



Becoming Trauma Informed

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This presentation asks you to consider the following...



- Defining trauma
- How trauma presents itself
- Our role in relation to a traumatised child
- Trauma informed strategies for approaching trauma
- Small changes we can make

What is trauma?



“A frightening or dangerous occurrence, that threatens a child’s sense of safety or security” (NCTSN, 2020)

But this is different to *Trauma* itself!

Trauma occurs when children experience the inability to protect themselves (emotionally or physically) or lack protection from others. The effects of which are persistent and can affect the child’s daily life and their ability to function

Unprocessed trauma may result in aggression and anxiety or to prevent re-exposure to trigger, they may act with avoidance, apathy or passivity.

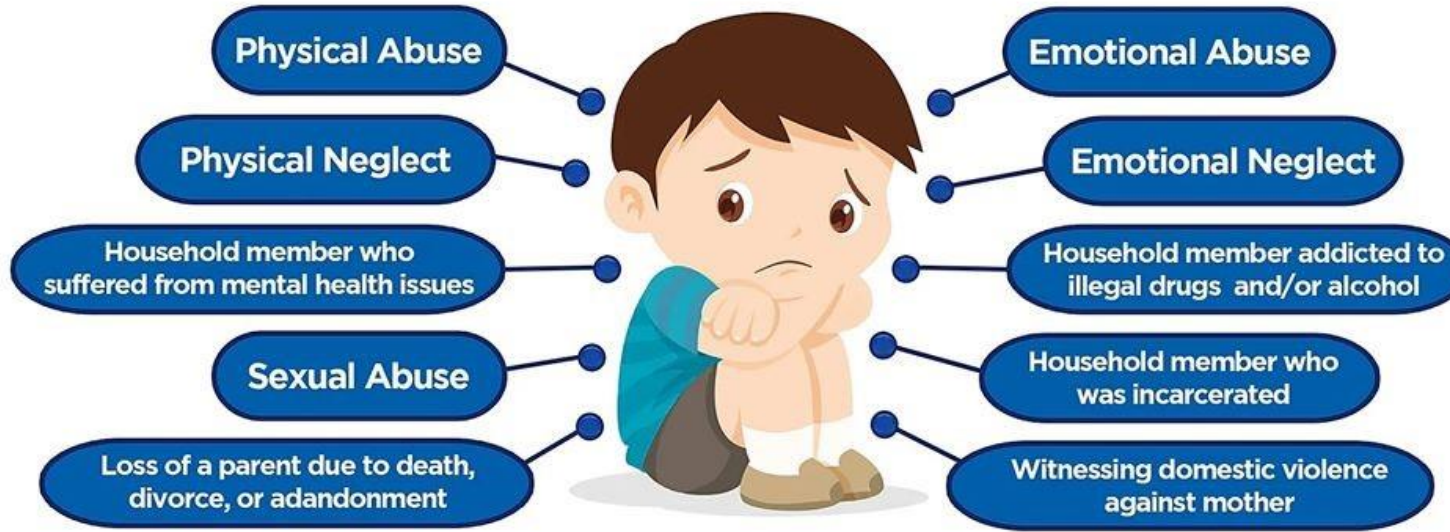
Sometimes *minor stresses* in the classroom are experienced as *major emergencies*...
this is not an overreaction, but the child going into survival mode!

“Trauma is a far subtler concept... not just a word for something extremely stressful. It doesn't always come from short, sharp shocks. Trauma is about events and their effect on the mind. What separates trauma from something stressful is how we relate to events on a deep level of belief”



Prideaux, 2021

ADVERSE CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES INCLUDE:



ADVERSE CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES HAVE BEEN LINKED TO:



3 ACEs or more... 3 times more likely to experience academic failure, 5 times more likely to have attendance problems, 6 times more likely to have behavioural problems.
4 ACEs or more... over 50% had learning problems. In comparison with a child with no ACEs... 32 times more likely to have behavioural problems

(a study of seven hundred 8 year olds, 2015)

Unhealed trauma?

Traumatized children grow up into troubled adults; their trauma does not just dissolve, and if left will be further embedded in their very core being.

We cannot presume that adulthood is a final 'trauma free' destination.

- Long-term health problems, both emotionally and physically (NCTSN, 2020).
- Stress at root of all adult illnesses- *survival adaptation*- meaning what children do to survive stress now then makes them ill later in life.
- When also in emotional isolation, the body is put under siege and the suppressed emotions can lead to mental and physiological adaptations.
- Almost all human disease and psycho-dysfunction in adults is caused by adaptations due to attachment needs not being met (Mate, 2018)

When trauma goes unprocessed, undiscussed, actively repressed; children's social tissues remain disturbed and unhealed and their individual trauma builds up.

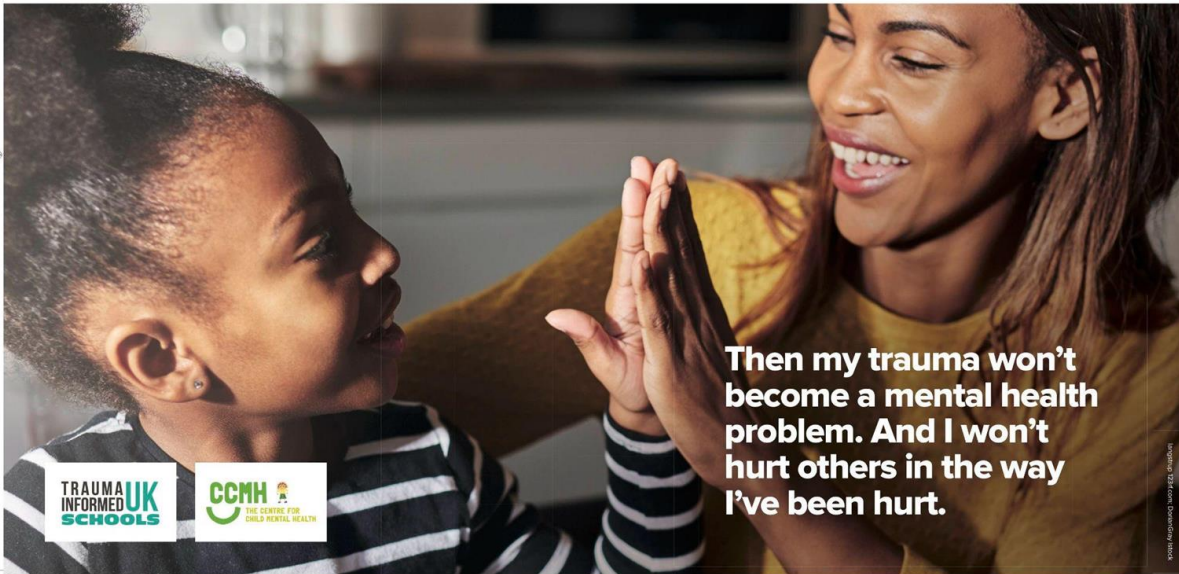
Our roles as Educators...



The traumatised child

Somebody help me!

Don't leave me with this nightmare in my head. Listen to me. Help me make sense of what I've been through. Be there for me. Let me know I matter to you.



Then my trauma won't become a mental health problem. And I won't hurt others in the way I've been hurt.

TRAUMA
INFORMED
SCHOOLS

CCMH
THE CENTRE FOR
CHILD MENTAL HEALTH

Children spend over 190 days in school- **we are a frontline mental health service.**

BUT this does not mean we have to be quasi-psychotherapists, but merely **replicate best parenting.**

We must provide an environment where children feel **psychologically safe.**

NO trust = NO communication

Trauma in the classroom

**A child's trauma refuses to be silenced.
It's in their behaviour, their relationships.
It blocks their learning.**

**That is, until someone listens to their story.
Until someone helps them make sense of
what's happened.**



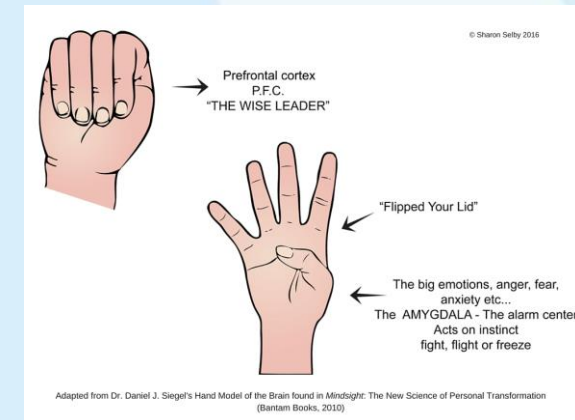
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Traumatized children either **externalise** (violent/angry) or **internalise** (depression/anxiety)

Trauma then presents itself as *behaviour*

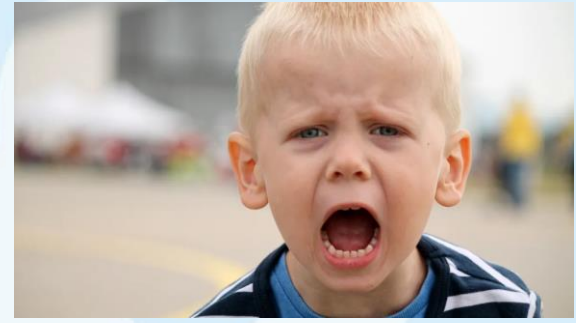


Dr. Dan Siegel's hand/brain analogy

We try and discuss behaviour in a disintegrated brain state but we must **CONNECT** before **CORRECT**

Anger and behaviour

Hurt people.. *hurt* people



Anger is a secondary emotion- with fear and sadness being at the root
(*masked* by anger)

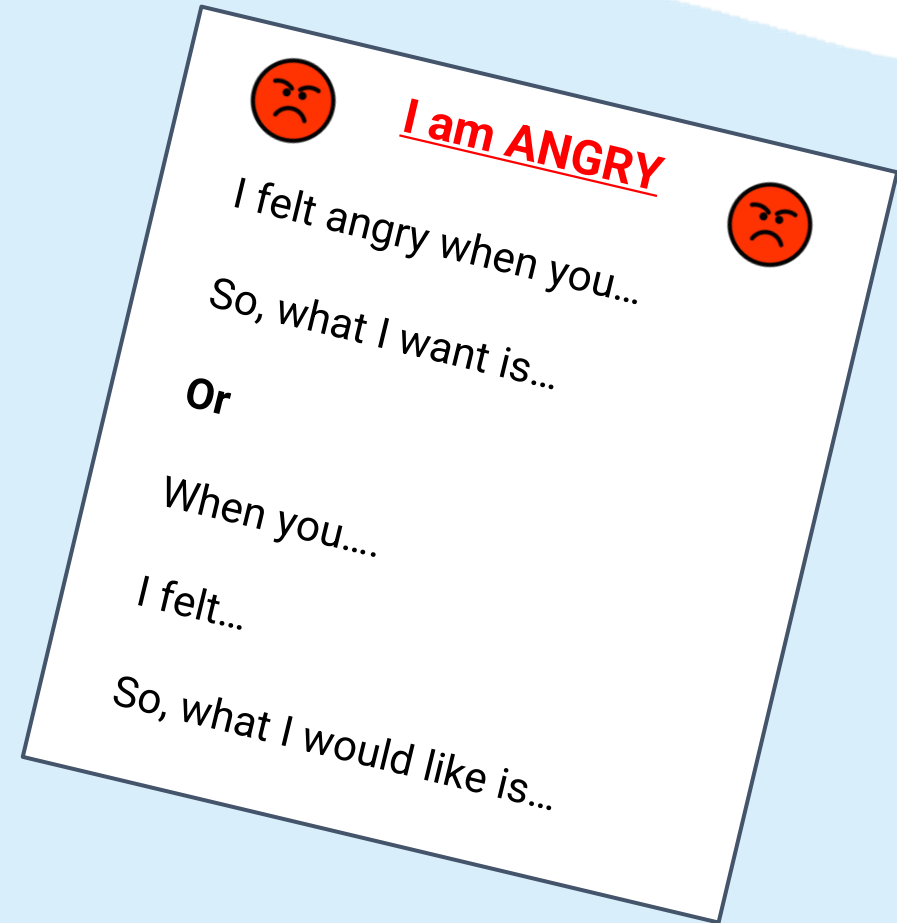
Anger must be met with behaviour support *not* management and an equitable behaviour plan that supports children differently (one size does not fit all..)

This is not the absence of rules and expectations but the presence of compassion and an understanding of what can be endured.

“I will sometimes need you to stop your actions but never your feelings”

Empowered Anger

- Awareness of anger, permission to feel BUT given the words through sentence stems
- Encouraging children to *harness anger* and *mentalise feelings* rather than lashing out
- Regulation and reflection through words
- Finding alternative strategies for expressing anger (resources on board in staff room)



The EAA (Emotionally Available Adult)



Troubled children may not always follow rules... but they will follow a person.

Majority of trauma stems from harmful relationships but one EAA is life changing... this is usually a teacher. Schools can therefore have a huge impact.

There is no significant learning without significant relationships.



Regulating Emotions

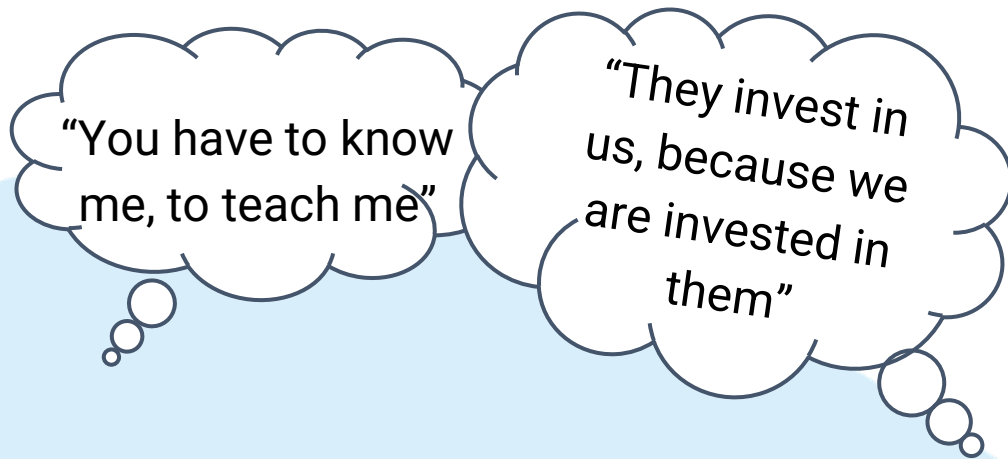
We have an expectation that older children can regulate
BUT trauma arrests the social and emotional
development.

This does not mean we should reduce our expectations
of what they can *achieve*... but what they can *endure*.



“Small” Changes

- Meet and Greet.. End and Send
- Every transition dysregulates- including home-to-school



An embedded meet-and-greet protocol is shown to...

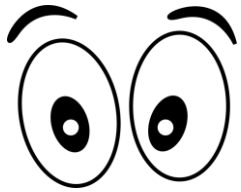
increase academic attainment, decrease disruptive behaviour and as a result, adds up to one hour of learning a day.

(Cook et al, 2018)





★ Greet the child with their preferred NAME



★ Establish EYE CONTACT with the child, where it is comfortable for the child to do so



★ Offer the child some form of non-verbal, friendly, appropriate HUMAN CONTACT



★ CONNECT to the child on a person level with a comment or question

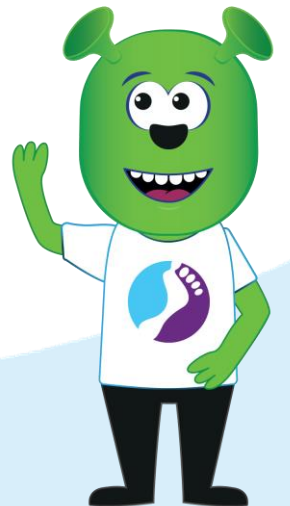
Making Connections

“Connection is the energy that is created between people when they feel seen, heard and valued—when they can give and receive without judgment.”

— BRENÉ BROWN, PHD, LMSW

super
SOUL
sunday

- How can we better connect with children?
- **Affect attunement**- matching/mirroring a child's energy level to show you have truly understood them
- This is an example of visual empathy, an understanding of experiences. (Mirroring a drum beat is also connecting and works in the same way to regulate).
- **Active listening** (not passive hearing..) no pressure, no fixing, just validation of feelings.



WINE!



WINE sentence stems are used for reflective conversations with children. I want you to think about **WINE** as much as possible...!

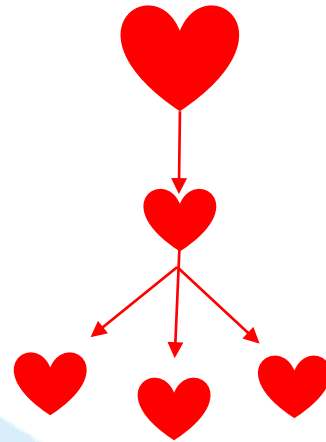


I **W**onder if... (e.g it felt like no one understood you)
I **I**magine... (e.g that was horrible when that happened)
I **N**otice... (e.g how your face lit up when you talked about your dog)
+**E**mpathy (e.g I felt moved when you told me about X... I respect you for your courage... will you help me understand X?)

Always follow up with empathy! E.g 'so when your mum went to hospital you say you felt terribly lost and alone. I can understand that. So painful, as I know how close you are and how much you feel supported by her'

Empathy

is caught not taught



Once we experience kindness, we can then be empathetic.

PACE

“A way of thinking, feeling, communicating, and behaving with a child that aims to make the child feel so safe that they stay open and engaged with you” (Dr Dan Hughes)

Play- A playful, warm and spontaneous way of interacting with a child to support them to feel safe and to promote trust.

Acceptance- Accepting and acknowledging the feelings fueling a child’s presenting behaviour (you can be firm on behaviour whilst at the same time be truly accepting of the feelings that are triggering it)

Curiosity- Active interest in how a child is experiencing an emotionally charged event. Curiosity also helps a child become self aware and reflect on themselves.

Empathy- Feeling into the emotional pain of the child (without getting lost in it). Empathy conveys to the child that they are no longer alone with their painful feelings and distress.

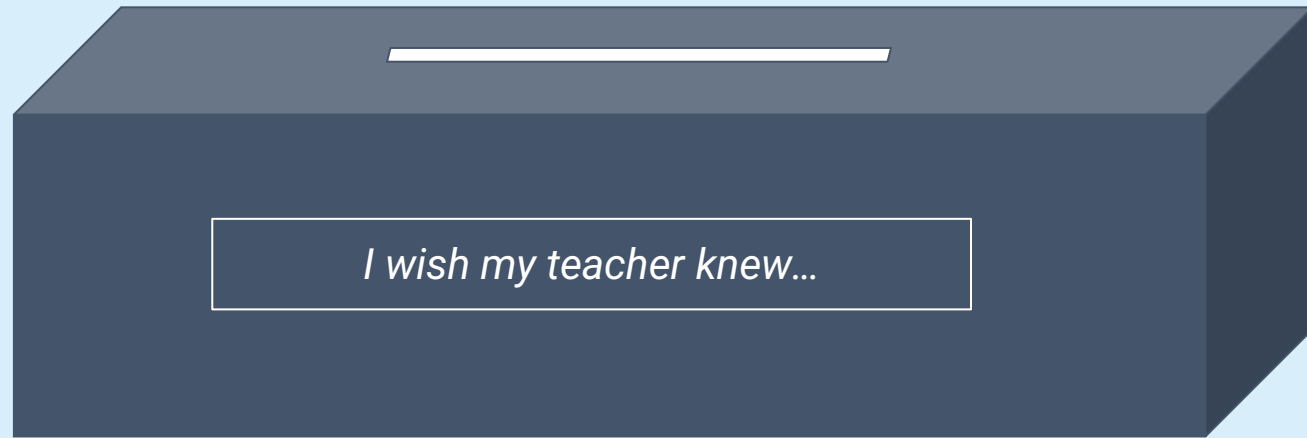
PACE cannot be used only as an intervention but must also be deep-rooted... our default way of being.





“I am really busy teaching at the moment and I want to give you my full attention. Keep hold of this and know that I AM coming back to you.”

More “Small” Changes...



In summary...

- Trauma is a real and prevalent risk to the well-being of children and their futures
- Children are carrying their experiences with them
- Small changes to what we say, how we communicate- can create meaningful connections
- *Empathy* is at the root of building relationships



“We can’t heal the world today but we can begin with a voice of compassion, a heart of love and an act of kindness”

Mary Davis

We must of course remember to take care of ourselves emotionally so that we are in a position to be able to help others.



Practise empathy and compassion and share your successes with others.

Useful links for Trauma...

[Childhood Trauma and the Brain | UK Trauma Council - YouTube](#)

[How to Overcome Trauma - YouTube](#)

And for *your* well-being...

[The Safe Place Meditation: Compassion Focused Therapy \(10 minutes\) - YouTube](#)

[Stress Bucket - YouTube](#)



Change is created
through connection...
not correction.