

Trauma-Informed Education Training: Tools for Deeper Learning

Activity 1: Understanding Trauma and Its Impact

Objective: To help classified professionals, faculty, and administrators understand complex trauma and its impact on student development.

Instructions:

1. **Explore the concept of Complex Trauma:**
 - Read the definition and explore the resources for [complex trauma provided by the National Child Traumatic Stress Network](#).
2. **Impact of Trauma:**
 - How might *complex trauma* impact student behavior and learning in college? **Reflect in 3-5 sentences.**
3. **Reflection:**
 - Recall a time you encountered a student displaying signs or behaviors associated with a trauma response.
 - What would be a trauma-informed approach to this situation?
 - Thinking about your response at the time, in what ways was it trauma-informed? What, if anything, would you do differently if you could do it again?

Activity 2: Trauma-Informed Education and Felt Safety

Objective: To equip classified professionals, faculty, and administrators with practical strategies for creating a trauma-informed environment that promotes felt safety and learning.

Instructions:

1. **Felt Safety:**
 - [Review Robyn Gobbel's blog post](#) on *felt safety*.
 - Define what *felt safety* means in the context of a college classroom, office, or campus.

- List three ways you can increase *felt safety* in physical (or virtual) spaces on campus.
- 2. Principles of Trauma-Informed Environment:**
- Describe the five principles of a trauma-informed environment: *safety, choice, empowerment, collaboration, and trustworthiness*.
 - Provide an example of how you can implement each principle in your interactions with students.
- 3. Case Study Analysis:**
- Read the provided case study scenarios (see [Appendix A](#)).
 - Identify the signs or behavioral expressions of a trauma-response in each scenario and what trauma-informed strategies you could use to support these students.

Activity 3: Evaluating and Redesigning Spaces through a Trauma-Informed Lens

Objective: To design physical or virtual spaces that promote felt safety and learning.

Instructions:

- 1. Assessment:**
- Evaluate your current office, classroom, or virtual environment. Identify aspects that might feel unsafe or uncomfortable for students, particularly those with a history of trauma. Consider including your students in the evaluation.
- 2. Design:**
- Sketch a realistic redesign of your space, incorporating elements that promote safety, comfort, accessibility, and belonging.
 - Describe changes you would make, such as adding calming colors, comfortable seating, or privacy options.
- 3. Implementation Plan:**
- Evaluate the changes you can make to your space that don't require institutional/facilities services approval.
 - Create a step-by-step plan to implement these changes.

- Consider the resources you need, potential barriers, and how you will measure the impact of these changes.
- Work with leadership to implement these changes.

Activity 4: Applying A Relationship-Based Approach

Objective: To help classified professionals, faculty, and administrators develop skills for building meaningful, supportive relationships with students.

Instructions:

1. Building Trust:

- List three ways to build trust with students who have experienced trauma.
- Reflect on a time when you successfully built trust with a student. What did you do to accomplish this?

2. Empowerment and Validation:

- Define *empowerment* and *validation* in the context of student support.
- Use the case study scenarios (see [Appendix A](#)) to imagine how you would validate and empower each student based on their unique circumstances.

3. Challenges and Strategies:

- Identify common challenges you face when trying to build relationships with students.
- For each challenge, brainstorm at least two relationship-based strategies to overcome it.

Activity 5: Role-Playing Scenarios

Objective: To practice trauma-informed responses to common scenarios for students impacted by foster care and trauma.

Instructions:

1. Scenario Development:

- Work in pairs to develop realistic scenarios that might occur on campus (e.g., a student discloses past trauma, a student is visibly upset after a class).
- Alternatively, use the scenarios provided in [Appendix A](#)

2. Role-Play:

- Take turns role-playing the scenario, with one person acting as the student and the other as the staff/faculty member supporting them.
- Practice using trauma-informed language and strategies learned from the training during the interaction.

3. Debrief:

- After each role-play, discuss what went well and what could be improved.
- Reflect on how you felt during the role-play and how you can apply these skills in real-life situations.

Appendix A: Case Study Scenarios

Scenario 1: Amanda's Academic Struggles

Amanda is a 19-year-old first time college student who aged out of the foster care system. She frequently misses classes and assignments, often appearing disorganized and withdrawn. Amanda's professors have noticed she seems anxious during exams and struggles with time management. She is not currently connected to any campus support programs.

Scenario 2: Marcus and Social Isolation

Marcus is a 21-year-old computer science major. Like a disproportionate number of foster youth, Marcus is Black and has been in and out of foster homes throughout his life. Marcus rarely participates in class discussions and avoids group work. He often sits alone in the library and avoids social events on campus. You suspect Marcus may be on the Autism Spectrum although he does not have a formal diagnosis or accommodations.

Scenario 3: Jasmine's Behavioral Outbursts

Jasmine is a 20-year-old Latina student participating in extended foster care, who entered the system at age 10. You are aware that she has resided in multiple family-

and congregate care settings since childhood. She exhibits frequent mood swings and has had several confrontations with classmates and instructors, some of which have involved Campus Safety. She is currently in conversation with the campus Conduct Office and is at risk of suspension. Jasmine has difficulty accepting constructive feedback and often perceives it as personal criticism. She was connected to community mental health services but recently disclosed that she stopped attending her bi-weekly sessions because she was upset with her therapist.

Scenario 4: David's Financial and Housing Insecurity

David is a 22-year-old 4th year student who aged out of the foster care system at 18. He is struggling to balance a full course load while working two part-time jobs to afford rent and basic necessities. David often appears fatigued and has difficulty concentrating in class. You are aware that David is expecting his first child in two months and is considering dropping out of school so that he can work more to provide for his family.

Scenario 5: Alex's Enrollment Obstacles

Alex is an incoming freshman transgender student who has been encountering many hurdles in the matriculation process due to his name and gender not matching the details on some of his personal identification documents. He is currently in the process of legally changing his name and sex on his Driver's License. He tearfully disclosed to you that he has been misgendered by campus staff in both the Admissions and Records and Financial Aid Office and is so frustrated by the process that he's considering giving up. If Alex does not attend college, he will be at risk of being kicked out of his transitional housing program.

Appendix B: Additional Learning Resources

1. [Understanding Child Trauma 3-page Info Sheet](#) by SAMHSA
2. [Foster Youth and Education Infographic](#) by John Burton Advocates for Youth
3. [ReMoved](#) a short film that follows the emotional story through the eyes of a young girl taken from her home and placed into foster care
4. [Understanding Transition Age Youth Documentary](#) by the Storyboard Project
5. [Trauma Informed Care Infographic](#) from the University of Buffalo School of Social Work
6. [How childhood trauma affects health across a lifetime](#) | Dr. Nadine Burke Harris TED Talk on ACEs (video) and [the Burke Foundation](#)
7. [Building Trauma Sensitive Schools Training Package](#) from the National Center on Safe Supportive Learning Environments

8. **Student Support (Re)defined** project by the RP Group and the related [Six Success Factors: Action Planning](#) activity
9. **Five Ways to Support Students Affected by Trauma** by The Greater Good Science Center at the University of California, Berkeley
10. **Transformational Relationships for Youth Success** report by the Center for the Study of Social policy
11. **Crosswalk: Youth Thrive & Healing Centered Engagement** by Youth Thrive
12. **From Theory to Practice: Fostering Relationship-Based Approaches in NextUp Programs** by John Burton Advocates for Youth
13. **Utilizing Schlossberg's Transition Theory to Conceptualize & Support First-Gen College Students' Transition into Higher Education Post COVID-19** by NACADA

Appendix C: References

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