Trauma

- **Private events** - Sexual, physical abuse
  - Secrecy
  - Power Imbalance
  - Raging Hopelessness
  - Sense of Isolation
  - Sense of Irretrievable Loss
  - Emotional and physical reaction, fight or flight

- **Public events** - natural disasters, car accidents, war, crime victimization
  - Can be a shared experience
  - No judgment attached
  - Sense of Helplessness
  - Forces beyond control
  - Sense of Irretrievable Loss
  - Emotional and physical reaction
Trauma Effects All Aspects of Life

- Trauma changes the actual **structure** of the brain (especially in very young children).
- It also changes the way the brain **works**.
- Results in problems with individual’s social lives, ability to think clearly, and with emotional control.
- Following trauma people often adopt health risk behaviors to cope, like eating disorders, smoking, substance abuse, self-harm, sexual promiscuity, and violence.
- People with trauma also die at a younger age.
**Adverse Childhood Experience (ACE) Study**

Without intervention, adverse childhood events (ACEs) may result in long-germ disease, disability, chronic social problems and early death. Importantly, intergenerational transmission that perpetuates ACEs will continue without implementation of interventions to interrupt the cycle.

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<th>Impact of Trauma &amp; Adoption of Health Risk Behaviors</th>
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<td>• 50+ sex partners</td>
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<td>• Inter-generational transmission</td>
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<td>• Repetition of original trauma</td>
<td>Of abuse</td>
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<td>• Eating Disorders</td>
<td>• Long-term use of health &amp; social services</td>
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<td>• Dissociation</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Perpetrate domestic violence</td>
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</tbody>
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Childhood Experiences Underlie Serious and Persistent Mental Health Problems
Health Risking Behaviors

**Childhood Experiences And Adult Alcoholism**

- ACE Score
- % Alcoholic

**ACE Score and Intravenous Drug Use**

- ACE Score
- % Have Injected Drugs

N = 8,022   p < 0.001
Impact of Trauma

Strong and prolonged activation of the body’s stress management systems in the absence of the buffering protection of adult support, disrupts brain architecture and leads to stress management systems that respond at relatively lower thresholds, thereby increasing the risk of stress-related physical and mental illness.
Trauma impacts on nervous system

Traumatic Event!

Stuck on “High” Hyper-arousal

Hyperactivity
Hypervigilance
Mania
Anxiety & Panic
Rage

Depression
Disconnection
Exhaustion/Fatigue
Numbness

Stuck on “Low” Hypo-arousal

Normal Range Window of Tolerance

Key Concepts of TRM
What about our school/district?

• Do we have students who ....
  – witness domestic violence?
  – are physically, emotionally or sexually abused?
  – are neglected?
  – are homeless?
  – have family members who are fighting overseas in Iraq or Afghanistan?
  – have experienced a natural disaster (e.g., tornado, house fire)?
How Trauma Impacts Learning

• Toxic stress releases EXCESS cortisol which has a negative effect on the brain particularly the hippocampus

• The hippocampus is involved with memories. A damaged hippocampus impairs the ability to form new memories, required for learning particularly verbal learning

• Trauma also impacts **sustained and focused** attention
ACE & School Performance

• Children who have been traumatized:
  – 2.5x more likely to fail a grade in school
  – Score lower on standardized achievement tests
  – Have more struggles in receptive & expressive language
  – Are suspended & expelled more often
  – More frequently placed in special education
Impact on Learning

- Language and Communication Skills
- Organizing Narrative Material
- Cause-and-Effect Relationships
- Taking Another’s Perspective
- Attentiveness to Classroom Tasks
- Regulating Emotions
- Executive Functions
- Engaging in the Curriculum
Impact on Classroom Behavior

- Reactivity and Impulsivity
- Aggression
- Defiance
- Withdrawal
- Perfectionism
- Impact on Relationships
Responding to People with Trauma

• We may unintentionally trigger someone’s trauma response

• Need to re-conceptualize individuals’ responses from intentional to being a physiologically based response

• Organizations’ policies and environments may also retrigger trauma
Changing the Question

• What is wrong with you?
  – I am aggressive
  – I am depressed
  – I am an alcoholic

• What happened to you?
  – I am a survivor of trauma
The Core Principles

• **Safety**: Ensuring physical and emotional safety

• **Trustworthiness**: Maximizing trustworthiness, making tasks clear, and maintaining appropriate boundaries

• **Choice**: Prioritizing developmentally appropriate choice and control for children, youth, families and adults

• **Collaboration**: Maximizing collaboration and sharing of power with children, youth, families, and adults

• **Empowerment**: Prioritizing child, youth, family and adult empowerment and skill-building
Trauma Sensitive Schools

• A shared understanding among all

• The school supports all children to feel safe physically, socially, emotionally, and academically.

• The school addresses students needs in holistic ways, taking into account their relationships, self-regulation, academic competence, and physical and emotional well-being.

• The school explicitly connects students to the school community and provides multiple opportunities to practice newly developing skills.
Helping Traumatized Children Learn

Creating and Advocating for Trauma-Sensitive Schools

The Flexible Framework
1. Leadership
2. Professional Development
3. Access to Resources and Services
4. Academic and Nonacademic Strategies
5. Policies and Protocols
6. Collaboration with Families
Trauma Informed Schools

Trauma-sensitive schools acknowledge the prevalence of traumatic occurrence in students’ lives & create a flexible framework that provides universal supports, is sensitive to unique needs of students, & is mindful of avoiding re-traumatization.
Creating a Trauma Sensitive School

• School-wide Infrastructure and Culture
• Staff Training
• Academic Instruction for Traumatized Children
• Linking with Mental Health Professionals
• School Policies, Procedures, and Protocols
• Nonacademic Strategies
Practices For Building Trauma Sensitivity

• Use a morning meeting to create a predictable and consistent environment for learning.
• Create a classroom “calming area.”
• Use a “hot spot” map to ensure safety.
• Plan and set priorities for improvement.
  – Trauma Sensitive School Checklist (Leslie University and Massachusetts Advocates for Children)
Support from School

• *Give children choices.* Often traumatic events involve loss of control and/or chaos, so you can help children feel safe by providing them with some choices or control when appropriate.

• *Increase the level of support and encouragement given to the traumatized child.* Designate an adult who can provide additional support if needed.
Support from School

• Set clear, firm limits for inappropriate behavior and develop logical—rather than punitive—consequences.

• Recognize that behavioral problems may be transient and related to trauma. Remember that even the most disruptive behaviors can be driven by trauma-related anxiety.
Support from School

• Be sensitive to the cues in the environment that may cause a reaction in the traumatized child. Children may increase problem behaviors near an anniversary of a traumatic event.

• Warn children if you will be doing something out of the ordinary, such as turning off the lights or making a sudden loud noise.
Support from School

• While a traumatized child might not meet eligibility criteria for special education, consider making accommodations and modifications to academic work for a short time, even including these in a 504 plan. You might:
  – Shorten assignments
  – Allow additional time to complete assignments
  – Give permission to leave class to go to a designated adult (such as a counselor or school nurse) if feelings become overwhelming
  – Provide additional support for organizing and remembering assignments
Self Care as an Ethical Obligation

“We can’t teach what we don’t know. We can’t lead where we won’t go.”
Malcolm X

“You cannot give away that which you do not have.”
Juli Alvarado
Coaching For Life
Resources

- Child Trauma Academy  http://childtrauma.org
- Resilience Trumps Aces  http://www.resiliencetrumpsaces.org/
- Bessel van der Kolk,  http://www.traumacenter.org
- The Heart of Learning and Teaching Compassion, Resiliency & Academic Success  Wolpow, Ray; Johnson, Mona M.; Hertel, Ron; Kincaid, Susan O. 2009  http://www.k12.wa.us/CompassionateSchools/pubdocs/TheHeartofLearningandTeaching.pdf
- MO Dept. of Mental Health  http://dmh.mo.gov/trauma