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SCHOOL TRAUMA MANAGEMENT PLAN

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1. WHAT IS TRAUMA?

Trauma is defined using eight general dimensions and six specific distinctions:

—Threat to life or limb; severe physical harm or injury, including sexual assault; receipt of intentional injury or harm; exposure to the grotesque; violent, sudden loss of a loved one; witnessing or learning of violence to a loved one; learning of exposure to a noxious agent; and causing death or severe harm to another (Wilson & Sigman, 2000).

—Physical trauma, psychological trauma, social trauma, historical trauma, ongoing trauma, and vicarious or secondary trauma.

COVID 19 are impacting our students on a physical, psychological, and social level. The trauma is ongoing.

2. CHILDREN AND TRAUMA

- Children are more vulnerable to the stress of trauma
- Children's responses to trauma are complex and are different from those of adults.
- Children's traumatizing experiences can compromise all areas of childhood development, including identity development, cognitive processing, body integrity, ability to manage behaviour, affect tolerance, spiritual and moral development, and ability to trust self and others.
- Repeated traumatizing experiences have a neurodevelopment, physiological, emotional, social and behavioural impact.

Children's symptoms fall into 4 major categories:

1. Persistent fear state

2. Disorder of memory

3. Deregulation of affect

4. Avoidance of intimacy

- When a child does not have the opportunity to process, give meaning, and learn to cope with the sequel of the traumatic experience with a trusted adult, the trauma can have a devastating impact not only on the child's ability to master stage-specific developmental tasks at the time of the trauma, but also on the course of subsequent development.
- Childhood trauma is considered a pivotal causal factor in the development of psychopathology and the quality of relationships with parents and other caregivers.
- These children develop "survivor behaviours"
- These behaviours help the child to survive extreme psychological stress in a hostile environment.
- In a non-threatening environment the children will exhibit these behaviours to deal with their uncomfortableness and anxiety.
- To these children a nurturing environment is threatening!

3. TRAUMA AND DEVELOPMENT

Developmental consequences of trauma on learners:

- Difficulty trusting others
- Social isolation
- Difficulty seeking help
- Hypersensitivity to physical contact
- Increased medical, emotional and mental problems
- Problems with coordination and balance
- Problems with academic achievement
- Oppositional/antisocial behaviours
- Difficulty planning for the future

4. TRAUMATIC EXPERIENCES AND EDUCATION

- Trauma can impact school performance. (Lower IQ, higher absence rate, decreased reading ability, increased behaviour problems)
- Trauma can impair learning. (Chronic exposure can adversely affect attention, memory, and cognition, interfere with problem solving, and result in overwhelming feelings of frustration and anxiety).
- Traumatized children may experience physical and emotional distress.
- Educators can help a child who has been traumatized.

5. TRAUMA PRACTISES IN SCHOOLS

- Becoming trauma informed requires a shift in the educational paradigm of classroom management.
- It goes against what you have learned about students' behavioural challenges and classroom discipline approaches.
- It changes how policies are developed and implemented in schools when encountering traumatized students.
- It has a ripple effect across the school environment and culture. It involves administration, teachers, staff, students and families.

6. BENEFITS OF TRAUMA MANAGEMENT PLAN

- Improved academic achievement and test scores.
- Improved school climate.
- Improved teacher sense of satisfaction and safety in being a teacher.
- Reduction of student behavioural out-burst and referrals to the office.
- Reduction of stress for staff and students.
- Reduction in absences, detentions, and suspensions.
- Reduction in student bullying and harassment.

7. TRAUMA INFORMED CARE FRAMEWORK (TIC)

Stages of trauma recovery

- Create a safe environment
- Processing of unresolved trauma memories
- Making connections with others

8. TRAUMA INFORMED CARE (TIC)

Essentials of TIC

- Connect – Focus on Relationships
- Protect – Promote Safety and Trustworthiness
- Respect – Engage in Choice and Collaboration
- Redirect (Teach and Reinforce) – Encourage Skill-Building and Competence

9. THE BEST TIC INTERVENTION

- The relationship works to bring the brain back into regulation
- Safe, predictable, consistent relationships

9.1 CREATING A SAFE ENVIRONMENT AT SCHOOL THROUGH RELATIONSHIPS

Strategies in working with students impacted by trauma:

- Clarify your role with the student.
- Establish yourself as a safe individual.
- Create an environment of respect.
- Give the student opportunities to make choices.
- Talk about safety and what steps you will take to help the student be and feel safe.
- Connect the student to the appropriate resources and people.
- Message to students: “You are not alone”.

9.2 CREATING A SAFE ENVIRONMENT AT SCHOOL

Some safety approaches for the classroom:

- Have a predictable environment with clear expectations for behaviour.
- Have structure during the class day, try not to deviate from it often
- Establish a quiet, safe place in the classroom for students to go when they are feeling overwhelmed. It should be a comfortable space away from others, with comfortable furniture, blankets and pillows.
- Have some sensory materials for students, such as a small rubber ball they can squeeze, stuffed animals, pillows with different types of fabric, pipe cleaners, rocks, crystals, play dough or clay, paper for scribbling, colour markers/pencils, puzzles, etc.
- Have pleasant colours, pictures of nature, cute animals, etc. in the classroom that students can focus on when deregulated.
- Incorporate music into the classroom that is playing in the background, rhythmic sounds

10. BEHAVIOURAL STRATEGIES FOR TRAUMA IMPACTED STUDENTS

Strategies:

- Practice active listening with students and demonstrate empathy
- Use of specific praise like-- “You did a great job paying attention in class today” vs “Good job today.”
- 10:1 (Ratio of positive to negative statements for traumatized children/adolescents)
- Active ignoring of negative behaviour
- Consistent expectations and behaviour plans that are based on rewards systems, not punishment.
- Do collaborative problem-solving with students.

11. TRAUMA INTERVENTION WITH TRAUMA IMPACTED LEARNERS

- Teach Stress Management/Relaxation Skills:
 - BREATHE! Teach breathing for relaxation
 - Provide students with a calm or quiet place to sit or talk.
 - Remain calm, quiet, and present.
- Watch the tone and speed of your voice/words—these children are hypersensitive to facial expressions, volume of voice, tone, etc. they pick up on stress-related behaviours of adults
- Do not lecture or ask too many questions because the student can not process too much
- Make sure to take deep breath yourself to calm yourself and the student will imitate you
- Slow yourself down, talk slower, use a lower pitch for your voice, do not use complex sentences, do not use lots of body movements
- Offer suggestions on self-calming techniques, such as mindfulness, grounding, tracking, and positive memories.
- Teach positive self-talk to students and practice it before you need it. “I am safe” “I can calm myself down” “I am a good loving person”
 - Use music, exercise, movement, stretching
- Incorporate more opportunities for humour and laughter into the curriculum. (Laughter reduces the traumatic response in the brain)
 - Teach Feelings Expression and Coping--
 - Identify and label emotions and feelings.
 - Use of scales and “thermometer” to rate emotion intensity.
- Identify coping skills to help decrease emotional intensity. Help learners find positive ways to cope.
 - Connect students to friends, peers, or supportive adults.
- Think of ways to reach out to parents/caregivers that involves them in the educational process.
- Deepen your understanding about the community the student lives in and available resources for the student and family.
 - Teach students how to ask for help until someone responds.
 - Role play accessing additional supports.
 - Best friend role plays: “What would you tell your best friend to do?”
 - Recognize that change happens very slowly.
 - Know that you may never see the outcomes of your efforts.
- Trust that our simple compassionate gestures are important elements of healing and surviving.

12. SELF CARE TO PREVENT SECONDARY TRAUMA

Working with traumatized learners can be overwhelming so managing personal and professional stress is vital:

- Exercise and eat healthy
- Engage in a pleasant hobby or activity
- Creating a health consistent structure and pattern in your personal life.
- Knowing your limits.
- Improving your understanding of trauma and secondary trauma.
- Taking time out.
- Seeking support from co-workers, family, friends
- Professional counselling
- Vacations