Brandt, Perry



**Intensity:** Previous Trauma

**Proximity:** Distance From  
Ground Zero

*One thing that helped Americans rebound after the  
911 attacks was a sort of great cultural coming together...*  
*-Kluger.*

**Intensity:** Those individuals with **RESOLVED** prior traumatic experience may have higher levels of resilience due to having survived and integrated these previous events. (sensitive systems to trauma)

\* How did you survive that experience? What strengths and resources can we pull forward from what happened back there that can help you now?

*“Nothing breeds success like success. “*

*-Selekman*

**Proximity:** Those closest to where the event occurred, or who have been intimately impacted (or who know people who have been impacted) are at greater risk of developing more significant symptoms. (how close were you)

*Courage is not having the strength to go on; it's going on when you don't have the strength.*

*- Roosevelt*



According to the American Academy of Pediatrics, the state of children and teens' mental health since the pandemic qualifies as a national emergency. - AAAP

Mental health among students overall continues to worsen with 40% of high school students showing signs of depression. -CDC

Teen girls who say they have thought about suicide increased 50% in last decade. -CDC

More than 1 in 5 LGBTQ teens reported they had attempted suicide during the past year. -CDC

Highest risk groups for suicide: men 45-55, 85+, American Indian men and Alaskan Native men, and second cause of death for youth (10 - 24). -CDC/SAMSA



The Most Important Part!!!

Mindfulness

Parts Work

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy

Dialectical Behavioral Therapy

Brainspotting and EMDR



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1. Limit what stories are being told. (acknowledge what stories are not being told)
2. Ask questions and don't assume.
3. Offer facts and reassurance but don't make promises.
4. Encourage kids to tell their own stories. (narrative)
5. Remind kids it is not all bad.
6. Focus on the helpers.
7. Be the helper!! -Life Kit(2022).



## Trauma Truth #1

Trauma Knocks Us  
Off Balance

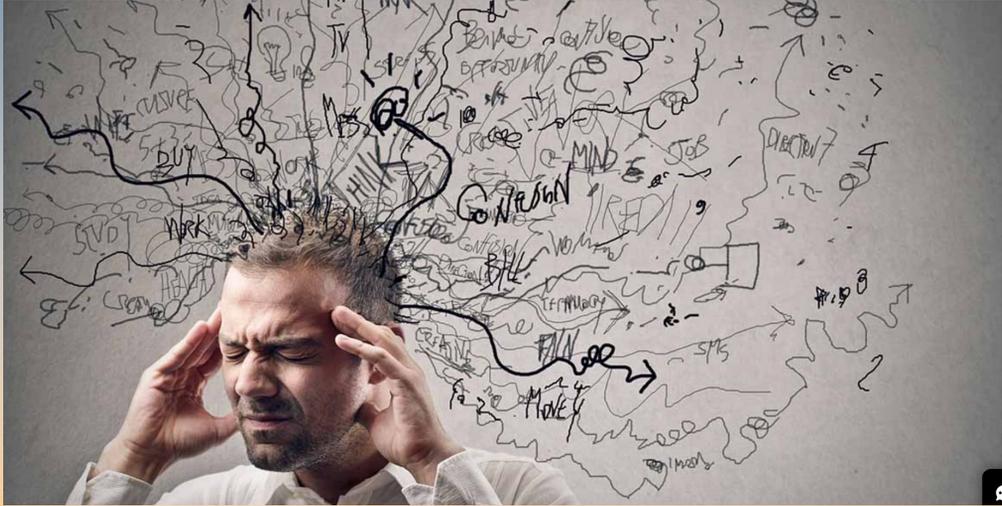
## CORRECTING COURSE

*Trauma knocks us out of balance which is why correcting course (finding the counterbalance) is the **CRUX** of treatment....and there are infinite options.*



*Bring balance to the force, not leave it  
in the darkness. -Kenobi*





What is happening? Am I a good person? Have I ever done good things?



It Starts With YOU

-A-B-C

-Survival Brain

-Dose Regulation

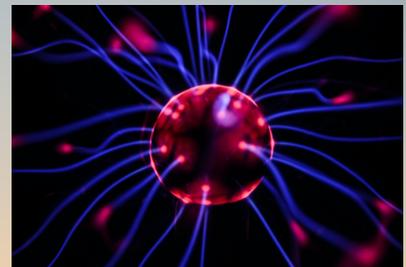
A **mirror** neuron is a neuron that fires both when an animal acts and when the animal observes the same action performed by another. Thus, the neuron "**mirrors**" the behavior of the other, as though the observer were itself acting.

wikipedia



## Trauma Knocks Us Out Of Balance

- \* Hyperarousal
- \* Re-experiencing
- \* Hypoarousal (constriction or numbing)



## *Window Of Tolerance*



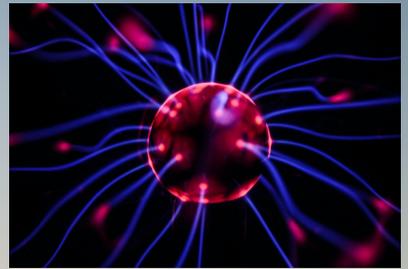
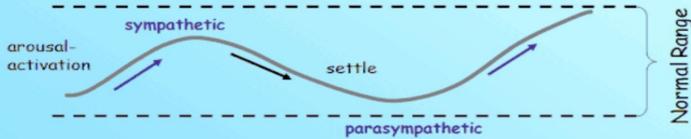
 nicabm National Institute for the Clinical Application of Behavioral Medicine

<https://fb.watch/3NOLPGG05>

[https://www.facebook.com/  
motherlymedia/videos/262  
522944786388/](https://www.facebook.com/motherlymedia/videos/262522944786388/)

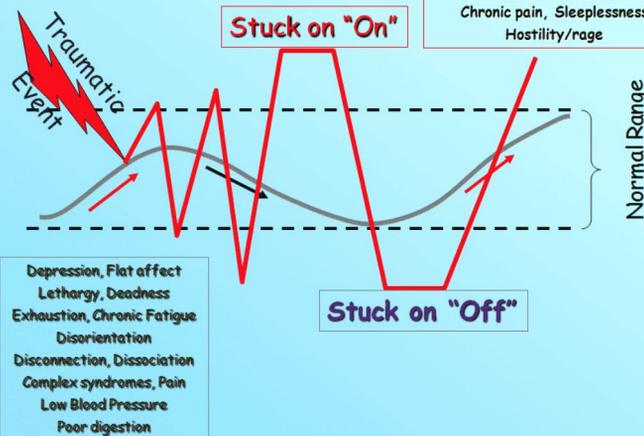


## A Healthy Nervous System



-Levine, Ogden, Siegel

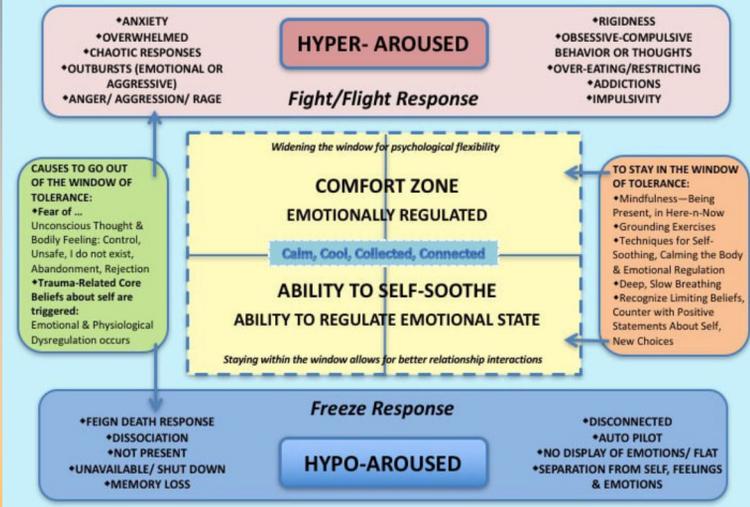
## Symptoms of Un-Discharged Traumatic Stress



-Levine, Ogden, Siegel

Marie S. Dezelec, PhD © 2013

**WINDOW OF TOLERANCE- TRAUMA/ANXIETY RELATED RESPONSES:**  
*Widening the Comfort Zone for Increased Flexibility*



**TO STAY IN THE WINDOW OF TOLERANCE:**

- Mindfulness—Being Present, in Here-n-Now
- Grounding Exercises
- Techniques for Self-Soothing, Calming the Body & Emotional Regulation
- Deep, Slow Breathing
- Recognize Limiting Beliefs, Counter with Positive Statements About Self, New Choices

-Dezelec and Associates

## Strategies to DECREASE Arousal



- Deep and slow tummy breathing
- Drinking from a straw
- Throwing therapy/yoga ball at a blank wall or outside wall
- Jumping on a trampoline or mini trampoline
- Weighted blanket
- Warm water
- Touchpoints

## Strategies to INCREASE Arousal

- Anything that stimulates the senses
- Smelling essential oils
- Chew crunchy food
- Use of sensory shaker (ball pit) for tactile input
- Movement
- Jumping on a trampoline or mini trampoline
- Gently sitting and bouncing on therapy ball (simulating rocking motion)
- Touchpoints



Put Balance  
Back  
Into Balance!!!!!!!

Safety at Home  
+  
Safety at School  
=  
BALANCE



## What Students Say They Need to Feel Safe.

- Talk to us! **Listen** to us!
- Tell us personal stuff (connect with us).
- Let us talk to our parents. (lock down during finals)
- Make us laugh (or at least try/hypoarousal)
- Lock the door during class. (previous experience)
- Don't freak out. (6th grade student/hyperarousal)
- Don't promote being a hero. (assembly)
- Don't make us do work (connect with us)
- Know what is going on! (phone call)
- Don't make me sit by the door or open it. (worse part)



## CONSISTENCY IS KEY



- Ask 'how are you?'
- Offer to help.
- Be kind ongoing.
- Look out for each other.
- Practice gratitude.
- Make them laugh.
- Give gifts of appreciation.
- Help people feel safe.
- ???

LEAD BY EXAMPLE  
-Sinek



## Staying Connected



- RECOGNIZE student's feelings and be comfortable staying quiet
- REASSURE and normalize their reactions
- RESOURCE students with information about where to go for help
- [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jNVPaINZD\\_I](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jNVPaINZD_I)

## 2 Minute Skills and Strategies

-Regulation Dose!

- Laughter is the Best Medicine
  - Power Pose
  - Gratitude and Gifts
  - Stretching
  - Drink Water
  - Mindfulness and Meditation
  - Healthy Distract
  - Talk To Someone
  - Don't Forget to Breathe
  - Cute Animal or Kid Breaks
- CONSISTENCY!!!!**



## Signs and Symptoms of PTSD (symptoms lasting longer than 30 days)

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- When friends and family are not enough -DSM



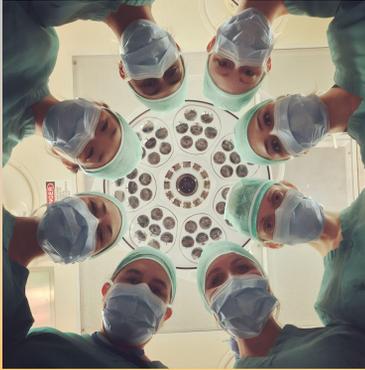
## Trauma Truth #2

Immediate

Intervention

Limits Impact

*“The time to work with trauma is when it is happening.”-Gordon“*



- The Kosovo War was waged in the Serbian province of Kosovo from 1998 to 1999. Ethnic Albanians living in Kosovo faced the pressure of Serbs fighting for control of the region. Albanians also opposed the government of Yugoslavia, which was made up of modern day Serbia, Montenegro, Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Slovenia and Macedonia.  
[-borgenproject.org/the-kosovo-war](http://borgenproject.org/the-kosovo-war)

- 200k to 250k killed
- 80% homes destroyed
- 20% high school kids lost one or both parents



*“The time to work with trauma is when it is happening.”-Gordon“*



- high school teachers were taught trauma techniques
- 1000 kids, once a week, 12 weeks
- 80% no longer qualified after program
- results held up 3 months after group completed
- first randomized test like this (control trial) landmark study
- “gold standard” of medical research



Nutrition  
Breathe  
Sleep  
Movement  
Write  
Mindfulness  
Meditation  
Nature  
Laughter  
Curiosity  
Play a Game



## Have Good Nutrition



Educate children and adolescents about the importance of nutrition

Talk about the impact of trauma on body organs and overall function

Cultivate good eating habits and reduce consumption of processed foods

Stay hydrated

Lead by example

# Breathe



- Breathe to the count of 6
- Alligator breathe
- Four square breathing
- Breathe in what you want!
- Hot chocolate breathing

-Reset your nervous system

-Feel the shift!

-Pause to get back into the higher functioning brain

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S4sfbciCr24>

# Sleep



Limit screen time and feel safe.

Limit caffeine.

Listen to bi-lateral music or a sleep app.

Like your bedtime routine.

Listen to your doctor.

Lose the chatter. (sleep doc.)

Like your environment (and your breath)

# Move It



Movement allows us to discharge trauma

Movement allows us to get out excess cortisol

Movement is the way mammals shake off traumatic experience

Movement can include a variety of things including dance, exercise, and shaking



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZtE1cg9KxRc>



# Write On!



Writing for 20 minutes a day can reduce traumatic symptoms within a few weeks

Writing allows us to go deeper into our experience

Writing allows us to acknowledge our feelings and emotions as a corrective experience

Writing externalizes toxic stress

*Journaling Allows Us To Drop Into A Deeper Version Of Ourselves*

<https://www.howlifeunfolds.com/learning-education/25-writing-prompts-just-kids>



What is an emotion you are struggling with right now?

What does it want?

What does it need to know?

What does it think it is doing to help?

What does it need to do to help you?

What does it need to stop doing?



# Turn Off Future Oriented Anxiety

Find your joy

Have gratitude

Change your lense

Be in the moment



## Be Mindful

Walking in Nature and/or Engage the Senses

Mindful Eating

Name Five Things in the Room

Name Five Things Outside of the Room

Get Curious About Your Surroundings

Find the Color Blue, Pink, Orange, and Yellow



Thich Nhat Hanh



# Meditate



# Meditate



Lower levels of stress

Reduce physical pain

Treat insomnia

Stop episodic anger

Deal with irrational thinking and anxiety

Increase coping skills and general sense of well being

1) Focus on breath

2) Focus on mindful activity

# Stay Curious

Gratitude

Compassion

Creativity

Mindfulness

Local adventures

Guest speakers

Animal Guests



# Laughter Is The Best Medicine



Laughter allows our brain to open back up by changing direction

Laughter can change our emotions

Laughter reminds us that it is not all bad

Laughter reminds us not to take ourselves so seriously

Laughter is contagious!!!!

# How to Meditate

*Ultra Spiritual Style*



*“It Is The Relationship That Hurts And It  
Is The Relationship That Heals” -Rumi*



# Play A Game



*Play is the gateway to vitality. By its nature it is uniquely and intrinsically rewarding. It generates optimism, seeks out novelty, makes perseverance fun, leads to mastery, gives the immune system a bounce, fosters empathy and promotes a sense of belonging and community.*

*-The National Institute of Play*

- Nutrition
- Breathe
- Sleep
- Movement
- Write
- Mindfulness
- Meditation
- Nature
- Laughter
- Curiosity
- Play a Game

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TKQcAzBpKew>





## Trauma Truth #3

People Are the  
Solutions To Their  
Problems

## What Would Your Superhero Do?



Superhero?

Artist?

Parent?

Rock Star?

Athlete?

Teacher?

You?



# Protective Factors For Teens

Problem Solving Skills

Extracurricular activities

Attached at home and school

Coping Skills

Esteem (Self)



The Top Resiliency Traits for Children:

- CONNECTION to Caring Adults
- Play and Creativity
- Routine and Ritual
- +Mindfulness



You Have Either Had  
Trauma Or You Are Going  
To....



Grief Is Messy



### Five Stages of Grief



*“Trauma is when we get stuck around those events and their impact on us.... Genuine grieving is the opposite of trauma.”*

*-Mate*



## Staying Connected

- RECOGNIZE student's feelings and be comfortable staying quiet
- REASSURE and normalize their reactions
- RESOURCE students with information about where to go for help





## Celebrate Every Success!



- Mark progress
- Have color parties
- Invite important others
- See failure as opportunity

'What have you tried to fail at this week?' -Sara Blakely

# What Is The Truth About Trauma?

“Once you know better you do better.”  
-Maya Angelou

Acknowledge  
Correct  
Integrate



## Trauma Truth #4

The Only Way  
Through It is  
Through It

# What is the Purpose of Our Emotions?

Anxiety (sweet brain)  
Grief (honor)  
Shame (disconnected)  
Resentment (needs?)  
Anger (catalyst)



Courage, Compassion, and Connection

# What is the Purpose of Our Emotions?

Survive (fight, flight, freeze)  
Remember people and situations  
Cope with situations in your daily life  
Communicate with others  
Avoid pain  
Seek pleasure  
-Wood & Brantley



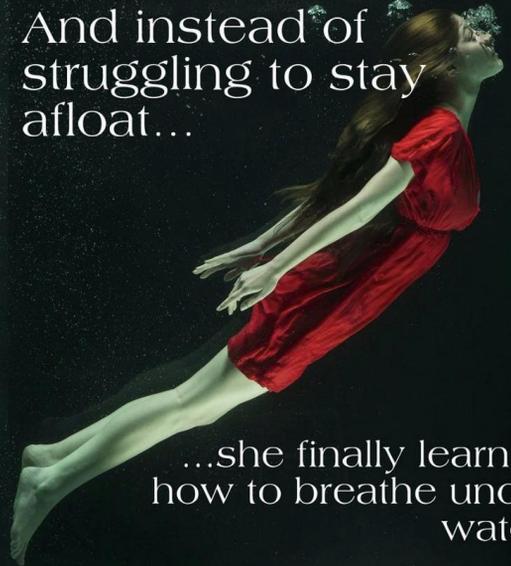
*Defining moments rise above the everyday. They provoke not just transient happiness...but memorable delight.*

- Heath & Heath

# Discomfort as Proof



And instead of  
struggling to stay  
afloat...



...she finally learned  
how to breathe under  
water.

## How did you fail today?

*The promise of stretching is not  
success, it's learning. -Heath &  
Heath*

*Failure is the CRUX of Resilience*



*“I start with tremendous gratitude for fear...I have no desire to be fearless...It’s just that (for most of us) fear is all jacked up on Red Bull.” -Elizabeth Gilbert*



## *Feel The Rainbow: The Biology of Emotions*

Anxiety - When it comes to survival fear is a good thing!

Grief - How we can shake off traumatic experience.

Shame - What reminds us we need each other.

Resentment - Where I find my needs are not being met.

Anger - When I am not feeling safe.

Sadness - How I can rethink my life.



*-Know the promise of recovery!*

*-All at the same time!!!*



What is an emotion you are struggling with right now?

Have a dialogue between yourself and the emotion?

What does it want?

What does it need to know?

What does it need to do to help you?

What does it need to stop doing?



## NAME IT TO TAME IT

“It looks like you are feeling overwhelmed\*, why don’t we take a break”

**\*ANGRY**

**\*SAD**

**\*MOVING AWAY**

**\*SCARED**

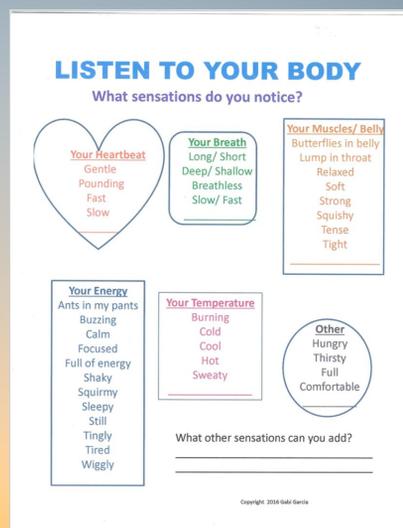
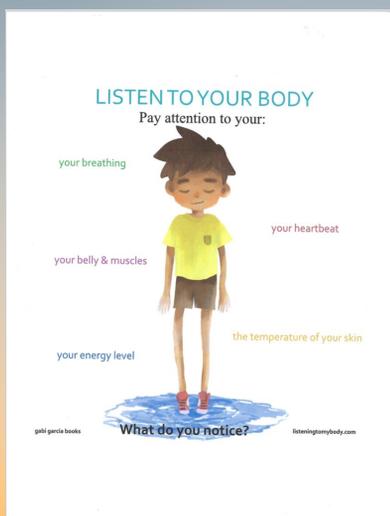
**-Siegel**



*“Naming it allows for a sense of understanding and being seen as well as validation. We we stop to notice (within ourselves or others) this can be a powerful grounding tool. Children, youth, and adults should be encouraged to focus mindfully on noticing how they feel, how their body feels, and identifying what they need to feel right again. Our goal is to essentially broaden this window of tolerance increasing capacity for people to hold emotional experiences (even intense ones) without becoming dysregulated or going into a state of hyper or hypo arousal.”*

*-Levine, Ogden, Siegel*

**This is how we build resilience!!!!!!**



-Garcia

What color is your feeling?

How big is your feeling?

What song captures your feelings?

What is your feeling doing? Is your feeling moving? Sitting Still?

What does it feel like? Is your feeling hard? Soft?

What does your feeling look like?

What animal is your feeling?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TKQcAzBpKew>



## Gratitude in Action



Gratitude has tremendous health benefits

Gratitude happens in the present...and extends it

Gratitude leads to joy

Gratitude connects us (and can help reconnect us)



## Gratitude and Resilience:

**What is a problem you  
are having?**

**What is the opportunity?**

## Hope in Action



Teach & Create Realistic Goals

Teach & Foster Mental Flexibility

Teach & Remember Pain is  
Temporary

Teach & Shift Gravity Problems

*Prepare the child for the path  
not the path for the child.*



We Tend to Get in Our Own Way

## Stop Your Stopping!

1. We lack information and resources.
2. We do what mammals do.
3. We play the blame game.
4. We try to solve the problem with the problem.
5. We think there is something wrong with us.
6. We are getting something out of staying stuck.
7. We don't think we can change.

# We Play The Blame Game

Understand the problem with feedback loops

Accept that you may not get the answers

Stop blaming yourself and others (think!)

Do something!

-Find your accountability (exercise)

-What is your part?

-What have you learned that you will take with you?

-What will you do now?



# We Try To Solve The Problem With The Problem

Shaming ourselves through trauma impact does not work

It takes as long as it takes to heal if you want to heal correctly

We tend to do what we know how to do

-Compassion (exercise)

-Don't do to you what has been done to you

-Identify your goals and a plan to attain them

-Find compassion for yourself (and for others)

## We Are Getting Something Out of Staying Stuck

Sometimes there are payoffs for not getting better

Avoidance does not work because there is loss and then there is loss

We don't feel understood and/or safe

We get attention

-Motivational Interviewing (Exercise)

-How confident are you? Scale of 1 - 10

-How motivated are you? Scale of 1 - 10

-Start with whatever scale they are lower on

## We Think There Is Something Wrong With Us

Don't expect people to need what you need

It makes sense

Trauma happens to everyone

Grief is messy

Volcano (exercise)

-explain the metaphor

-draw the volcano

-create steam vents





## Trauma Truth #5

Post Traumatic  
Growth Happens



**TRAUMA IS A BRAIN INJURY!**

Triggers are hot spots waiting to be activated

Trauma memory is out of time and place

Don't focus on the trigger but rather how long it takes to stand back up

**THIS IS HOW WE MARK  
PROGRESS!**



## The Trauma Truths

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  3. Have a Strengths Based Mind Set
  4. Understand the Purpose of Emotions
  5. Trust Your Ability to Heal



## Trauma Truth

It Starts With YOU

Take care of yourself so you can take care of others

Understand trauma so you can teach others about trauma

Get mentorship so you can mentor others

Self-Care (exercise)

-How do you take care of yourself?

-What could you do more of (or less of) for you?

-What can you celebrate?



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