



Creating Trauma-Responsive Schools

Lara Kain

National consultant on building trauma-informed,
resilience-focused environments

Twitter: @larakain1

www.larakain.org



WELCOME!



Building Community:

Please introduce yourself! share where you are, your role,
and your favorite food OR movie



ESSENTIAL QUESTION

How do we create schools
that foster Hope, Equity
and Resilience using a
trauma-informed lens?

Guiding Assumptions

We Aren't *Fixing* ANYONE.

This work is deeply personal transformative work. Change is an ongoing process of inquiry and reflection

How we currently operate often induces and compounds trauma for children and families

There is no checklist, program, or toolkit



Today might feel like

Our current system delivers more than we can manage, and we are doing the best we can



Let's dive in



Please feel free to share thoughts and reactions in the chat as we go

Suggestion:
Use a * for something that resonates for you

A ! (or !!!) for something you are excited about

And a ? For a wondering or question you might have



What is a trauma informed approach?

Broadly defined as practices that promote a culture of safety, empowerment, and healing, and that encourage support and treatment of the whole person, rather than treatment of individual symptoms or specific behaviors.

Shawn Ginwright Ph.D.

Author of Hope and Healing in Urban Education: How Activists are Reclaiming Matters of the Heart.

From Trauma-Informed to Healing Centered

In this movement we currently have a bit of a messaging problem

- ◆ We want to foster **HOPE, HEALING,** and **RESILIENCE** while at the same time understanding that trauma, ACE's, poverty, inequity come to school with us
- ◆ We want to be asset-focused rather than deficit-based without toxic positivity that ignores the reality of the systems around us



A Shift to Healing Centered Engagement

- ◇ Healing-centered engagement emphasizes individuals' strengths and resilience, recognizing the impact of trauma without minimizing it.
- ◇ The term *healing-centered engagement* expands how we think about responses to trauma and offers more holistic approach to fostering well-being.
- ◇ A healing centered approach to addressing trauma requires a different question that moves beyond “what happened to you” to “what’s right with you” and views those exposed to trauma as agents in the creation of their own well-being rather than victims of traumatic events.

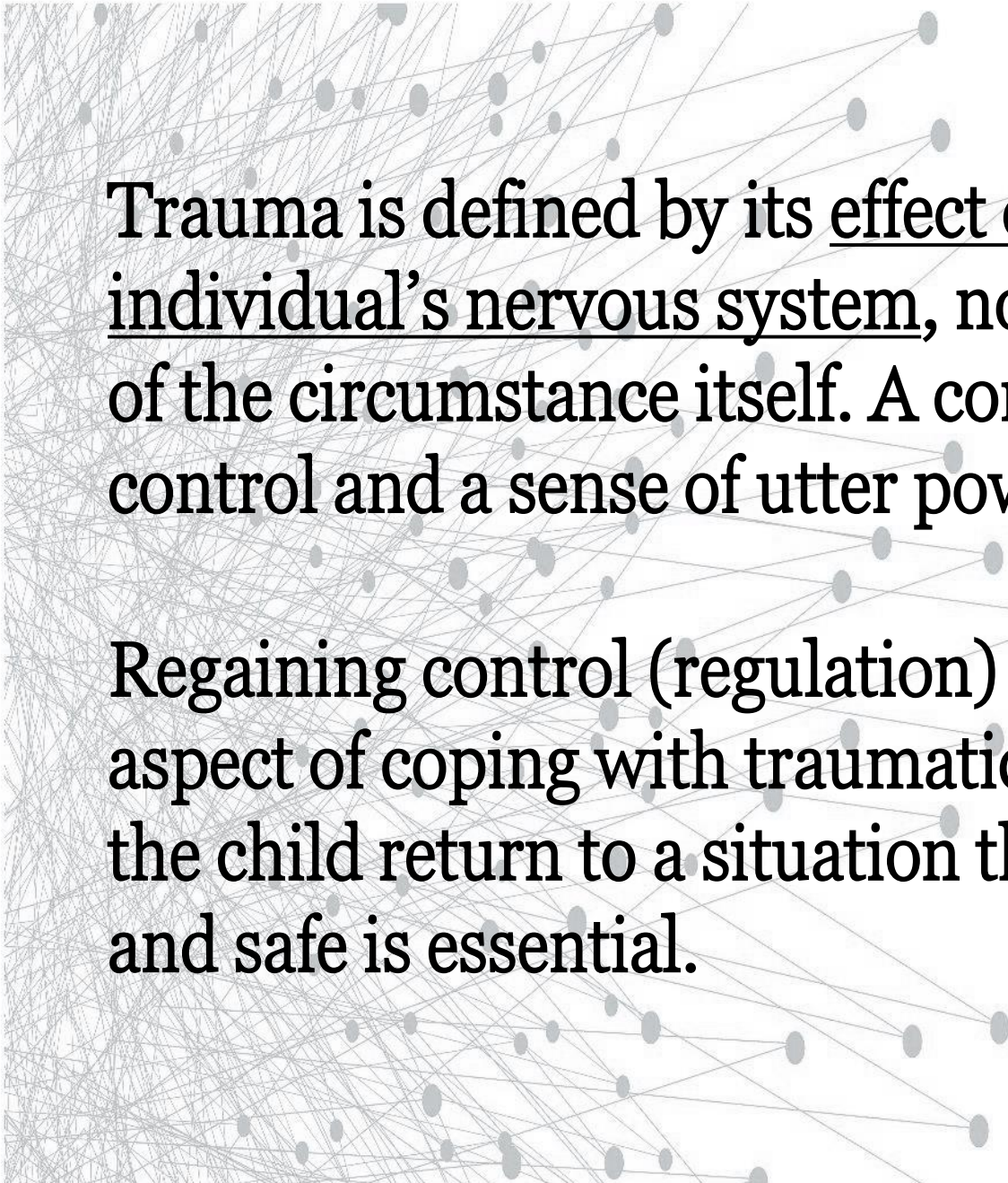
<https://medium.com/@ginwright/the-future-of-healing-shifting-from-trauma-informed-care-to-healing-centered-engagement-634f557ce69c>

Toward a Definition of Trauma

The results of an event, series of events, or set of circumstances that is experienced by an individual or community as physically or emotionally harmful or life threatening and that has lasting adverse effects on their functioning and mental, physical, social, emotional, or spiritual well-being.

Source: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)





Trauma is defined by its effect on a particular individual's nervous system, not on the intensity of the circumstance itself. A complete loss of control and a sense of utter powerlessness.

Regaining control (regulation) is an important aspect of coping with traumatic stress and helping the child return to a situation that is predictable and safe is essential.

Collective Trauma



"Collective trauma refers to the impacts of adversity on relationships in families, communities, and societies at large. This includes natural and human-caused disasters as well as the cumulative effects of poverty, oppression, illness, and displacement. "

Dr. Jack Saul
Author of Collective Trauma
Collective Healing

COVID-19 and Trauma

- ◆ This is a hard time for many people
- ◆ People with history of traumas *may* be more severely impacted by the trauma brought on in this pandemic
- ◆ As educators we may also have our own trauma histories, and we may be emotionally impacted by the trauma of our students

TOXIC STRESS

“The excessive or prolonged activation of the physiologic stress response systems in the absence of the buffering protection afforded by stable, responsive relationships.”

- The American Academy of Pediatrics

3 Realms of ACEs

ACEs Connection accelerates the global movement to prevent and heal adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), and supports communities to work collaboratively to solve our most intractable problems. Left unaddressed, toxic stress from ACEs harms children and families, organizations, systems and communities, and reduces the ability of individuals and entities to respond to stressful events with resiliency. The ACEs in these three realms intertwine throughout people's lives, and affect the viability of organizations, systems and communities.



Thanks to Building Community Resilience Collaborative and Networks and the International Transformational Resilience Coalition for inspiration and guidance. Please visit ACEsConnection.com to learn more about the science of ACEs and join the movement to prevent ACEs, heal trauma and build resilience.



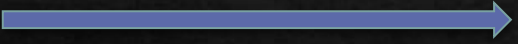
The 3 realms of ACE's

Household Community Environment

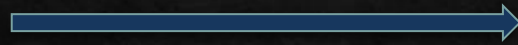
THE BRAIN



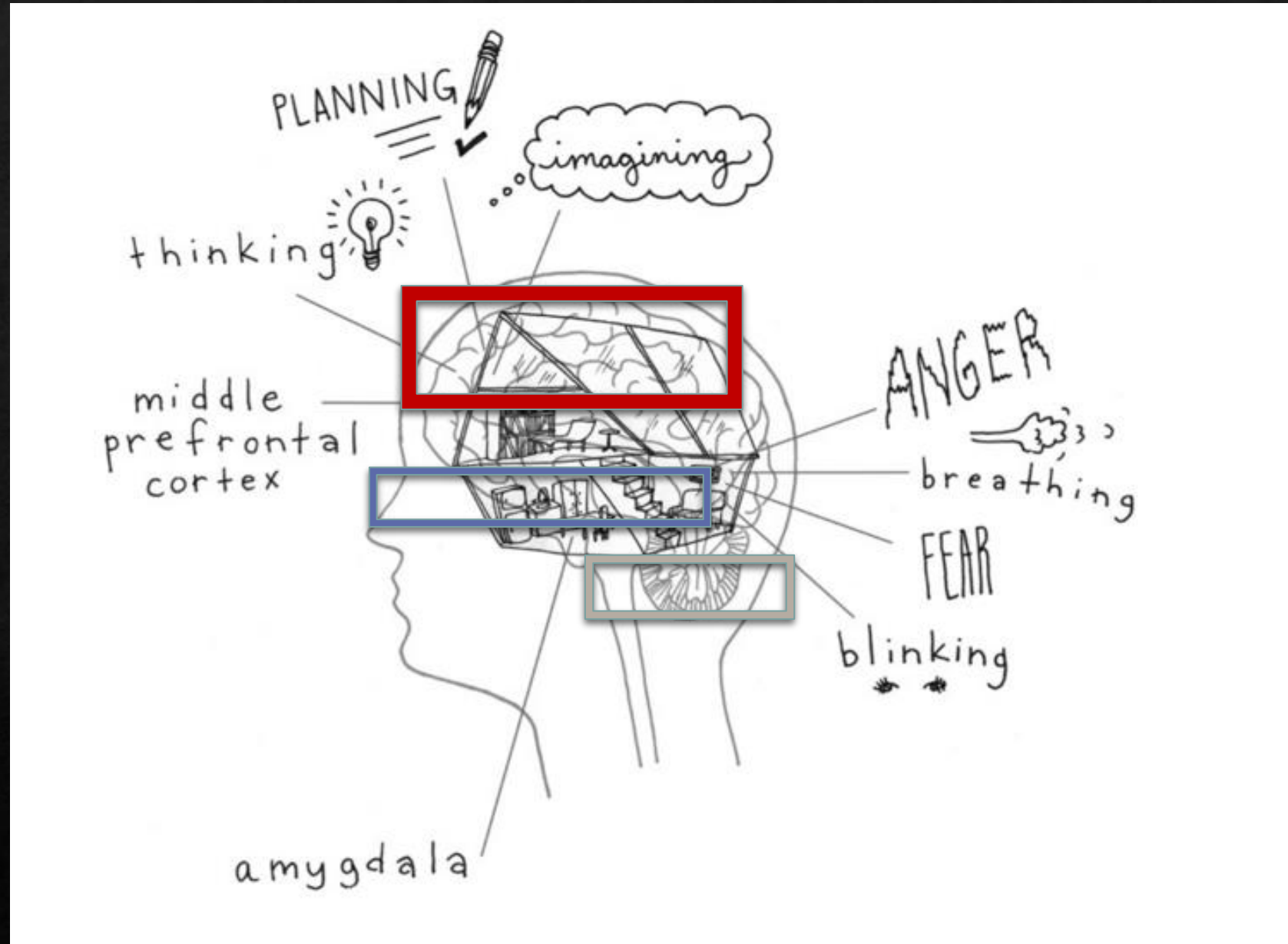
NeoCortex: What can I learn from this?



Limbic System: Am I loved?



Brain Stem: Am I safe?





“Focusing on academics while struggling with trauma is like playing chess in a hurricane.”



**How is trauma
like an oak
tree?**

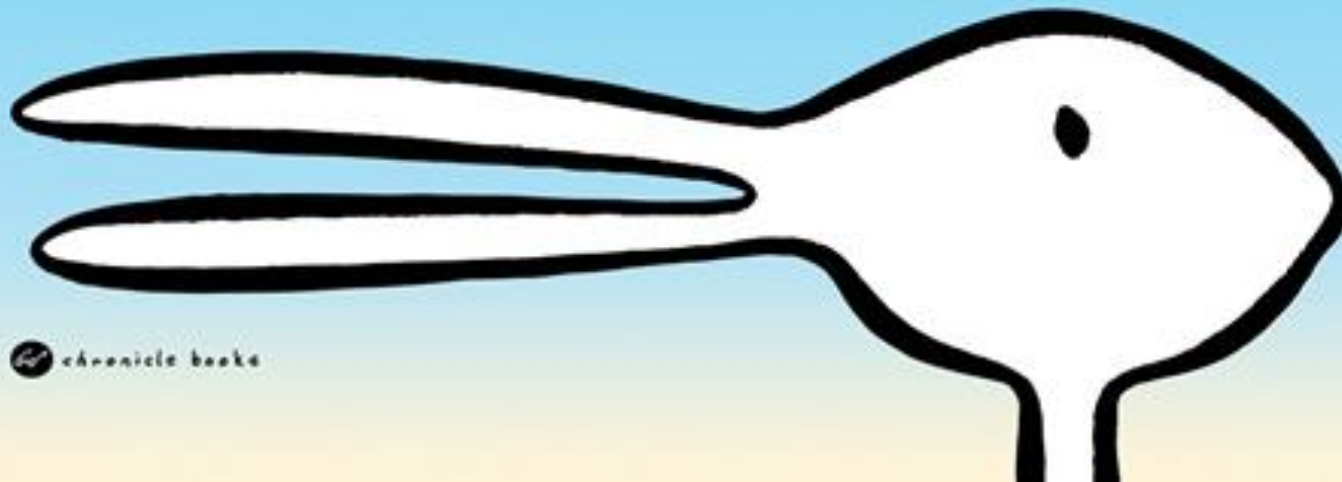


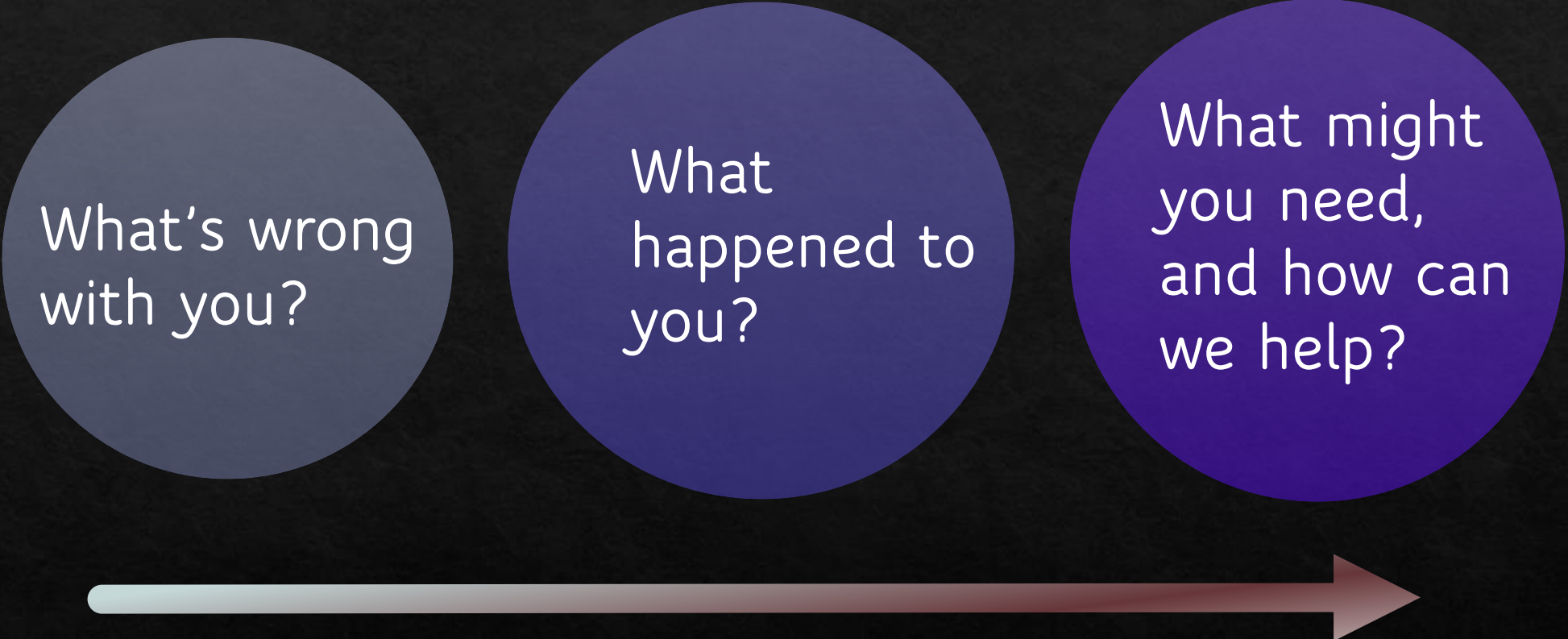
PARADIGM
SHIFT



Hey, look! A duck!

That's not a duck.
That's a rabbit!





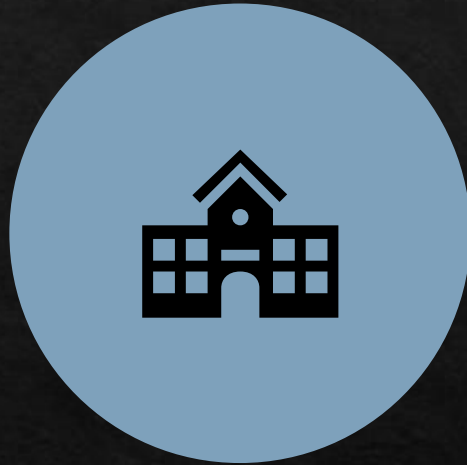
What's wrong
with you?

The diagram consists of three circles arranged horizontally, each containing a question. The circles transition from a light blue-grey on the left to a dark purple on the right. Below the circles is a long horizontal arrow pointing to the right, with a color gradient from light grey to dark red.

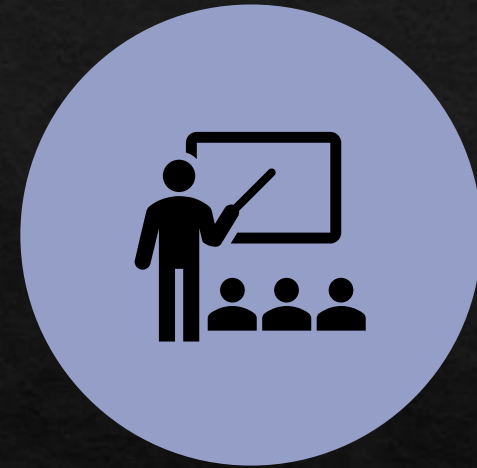
What
happened to
you?

What might
you need,
and how can
we help?

Reflection



HOW DO TRAUMA AND ACES
IMPACT THE SCHOOL COMMUNITIES
THAT YOU ARE A PART OF?



HOW DO YOUR SCHOOL
COMMUNITIES ADDRESS THIS?

*"If you never
heal from what
hurt you, you'll
bleed on people
who didn't cut
you."*

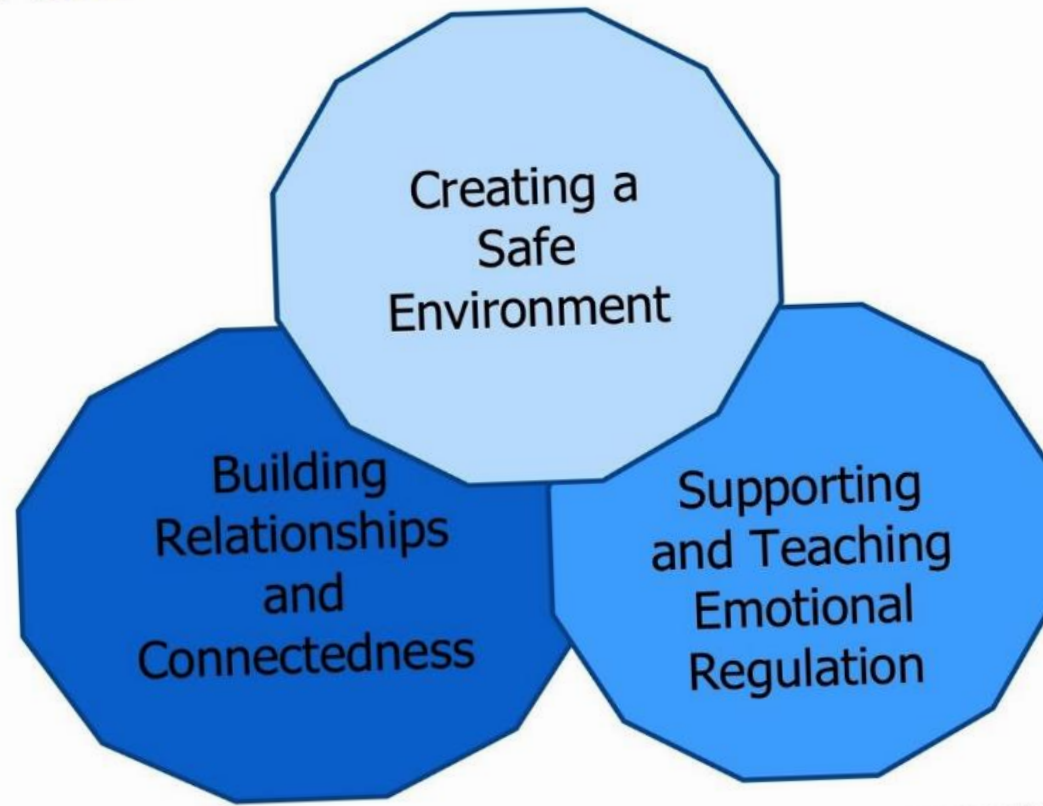
The Principles of Trauma-Informed Care

- ✓ Safety
- ✓ Trustworthiness and Transparency
- ✓ Peer Support
- ✓ Collaboration and Mutuality
- ✓ Empowerment, Voice, and Choice
- ✓ Cultural, Racial, Historical, and Gender Justice

Adapted from SAMHSA



Components of Trauma-Informed Care



Substance Abuse for Mental Health Services Administration, 2014



Youth Voice and Participation is Essential to Well-being

- ◆ Researchers have found that well-being is a function of the control and power young people have in their schools and communities (Morsillo & Prilleltensky 2007; Prilleltensky & Prilleltensky 2006).

SAFETY

- ◇ A felt sense of safety is utmost priority to invite an optimal state for learning and social engagement
- ◇ The more unhealed trauma we have (collectively or individual) the more we need cues of safety in the environment to regulate



Trauma-Informed Approach
is the lens through which
we view our entire system

It is not a thing we 'do', it is
who we become





"In teaching you
can't do the
Bloom stuff
until you take
care of the
Maslow stuff"

Author unknown

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/bilg/326347413>

If it is not anti-
racist it is not
trauma-
informed

“With a deeper trauma-informed vision, we recognize that many students of color experience the ravages of racism; that students experiencing poverty contend with brutal economic injustice. The issues to be addressed are the racism and the injustice. The best trauma-informed practices are rooted in anti-racism, and anti-oppression more broadly, not just in helping students cope with the impact of isolated traumatic events, and not just in assuming that a student whose family is experiencing poverty must be experiencing some sort of abuse at home. If I am not actively anti-racist, I am not trauma-informed.”

Paul Gorski “How Trauma-Informed Are We Really?”

http://www.ascd.org/publications/educational_leadership/oct20/vol78/num02/How_Trauma-Informed_Are_We,_Really%C2%A2.aspx

Trauma-Informed Teaching: How School Staff Can Help



- ◇ Greet the student warmly
- ◇ Maintain regular, consistent routines
- ◇ Give the child choices
- ◇ Allow the child opportunities to control parts of their day
- ◇ Praise publicly
- ◇ Discuss concerns privately
- ◇ Set clear, firm limits
- ◇ Provide a safe place to talk
- ◇ Be sensitive to loud noises, turning lights off
- ◇ Warn children of changes in normal routine
- ◇ Have plans for transition times
- ◇ Reassure child that they are not a bad kid
- ◇ Incorporate large muscle activities

Trauma-Informed Practice: Beneficial For All Students

- ◆ Always empower/never disempower.
- ◆ Provide unconditional positive regard.
- ◆ Maintain high expectations.
- ◆ Check assumptions, observe, and question—sometimes behavior is the only way they know how to communicate.
- ◆ Be a relationship coach (explicitly teach how to have healthy relationships).
- ◆ Provide opportunities for meaningful participation.

Key Pillars of Your New School Year Plan



Include ample opportunities to regulate, relate, and build community. Seek input from diverse stakeholders – including students. Build back to academics through relevant content.

Elimination of Exclusionary and Hyper Punitive Discipline

- ◇ “Rather than using discipline, a school that uses a trauma informed approach might offer therapy, or counseling to support the restoration of that student’s well-being. The assumption is that the disruptive behavior is the symptom of a deeper harm, rather than willful defiance, or disrespect.”

Shawn Ginwright

<https://medium.com/@ginwright/the-future-of-healing-shifting-from-trauma-informed-care-to-healing-centered-engagement-634f557ce69c>

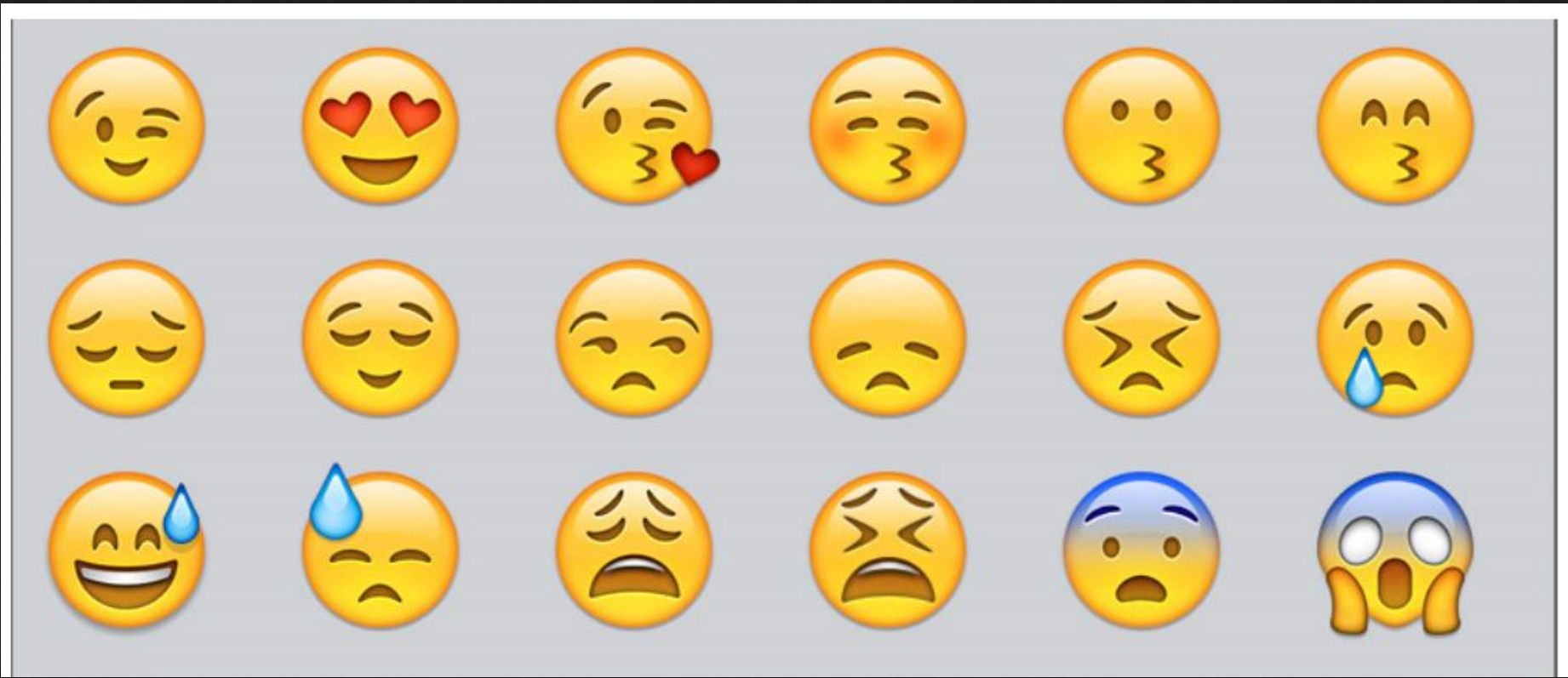
Review Tool for School Policies, Protocols, Procedures & Documents: Examination through a Trauma-Informed Care (TIC) Lens

TIC Value	Desired Responses by Students & Families to the Policy, Protocol, Procedure or Document	Consistency with the Desired Response*					Cite evidence to support rating (see page 3 for examples)
		1 Very Inconsistent	2 Inconsistent	3 Neutral or Not Sure	4 Consistent	5 Very Consistent	
Safety	This policy, protocol, procedure or document ... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reinforces you will listen to my history without judging me. • shows you value my emotional and physical safety, even if it means you have to change your usual approach. 						
Trustworthiness	This policy, protocol, procedure or document ... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • recognizes trust is something that is earned over time, so I may not tell you the truth until our relationship is established. • shows you understand I may “test” our 						

Review Policies and Practices with a TI lens, be willing to exit policies that re-traumatize

<https://dpi.wi.gov/sites/default/files/imce/sspw/pdf/traumareviewtool.pdf>

REGULATE,
THEN
RELATE,
THEN REASON
- BRUCE D. PERRY



The Importance of Regulation:
Theirs and Ours

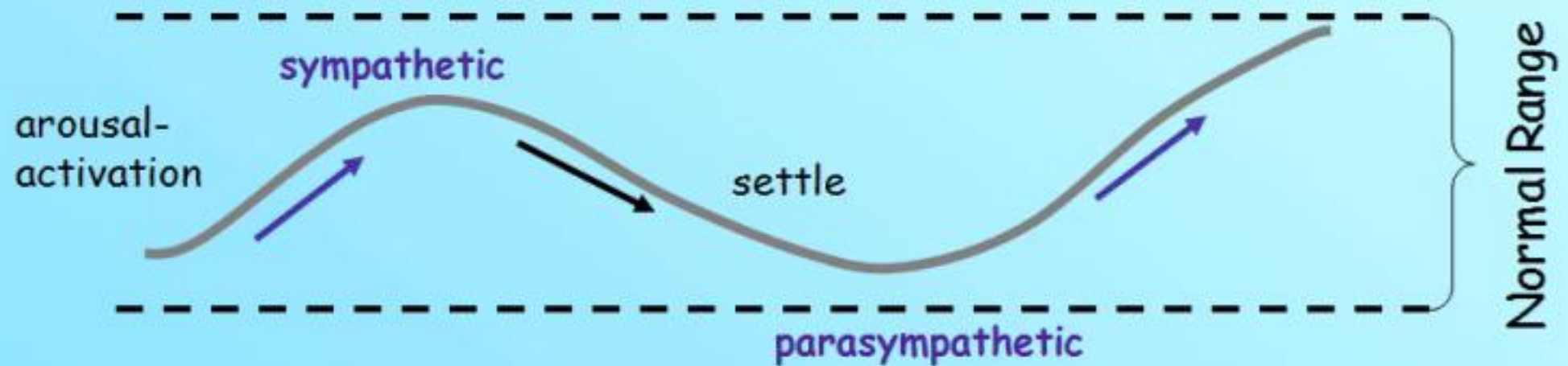


"PUT DOWN

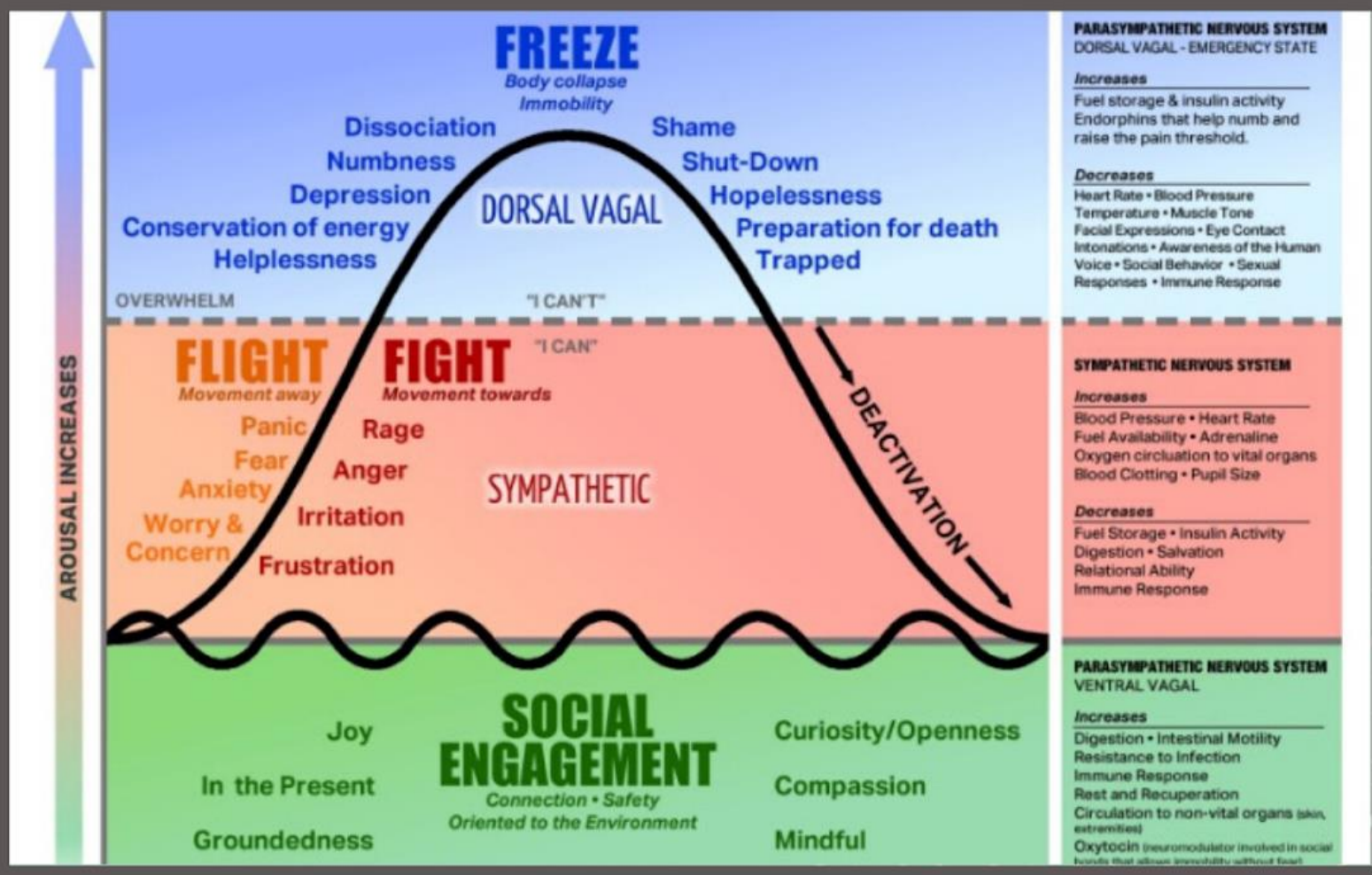
**YOUR MIRROR FAST ENOUGH TO REALIZE THAT
KID'S BEHAVIOR IS NOT DIRECTED AT YOU,
BUT PICK IT UP QUICK
ENOUGH TO EMPATHIZE
WITH THEM AND SEE
YOURSELF IN THEIR SHOES."**

-JAMES MOFFETT

A Healthy Nervous System



Slide courtesy of Stephanie Foy, Dimensions in Healing







Regulation

A dysregulated adult cannot help a dysregulated youth to regulate.



Resilience

Managing stress and functioning well when faced with stressors, challenges, or adversity; the outcome is personal growth and positive change

Resilience

- Resilience is a process and an outcome.
- All people have the capacity for resilience. Some people have a pattern of resilience throughout their lives, whereas others have periods of resilience.
- Resilience is relational.

The Science of Resilience

Research has identified a common set of factors that predispose children to positive outcomes in the face of significant adversity

These counterbalancing factors include

- ◆ facilitating supportive adult-child relationships;
- ◆ building a sense of self-efficacy and perceived control;
- ◆ providing opportunities to strengthen adaptive skills and self-regulatory capacities; and
- ◆ mobilizing sources of faith, hope, and cultural traditions.

Learning to cope with manageable threats is critical for the development of resilience

The capabilities that underlie resilience can be strengthened at any age

What Resilience is Not

- ◆ Being **resilient** does **not** mean that people don't experience stress, emotional upheaval, and suffering
- ◆ It is NOT pulling yourself up from your bootstraps
- ◆ It is NOT grin and bear it
- ◆ It does not mean we expect personal resilience in the face of unjust policies and inequitable systems
- ◆ Focusing on personal resilience or grit avoids solving the structural problems that are causing the suffering that requires resilience in the first place

#BeTheOne

Over and over the research shows that the key to mitigating ACEs and trauma, the path to building resilience is a positive relationship with ONE caring adult





A Window of Opportunity?

Since the pandemic in what ways have we begun to 'reimagine' or 'redesign' education and how do these practices align with trauma-responsive schools' best practices?

Trauma-Responsive Schools (not a complete list)

- ◊ Use restorative practices rather than punitive discipline and rigid discipline matrixes
- ◊ When behaviors occur, pause judgment, show compassion and concern, and attempt to discover what lies beneath the behavior
- ◊ Are actively anti-racist, support their LGBTQ+ youth, and are committed to equity for all
- ◊ Feel warm and SAFE
- ◊ Use distributed leadership and have high collaboration among adults
- ◊ Prioritize inquiry, cultural relevance, and youth voice in the curriculum
- ◊ Grade with mastery and equity at the center
- ◊ Build a culture of community and family
- ◊ Use “bottom-up” approach (provide opportunities for regulation)
- ◊ Joy and laughter are evident
- ◊ Promote a culture that nourishes Hope, is committed to Equity, and fosters Resilience

Q & A



Contact Me

- Follow Me! @larakain1
- Connect with Me!
www.Larakain.org
- larakain1@gmail.com