















## M u l t i - T i e r e d A p p r o a c h

- The aim of a trauma-informed tiered approach
  - To create a school-wide environment that addresses the needs of all students, staff, administrators, and families who might be at risk for experiencing traumatic stress symptoms.
- In an effort to becoming a trauma informed districts we have focused on:
  - Strategic planning by administrators
  - Staff training
  - Direct intervention with traumatized students
  - Building knowledge and communication in a variety of domains, all with a focus on creating and supporting academic achievement, behavioral competence, and mental health of all students, families, and staff.



## Trauma Informed Approaches

- Realizing the widespread impact of trauma and pathways to recovery
- Recognizing trauma's signs and symptoms
- Responding by integrating knowledge about trauma into all facets of the system
- Resisting re-traumatization of trauma-impacted individuals by decreasing the occurrence of unnecessary triggers (i.e., trauma and loss reminders)
- Implementing trauma-informed procedure and practices.

## Trauma Informed School

- As a trauma-informed school:
  - We promote a safe and welcoming climate
  - Seeks to create a structured and predictable learning environment that minimizes unnecessary trauma and loss reminders
  - Focus on building positive relationships between teachers and students, and among school staff
  - Have an anti-bullying and suicide prevention programs
  - Use a balanced restorative justice (a.k.a. restorative practices) approach to conflict and conflict mediation with appropriate disciplinary action.
  - Creates safe spaces
  - Accept parents where they are (example- no smoking)
  - We don't punish the things kids cannot control- pencils, rides to school

## How to Address Trauma: A Multi-Tiered Approach

### Tier 1

- Schoolwide/Universal Strategies
- Informed by an understanding of trauma
- Designed to:
  - Build resilience, mitigate impact, support healing, minimize trauma in school and create and support safe environments that promote healthy and successful students and staff.
  - KEY STRATEGIES:
    - Promoting Positive School Climate
    - BIST
    - Emergency Management
    - Psychological First Aid
    - Bullying Prevention
    - General Wellness Support & Education
    - KEY PARTNERSHIPS:
      - School Community (Admin, teachers, counselors, coaches, nurses)
      - Community Mental Health Organizations,
      - Law Enforcement
      - Families

## How to Address Trauma: A Multi-Tiered Approach

### Tier 2

- Targeted services for students exposed to trauma and at risk for further impact
- Trauma-focused coping
- Early Intervention/Identifying Students and Staff At-Risk
- Identify and respond to students and staff who are at-risk or have been exposed to trauma and/or loss in ways that meet their unique exposures, experiences, developmental, and personal needs.
- KEY STRATEGIES:
  - Screening Students
  - Group Interventions (Kivas)
  - Success Plans
  - Threat Assessment, P
  - Peer Support
  - KEY PARTNERSHIPS:
    - School Community, Community Mental Health Organizations, Families

## How to Address Trauma: A Multi-Tiered Approach

### Tier 3

- Individualized, trauma-specific mental health services
- Cognitive behavioral therapy
- Intensive Support
  - Provide support to those students whose behaviors and experiences necessitate intensive interventions and aim to meet their unique exposures, experiences, developmental, and personal needs.
  - KEY STRATEGIES:
    - Intensive individual and family support
    - Trauma-specific treatment
  - KEY PARTNERSHIPS:
    - School Community, Community Mental Health Organizations, Families

## Identifying and Assessing Traumatic Stress

- Identification of students that are vulnerable to traumatic events
- This is an important prevention and intervention strategy with an intentional plan to use information to help a student attain educational goals.
- We implemented a tiered approach for identifying students for trauma-related mental health problems
  - Such factors include (but are not limited to)
    - significant changes in key developmental domains (physical/health, cognitive, behavioral, social/emotional)
    - disruption in the student's academic performance, attendance, or pattern of school engagement.

### Standard Protocols for Considering Trauma-Exposure

- School personnel are prompted routinely to consider the presence and/or impact of trauma exposure on student academic and behavioral performance.
- This includes:
  - observing signs, symptoms, and risk factors related to a potential traumatic event
  - addressing barriers to support youth facing these challenges.
  - Staff use trauma-related and/or routinely collected data to inform decisions about students in a systematic manner (e.g., attendance, grades, nursing visits, behavioral incidents).
  - Staff meetings, student performance reviews, and other standard protocols for regularly assessing student performance while integrating trauma-informed considerations.

### Trauma Screening for Behavioral Referrals

- The district includes as a primary response to behavioral referrals a screening for traumatic experiences and traumatic/loss stress reactions using evidence-based screening tools.
- When traumatic exposure or traumatic/loss stress reactions are identified, a more comprehensive assessment is conducted to direct future interventions.

#### Ongoing Monitoring of Traumatic Stress Responses

- The goal of the district is to make available an ongoing assessment that is aligned with ongoing intervention of traumatic stress reactions for students experiencing ongoing academic, behavioral, and mental health challenges.

#### Addressing and Treating Traumatic Stress

- Adequate supports are available for all school stakeholders who have directly or indirectly experienced traumatic events or are at risk for exposure.
- Stakeholders include students, families, teachers, administration, and additional school personnel.
- Referral and access to evidence-based prevention and intervention resources are available
- Provision of services are systematically linked to protocols for identifying individuals exposed to trauma and loss.
- Routine reviews of service referral and provision are conducted to ensure effectiveness.

### De-stigmatized Self-Referral Options

- Students and school personnel are made aware of support services available.
- Individuals are encouraged to connect with services when necessary.
- Service options are made available in the community to support privacy preferences.

### Early Interventions

- The district provides trauma-informed, evidence-based, resiliency-building early interventions.
- Interventions include:
  - cognitive-behavioral or mindfulness strategies
  - courses for youth identified at risk for traumatic stress grief, or depression
  - referrals to trauma-informed services that address behaviors such as substance abuse
  - in-class supports that address behavior in a trauma-informed manner

## Trauma-Informed Behavior Support Plans

- The school's behavioral support planning team incorporates an understanding of :
  - Trauma
  - trauma and loss reminders
  - trauma's impact on key developmental domains
  - evidence-based practices for supporting children experiencing traumatic stress into its behavior support planning process

## Referring for Services

- Educators and school staff refer students to evidence-based trauma-informed treatments as needed when the school is unable to meet their trauma-based mental health needs. The school develops strong relationships with community providers of trauma-informed care.

## District Mission and Vision

The district's academic mission recognizes (formally and in practice) that addressing trauma and behaviors associated with exposure to trauma and loss is key to improving academic outcomes.

## Professional Development

- Trauma literacy is a key component of professional development for school administrators, teachers, and staff.
- Building on a strong foundation of therapeutic and crisis management practice in schools, trauma literacy helps staff recognize the continuum of trauma in children and its impact on academic achievement and development.
- Leadership and staff share an understanding of trauma stress on the brain and body, student learning, their behavior, and the need for a school-wide approach to develop skills for coping with such stress.



### Psychoeducation for Students on the Effects of Stress and Trauma

- The school provides health and psychoeducation to students about the effects of stress and trauma on the body;
- how to develop healthy coping skills for managing stress
- promotes associations and activities that nurture healthy peer and family relationships and connections to community organizations
- incorporates practices to increase students' resilience and protective factors.
- For youth who have recently experienced a loss, the school provides grief-specific psychoeducation and supports.
- Handle with Care program

### Developmentally Appropriate Trauma-Informed Responses

- Trauma can impact development.
- A child's developmental level should be considered when addressing their educational needs, including classroom structure and individualized supports.
- For younger students, the recognition that the adults in these children's lives may have to provide additional support to help them thrive.
- It also recognizes that certain students may have developmental delays or intellectual disabilities that require specialized trauma-responses.

## Partnerships with Students and Families

- Trauma and loss involves experiences of powerlessness and isolation that can make students and families less likely to trust school institutions and authority figures or to fully participate in programs created to support their trauma recovery.
- It is essential to empower students and family members as partners in the creation of a trauma-informed school as well as in the planning of trauma-informed practices.
- It is important to recognize the impact of caregiver, sibling, and other important family member's life experiences in an effort to enhance a school's ability to address adverse life experiences for the student and find practical opportunities to maximally address challenges facing students.
  - This supports student engagement academically and addresses potential trauma-related factors that are impacting students at home.

## Partnerships with Students and Families

- Efforts need to be made to build meaningful partnerships among students, families, caregivers, and school staff in order to:
  - better support students who have experienced trauma and loss
  - to create, implement, and sustain trauma-informed programs and practices
  - Students and families must be actively engaged in student-specific assessment of strengths and needs and the development of individualized education and treatment plans.
  - Students and families need to be involved in school-wide planning and implementation efforts to address trauma, including the development of school-wide policy, protocol, and guidelines to create a trauma-informed school climate and to implement trauma-informed practices.

## Education for Parents/Caregivers

- The school, together with community partners:
  - teach parents about the effects of stress and trauma on children's brains and bodies
  - instructs them in how to develop skills for coping with stress to bolster student's learning-readiness and a sense of psychological safety (feeling and believing one is safe).

## Education for Students

- The school provides education to students about:
  - the effects of stress on their brains and bodies
  - stress management strategies such as slow breathing, mindfulness, effective problem-solving, and asking for help.

## Engagement in Program Planning and Implementation

- The school engages students and families/caregivers in the process of creating trauma-informed schools at all levels.
- School staff and administrators collaborate with students and families to develop practices that will best address their needs and implement those practices in ways that make them most useful, effective, and accessible.
- On an organizational level, schools partner with students, families, and caregivers when making decisions regarding the development and implementation of programs.

## Creating a Trauma-Informed Learning Environment: Social/Emotional Skills and Wellness)

- Create a safe environment by promoting healthy interactions among students and staff and teaching social/emotional skills and self-regulation skills.
- Promote the wellness of all students, ensuring they feel safe and supported physically, socially, emotionally, and academically.
- School personnel model healthy social/emotional skills and integrate trauma-informed practices
- Protocols are in place to address bullying, identify threats, harassment and other behaviors that compromise the safety of the learning environment.

## Predictable and Supportive Learning Environment

- A true understanding of trauma is used to deepen and augment school-wide practices to create a predictable and supportive learning environment that minimizes unnecessary trauma and loss reminders.
- Students and teachers are explicitly connected to each other, to the schools' programs, and to the rest of the school community—including the promotion of teacher peer consultation and support models.

## Social Skills

- Training is provided for staff and curriculum implementation for students on creating, sustaining, and promoting a positive and safe learning environment.
- Content includes conflict resolution, problem-solving skills, social communication, emotional/behavioral literacy, bullying prevention, and suicide prevention.
- The school recognizes that unhealthy social conflict between peers can have serious developmental consequences and negatively impact the mental health of all youth involved.
- The school proactively addresses bullying/cyberbullying by educating staff, students, and families in bullying awareness, relevant social skills (empathy, friendship, assertiveness) and effective response and repair strategies.
- Providing targeted supports for youth at risk of displaying behaviors that adversely impact the psychological and physical safety of others is an important supplement to universal supports.

## Safe Spaces for Students

- The school develops and designates safe spaces inside and outside of the classroom for students to calm themselves after exposure to trauma and loss triggers.
- Safe spaces provide opportunities for students to self-regulate when experiencing behavioral and emotional challenges.

## Trauma-Informed Interventions: Discipline

- Students requiring frequent disciplinary actions are assigned appropriate support services to address underlying causes of the behavior.
- The school coordinates support services with the student's family and gives appropriate referrals as available when required.
- In short, discipline is about teaching not about punishing

## Team-Based Approaches

Team-based approaches are incorporated for problem-solving, decision-making, and action planning to support students receiving Tier 2 level intervention efforts.

Teams facilitate student eligibility and placement into Tier 2 group interventions

- monitor progress and effectiveness of interventions
- collectively collaborate to make adjustments to the student's intervention plan.

## Partnership with School Staff and Community Members

- Intensive trauma-informed school-based individual and family interventions includes consultation with school staff and wrap-around services.
- Partnerships in the community that can maintain youth safety and where youth may utilize services have been established in child welfare and law enforcement settings.

What we did... .

McDonald County 4 Kids

Focus on Kindness

Work Hard and Be Kind

Hang Up and Hang Out



## Recognizing the Impact of Trauma in the Classroom

- The ability to manage stress becomes compromised
- After a traumatic life event, children may find situations that were previously manageable now prompt feeling of being emotionally or physically unsafe
- The school environment can present children with many stressors that can trigger traumatic stress reactions
- Extreme responses to perceived threats can interfere with their ability to function
- Children's stress responses can range in intensity, duration and frequency.

## Relationships and Trauma

### **Student-Teacher Relationship**

- Building a positive student-teacher relationship should be the first priority in the classroom (Forbes, 2012).
  - This relationship provides security and safety for the child, who can then focus on his academics.
  - Academic achievement happens when the child is calm and secure.
  - A child doesn't care how much you know until he knows how much you care.
  - Being genuine, knowing yourself, and asking the right questions are key to building a healthy and safe student-teacher relationship.
  - Rather than asking, "I wonder what's wrong with that person?" rephrase the question to "I wonder what happened to the student that caused them to behave that way?"
  - Some teachers tend to respond to negative behaviors such as classroom outburst, verbal defiance, or anger by resorting to traditional discipline measures that are not effective for students who have experienced trauma.
  - Time-outs, seclusion rooms and staying in from recess have a direct impact on the child's safety; therefore, these techniques are ineffective.

## Relationships and Trauma

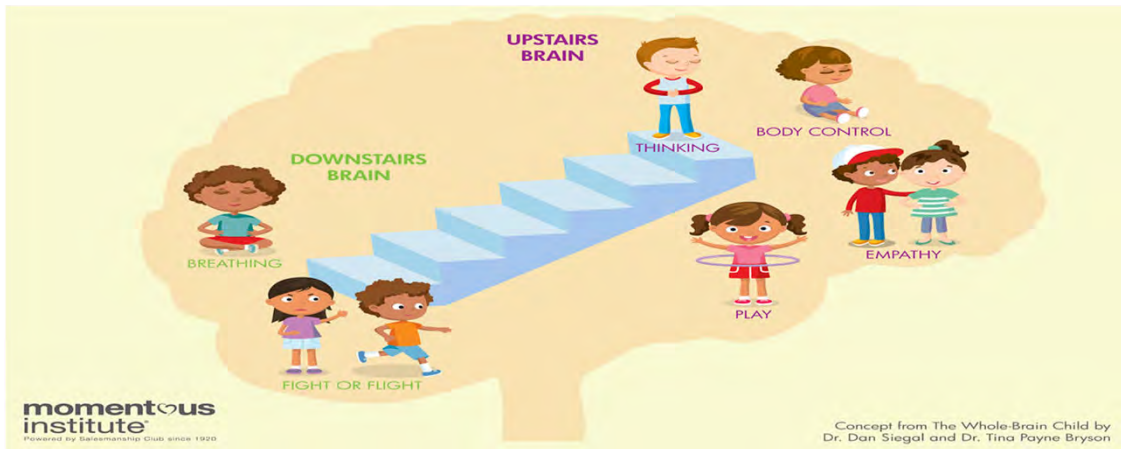
Teachers need to ask more questions of themselves such as:

- What is driving the behavior?
- What else is really going on?
- What does this child need?
- How can I change my perspective?
- What is this behavior communicating right now?
- What could be triggering this behavior?
- What negative beliefs does the child have about himself?
- In what ways are my expectations triggering him?
- Where is the child in his brain? (Forbes, 2012)

### **Strategies When Talking with a child who has Experienced Trauma**

- A child who has experienced trauma may have many questions or choose not to talk about the event at all.
  - A teacher may be the trusted adult in which the child confides.
  - If the child asks questions, the teacher should try to answer them.
  - If the teacher doesn't know how to answer a question, admit that to the child.
  - A child should never be forced to talk about his traumatic experience before he is ready.
  - When the child is ready, he may choose different outlets such as writing, drawing, or playing with toys.
  - As the child is sharing the experience, the teacher should avoid telling the child how he should feel.
  - Teachers should expect strong emotions from the child; assure the child that it is okay to feel upset (Mental Health First Aid USA, 2016).

“The Whole-Brain Child” that helps us understand the brain in a simple way. It’s the *upstairs* and *downstairs* brain. By: Dr. Dan Siegel and Dr. Tina Payne Bryson



## Upstairs and Downstairs Brain

- Picture a brain like a house.
  - Downstairs is where important things live.
  - Basic functions like breathing, strong emotions, and innate reactions to danger, like fight, flight or freeze. It’s like the downstairs of a house, which is where we almost always find the basics—kitchen, living room, bathroom.
- The upstairs brain is more complex.
  - Thinking, imagining, planning – these things come from the upstairs brain.
  - We use the upstairs brain to think critically, problem solve, and make good decisions.
  - Important to note for those of us working with teens, the upstairs brain is not fully formed until our mid-20s!

## Upstairs and Downstairs Brain

### What do we need to be a highly functioning person in the world?

- We need both the upstairs and the downstairs brain.
- We need that downstairs brain to work. It saves us from urgent situations. It loops our feelings into logical equations. It's what keeps us breathing! But we don't want it fully in control.
- We need the upstairs and the downstairs brain to work together.
- The staircase is one of the most important parts of a two-story house, and that same logic is true for the brain. When the brain's staircase is built, the upstairs brain can monitor the strong emotions and impulses from the downstairs and make sense of them.

## Upstairs and Downstairs Brain

### So how do we build this staircase?

- The most important thing is to be attuned to the child and recognize what part of their brain is controlling their actions.
- A child throwing a tantrum in class because another kid cut in front of her in line at the pencil sharpener doesn't need the same attention as a child who is so upset that he is finding it difficult to calm down or receive comfort.
- The first child is in her upstairs brain. The minute she gets to that pencil sharpener, the tears will likely stop. She is in control of her emotions.
- The second child is in his downstairs brain. He is so upset and angry that he can't make logical decisions. He can't think clearly.

## Upstairs and Downstairs Brain

- An attuned parent, teacher, or therapist might see that the second child is escalating and connect with him—right brain to right brain.
  - “I can see that you are getting red. You’re really feeling upset about this.”
  - After the child feels understood and comforted, he can then turn to problem solving or making better decisions.
  - The adult can guide him in a breathing exercise or other soothing technique to help him calm down.
  - Once he is back in his upstairs brain, the issues can be addressed using logic and reason.
  - The mistake many of us make is trying a left-brained intervention (asking a child to reason or problem solve) when what's really called for is a right brained connection ("I see you. I hear you. I care about you.")

## Upstairs and Downstairs Brain

- As we work with children, we need to continually ask ourselves, “Am I engaging the upstairs brain, or am I triggering the downstairs brain?”
- As adults, we are like the brain’s staircase carpenters. It is up to us to make sure that staircase is working.
  - The better we are able to understand this concept, the better we can help kids during stressful situations, and also during calm, character-building times. Just remember to use your upstairs brain!
- ©2019 Momentous Institute

### Strategies to Help with Regulation

- Self-regulation happens when a person recognizes he is operating in the emotional “downstairs brain” and needs to regulate back to the “upstairs brain.”
- Recognize when they are about to “blow their tops.”
- When they feel this way, some go for a walk, take deep breaths, read, or exercise.
- Teaching a child about self-regulation is important.
- If the child is in the “downstairs brain”, the teacher can help teach the child how to regulate so he gets back to the “upstairs brain.”

### Strategies to Help with Regulation

1. **Be present with the child.** Listen to what he is saying and validate his feelings. Use reflective listening and clarifying statements to help the child talk through his feelings.
1. **Integrate the upstairs and downstairs brain** by asking for facts such as “What is 4 times 5?”. Ask open-ended “What would you do?”-type questions. This strategy keeps the child from thinking so emotional (downstairs brain) and using his upstairs brain to answer the questions.
1. **Have the child mimic your breathing pattern.** This strategy can help the child focus on breathing until he is ready to talk.

## Strategies to Help with Regulation

### 4. Help the child find appropriate regulating strategies.

- When the child feels he will have an outburst, teach him how to regulate on his own.
- As part of the student-teacher relationship, the teacher will need to know the child's interests and help him decide what will work for him.
- For example, he may need to walk the halls, read a book, or go to a safe place in the room designated for him.
- Whatever it is, the teacher should communicate the child's decision [on how he will self-regulate] to others in the building.

## Strategies to Help with Regulation

### 1. Integrate self-help strategies throughout the school day.

- Some effective free websites to assist with this are:
  - Stop, Breathe, and Think: <https://www.stopbreathethink.com/>;
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  - Calm: <https://www.calm.com/>;
  - Insight Timer: Some effective free websites to assist with this are:
  - Stop, Breathe, and Think: <https://www.stopbreathethink.com/>;
  - Calm: <https://www.calm.com/>; Insight Timer: <https://insighttimer.com/>;
  - Mindshift: Some effective free websites to assist with this are:
  - Stop, Breathe, and Think: <https://www.stopbreathethink.com/>;
  - Calm: <https://www.calm.com/>; Insight Timer: <https://insighttimer.com/>; Mindshift: <https://www.facebook.com/MindShift.KQED/>;

## Strategies to Help with Regulation

- Smiling Mind: Some effective free websites to assist with this are:
- Stop, Breathe, and Think: <https://www.stopbreathethink.com/>;
- Calm: <https://www.calm.com/>;
- Insight Timer: <https://insighttimer.com/>; Mindshift: <https://www.facebook.com/MindShift.KQED/>;
- Smiling Mind: <https://www.smilingmind.com.au/>;
- Super Stretch Yoga: Some effective free websites to assist with this are:
- Stop, Breathe, and Think: <https://www.stopbreathethink.com/>; Calm: <https://www.calm.com/>;
- Insight Timer: <https://insighttimer.com/>; Mindshift: <https://www.facebook.com/MindShift.KQED/>;

## Strategies to Help with Regulation

- Smiling Mind: <https://www.smilingmind.com.au/>; Super Stretch Yoga: <https://adventuresofsuperstretch.com/>; Go Noodle: Some effective free websites to assist with this are: Stop, Breathe, and Think: <https://www.stopbreathethink.com/>; Calm: <https://www.calm.com/>; Insight Timer: [https://insighttimer.com](https://insighttimer.com/)
- Mindshift: <https://www.facebook.com/MindShift.KQED/>; Smiling Mind: <https://www.smilingmind.com.au/>; Super Stretch Yoga: <https://adventuresofsuperstretch.com/>; and Go Noodle: <https://www.gonoodle.com/>.



## Conclusion

**Students come to us with all levels of readiness. We have to learn to recognize those levels, accept them where they are, and teach them how to “level up” in terms of mental health. We cannot give excuses or play the blame game and see change. If we don’t show “better” they will never know “better”.**