



TRAUMA-INFORMED SCHOOL PRACTICES:

BUILDING EXPERTISE TO TRANSFORM SCHOOLS

Anna A. Berardi and Brenda M. Morton

Trauma-Informed School Practices

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ANNA A. BERARDI AND BRENDA M. MORTON



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About the Authors

We offer a unique perspective on trauma-informed (TI) training and implementation. We are, as far as we can find, the first and perhaps only TI educator training partnership consisting of a mental health practitioner and an educator, both of whom also teach in a university setting. Our multidisciplinary partnership is an important distinction. We've committed ourselves to learning about the knowledge, skills, and dispositions that inform each of our professions. We firmly believe that in order for us to transform schools in ways that mitigate the enduring effects of chronic stress and trauma impacting students, both disciplines and expertise must work in tandem not only in providing training, but in designing TI educational training competencies for teaching professionals.

Anna Berardi, Ph.D., is the founder and director of the Trauma Response Institute, and a tenured professor of marriage and family therapy in the Graduate School of Counseling at George Fox University—Portland, Oregon. Anna began her work as a social worker, and is a licensed and practicing psychotherapist, utilizing best-practice trauma-informed approaches such as Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR), Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (TF-CBT), and Emotion-Focused Therapy (EFT) to facilitate healing processes for individuals and couples impacted by the lingering effects of trauma. For the past 25 years she has advocated for the needs of marginalized and under-served populations through the training of mental health professionals, including school counselors and school psychologists, serving various communities in the Pacific Northwest. Anna's scholarly publications and conference presentations primarily focus on clinical supervision and training, social justice advocacy, and trauma-informed care.

Viewing trauma-informed care as social justice in action, Anna also addresses how issues of privilege and marginalization exacerbate individual and community vulnerabilities in the aftermath of stress and trauma. Her advocacy and trauma-response work includes service to local, national, and international communities. This includes providing direct social services, supervising interns working in these communities, mentoring graduate thesis projects focusing on providing trauma-informed care within schools, and training educators in TI school practices.

Anna created one of the first university-based trauma-informed graduate certification programs for education, mental health, and ministerial professionals. Together with her colleague, Dr. Brenda Morton, she co-created and facilitates the Trauma-Informed School Initiative dedicated to training and supporting school personnel implementing trauma-informed school practices. This collaboration with Brenda, a teacher educator, and school districts, exemplifies Anna's view that trauma response requires multidisciplinary collaboration with communities in need of resources.

Brenda Morton, EdD., is a tenured Associate Professor in the School of Education at George Fox University. She taught middle and high school at both public and private schools in Oregon and is a licensed administrator. In 2009, Brenda joined the faculty at George Fox University School of Education, where she works in teacher preparation with undergraduate and graduate students. Early on in her career, Brenda recognized the needs of at-risk youth and began to focus on this specific group of vulnerable learners. In 2010, Brenda and her family became a foster family to a sibling group of four. The challenges and joys of foster parenting led her to focus her dissertation on academic outcomes of foster youth. Her dissertation was an extension of her love for at-risk youth and deep desire to understand, connect, and create a path forward. To that end, she earned certification as a National Dropout Prevention Specialist and a post-doctoral certification in Trauma Response.

Brenda is a Fulbright Scholar. She was awarded a teaching and research Fulbright grant to teach trauma-informed practices to undergraduate and graduate students at the University of Tartu, in Tartu, Estonia. She also provided professional development training for school social workers and school psychologists at an educational service center in Tartu. Since the completion of the Fulbright in 2018, she continues to return to Estonia to train general and special education teachers, school psychologists, social workers, and faculty.

Anna and Brenda co-created a trauma-informed certification program for teachers, administrators, and schools. Together, they work with schools to train educators in Trauma-Informed School Practices (TISP) using an integrated social-behavioral health and educational framework informing their Trauma-Informed School Practices Tri-Phasic Model. While they have no intention of turning educators into mental health providers, they do advocate that educators

develop trauma-informed educational competencies as part of their basic training—in essence, becoming trauma-response experts. Trauma-informed educator competencies are crucial for creating educational systems, from school culture to classroom management, that work for all students, not just those impacted by unmitigated stress and trauma. Trauma-informed knowledge, skills, and dispositions allow educators to create strategies, teaching methods, a classroom climate, and a school culture where all students feel safe and secure. Only then can they begin to grow and develop academically and socially.

Book Process Notes

Throughout this text we strive to utilize various practices that reflect our desire to honor multiple voices and life experiences. To this end we seek to avoid language that excludes. In recognition that male pronouns are not gender inclusive, we strive to vary our use of pronouns and incorporate the gender-inclusive term they/them when referring to a singular person, a technique we will often use.

In resonance with our emphasis that it takes a village to learn, grow, and thrive, we will attempt to give recognition through citations to our own ideas inspired by those who have enriched our learning. Whether a good idea or an original source citation, we hope to honor all those who have informed us along the way.

When referring to specific conversations, we refrain from using actual names and other identifying features in order to protect people's privacy. Most case examples are hypothetical, and are identified as such. If an example is based on real events, we have secured permission to refer to those experiences even though we will still alter identifying information.

Preface

Last week we received an email from an administrator of a middle school in an urban school district. The administrator explained they had behavioral challenges in their school and wondered if trauma-informed training would help them meet their needs. We sat down with the administrative team and learned that over the course of the first few weeks of the school year, a half-dozen or more fights had erupted and they were seeing a troubling number of weapons making their way into the school building. Teachers reported struggling to manage behaviors in their classrooms and had expressed feelings of frustration and desperation as they asked for support. Teachers, however, were not the only ones feeling the pressure; administrators were encountering surprisingly hostile and aggressive parents.

This school and their experiences are not unique. In fact, in a survey of 205 teachers, administrators, and instructional assistants in a rural school district, an overwhelming majority shared concerns and challenges very similar to those of their urban counterparts (Berardi & Morton, 2017 a; Morton & Berardi, 2018). They created a list of troubling behaviors and described how it felt like these behaviors had significantly escalated over the last 5 to 7 years. Behaviors, however, were not the only focus. Poverty and mental health rounded out their top three concerns. Clearly, something is going on, and it calls for immediate action.

The experiences of these 205 teachers and administrators are not an anomaly. Walk into any public school in the United States and talk to teachers. They will share with you their concern for their students, how their job has changed, how students are shouldering tremendous pressures and chronic stress, and the impact it is having on academic achievement and social functioning. These school experiences, cries for help from students, parents, communities, and educators, are what prompted our work, the identification of trauma-informed educator standards of practice, and this implementation guide.

Toward Building Trauma-Informed Educator Competencies

Advances in traumatology and neurobiology, along with longitudinal data confirming the generational impact of stress and trauma on lifespan psychosocial and physical health, have created a seismic shift in how we conceptualize and respond to the needs of children and adults seeking services within our communities (Carrion & Wong, 2012; Centers for Disease Control & Prevention, 2015; Cozolino, 2014; Felitti et al., 1998; Porges, 2011). This includes institutional settings such as hospitals, residential care facilities, prisons, and educational environments, including P-16 settings (Cozolino, 2013; Massachusetts Advocates for Children, 2005; SAMSHA, 2014). Educators, and the systems in which we provide our services, can no longer assume that our traditional ways of approaching the learning process are congruent with current knowledge and best practices. In response, this textbook is designed to assist educators in building trauma-informed competencies, including its systemic application in all aspects of the school environment. The integration of knowledge, skills, and dispositions congruent with trauma-informed competencies comprises Trauma-Informed School Practices (TISP; Berardi & Morton, 2017; Morton & Berardi, 2017; Morton & Berardi, 2018), our initial training method to assist educators transitioning to trauma-informed practice.

In this text we present the Trauma-Informed School Practices Tri-Phasic Model, our model detailing educator competencies needed to create effective trauma-informed learning communities.

Trauma-informed competencies are a new content and skill domain for educators. They require a revisiting of theoretical constructs already familiar to educators, but integrated with and perhaps even transformed by new fields of study traditionally found in the social and behavioral science professions. And herein lies the key: Trauma-informed

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competencies require a cross-collaboration of both content and practice domains of education professionals and mental health professionals (Morton & Berardi, 2017).

While many education professionals and mental health professionals might be alarmed by this statement, the authors intend to demonstrate that trauma-informed (TI) practices require a shared content domain with role-specific application. Mental health providers cannot be of service to this process unless they too have demonstrated acquisition of trauma-informed competencies, which in and of itself includes an understanding that trauma-informed practice is a helpful, if not necessary, form of service delivery across multiple professions. Likewise, education professionals may be reticent to dig deep to learn this new domain for fear that they will be expected to serve as mental health professionals rather than educators.

We acknowledge that this reticence may exist for many current educators. We invite you to take note of your concerns and revisit these thoughts after you have worked through this text. To assist in this process, we invite you to take the [TISP Pre-Survey](https://goo.gl/forms/JHDI5jeZJznwnMRY2) (https://goo.gl/forms/JHDI5jeZJznwnMRY2) before moving further along. It will only take a few minutes. At the end of the text or your course, you will be invited to take the survey again. You will then have access to a comparison between your pre- and post-course thoughts. After you take the initial survey, read on for how and why we will incorporate parallel self-application and awareness exercises throughout the text.

A Word About the Use of the Term *Trauma-Informed*

Many educators may be hesitant to use the term *trauma* as part of the title of a protocol implemented within their schools, opting for other titles less suggestive of abuse or mental health struggle. We agree! First, let's differentiate between *trauma-informed* as an educator competency versus the title of a program.

TISP, and its application as the TISP Tri-Phasic Model, is not a program in the same way Mind Up, or AVID might be. Rather, it is a roadmap to creating safe and effective trauma-informed learning environments. To acquire the necessary competencies, we have identified the knowledge, skills, and dispositions of a trauma-informed educator, and presented these competencies as a scaffolded guide to creating trauma-informed learning communities. It is a metamodel based on trauma-informed theories, research, and best practices. The TISP Tri-Phasic Model includes practical recommendations for implementation, and equips educators with the ability to evaluate *any program*, whether promoted as trauma-informed or not, for its congruence with trauma-informed practice.

We caution educators not to minimize the importance of developing trauma-informed competencies, *and to name them as such*. This includes continued discernment regarding *implementation language* sensitive to social context.

The Use of Labels

Trauma-Informed educators do not advocate identifying or diagnosing students as traumatized. We embrace a guiding value of the mental health professions to avoid labeling students according to an ACE score, or any other psychosocial measure designed to provide insight into the world and experience of a student. Rather, TISP teaches educators how to listen to their students' stories, only hinted at in an ACE score, and mostly revealed through the context of our relationships with them, as well as their academic and social functioning at school.

Trauma-informed principles also reflect that this approach to learning is a universal design, appropriate for all students regardless of psychosocial stressors or cognitive strengths and limitations; it is good practice for promoting the cognitive and social-emotional growth of all students, as we will further unpack in the chapters ahead.

Terminology

Throughout this textbook concepts and terms inherent to trauma-informed educator competencies will be introduced and defined. We begin by defining key terms related to the overall objective of this textbook.

Stress and Trauma

Trauma-Informed Expertise

TI expertise reflects mastery of a new content domain for educators. It is not a passing fad. Educators are constantly introduced to new programs trying to gain traction and interest. Sometimes educators are exhausted by all the new initiatives, knowing funding, hope, and hype are likely to be replaced with broken budgets, disappointing outcomes, and apathy.

Trauma-informed competencies allow the educator to evaluate the fit of any new program by examining its ethos, system-wide practices, and direct interactions with students. That shiny new penny may be something innovative or just a repackaging of a preexisting program. Regardless, the trauma-informed educator will know how to discern its merit based on a conceptual framework integrating the latest research and best practice strategies from neurobiology, attachment, traumatology, cognitive development and learning, and psychosocial theories related to recovering from the impact of unmitigated stress and trauma in order to maximize their success in the school environment.

Stress and trauma are universal human experiences, yet definitions can differ widely depending on the context in which the terms are used. For example, a researcher analyzing factors that help persons survive and thrive in the aftermath of a stressful event will aim for very precise definitions regarding what is a stressor event versus what is a traumatic incident. Meanwhile, in clinical mental health settings, practitioners understand that stressful and traumatic events are often subjectively experienced: What might be traumatic for one person, whether a perceived or real event, may only be mildly or temporarily stressful for another.

In Chapter 3, we will unpack the essence of stress and trauma as it is understood through a metatheory detailing what makes each of us vulnerable to events being traumatic versus merely stressful or challenging, and how the Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) Survey is renewing our understanding regarding why some stressful events are more impactful than others. But for now, *trauma is simply a term to describe the **aftermath or impact** of an event, whether real or perceived, that interrupts a person's ability to maintain a sense of psychological and/or physical safety and well-being.* When we use the term *trauma*, as in “She has experienced a lot of trauma in her life,” it is shorthand for saying that certain events were overly stressful, hurtful, and/or terrorizing; these events were traumatic for that person, and have impacted who they are today and how they function in the world.

The impact or aftermath of such events can be short-lived, resolving fairly easily, becoming merely one event in a person's life history. Or the event may require long-term recovery, setting off additional biopsychosocial vulnerabilities, and perhaps becoming a chronic event defining a person's sense of self and functioning. Stressful and traumatic events

can lead to growth and wisdom, or bitterness and despair. Persons able to seize the wisdom path may still suffer chronic side effects, while persons unable to make peace or coexist with the memory of the trauma may show no *outward* social or physical health impact.

Often throughout this text we will refer to “unmitigated stress and trauma” precisely because most of us, including our students, have the capacity to find our way through stressful or traumatic events with only temporary disruptions if we are embedded in strong communities of care. In the absence of a strong relational community, our stressors and traumas often go unnoticed. The impact of these events lingers and festers, and soon, along comes another stressor piling on insult to injury. This ongoing process of not being attuned to and mentored through these stressful events leads to a state of unmitigated stress and trauma that chips away at our resilience, creating chronic trauma-induced injury.

We go to great lengths explaining that not all stressful events become trauma, and not all trauma leads to predictable and irretractable consequences, and sometimes minor stressors can interfere with our health and well-being just as much as a full-blown traumatic event, in order to caution you not to make assumptions about the well-being of those who survive traumatic events (neither minimizing nor catastrophizing). Rather, we want to increase your insight and empathy into just exactly what stressful events—whether mild or severe enough to be classified as a trauma—do to us: how such events immediately impact us physically, emotionally, cognitively, and socially. We want to deepen your awareness of the systemic factors—the pre- and post-trauma environmental factors that make some of us more at risk or more resilient. We also want you to grasp how TISP is a universal-access approach as it serves the well-being of all students. And most importantly, we want you to fully grasp how our capacity to heal and grow from stress and trauma is linked, in large part, to how we as a community wrap ourselves around each other *before and in the aftermath* of such events in order to maximize health and wellbeing as evidenced in a student’s academic and social functioning.

Trauma-Informed

The term *trauma-informed care* arose within mental health research and practitioner circles to denote advances in our understanding regarding how trauma impacts persons and communities, and best practices in response (SAMSHA, 2014; Siegel, 2012; van der Kolk, 2014). *Trauma-informed* denotes an ever-emerging body of literature and practice representing the convergence of various disciplines, such as research in the fields of traumatology and neurobiology, as well as concepts gleaned from various developmental theories such as attachment and cognitive development, combined with emerging data regarding intervention methods most effective at helping persons heal and resume their development (Berardi & Morton, 2017).

Not all mental health professionals (MHPs) can claim trauma-informed competencies, even though the heart of MHP work is helping alleviate the effects of trauma (Morton & Berardi, 2017). Attending a conference or reading a text on trauma-informed processes does not create a trauma-informed professional. It takes a deep dive into the literature integrating advancements in our understanding of the role of attachment in building neurological networks, the role of these networks in being able to meet life’s challenges, and what happens to our body and mind when overwhelmed with unmitigated stress and trauma. This knowledge helps us make sense of intervention methods in response. Then we dig into best practices congruent with our role even while seeking additional training, supervision, and peer collaboration as we practice these emerging dispositions and skills.

Trauma-informed denotes an ever-emerging body of literature and practice representing the convergence of various disciplines, such as research in the fields of traumatology and neurobiology, as well as concepts gleaned from various developmental theories such as attachment and cognitive development, combined with emerging data regarding intervention methods most effective at helping persons heal and resume their development (Berardi & Morton, 2017).

This text aims to give you an overview of the conceptual elements informing trauma-informed school practices. We will bring you into the literature and provide direction for deeper reading. We will then identify best-practice interventions congruent with your role as educators. As you embark on this deep dive, and put into practice what you are learning within a community of educators doing the same, you will then be able to claim trauma-informed competencies.

Trauma-Informed Educator Competencies

Education professionals have unifying concepts for defining what constitutes competencies. For example, it is widely understood that education competencies are not merely demonstrating a knowledge base but are exemplified in practice. And good practice is not merely memorizing a script—do “this” when “that” occurs. An educator needs guiding principles to discern how to stand beside students and walk them through the psychosocial and learning challenges of the moment. This requires educators to embody a mindset, a set of guiding principles and values—dispositions—congruent with the competency. Hence, trauma-informed educator competency is displayed through the intersection of knowledge, skills, and dispositions.

In mental health practice, competency is developed by building perceptual, conceptual, executive, and professional skills (Bernard & Goodyear, 2018; Falender & Shafranske, 2004; Morgan & Sprenkle, 2007). While all four work in tandem, the first two are most clearly linked. An MHP practices increasing their attunement not only to what is being said and who is doing what, but to the underlying meaning fueling the interactions as revealed in non-verbal body language, the tone, volume, and pitch of spoken words, the person’s history, and narratives regarding hopes, fears, and worldviews. All of this perceptual data is taken in and organized according to conceptual elements from the social and behavioral sciences informing the therapeutic process. The third element used to assess MHP competencies is executive skill, the actual actions of the practitioner, including the MHP’s ability to reflect on what they are doing and why.

The fourth category often used to assess MHP competency is a heading often simply called *professional competencies*. This includes the application of legal and ethical principles as it informs professional functioning, not just when providing direct service to clients. But it also includes the practitioner’s self-awareness of their own functioning, the capacity to self-regulate when stressed or triggered, and the commitment to regularly self-evaluate and seek appropriate self-corrective measures as needed. It is an acknowledgement that much of the success of our work depends on our awareness that the role of self—who I am and how I function in the world—is a vital part of what helps us be effective.

Reflecting the heart of Erikson’s (1964) developmental hypothesis that insight leads to the capacity to act responsibly lest we merely react to our environment due to unconscious neural networks (which we explain in Chapter 2), educators and MHPs help our constituents understand what drives their behavior. To embrace this task effectively, we must travel the same road of self-exploration and ownership. This process is often referred to as the *Self of the Therapist*, or *Person of the Therapist/Counselor*, in acknowledgement that the psychosocial maturity of the practitioner is vital to effective professional functioning.

Trauma-informed educator competencies requires educators to engage in this same process: As you are recognizing the role of psychosocial stressors and trauma on development over the lifespan, so too will you increase your own awareness of how stress and trauma has shaped you. And in order to respond effectively to your students, as with MHPs, we will invite you to engage in an insight and self-care process. Throughout this text we will provide exercises and tips on how to engage in *Person of the Educator* processes.

Weaving It All Together

Given that TI educator competencies are an integration of multiple content domains representing a cross-collaboration between the educator and mental health professions, we utilize a few processes throughout this text to facilitate a fuller sense of the concepts you are seeking to metabolize. Each chapter or section will include many of the following elements:

- Desired Outcomes: The perceptual, conceptual, executive, and professional skills an educator will be able to utilize as a result of applying the material.
- Key Concepts: Theory constructs or conceptual domains of emphasis. This helps the educator continually see the weaving together of educator, social science, and behavioral science domains informing TI practice.
- Chapter Overview: These overviews summarize how the current chapter builds on the material already presented.
- Case Examples: We will use composite fictional case examples to illustrate concepts and model TI assessment and responses. And on occasion, such as in Chapter 3, we will invite readers to engage in activities as part of that case example.
- Exercises: We present a variety of methods for further engagement with the concepts presented in each chapter. At the conclusion of various chapters, an Exercise box will denote a recommended activity, such as personal or group reflection questions, or a classroom, school, or administrative evaluation and response activity. Occasionally, the exercises focus on *Person of the Educator* reflections, as this work is the birth of trauma-informed educator dispositions. These exercises are also designed to help the educator learn the concept through self-application as we are often our best case examples!
- Worksheets: Additional engagement activities include worksheets found in the text appendices. These activities often require expanded instructions, with each worksheet representing a part of a larger whole. Therefore, we group the worksheets together at the end of the text for easier tracking of your process.
- Call-Out Boxes: Along the way, text boxes will expand on a topic in a variety of ways. For example, we may offer parallel applications or related thoughts, deepen concepts already presented, or highlight controversies or other topics of secondary interest.
- Resources for Further Reading: At the end of each chapter we offer a few resources for further study, in addition to the references cited in this text. TI expertise cannot be mastered through any one textbook. It is a specialty that requires a deep dive into multiple sources over time as you also engage in the process of implementation and evaluation. In addition, TI educators are growing in numbers, and often use social media for encouragement and to share ideas as they engage in the process of developing this expertise. Throughout this text we will link you to open access resources that will take you deeper into concepts presented. At times, we will refer you to these resources to avoid repeating what is already accessible and required on your journey.

Book Overview

This text assists educators in the development of trauma-informed competencies required to transition to a trauma-informed educational environment. The principles informing Trauma-Informed School Practices (TISP) are detailed in Section I, “Foundational Principles.” It begins with an overview of the struggles facing students and educators, grounded in the reality that many students experience unmitigated stress and trauma, and this has undermined their ability to be successful in the school environment. To understand this link between trauma and school functioning, we revisit factors contributing to healthy development and resilience. We then explore how unmitigated stress and trauma can overwhelm coping resources and undermine our capacity to function. This includes explaining the concept of integrated neural functioning, as the heart of trauma-informed care is understanding the neurological impact of consistent attunement and mentoring versus unmitigated stress and trauma. This section concludes with an in-depth presentation of the Trauma-Informed School Practices Tri-Phasic Model, detailing the trauma-informed competencies needed to transform an educational system.

Section II, “Implementing Trauma-Informed School Practices,” applies the competencies identified in the TISP Tri-Phasic Model to the education system transition process. This section addresses both systemic and practical day-to-day tasks and challenges designed to help districts and schools make wise use of training resources and strategically transform school cultures and practice. It also provides practical steps to implementing trauma-informed knowledge, skills, and dispositions in the classroom. Here we focus on scaffolding a process that allows the educator and student to grow in partnership as this new school and class method unfolds. While providing concrete examples and testimonies from educators, we also provide insight into how to evaluate pre-existing programs, such as a school’s discipline policies, for trauma-informed congruency.

Section III, “Sustaining Trauma-Informed School Practices,” concludes our work by exploring how to nurture and build enduring trauma-informed learning environments. For many professionals, trauma-informed competencies make sense; there is a logic that touches a place in us that says, “It is actually quite simple.” When we provide communities of care, life thrives. But learning how to provide that care requires effort as we wade through myriad cultural influences that divert our attention. Trauma-informed practices require diligent attention, not half-hearted application. And they are inclusive of all stakeholders.

To that end, Section III focuses on tending to three different parts of the larger system that enable trauma-informed schools to become a reality. First, we examine the need to include parents and guardians as part of the trauma-informed team. A systemic understanding of the reasons why our students suffer such extreme degrees of unmitigated stress and trauma reminds us to not scapegoat parents, as family stress and student difficulties are a manifestation of culture-wide distress. And, most important, parents are most influential in the life of the developing child, and therefore should be central trauma-informed team members.

We then shift focus to university teacher-education and mental health training programs. Until we revise bachelor- and graduate-level training programs to place trauma-informed competencies as a foundational outcome expectation, educational settings will be spinning their wheels re-orienting each new hire to get on board with trauma-informed expectations. Likewise, congruent with trauma-informed competencies, cross-discipline collaboration is key to advancing our trauma-informed knowledge and ensuring effective response.

The text concludes with a focus on the importance of evaluating the efficacy of our efforts. Here we examine data gathering not just to satisfy documentation requirements, but to facilitate encouragement and further growth in strengthening school as a nurturing community for students and staff. It provides a nice touchpoint for revisiting why this text has focused on the Person of the Educator, as well as the well-being of our students.

TISP identifies educator perceptual, conceptual, executive, and professional competencies—the knowledge, skills, and dispositions that form the foundation for safe, effective, and appropriate application of trauma-informed principles in educational settings.

TISP identifies educator competencies—the knowledge, skills, and dispositions that form the foundation for safe, effective, and appropriate application of trauma-informed principles in educational settings.

This new educator content domain invites a significant overhaul of how educators are trained and evaluated in their roles as teachers, administrators, and support staff. This may feel like a daunting task, and we invite you to name your initial skepticism. As we walk you through this new competency, we hope you resonate with the conceptual elements informing trauma-informed practice even as you

begin to see hope on behalf of your students, the education profession, and yourself as an educator.

SECTION I: FOUNDATIONAL PRINCIPLES OF TRAUMA-INFORMED SCHOOL PRACTICES

There is an unprecedented outcry among educators for communities to understand the extreme challenges in schools of all socioeconomic levels whereby students are not able to engage in the academic and social demands of the learning environment. We begin our journey by first unpacking the severity of these concerns precipitating our proposition that, in addition to adequately staffed and resourced schools, we need to incorporate a new conceptual lens that accurately identifies the nature of student challenges and effective teaching practices in response.

Chapters 2 and 3 identify barriers and solutions to impaired executive functioning foundational to learning. Here, we introduce trauma-informed conceptual elements by examining how integrated neural functioning is promoted or undermined, what this looks like in our everyday life, and how attunement and mentoring begin to unravel the impact of unmitigated stress and trauma.

Chapter 4 revisits the classroom for a deeper examination of how dysregulated behavior impacts educational settings. It illustrates that a different approach is required to protect all students and the integrity of the classroom, and to prevent educator secondary trauma and burnout.

Chapter 5 identifies best-practices in trauma-informed care, illustrating that regardless of setting, trauma-informed interventions reflect universal best practices to promote resilience over the course of our development. This assures educators that TISP is based on sound research and is a universal design appropriate for all students.

Trauma-informed knowledge invites changes to traditional and postmodern pedagogical practices, placing attunement (*Connecting*) and mentoring (*Coaching*) at the core of the learning process. In response, Section I concludes with the introduction of the Trauma-Informed School Practices Tri-Phasic Model, a detailed description of the knowledge, skills, and dispositions comprising trauma-informed educator competencies. It is designed for use by Regulation and Support Systems responsible for setting competency standards for teacher and administrator preparation programs, including universities revising curriculums to include trauma-informed competencies. Current educators (administration and staff) seeking to develop trauma-informed competencies will also find this document a useful guide. The application of these competencies is detailed in Sections II and III, with this document serving as a reference point along the way.

Chapter 1: The State of Public Schools



[Image: [Classroom](#) | [Unsplash](#)]

“We ignore the emotional needs of young children at our peril.”
—Bruce D. Perry, *Born for Love: Why Empathy Is Essential—and Endangered*

Desired Outcomes

This chapter and the accompanying recommended readings and activities are designed to assist educators to:

- Identify the severity of need in many schools reflected in behavioral disruptions and poor academic

performance

- Discover the impact of struggling students on all school stakeholders
- Increase curiosity regarding how to understand the nature of the problem and appropriate school-based responses

Key Concepts

This chapter focuses on the impact of unmet student emotional and physical needs in public schools. It includes the following key concepts foundational to trauma-informed competencies:

- Identification of the problem, in all of its complexities
- Awareness of the scope of the problem
- Insight into the impact on all stakeholders

Course Overview

In this chapter we present alarming information on what is happening in many public schools. We share perceptions and experiences of teachers and the concerns they have expressed in relationship to their students, and discuss the impact of unmet student needs on all school stakeholders. The challenge in schools is not just about dysregulated students, but about educators, teachers and community members at their wits end, searching for a way forward.

I (Brenda) have a cohort of students every year who are pursuing a master's degree in teaching. Their program includes extended placement in a school for their student teaching. My students regularly share their experiences in the classroom, which gives us a chance to debrief. What follows is from one of those debrief sessions.

A teacher candidate was placed in a third-grade classroom in a rural school district. She came to see me after teaching all day. She was tired and emotionally drained. As she sat in my office and began to tell me about a particular student who displayed significant behavioral issues, she began to cry. "The student comes to school angry every single morning. And I mean really angry. It is becoming impossible to get him to settle down, pay attention, and focus on academics. Just this morning he completely lost control, ripped up the worksheets and threw them on the floor." This child was clearly hurting, and my student teacher was distraught, feeling like she was failing before she even earned her teaching license.

Does this classroom interaction sound familiar to you? Students enter the classroom with varying readiness and

ability levels, learning styles, learning needs, and behavioral issues, amid increased class sizes. Enormous pressure has been placed on teachers and students to perform on standardized exams. Parents and communities hold teachers accountable for the outcome of those exams. Yet, parents and communities do not know how classrooms have changed, or what obstacles to achievement teachers face.

Classroom management has become increasingly more difficult. Examples of dysregulated children and youth abound, leaving teachers and other school personnel deeply concerned. To get a clear picture of what educators and schools are experiencing, we conducted a survey of 205 teachers, administrators, and instructional assistants (Morton & Berardi, 2018). The survey was created to explore the needs of students and classroom challenges, asking for perceptions and experiences, and comparing those to student needs and challenges 3 to 5 years ago. For context, of those that responded to the survey, 43% were P-12 classroom teachers, 26% classified staff, 12% certified district specialists, 9% classified classroom staff, and 10% held administrative leadership positions in the district. Overall, the average survey participant had been in the district for over 9 years, with more than 35 serving in the district for 20 or more years. They were almost evenly split between elementary and secondary roles. We point out the demographics of these participants because their experience working with children and youth is significant, and their years in their various roles provided them with history and perspective on the needs of students in today's classroom.

The survey asked if they had noticed any change in student needs over the last 3 to 5 years. They responded overwhelmingly with a "yes." When they were asked to describe the change they noticed in their students, the most common responses were:

- Challenging classroom behaviors
- Anxiety
- Depression
- Mental health challenges
- Homelessness/unstable housing
- Inability to control emotions
- Difficulty focusing
- Declining academic achievement and classroom performance
- More students requiring SPED services to support behavioral challenges

These responses were organized into the following four categories: (a) behavioral issues (defined as disrespect, aggression, and negative attention seeking behaviors); (b) academic challenges; (c) stress and anxiety; and (d) mental health challenges (Morton & Berardi, 2018).

Behavioral Issues

The survey revealed classroom behavior as the greatest challenge classroom teachers were experiencing. Teachers reported student dispositions as "students behaving aggressively," "disruptive behavior that impacts the learning environment," "noncompliance," "physical aggression," and "defiance." One teacher shared "screaming, yelling, and throwing things" as the biggest challenge within their classroom. Another shared, "One student spends only about 20% of the day on task. The rest of the time she is running back in forth in my classroom and sometimes out of it. She can become easily upset by other students and will just start screaming. Another student gets upset if you ask him to do something he doesn't want to do or to correct a mistake and will start wailing. Some days he can handle some correction; other days he cries loudly in class throughout the day." An elementary teacher summed it up by saying, "Some children are quick to lose their temper and throw items at other students. We are losing too much teaching time dealing with behaviors" (Morton & Berardi, 2018, p. 202).

Academic Challenges

Teachers are worried about the academic achievement of their students. They shared that this concern has increased over the last 3 to 5 years. One shared, “There seems to be some high-functioning kids or kids that get it, but then there are just kids below or way below grade level. The ‘middle’ or ‘average’ student seems to have disappeared!” A pre-K teacher shared, “The academics are more rigorous now, so they are expected to do more and some of them are not necessarily ready for it. I think they need more support.” Another said, “It seems the number of special education and behavior students is increasing and what they are supposed to be able to do academically is becoming more challenging.” An elementary teacher summed up her frustration by saying, “There are too many behavior issues that interfere with education and the academic needs of the students are often secondary.”

Stress and Anxiety

Anxiety and increased stress levels have been noted by teachers as another area of concern. A high school teacher said, “Students seem to have become more anxious and stressed.” One teacher wondered if this was because many are “trying to fit so many pieces of curriculum into a day—I think it’s too stressful and intense for the students. Many of the students need a more holistic approach and the day is incredibly chopped up with pull-outs [students scheduled for additional support and thus pulled from the classroom]. This makes it challenging to create a family within the classroom, something many of the students desperately need.” Another wondered about the impact of high-stakes testing on students. They shared, “I think high stakes assessment stress has affected our attempted suicide rate.”

Mental Health Challenges

Teachers and administrators are seeing an increase in the mental health needs of their students. A high school teacher said, “I see a lot more students who present as mentally ill or unstable. Students who shut down, or have outbursts unrelated to the material we are studying.” One teacher identified “uncontrollable anger” manifesting in their classroom. Several survey respondents voiced the need for licensed mental health providers in each school building in the district, and for the creation of in-school services to meet needs. Others pointed to the need for increased planning time in order to thoughtfully make adjustments to the learning environment that could help meet the emotional needs of their students.

Unfortunately, these situations and experiences shared by teachers and administrators have become more frequent. In the last couple of years, teachers and administrators have taken to social media to voice their frustration with the dispositions of students and parents. These posts have included pictures of torn-up textbooks and novels, classrooms that have been left in complete disarray, bulletin boards destroyed, school technology discarded, vandalism of desks and other school furniture, and injury to teachers. This cry for support was echoed in a report from our own Oregon Education Association (OEA). Witnessing an increase in classroom management issues and listening to their membership, they created a task force to explore what was happening in schools. Testimony in 2017 to the State Board of Education alerted the governor to an impending crisis. The OEA (2019) published a report summarizing testimony from more than 2,000 educators across the state, and from community parents, educational professionals, and legislators at community forums.

At the forums and in a survey, OEA asked the same four questions:

- In your classroom, school, or district, what are barriers to ensuring all students can learn in a safe, inclusive, and welcoming environment?

- What changes could be made to overcome those barriers in your classroom, school, or district?
 - What support do you need or does your classroom, school or district need to implement those ideas?
 - What innovations or successes do you know about that could inform changes across Oregon?
- (<https://www.oregoned.org/standing-up-for-you/disrupted-learning>).

What OEA learned mirrored our findings from the 205 teachers. Survey and forum respondents shared extreme classroom behaviors that included verbal abuse, physical abuse between students, using classroom items as weapons, and destroying property as significant barriers to providing the high-quality education teachers desired to deliver (OEA, 2019, p. 6). In fact, these behaviors have become so common in classrooms, that they are rarely acknowledged as an event. One reason named for these increased behaviors is the increase in class size. OEA found that approximately 45% of all classes have 26 or more students, with some classes having as many as 56 students (OEA, 2019). As class sizes have increased, student social-emotional needs have become more severe, and school funding has decreased, teachers report having significantly fewer classroom supports, including “counseling staff, special education teachers, school psychologists, school nurses and other specialized support personnel” (OEA, 2019, p. 7).

What is happening in classrooms is not just impacting those exhibiting disrupted learning behaviors. The impact can be seen in classmates, teachers, special education referrals, and loss of community confidence in the public school system.

Student Impact

When a student displays emotional outbursts or physical aggression in the classroom, the entire classroom suffers. Student bystanders find their learning interrupted as the teacher is immediately needed to bring calm, safety, and stability to a child who is out of control. The negative interaction creates a chaotic environment that requires time to recover, resulting in additional lost instruction time. Children are also emotionally impacted by the event that took place. Witnessing the event can leave children afraid to engage in any kind of relationship with the student who exhibited those behaviors, making it difficult, at best, for the teacher to create a welcoming environment for all and leaving emotionally vulnerable children in social isolation. Children in classrooms where emotional and/or physical outbursts are common may view school or their classroom as an unsafe environment, therefore impacting academic and social growth for all.

Teacher Impact

Teachers are also suffering both physically and mentally. Our local news channel gathered a group of teachers to discuss behavioral issues in their classrooms and schools. During the interview teachers shared that they or a colleague had been physically injured as a result of out-of-control student behaviors. The reporter contacted the largest school districts in the state and learned that in the last two years, one district reported 1,789 teacher injuries with 72% of those injuries caused by their students. A second district reported 634 teacher injuries with 65% caused by their students. One district started tracking these incidents this year, with 551 teacher injuries, 404 of which were caused by a student (Severance, Tierney, & Johnson, 2019).

Teachers are also experiencing secondary trauma, resulting in mental and physical exhaustion and early retirement from the profession.

The majority of survey respondents indicated the need for more training as their teacher preparation programs inadequately prepared them for the significant mental health challenges of their students. Teachers are trained to create engaging lessons focused on raising the academic abilities of their students. They are led to believe that if they master tried and true behavioral management strategies, they will have a well-ordered classroom. As one teacher stated, “Yay for me getting an A in my classroom management course; it means nothing due to what is happening in classrooms today.” Now, educators serve as surrogate parents, safety officers, and caseworkers in overcrowded, underfunded settings.



[Image: [Lonely Man Crying Alone](#) | [Pixabay](#)]

Special Education Referrals

Recently, we were invited to meet with a group of superintendents, principals, teachers, and school counselors from several different school districts in Oregon. Before the meeting began, a conversation between a couple of people around the coffee pot turned into a larger group discussion about the significant jump in student referrals for special education testing, prompted by out-of-control behavioral issues in the classroom. As teachers face students with an inability to self-regulate, and without additional classroom support, they are desperate for answers, strategies, and solutions to support this group of learners. Not knowing what else to do, they are referring students for special education testing at an alarming rate. Special education teachers are stretched beyond their limits with the influx of referrals.

Community Impact

The impact these events have on the community are multifaceted. First, parents are looking to school administration to respond to these significant disruptions in their children's classrooms. As administrators struggle to find effective and appropriate actions, the families and community begin to lose confidence. Parents begin to question their children's safety in the school. Pressure can mount with parents calling for stricter accountability measures, believing that poor behavior just needs to be corrected.

But, for the trauma-impacted student, it is just not that clear-cut. Their misbehavior is not simply disrespect, but a manifestation of significant cognitive distortions and limitations resulting most often from the unmitigated stress and trauma that characterizes their life thus far. It leads to self- and other-doubt, resulting in anger, hurt, and often hopelessness. Behavioral modification programs based on reward and punishment mean nothing to them, and only serve to further feelings of inadequacy and shame (Craig, 2016; Ristuccia, 2013). Without the help and support they need, our typical interventions might actually be making the situation worse, increasing the likelihood of a cascading set of struggles, including the student choosing to leave school entirely.

The dropout process is not immediate; it does not happen overnight. It is a slow process of disengagement, frustration, suspensions, and other acts of exclusion. However, without interventions, failure and dropout rates will increase. Young adults without a high school diploma will earn less than \$40,000 a year. This represents a \$18,800

yearly gap between their salary and the salary of those who earned a bachelor's degree (National Center for Education Statistics, N.D.). The unemployment rate for those without a high school diploma is 13%, versus 3% for those with a bachelor's degree (National Center for Education Statistics, N.D.). Those who drop out face tremendous obstacles in meeting their basic needs and often rely on social programs to bridge that gap.

We've known for a long time that our public schools face significant challenges, as we ask why our students struggle so much, and how to fix it. The No Child Left Behind era brought a focus on standardized testing. Schools became focused on a single score. As scores took center stage, teachers faced scrutiny from the communities they served. Calls for merit pay for teachers and report cards for schools put teachers under the microscope. Basically, for a multitude of cultural reasons, lawmakers decided that teachers—and the education system—were the cause of the problem. And the fix was to put more pressure on teachers to show results of a job properly done via test scores.

Parents want their children to be academically and socially successful, and rightfully so. However, the challenging conditions in which teachers are operating are caused by forces largely out of their control. And, more often than not, community members are unaware of the enormous daily challenges teachers face. In short, we need to first re-ask and answer why students struggle to thrive in the school environment.

Conclusion

The findings from our survey of 205 teachers, the report by the OEA, and our work with schools confirm that unmitigated stress and trauma are wreaking havoc in our schools. The academic and social impact of traumatic histories has become a social justice imperative. Darling-Hammond and Cook-Harvey (2018) call for a return to focusing on the “whole child” and not just academics; they define the whole-child approach as one that includes, “access to nutritious food, health care, and social supports; secure relationships; educative and restorative disciplinary practices; and learning opportunities that are designed to challenge and engage students while supporting their motivation and self-confidence to preserve and succeed (p. 2). The whole-child concept is not new, but took a backseat to student test scores and standardized exams during the era of No Child Left Behind. Now, however, awareness that at least 50% of students in classrooms have been impacted by trauma calls for a renewed focus.

Our teachers, administrators, students, and non-teaching school support personnel are experiencing significant challenges as they seek to create a safe, engaging environment where all students can learn. OEA (2019) said, “Students and educators should feel safe and secure while at school. The disrupted learning environment crisis puts these core values at risk” (p. 3). This bleak state of our schools calls for immediate action: an overhaul of our education system where all people feel safe, seen, heard, and can flourish.

A Look Forward

In this chapter we discussed the state of public schools. We unpacked the perceptions and experiences of teachers who are deeply concerned about the behavioral, academic, and mental health challenges of their students, which continue to increase in severity each year. And, we have observed that some of our responses on a broad cultural level have perhaps been meant well, but suggest that we do not fully understand the scope of the problem.

TISP proposes that given the severity of need experienced by today's students and teachers, we need to re-envision how we train our educators, how we interact with students, their families, and each other, and how we create safe and effective learning environments. In the remaining chapters in Section I of this text, we will explore the above questions—why are our classrooms in crisis, and what can be done about it—by applying advances in neurobiology, development, and traumatology research informing the conceptual elements of Trauma-Informed School Practices. In

the remaining sections, we will identify the knowledge, skills, and dispositions required by educators to implement these concepts in a manner that responds to the needs of all students.

Resources for Further Reading

- [DoSomething.org](#). A grassroots organization providing statistics on education in the United States.
- [Classrooms in Crisis](#). One state's process assessing the needs of students and educators.
- [Child Mind Institute](#). This organization provides rich resources for parents and educators.

Chapter 2: Optimum Development and Academic Readiness



[Image: [Adult Hugging a Baby](#) | [Unsplash](#)]

Piglet sidled up to Pooh from behind.

“Pooh!” he whispered.

“Yes, Piglet?”

“Nothing,” said Piglet, taking Pooh’s paw. “I just wanted to be sure of you.”

—A.A. Milne, *The House at Pooh Corner*

Desired Outcomes

This chapter and the accompanying recommended readings and activities are designed to assist educators to:

- Revisit and deepen conceptual skills regarding the ultimate goal of human growth and development, utilizing theoretical constructs embedded within trauma-informed practice
- Deepen perceptual skills by applying foundational trauma-informed theoretical constructs in the identification and assessment of your own developmental functioning

Key Concepts

This chapter focuses on identifying optimum environments crucial to nurturing resilient students able to meet the academic and social demands of the school environment. It includes the following key concepts foundational to trauma-informed competencies:

- Erik Erikson's theory of Human Growth and Development and its articulation of the challenges and goal of healthy development
- Attachment theory as a guide to how students become equipped to meet developmental challenges via Good-Enough Parenting and the Connection-Break-Repair process
- Attachment behaviors as both attunement and mentoring by a community of care, not just parents
- The role of secure attachment relationships in the formation of integrated neural networks key to managing stress and anxiety, precursors to academic and social-behavioral achievement
- Daniel Siegel's Domains of Neural Integration as a method of assessing areas of strength and growth for both the educator and student

Chapter Overview

It is easy to surmise that Trauma-Informed School Practices (TISP) arose in light of our increased awareness of how unmitigated stress and trauma undermine a child's capacity to be successful in meeting the academic and social demands of school. And, as you might expect, we will spend a significant amount of time unpacking how a child's inability to be successful in school unfolds when overwhelmed by stress and trauma. But in order for us to understand this breakdown process, we will revisit conceptual elements of healthy or optimum

development, what it looks like, and what it requires. We need to recapture a vision of the very goal of development and the human and social contexts in which it occurs. In this chapter we set the stage for a deeper understanding of the effects of unmitigated stress and trauma by first revisiting key developmental constructs informed by advances in neuroscience, anchoring trauma-informed practices.

Figure 2.1: Erik Erikson: (Original) Developmental Model Overview

Crises are aspects of being human we need to learn to hold as both/and. The *crisis* connected to a *stage* reflects its *critical period*, the time in which the challenge is perhaps first experienced or most foundational, even though we encounter each challenge, strength, and vulnerability in multiple iterations throughout the lifespan.

Goal: Achieve an integrated balance with (at least a slight) favor toward the positive end.

Descriptors reflect Erikson's (1987) wording, further defined by A. Berardi, (2000), GCEP 510: *Human Growth & Development*, Graduate School of Counseling, George Fox University. Portland, OR.

-
- **Stage** (*Life Cycle*) Infancy **Age** (*Relative*) 0-12 months
 - **Crisis** (*Challenge*) Trust v. Mistrust
 - **Outcome: Ego Quality** (*A Strength*) **Hope**: Enduring belief despite dark urges and rages (fear). I can trust despite risk.
 - **Outcome: Core Pathology** (*A Vulnerability*) **Withdrawal**: Social and emotional detachment.
-

- **Stage** (*Life Cycle*) Toddler **Age** (*Relative*) 1-3 years
- **Crisis** (*Challenge*) Autonomy v. Shame and Doubt
- **Outcome: Ego Quality** (*A Strength*) **Will**: Increased judgement and decision in drive application despite shame and doubt. Engage rather than avoid.
- **Outcome: Core Pathology** (*A Vulnerability*) **Compulsion**: Any behavior we repeat on impulse or to resist impulse to distract against shame & doubt.

-
- **Stage** (*Life Cycle*) Early Childhood **Age** (*Relative*) 3-6 years
 - **Crisis** (*Challenge*) Initiative v. Guilt
 - **Outcome: Ego Quality** (*A Strength*) **Purpose**: Courage to envision and pursue goals despite guilt, fear, self-sabotage impulses.
 - **Outcome: Core Pathology** (*A Vulnerability*) **Inhibition**: Psychological restraint (i.e., ignoring, denying) against freedom of thought, expression, activity.
-

- **Stage** (*Life Cycle*) School Age **Age** (*Relative*) 6-12 years
 - **Crisis** (*Challenge*) Industry v. Inferiority
 - **Outcome: Ego Quality** (*A Strength*) **Competence**: Free use of skill and intellect unimpaired by infantile inferiority (deep sense of inferiority, fear of judgement, failure).
 - **Outcome: Core Pathology** (*A Vulnerability*) **Inertia**: Paralysis of action, thought; prevents work; lack of confidence that it is OK to succeed or fail.
-

- **Stage** (*Life Cycle*) Adolescent **Age** (*Relative*) 12-18 years
 - **Crisis** (*Challenge*) Identity v. Role Confusion
 - **Outcome: Ego Quality** (*A Strength*) **Fidelity**: Sustain loyalties (trustworthiness) freely given despite inevitable value system contradictions. Community is not about sameness.
 - **Outcome: Core Pathology** (*A Vulnerability*) **Isolation**: Lack of connections; withdraw.
-

- **Stage** (*Life Cycle*) Young Adult **Age** (*Relative*) 18-34 years
- **Crisis** (*Challenge*) Intimacy v. Isolation
- **Outcome: Ego Quality** (*A Strength*) **Love**: Mutual devotion subduing antagonisms of divided function. "I love you even though you are SO different than me."
- **Outcome: Core Pathology** (*A Vulnerability*) **Exclusivity**: Elitist shutting out of others we do not accept or who do not conform to our standards.

-
- **Stage** (*Life Cycle*) Maturity **Age** (*Relative*) 35–55 years
 - **Crisis** (*Challenge*) Generativity v. Self-Absorption
 - **Outcome: Ego Quality** (*A Strength*) **Care**: Widening concern for what generated by love, necessity, or accident.
 - **Outcome: Core Pathology** (*A Vulnerability*) **Rejectivity**: Unwilling to include certain others in one's generative concern.
-
- **Stage** (*Life Cycle*) Old Age **Age** (*Relative*) 55 years and older
 - **Crisis** (*Challenge*) Integrity v. Despair and Disgust
 - **Outcome: Ego Quality** (*A Strength*) **Wisdom**: *Detached* (it's not about me and what I want), active concern (*care*) in face of death (temporality of all things).
 - **Outcome: Core Pathology** (*A Vulnerability*) **Indifference**: No care; withdraw and inertia. Bitterness: Scorn for self and other.

Figure 2.1

The Goal of Development: Revisiting Erik Erikson's Vision

Each year I (Anna) invite a new group of graduate students to revisit the “age and stage” developmental theorist, Erik Erikson (1964, 1987) and his psychosocial theory of human development. I start by explaining that his theory is not about ages and stages. It is about what he envisioned was the goal of human development, summed up in a series of propositions.

Human growth and development is an identity formation process:

- That occurs within a complex web of relationships;
- Through various processes of adapting to the demands of the environment;
- With the goal of reaching maturity characterized by love, wisdom, and fidelity;
- Leading to insight and responsibility.

His “ages and stages” (summarized in Figure 2.1) are less about what may or may not happen at a particular *age*, but about a series of *internal* and *interpersonal* challenges we encounter over and over again throughout life. For example, as newborns, our most significant challenge is our need to be loved and to trust in the goodness of self, other, and the world—and this issue is not resolved in infancy. Rather, it is our first iteration of what is to be a lifetime of repeated encounters with this dynamic. These repeat encounters give us the opportunity to strengthen earlier gains (our positive

neural networks) needed to overcome and tame the negative neural networks endemic to all of us as part of being human. But repeat encounters also can undermine fragile, new internal strengths, further solidifying negative neural networks that impair our ability to meet additional life challenges as we move across the lifespan.

In other words, developmental crises, and the resulting core strengths and pathologies (as Erikson called them) are universal developmental themes we need to struggle with over and over again if we are to become mature adults. At each step in the process, the developing child needs a community of caring adults who understand the importance of these iterations and provide the optimum environment in which the child can engage in these challenges (Erikson, 1987).

While we can identify adjustments we'd make to Erikson's original stage formulations in regards to timing, gender awareness, and tasks related to today's environmental demands (Gilligan, 1982; Kraus, 2009), here, what we are most interested in are the developmental concepts informing Erikson's model. Specifically:

- 1. Growth occurs within a relational polarity between self and other.**

We are faced with predictable *external* (relational, environmental) challenges that often correspond with an *internal* challenge we are primed to take on. For example, let's recall our first challenge after birth: the need to bond with a caretaker, creating or flushing predictable *internal* challenges, such as "I need to be loved, but am I lovable?" The external world is placing demands on the infant, and the infant is internally ready and primed to interact. When there is a mismatch (school places academic and social demands on the student, but the student is not able to engage), internal psychological struggles for the student, and between the student and the external environment, are guaranteed.

- 2. Growth occurs in dialogue with two inner competing polarities.**

Continuing our example of the infant's first challenge to engage with the world, each crisis is cognitively, emotionally, and viscerally evident within the child's body, signaling the need to respond. Having no words and merely tracking his experience through physical and emotional sensations, the child is placed at a particular type of inner crossroads: "Do I trust despite my inner doubts [the birth of a positive neural network about one's worth]), or should I withdraw, as the crushing shame of rejection is too overwhelming [the birth of a negative neural network about one's worth and the goodness of others]?" Erikson (1964) uses the term *crisis* to describe these central challenges of a particular stage. Successful resolution between these two opposing neural networks requires a both/and integration whereby the positive neural network is stronger than the negative neural network, and so helps to provide a reassuring counterbalance and mediating effect.

In this example of Erikson's first-stage in which we are challenged with the inner polarity of trust versus mistrust, if the child could put words to the challenge's emerging resolution, it might sound like this: "People, and life in general, are not always trustworthy, but I can trust that most times others are trustworthy. And I can trust that I can survive encounters with others' untrustworthiness or my own doubts and fears. I am driven to do this because there is something about loving and being loved that makes life worth living, giving me hope to engage and move forward." As we will see in future chapters, when a child cannot integrate these neural networks, the negative networks lead to cognitive, affective, and behavioral dysregulation, often most evident in classroom settings.

- 3. Growth requires repeating challenges over and over.**

Remember the movie *Groundhog Day* (Ramis, et al., 2002)? The main character repeated the same day for years on end, constantly re-encountering the same challenges, but qualitatively changing with each iteration. Even when he developed mastery in something, he kept being challenged by the deep layers of internal beliefs and meaning he was making along the way. The movie ends with him choosing to actually stay in that very town to settle down and build some roots.

While the internal strengths and vulnerabilities we develop responding to an earlier crisis are then used as skill sets (encoded as neural networks) to meet future challenges, we are never "done" with those earlier challenges. These challenges are lifelong themes we encounter over and over. Each successive encounter pushes us deeper, giving us the opportunity to further strengthen earlier positive neural networks or undermine our growth by nurturing negative neural networks. On any given day, each one of your students is not merely encountering the challenges of Industry versus Inferiority, but having re-encounters with earlier challenges regarding their safety,

worth, and ability to meet the demands of those around them. Educators are the ones who see the child's negative and positive neural networks in action, while also being the ones called to empathically attune and mentor them through whatever developmental demand is preventing them from making academic and social skill gains.

4. Neural networks influence our psychosocial functioning.

Our internal negative and positive neural networks shaped by our interactions with self and other form the basis for internal schemas related to our worth, the goodness of others, and life in general. We will further explore the formation and influence of neural networks below. But a hint of what is to come:

When children cannot function in the school environment, they are telling us that negative neural networks are pulling their strings, that they have not had the chance or ability to nurture the positive neural networks needed to counterbalance a bunch of confusing, discomfoting, negative thoughts, feelings, and sensations that rattle around inside their body and mind. And each time a child is dysregulated, they are revisiting a place where they are re-encountering a developmental challenge. They need a redo—and tag, you're it; they need you to be the grounded attachment figure that walks them through it via attunement and mentoring.

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5. Development takes a village.

And finally, Erikson reminds us that our growth and development is intimately connected to the broader culture, and its embrace of relational values that support and sustain health (Erikson, 1987). Look at his description of an adult—one who is committed to love, care, and generativity in a manner that is not exclusive. A child's growth is not solely dependent upon the relational style of the parent; it is embedded in a deeper matrix of relational influences extending beyond kinship relationships. And a significant part of that community is school.

Likewise, schools are embedded in a reciprocating relationship with the broader culture. Educators need communities—parents, lawmakers, the general public—to believe in and support the education of the next generation as part of their commitment to be generative. Educators need to know that they are valued as professionals, and need to be supported as such through adequate funding for wages and supplies. In Chapter 4 we will revisit this topic again, as educator stress is not just about trying to find effective responses with students who are unable to manage the demands of the school environment: you are facing a variety of cultural messages, overt and covert, signaling a lack of trust in your expertise and community commitment to the public education process. This adds to your stress, activating your own neural networks in response.

Attachment and the Creation of Integrated Neural Networks

Erikson's theory articulates a vision of the substance and process of becoming a mature adult, a wisdom-making process embedded within relationships with ourselves, with others, and within a broader cultural environment committed to relational principles necessary to support healthy development across the lifespan. Attachment theory (Bowlby, 1969, 1988) gives us specific guidance on what these relational behaviors look like, and how these behaviors create integrated neural networks necessary for healthy development.

Neural Networks: Deeply Held Beliefs Influencing Behavior

We've been using the concept of neural networks to elaborate on Erikson's contributions to understanding the process of development, but what do we mean? Cognitive developmental theorist Jean Piaget (1952) was instrumental in helping us describe how we develop the capacity to interact with our environment through the development and summoning of schemas, neurological storehouses of scripts for responding to the world born from repeated encounters. Erikson helps us understand the psychosocial content of these neural networks that are in constant play as our students respond to the academic and social challenges of the school environment. Advancements in neurobiology verify and provide us with a deeper understanding of the actual physical construction of these neural networks; it is not merely hypothetical, as now we have empirical proof regarding how the brain wires together and grows (Cozolino, 2014; Porges, 2011; Porges & Furman, 2011; Siegel, 2012).

Our memory banks—both positive and negative neural networks—contain neural encodings of our earliest experiences stored through implicit memory processes, a skill of our right frontal cortex that is able to encode memory through feelings and sensations (Schoore, 2017; Siegel, 2012). For example, hearing soothing voices and feeling gentle, protective touch, we felt loved and safe. Hearing arguments and loud jarring voices, or feeling rushed physical touch and anxiety that is easily conveyed during moments of eye contact (or lack thereof), are just a few ways that we felt vulnerable and scared. These preverbal memories are stored in our implicit memory.

As our use of language grows, so does our brain's capacity to store experiences in explicit memory, a function of our left frontal cortex. Memory neural integration between left and right hemispheres, and between positive and negative neural networks, occurs when our caretakers attune and mentor us through various life experiences, helping us make sense of our experiences, and affirming that we can find our way through the challenge. In the absence of this type of relational fidelity, our memories remain fragmented, compartmentalized, and dysregulated.

Of specific focus here is the role of consistent, emotionally attuned, and mentoring responses by caretakers in building positive neural networks that mitigate or tame the influence of competing negative neural networks through the neural integration process (Commodari, 2013; Porges, 2011; Siegel, 2012). Erikson already tips us off that in the realm of making sense of self and other in all matters related to the bio-psycho-social anxieties of life, we have competing networks—negative and positive. Negative networks are born from uncertainty, fear, or pain, leading us to doubt self, others, and/or the goodness of life. Just glance down Erikson's list of core pathologies to view some of the most common negative neural networks influencing dysregulated student behavior: "The world is not safe and I am not lovable, I have no choice but to withdraw"; "I have no real sense of will and just react compulsively"; "I dare not set goals and will remain inhibited with fear"; "I am not competent, so don't bother trying"; and the list goes on. Negative networks can include some element of truth, as people are not always lovable, capable, trustworthy, etc., and they function to inspire self-protection. But as Erikson's use of the term *core pathology* hints, our negative neural networks backfire, morph into lies, and impair our ability to grow and thrive when left unmitigated.

Positive neural networks are born from consistent, emotionally attuned love, care, and mentoring responses throughout a child's formative years, leading to an inner confidence that we can figure it out despite the experience of fear and anxiety. This is congruent with what Erikson identified as the optimum goal of each developmental challenge: that as a result of the relational fidelity of the caretaker, the developing child would be able to summon internal strengths despite the nagging voice of those pesky negative internal neural networks (Erikson, 1987).

As we will uncover in our review of attachment theory, negative implicit memories left unmitigated feed a continued lack of integration between explicit and implicit neural networks. This lack of hemispheric integration places the child in an unavoidable position of dysregulation. Lack of hemispheric neural integration allows reactionary implicit neural networks to run the show, as we react to physical and emotional cues in the here and now in an effort to protect ourselves, with little explicit memory and associated schemas to help us differentiate the myths and exceptions of our negative neural networks. We lead, in conscious and unconscious ways, with the belief that we are stupid or worthless, that people are not trustworthy—whatever the negative network is being activated at the time. We then respond with a

variety of fairly predictable defensives, whether through withdrawal or attack (Arntz, Chasse, & Vicente, 2005; Bowlby, 1976, 1980; Carrion & Wong, 2012; Kinniburgh, Blaustein, Spinazzola, & van der Kolk, 2005; Perry, 2009; Schore, 2003).

In group settings, our neural networks seek out and resonate with others carrying similar scripts, forming a “groupthink” process, commonly seen in classrooms. Sometimes this contagion effect reveals the linking of positive neural networks, displayed in group care, empathy, kindness, and generosity. Many times, negative neural networks link, leading to group chaos or violence. Regardless, the behavioral issues plaguing students and teachers are revealing unintegrated neural networks: students’—and at times the teacher’s—negative neural networks are signaling the need for attunement and mentoring.

Hollywood’s Depiction of Neural Networks

Movies and novels are replete with themes regarding the formation of negative neural networks that then shape the character’s responses to life challenges. For example, in *Finding Nemo* (Stanton et al., 2003), we meet a dad who was always a bit of a worrywart and adverse to taking risks. The catastrophe that struck his family only served to strengthen those inner negative neural networks. The movie depicts how engagement with each life challenge invites us to rework those internal scripts, which he does quite nicely.

A fun place to see the building of neural networks more overtly named and illustrated is in the movie *Inside Out* (Docter et al., 2015). Likewise, an animated sequence in the documentary *What The Bleep Do We Know* (Arntz et al., 2005) also explains how negative neural networks develop and operate.

You may have seen all three of the movies we’ve briefly mentioned here, in addition to other movies we will mention along the way. We think that you may be rewatching many of your all-time favorites, but with deeper conceptual language to describe what is being portrayed. Enjoy!

Attachment Theory and Its Influence on Academic and Social Functioning

A primary theoretical construct informing TI practice is attachment theory, a developmental model describing the role of interpersonal connectedness in the formation of integrated neurological functioning, leading to the capacity to effectively manage life’s anxieties so that the developing person can engage in the various tasks or demands presented by the environment (Bowlby, 1988; Bowlby & Golding, 2007; Karen, 1990; Siegel, 2012). Here, we are addressing how the child’s attachment relationships are key to enabling them to academically engage and emotionally and behaviorally self-regulate (Geddes, 2006; Massachusetts Advocates for Children, 2013; Masten & Obradovic, 2006; Morton, 2018).

Over the past 20 years, elements of attachment theory have experienced a resurgence of interest as advancements in neurobiology have provided empirical evidence of the



[Image: [Herd of Elephants](#) | [Unsplash](#)]

physiological impact of relationships. First, we can see physiological evidence that secure, emotionally attuned, and trustworthy relationships do build neurostructures advancing brain functioning required for psychosocial growth. Likewise, insecure, emotionally misattuned and inconsistent relational fidelity undermine the formation of neurostructures required for cognitive functioning and self-regulation, leading to added challenges throughout the lifespan (Cozolino, 2014; Siegel, 2012; van der Kolk, 2014).

They are mirrored in Erikson's developmental model, but in a nutshell, attachment theory's primary premises are quite simple (Bowlby, 1969):

- We all experience anxiety. Life is hard and will present us with numerous expected and unexpected challenges (stressors), some more annoying than hard, and others downright scary, traumatic, and unfair.
- To manage this anxiety, we need consistent attachment during our first 18 years of life. All children need what developmental theorists call “good-enough parenting” (as explained below) from adults who consistently see, value, care for, and mentor them throughout the first 18 years of life (Karen, 1990; Winnicott, 1990). When we are loved (being seen and mentored) by a caring community, our innate ability to grow and thrive unfolds.
 - In the absence of good-enough care, brain development stalls, negative neurological networks (for example, “Life is always unfair” or “I am not lovable”) take hold and dominate, and positive neurological networks (such as “Life is good on most days” or “I am deeply loved”) fail to take hold. This lack of neural integration sets off a cascade of developmental consequences unique to each person and their circumstances.
- If we get good-enough attachment, we are better able to handle life's anxieties. When we have consistent attunement and mentoring, we build the internal neurostructures required to emotionally and cognitively meet the both-and of life's challenges without being overwhelmed by anxiety. We develop confidence in our abilities to do life, what is often referred to recently as “grit” (Duckworth, 2016). Through firsthand experience, we know we are loved—we have worth, even though we, and the persons who love us, are not perfect. We learn we can reach out for help as needed, even as we are learning how to use our internal and external resources to meet day-to-day expectations.
 - Attachment theorists call this confidence. It takes confidence in the goodness of self, others, and the world despite the imperfections and the bad. It takes confidence in our own ability to figure it out even though we may often get it wrong. It takes confidence to reach out for help, knowing those persons may or may not be able to respond as we ideally desire.
 - And this confidence (built by consistent love and care) is what enables us to manage anxiety, whether it is the minor anxiety of managing day-to-day tasks or surges of anxiety that accompany larger stressors and traumatic events.
 - In the absence of good-enough attachment, we do not have the neurostructures to emotionally and cognitively self-regulate and learn. We know through firsthand experience to doubt our worth and the trustworthiness of others. We lack the confidence in ourselves to meet the daily challenges of life, leading to inhibited action, self-doubt, and oversensitivity to criticism. We lack confidence in others truly caring about us, and become overly sensitive to any perceived or actual slight. We do not feel safe in the world; we do not feel safe in our own skin. We learn all sorts of ways to protect ourselves, such as curbing or muting our will or drive to be loved, to be creative, to set desired goals as protection against personal failure, rejection, and shame. We cannot manage the anxiety of day-to-day demands, let alone major stressful or adverse events.
 - The cumulative effect of these negative neural networks dominating our psychosocial and cognitive functioning over the course of the lifespan manifest in all sorts of challenges observed in the classroom, as we will examine in Chapter 4.
 - In adulthood, these challenges are most apparent in struggles in our intimate, close relationships, or adult living skills related to self-care and social responsibilities such as economic sustainability and honoring social contracts (i.e., laws).

Good-Enough Parenting as Attunement and Mentoring

Figures 2.2 through 2.4 provide an outline summary of the foundational elements of attachment theory, including John Bowlby’s original hypothesis, as well as the work of Mary Ainsworth and Mary Main, who worked with Bowlby to flesh out basic styles of what secure and insecure attachment from parents look like and their effects on children. In summary, Bowlby described securely attached parents as caretakers who were able to offer care in just the right dose—in style and consistency—according to the current needs and biological wiring of the child, helping the child create internal working models (neural networks or schemas) of the world based on the internalization of that care (Bowlby, 1969, 1976, 1980). In other words, not all children need love and care *expressed* in the same manner. Good-enough parents, a term coined by Winnicott (1990), are able to bend and flex according to the needs of their child in the process of offering consistent emotional attunement and mentoring. And no parent is perfect—nor should they be. But the limits of the parents must not exceed the tipping point required of that child to internalize that they are loved and cared about, and can safely trust and rest into that attachment relationship despite its imperfections; that’s good-enough.

Attachment Theory Overview

Figure 2.2: John Bowlby (1988): Attachment Theory Propositions, Function, and Attachment Behavior Definition

Bowlby’s Hypothesis	Attachment Theory	Attachment Behaviors
3 Propositions:	2 General Functions	Definition & Duration
When we are confident that an attachment figure is available when needed, we will be less prone to intense or chronic fear than if we do not have this confidence.	A way of conceptualizing the propensity of humans to make strong affectional bonds to particular others.	Definition: Any behavior resulting in attaining or retaining proximity to another person. Includes smiling, crying, anger, flirting, direct or indirect requests for help or attention.
Confidence in availability (or lack thereof) builds slowly during childhood. These expectations tend to persist throughout life.	A way of interpreting emotional and personality disturbances resulting from unwilling separation and loss.	Duration: Attachment behavior most evident in childhood but remains from cradle to grave.
The expectations of availability and responsiveness of attachment figures developed during childhood are fairly accurate representations of experiences we have had.		

Figure 2.2

Figure 2.3: John Bowlby (1988): Six Patterns of Attachment Behaviors

Bowlby asserts that the more a parent displays the positive traits in the following six patterns, the more likely the child will securely attach. The more a parent displays the negative attributes of these six patterns, the more likely the child will not securely attach.

Pattern #	Positive Attachment Behavior	Negative Attachment Behavior
1	Responsivity Embracing of child's attachment needs regardless of child's age.	Non-Responsivity Unresponsive to attachment needs and child's signals; disparaging, rejecting.
2	Continuity Consistent presence; consistency; trustworthy.	Discontinuity Significant absence due to illness, adoption, foster care, travel, or death.
3	Absence of Threats Mentors, does not shame; no emotional games, threats, or hurtful messages.	Threats (and Harm) Emotional control of child; threats to not love, withhold support; includes violence.
4	Availability Able to manage own life struggles without scaring or ignoring child.	Abandonment Parent threatens to leave or harm self to guilt child or manipulate spouse.
5	Absence of Guilt Takes appropriate responsibility; resists urge to control or punish child via guilt.	Guilt Induce via claim that child is responsible for problems, illness, divorce, financial struggle.
6	Non-Inversion (Parent is the parent) Parent maintains role as adult mentor. Appropriate generational hierarchy and role expectations.	Inversion (Child pressured to care for parent) Role reversal; parentification or uses child as a friend, confidant; child forced to meet attachment need of parent.

Figure 2.3

Figure 2.4: Child and Adult Attachment Styles

Mary Ainsworth (2015) observed four distinct attachment patterns children display in relationship to their primary attachment figures. Mary Main (Hamilton, 2000; Main, Kaplan, & Cassidy, 1985) observed four distinct adult attachment patterns that parents display towards their children. Together, they discovered a correlation between the way a child attached and the style of attachment that the child's parents provided that child. An adult attachment style does not always “produce” the corresponding child attachment style, but they discovered that a significant correlation does exist. Use the *Child Attachment Styles* to identify traits in yourself as a child; use the *Adult Attachment Styles* to identify traits in yourself as an adult, whether bonding with another adult or as a parent caring for a child.

Ainsworth's Child Attachment Styles	Main's Adult Attachment Styles
Style 1: Secure <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Child: Engaged, curious, responsive; easily seeks connection and at ease when on own; reacts congruent with situation, for example, happy when parent arrives, sad when leaves. Parent: Responsive; attentive; attuned. 	Style 1: Autonomous <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Family Recall: Can recall the good and bad; not overwhelmed or cut off; integrates past and present. Receptive to attachment needs of children, close others; strong anxiety management and emotional self-regulation abilities.
Style 2: Anxious Avoidant <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Child: Looks mature, detached; doesn't seek comfort; adapts to blank, angry, rejecting, distracted parent. Parent: Nonresponsive to cues; may disparage attachment-seeking behaviors. 	Style 2: Dismissive <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Family Recall: Resists recall or idealizes family despite the bad. Detached, avoid emotional depth; love and intimacy difficult; may view others' emotional needs as weak or childish.
Style 3: Anxious Ambivalent <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Child: Clingy; inhibited; anxious. Parent: Their varying needs dominate; come here-go away. 	Style 3: Preoccupied <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Family Recall: Preoccupied by past, family pain. Emotional regulation difficult; may often feel anger, despair, worthlessness; like a victim; anxiety; overwhelmed.
Style 4: Disorganized/Chaotic <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Will co-occur with Style 2 or 3. Child: Will act unpredictable, indiscriminate, reactive. Parent: Will act unpredictable, indiscriminate, reactive. 	Style 4: Disorganized <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Will co-occur with Style 2 or 3. Family of Origin: Abusive, inconsistent; vacillate between overly intrusive and absent; addictions; violence; mental illness. Current relationships replicate early trauma.

Figure 2.4

Other attachment-focused theorists have added to our understanding of what “good-enough” means—and again, it is not about perfection or protecting children from all relational stress or disappointment. In fact, it requires (a reasonable dose of) the exact opposite. Return to Erikson's notes again (Figure 2.1 above). As we discussed, notice how all of life is about developing internal strengths despite challenge, despite the imperfections of self and others, despite our own internal fears, hangups, and insecurities.

Our attachment relationships with children are all about helping emerging adults deal with the reality that life is hard and unfair from a foundation of relational safety—knowing that they are loved, they matter, and they have the internal resources (neural networks affirming worth and competence) and external resources (the community) to do this thing called life.

Our attachment relationships with children are all about helping emerging adults deal with the reality that life is hard and unfair from a foundation of relational safety—knowing that they are loved, they matter, and they have the internal resources (neural networks affirming worth and competence) and external resources (the community) to do this thing called life.

The growing child encounters this challenge on a daily basis from the moment they are born. Life didn't play fair when their skull was nearly crushed during birth, or they were hit with the full force of gravity, cold, and air entering their lungs for the first time. Life was scary and unpredictable whenever their stomach hurt or they were pricked with a needle or got a fever. And don't even get a toddler started on how unfair life is that they cannot control nearly anything despite the fact that they can now walk and talk!

These are expected “breaks” or “misses,” as theorists call them, that are part of being alive, and must be encountered. Often, such events are no one’s fault: it is just life being life. And they are necessary opportunities for offering the child attachment-based attuned and mentoring responses (verbal or non-verbal) that say, “I know it hurts,” or “I know it’s unfair, but I’m here with you and together we will see this through,” or “You’ve got this thing; let me know if you need my help, as I’m right here with you.”

For differing reasons, a parent should not be able to prevent every physical or emotional discomfort of a child on a daily basis. But the good-enough parent who is aware of the slight—the relationship “miss,” the “break” in the attunement process—cycles back to acknowledge the child’s experience and offers a situation-appropriate response. This process of “break and repair” is what builds trust; it is the hallmark of good-enough parenting. The parent is not expected to repair all breaks—that is unrealistic. But good-enough parents and strong attachment-based care protects children from unnecessary, hurtful breaks where they can, and provide consistent enough repairs at a “good-enough” frequency, appropriate for that situation. This ability to prevent unnecessary and hurtful breaks past a tipping point in frequency and intensity, and to attune and mentor, comes from parents whose own neural integration is such that they can stand in a de-centered place; they can put their own needs and reactions aside, see the developmental needs of the child, and then respond accordingly. They are securely attached adults.

When the parent (or teacher) says, “I know I hurt your feelings. I’m sorry. I was angry and I took it out on you,” or “I know you are angry with me, but no, you can’t have or do x, y, or z,” a multitude of good processes are co-occurring. First, the child receives affirmation that they are seen and cared about by the adult. Second, they experience the adult’s ability to own their faults or limitations, if that was the case. This is reflecting the adult’s *confidence* that they can tolerate not being perfect. Instead, they can focus on doing it better the next time (when they are the ones who caused an unnecessary or hurtful “break”), while empathically hanging out with the child’s experience as the child summons the confidence to muddle through the “break” on the way to “repair.” Meanwhile, when the child has been hurt (whether by parental accident or reactivity, or by appropriate limit-setting), and the parent circles back to repair the actual or perceived “break,” the child learns that their thoughts, feelings, wants, and needs are important, even though it may not mean they can or should necessarily get what they want.

The confidence resulting from good-enough attachment is not arrogance or naive optimism. It is a sense of faith in yourself, an ability to tolerate being wrong without that meaning you are a total failure and unworthy human being. It also reflects the ability to tolerate the inevitable limits and failings of those around us without minimizing their failings or totally disregarding them because of it. It allows us to take an honest inventory of ourselves and others. It gives us the ability to say, “That was wrong and it hurt; now, how can we repair this?”

This alludes to the developmental concept of whole, integrated relating, often referred to as “splitting versus whole-object” relating (Berardi, 2015; Mahler, Pine, & Bergman, 1973; Rubens, 1996; Winnicott, 1990). Developmental theorists surmise that you and I work through cognitive stages where we see the world as either/or, right/wrong, good/bad, when in fact life is all of that and more. I have good parts and not-so-good parts to my way of being in the world. Those I love are the same. Good-enough attachment helps me experience the good and the bad in myself and the ones I love, and ride the wave—the hard work—of relationship. When I am not able to hold those two in tension, it may prevent me from admitting I am wrong, or another person is wrong. It may make me unable to repair the break when I am wrong, or lead me to refuse repair by others who have wronged me. It may lead me to ignore or make excuses for others who have hurt me, or to overly ruminate about every wrong committed against me, whether the other person takes appropriate ownership or not. Discernment regarding how to honor my boundaries or those of others becomes distorted and confused. This will be important for us to revisit when we talk about trauma-informed discipline policies as embodying this “both-and.”

Good-enough attachment creates a foundation for us to tolerate ambiguity, imperfection, and uncertainty in self, others, and the world around us while we risk embarking on new relational, intellectual, and physical challenges.

This directly relates to the key challenges of Erikson's *Industry and Inferiority* stage that dominates a child's school years. Understanding the lack of good-enough attachment, and the resulting undeveloped and unintegrated neural structures, helps us understand children who display little frustration tolerance, low anger thresholds, and fear of failure that locks them into oppressive self-imposed pursuit of perfection or leads them to give up before even trying. It helps us understand students who lead with indifference, disrespect, and outright violence. The consequences of chronic misattunement are real and profound, and will be illustrated more in Chapter 4.

Good-enough attachment creates a foundation for us to tolerate ambiguity, imperfection, and uncertainty in self, others, and the world around us while we risk embarking on new relational, intellectual, and physical challenges.

But most comforting is the realization that in imperfection, we truly learn what love, acceptance, and trust mean when we circle back and repair the places where we broke trustworthiness. Among attachment-focused mental health practitioners, we use a metaphor borrowed from how steel rods are fabricated: Through a process of melding together (attachment), breaking apart (break or miss), and then melding together again (repair), the fibers holding it together become stronger. So it is with relationships: We build bonds of deeper love and trust as we inevitably cycle from processes of deep, resonant connection to moments of relational “misses” or “breaks” and then back to “repairing” those breaks, returning to a state of attunement.

Another element to consider is our need and ability to form strong relational bonds with more than one or two caretakers. We've learned a lot about what makes today's students so vulnerable, and it is not merely because of parental struggle. Many systems-based therapists and sociologists believe it is because families in general are more challenged and isolated, and hence more vulnerable, than at any time throughout history. While it is beyond the scope of this text to elaborate on these issues, suffice it to say that parents need our empathy and support even while we are acutely aware that much student stress is originating in the home. There are reasons why parents are dysregulated, and they are in need of a trauma-informed approach as well. We will address this further in Chapter 11.

We can't merely wish or demand that parents become the attachment figures their children need. When our students come to school with marginal abilities to learn and self-regulate, we can't just expect them to pull it together and get with the program. We are looking at an entire society suffering the effects of disconnection and dysregulation.

To avoid sending us down the hole of depression and hopelessness here and again in Chapter 4 (how dysregulation impacts schools), there is actually some good news and the reason for a Chapter 4 and 5 (best practices in response) preview: Attachment theory and empirical evidence gleaned from neurobiology illustrate that when we provide our students with attunement and mentoring—when we offer our students good-enough attachment—we can help them repair neurostructures battered by unmitigated stress and trauma. We can help them repair developmental injuries that are preventing academic and social-behavioral success at school. It takes a school community village, and it can be done.

States of Neural Integration

Above we described how development is all about attachment figures attuning to our experience and needs, and mentoring us in response to the demands these experiences and needs are signaling. This attachment process builds neural networks promoting what Daniel Siegel (2012) describes as integrated neural functioning. When we display certain character strengths or relational abilities, we are displaying various types of neural integration. When we embark on a goal to develop certain habits or skills, we are building new neural networks requiring or leading to deeper levels of neural integration.

Siegel has identified nine states of neural integration we can use in two ways. First, Siegel gives us insight and language to describe our current functioning and experience from the viewpoint of our brain—the actual neurological processes being activated by or responding to the day-to-day demands of being alive. And second, Siegel gives us concrete ways to pinpoint places where we might want to grow, strengthen, or rework various neurostructures as we tend to our own developmental journey (Siegel, 2012; Siegel & Bryson, 2012).

We've summarized Siegel's domains of neural integration in the charts listed below (Figure 2.5). In the Developmental Journal Worksheets listed in Appendix A, we will invite you to use the descriptors found on the charts as a reference for assessing your own strengths and growth areas. In Section II, you will be able to cycle back to this chart as you identify attachment-focused classroom activities designed to strengthen your students' integrated neural functioning.

Figure 2.5: Daniel Siegel's Domains of Neural Integration (Siegel, 2012, Ch. 14; 2007)

The following definitions use many direct quotes from Siegel's articulation of each domain (Siegel, 2007, 2012). The remaining descriptions and examples are from Berardi, A. (2013). *GCEP 510: Human Growth & Development*, Graduate School of Counseling, George Fox University, Portland, OR. Develop your own examples with and for your students.

Goal of Neural Integration: Mindfulness

Engaged, self-aware self-attunement allowing a more receptive, integrated state to engage with self and others in life-affirming resonance. Being “one's own best friend” allows full and receptive relationships with others. *Crucial to neural integration and caring, compassionate, stable, and effective communities.*

A Way to Engage with Siegel's Nine Neural Networks:

Mindfulness, rather than disconnection and dysregulation, reflects integrated neural network functioning. It's a state of health we strengthen through attunement and mentoring over time as we grow in wisdom. (Can you hear Erikson?) We will use this chart in future sections to identify ways to strengthen student neural networks. Here is a way you can engage now to inspire insight, empathy, and further growth:

1. Use each network to identify strengths and positive neural networks to celebrate and nurture.
2. Use each network to identify thoughts, feelings, sensations, or behaviors you may have when stressed.
3. Design attunement and mentoring exercises to strengthen specific domains.
4. For further reading, refer to Siegel and Bryson's *Whole Brain Child* (2012).

Domain	Integrated Example	Unintegrated Example	School-Focused Strategy
<p>Consciousness: <i>A Few Good Men</i>: “You can’t handle the truth.”</p> <p>“Hub of mind” receptive to all. Feel sensations fully, tolerate nature of experience and transform memory’s nature. Widening “window of tolerance” for knowing about past events. Can “bear witness to one’s own pain and remain present as recollection is integrated into broader sense of life.”</p>	<p><i>Ice Age I</i>: Manny the Mammoth eventually integrates memory of his wife and child.</p>	<p><i>Man in the Moon</i>: Death of teen loved by two sisters took a while to metabolize by the rejected sister.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Activities to tell life stories of self and other. Literature, art, music, drama as neural integration. Catch moments to ask child about life. Listen-Reflect-Capture Meaning to child.
<p>Vertical: <i>Acronym HALT: Hungry-Angry-Lonely-Tired</i>.</p> <p>“Head to toe circuit integration”; conscious awareness of “input from body as travels up spinal cord, bloodstream into brainstem, limbic system, and cortex to form vertically integrated circuit.” Listen to bodily cues before act. Body states shape affect, reasoning, and decisions.</p>	<p><i>Coaching</i> kids in sports, music (mind-body awareness).</p> <p><i>Stranger Danger</i>—trust your gut.</p>	<p><i>Insurance commercial</i>: “Characters in horror movies make bad choices.” They ignore sensations, putting them in danger.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focus: diaphragm breaths; notice sensations, thoughts, feelings, needs. Use story characters to observe mind-body responses. Before a test use fear management exercise.
<p>Horizontal: <i>Sheldon vs. Penny</i>.</p> <p>Connect left hemisphere (linear, logic, linguistic, literal thinking) with right (holistic, imagery-based, nonverbal, emotional/social processing) to strengthen middle prefrontal function. Coping style can create imbalance. Source of triggers. Self-reflection on coping style and develop underused attention and reflection modes to heal. Right side develops first; most problems stem from here. Self-awareness, empathy, learning, and relationships require hemisphere integration. Feeling, sensing, and language allow mutual flow and regulation between hemispheres.</p>	<p><i>Ice Age I</i>: The sloth was very connected: able to “see” the meaning of Manny’s deeper struggle, namely avoidance and cautiousness due to past memories.</p>	<p><i>Sheldon – Big Bang</i>: His analytic attitude and failure to track the emotional experience of self and others often hurt and insulted others.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Awareness Wheel: Pick an event; help child identify thoughts, feelings, sensations, wants, needs, hopes. Ponder actions after taking this info into account. Identify a topic and preferred method of expression—verbal, written, artistic. Use this first. Then invite child to express the same using a less comfortable method. Group kids together in mixed-style groups to share.
<p>Memory: <i>Source of horizontal struggle: Lack of implicit and explicit memory integration</i>.</p> <p>Implicit memories assembled into layers of explicit memory: Implicit puzzle pieces of memory in form of perceptions, feelings, bodily sensations, behavioral impulses are woven together with our mental models to produce new clusters of explicit factual and episodic memory. Unintegrated, implicit memories are confused with new here-and-now experiences. If integrated, explicit memory knows what’s coming from past; can answer “Why did that trigger me so much?”</p>	<p><i>Disney’s The Kid</i>: Through encounter with that embarrassing kid, implicit memories made explicit, allowing adult to empathically connect with hurt self.</p>	<p><i>Disney’s The Kid</i>: Adult built a defensive persona against feeling shamed and inadequate as a child. Had no mercy or empathy for that part of himself.</p>	<p>Use conflict resolution to reflect on why event was triggering, not as an excuse, but to stop reactions and take ownership:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Respond with reassuring structure, not punishment. Help decode later. Then reflect on thoughts, feelings, sensations. Adult knows implicit memories expressed via code; talking it through helps make more explicit.

Domain	Integrated Example	Unintegrated Example	School-Focused Strategy
<p>State: <i>Game: Survivor: Competing needs and values create conflict.</i></p> <p>We have different and conflicting mind states: one part vs. other. “Mind states are clusters of transient but potent neural firing patterns.” Accept and integrate states of self, not idealized sense of how to be.</p>	<p>Cider House Rules: Homer saw many-sided states within self and other.</p>	<p>TV characters: Often one dimensional to entertain, but not functional.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collage to identify many sides: angry, caring, sad, fearful, adventurous, accepting, intolerant. Stories to normalize change; see humans as complex.
<p>Narrative: <i>Book: Fantastic Flying Books of Mr. Morris Lessmore.</i></p> <p>Weaving together our life stories via integrated self-observing. Narrative coherence: Our story makes sense in a deep, full way; no rationalizing or minimizing. Narrative integration: Remember to deepen understanding and acceptance as painful memories more fully tolerated and then resolved. “Our life story is not all of who we are.”</p>	<p>Ice Age I: Tiger: More than a selfish member in a toxic clan. Who is he if he chooses to not be like them? How can he resolve regret for betraying friends?</p>	<p>Spiderman as a child: Seeing self as irredeemable impacts thoughts, feelings, actions, perceptions. Split: good/bad; either/or; self/other; think/feel.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explore thoughts, feelings, perceptions before, during, after event to increase insight and empathy as precursor to reworking distortions. Use shared narratives of school as a team–community to help each other navigate life. Accentuate stories of those who learn from mistakes and hardships.
<p>Interpersonal: <i>Romance stories: Can't fully trust or live without you.</i></p> <p>Survival requires secure relationships: interdependent; attuned. Aided by neural integration and key to well-being.</p>	<p>Finding Nemo: Nemo made friends with a variety of creatures.</p>	<p>Finding Nemo: Dentist's child likely struggled with friends.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teach skills for making friends. Teach conflict resolution as process that deepens friendship (connect–break–repair).
<p>Temporal: <i>Movie: My Girl: Fear of death stopped her.</i></p> <p>Living with awareness of the transience of time. Must integrate uncertainty, impermanence, and death. Change is constant; all things end. A “prefrontal existential issue for us all”; our brain gives us the “opportunity and burden to sense the future”. We can be fully in the moment, yet aware that it's temporary. If we become preoccupied with it or ignore it, it hijacks life. Goal: face reality with equanimity; note and welcome mindfully, not withdraw.</p>	<p>Fall of Freddy the Leaf: Loss is common child theme.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shocks us. Hurts and disorients. Comfort as flounder. Live as do neural integration. Goal: both/and. 	<p>Forest Gump: Breakup with Jenny stopped him for a while via running. After her death, he was able to grieve yet stay present and engaged, evidenced through his parenting.</p>	<p>Kids face change, uncertainty, and loss daily.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Validate it; put words to the experience, content, emotion, meaning. Mirror “other side” when you see an experience of joy, safety, beauty, stability, fun. <p>Train staff to examine temporal domain issues to increase neural integration so they can meet students as they do the same.</p>
<p>Transpirational: <i>Stephen Hawking's physical limits opened up “ipseity.”</i></p> <p>“Breathes life across all domains.” Inspires interconnectivity, service to others. We're part of something beyond self, dissolving “optical delusion of separateness”—Einstein. Allows ipseity moments: see “bare self beneath adaptation, thought layers, rules and mental models of personal identity that shape our life.” We're part of and influenced by what preceded us, and part of and influence what comes after.</p>	<p>Songs: “Let it Go”; “Happy”; Anti-bully campaign: Can see/feel it in shared events.</p> <p>Erikson: Generativity: Posterity and Greater Whole Mindset</p>	<p>Online bullying: Mean comments made in response to the suffering of others.</p> <p>Erikson: Self-Absorption: Here and Now, Self-Clan Mindset</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fundraisers for a group or person in need. Encouragement letters students write to those hurting or forgotten. Adopt a social cause. Anthem song rituals. Reflective narratives of shared events to put words to the meaning and solidify the experience in memory.

Case Example: Developmental Theory Application

The following fictional case example provides a backdrop to the application of the concepts discussed in this chapter. In many ways, Charlotte has a lot in common with all of us, in that life has dealt her unfair traumatic events. Some of those events represent the limits of her adult caretakers, while others are no one's fault—it's just life being terribly unfair. This example illustrates that a trauma-informed approach starts with the understanding that life is hard and unfair for all of us in various ways, and that wrapping ourselves around each other is what builds strong and resilient minds and bodies capable of meeting various developmental challenges throughout the lifespan. TISP is inviting schools to more intentionally embrace their role as part of a growing child's attachment network not only to promote academic and social-emotional success in school, but to increase the child's capacity to grow and thrive in the face of adversity throughout the course of their life.

The Case of Charlotte

Charlotte is a 10-year-old fourth-grade student of African American descent, residing in a culturally diverse large city in the upper Midwest United States. When she was seven, her parents divorced, and when she was nine, her mother died of cancer. She currently resides with her father and his parents.

Charlotte's academic record reveals that her performance has fluctuated: at times she easily displayed mastery/high proficiency, but during certain grading periods in first and third grade she barely met benchmark standards in many subject areas. She has never displayed socially disruptive behaviors, but has displayed socially avoidant traits in seasons co-occurring with her decreased academic functioning. At the most recent parent-teacher conference, Charlotte's father was informed that his daughter was being bullied by a group of girls and she appeared more quiet and withdrawn of late.

Charlotte's Relational Networks

Let's imagine that Charlotte's parents were able to provide good-enough parenting in substance, consistency, and time: They understood their role as parents, investing in the emotional and physical well-being of their child, attuning to her and mentoring her on a daily basis so someday Charlotte could launch and embark on her own life course. Their relational stance toward Charlotte communicated genuine love, interest, and celebration in her day-to-day life encounters, communicating a sense of wise knowing, and emotional and physical availability. They did not ignore her, withhold connection, or shame or minimize Charlotte for her needs, as might a parent with what attachment theorists call a dismissive attachment style (Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters, & Wall, 2015; Karen, 1990). Nor did they manipulate Charlotte to boost their own self-worth, or soothe their own fears, loneliness, and insecurities congruent with what is often called a preoccupied attachment style (Ainsworth, et al, 2015; Karen, 1990). Charlotte knew that her parents were honest with her and available for help, whether the assistance needed was cognitive processing, emotional attunement, or physical support. She was not left to drown in managing life challenges beyond her ability, nor protected from the hard work of learning how to manage age-appropriate expectations. This relational stance on the part of her mom and dad may have influenced their ability to maintain a united parenting partnership, attuning to their child's distress as they divorced and settled into new routines.

When Charlotte's mother became ill and the family absorbed her impending death, let's imagine that Charlotte's extended kinship network—her relatives, family friends, and faith community—wrapped themselves around Charlotte and her parents as best they knew how. Charlotte would have experienced caring others inviting her to talk as she

wanted, being available to answer her questions, or just providing a shoulder to cry on or a place to escape into something fun. She would have seen her mom and dad struggling, especially her mom as she dealt with pain, fear, and anguish at having to say goodbye to her life and to her baby girl. Her mom would have modeled that it is OK to grieve. She likely would have learned how her community made sense of suffering, the temporality of life, and what death ultimately means. These constructs would have been directly and indirectly communicated as Charlotte watched and listened to the adults around her, giving her small anchors for making sense of what was happening—one of the keys to coping, as we will explore in greater detail in Chapter 3.

Summary Observations

Good-enough parenting does not mean 100% protection from parental failings or missteps, or stressors and traumas that bombard a family through no fault of its own. Charlotte has experienced two significant and overwhelming traumas—her parents’ divorce, and the illness and death of her mother. These are devastating adverse events that have the potential to undermine the foundation a growing child needs to survive and thrive.

What this imaginary case illustrates is a child who may be highly resilient due to consistent attachment relationships she’s experienced over the course of her young life, promoting integrated neural networks capable of helping her through seasons of hardship and trauma. Her academic struggles and her social withdrawal would be logical and expected, as would additional signs of distress.

But risk and danger lurk: Charlotte needs more than just attunement and mentoring from her kinship network. She needs to be firmly embedded in a community of care. School is a vital part of that community. Charlotte needs us to see the fear, confusion, and pain that is hijacking her life on a daily basis for a season, and will resurface every now and then as each age and stage forces her to make sense, yet again, of the traumas years prior.

Our imaginary Charlotte does live within a caring community of extended kinship networks. She has attentive and caring relatives who walked with her through her parents’ divorce and her mother’s death. They will be mothering forces in her life as she continues to grow. But Charlotte is still vulnerable. Like a new shoot sprouting from the ground when it is still too cold to survive, she comes to school each day raw and vulnerable on the inside, needing school to continue the support she is receiving at home. She needs attunement and mentoring from the adults charged with her care throughout the school day, throughout the education process. In other words, educators need to be good-enough attachment figures not just because of the length of time Charlotte spends at school each day, but because her learning process also occurs within the context of relationship (Palmer, 1993).

Right now, Charlotte is showing signs of distress. Her grades are lower once again, her tendency to withdraw is back, and this, in part, may be making her a more susceptible target for bullying. Attunement and mentoring will help us stop the bullying—for both Charlotte’s and the other students’ well-being. Attunement and mentoring-based school practices, as we will outline in later chapters, will also reinforce the emotional support Charlotte is receiving at home. This increases her chances of metabolizing these losses in a way that leaves her more resilient rather than developmentally undermined in a way that tumbles and intensifies as she develops.

What happens when school does not attune to the Charlottes of the world, but merely becomes a place where demands are placed on them in a sea of chaotic, overstimulating, noise and volatile energy? And what about students who do not receive good-enough attunement and mentoring at home, with the safety nets of safe and available extended kinship networks? Sadly, this is the reality for many students as we will explore in Chapters 3 and 4. These questions are what inspires TISP, grounded in the knowledge and skills of attunement and mentoring—good attachment—as basic to cognitive and social-emotional growth for all students.

Introduction to the Developmental Journal

As we discussed in our text's Preface, one of the best ways to encounter trauma-informed conceptual elements, in this case developmental theories, is to apply their principles to our own life. In so doing, we get a visceral feel for the theory and begin the process of engaging in *Person of the Educator* work. Also, by encountering our own fears, griefs, and regrets along the way, we are better able to strengthen our own neural networks, our own internal secure attachment schemas, allowing us to put aside our own immediate needs (de-center self) in order to be good attachment figures to those in our care—in this case, our students.

And finally, choosing to love, choosing to mentor or invest in the growth and development of another person will activate us. It is hard work. Some of our reactions are related directly to what is occurring in the moment. But at other times, our response is fueled by dysregulated neural networks connected to our own internal attachment histories encoded in what we call attachment schemas. Engaging in *Person of the Educator* work helps us more easily identify how our own attachment schemas are informing our responses, and where those responses are helpful or detrimental in our current day-to-day functioning as educators, friends, and family members.

In Appendix A you will find a set of worksheets detailing a three-part amended Developmental Journal commonly assigned to Anna's students who are preparing for work as mental health professionals. The first part, Worksheet A-1, invites you to describe your parents' relational style. Using attachment theory style prototypes, it is meant to help you describe broad characteristics of how your caretakers were able to attune and mentor you during your first 18 years of life. Next, in Worksheet A-2, you are invited to explore your encounters with the developmental challenges identified by Erikson. He views these challenges as meeting up with us now and then across the lifespan, and you will look at ways you first encountered these challenges and subsequent encounters thereafter. The goal is to begin activating your implicit and explicit memory in preparation for Worksheet A-3, the final exercise, in which you will ponder and describe your various neural networks. The goal is to increase your confidence that you can assess various developmental strengths and challenges as part of the process of embracing healing and growth, as a lifelong normal and expected job of being alive, of being human, of being a responsible adult.

So, while these worksheets are intended to help you metabolize the content we presented in this chapter (as we will cycle back to these concepts as we discuss TISP classroom- and school-based practice methods), they are also inviting you to personally grow. Therefore, take your time completing each element. And be prepared to find yourself wanting to talk it over with peers or even a counselor. I (Anna) work through these worksheets on a yearly basis when I invite my students to do the same. I can recall times when I was overwhelmed with anger or sadness—all good stuff. Luckily, I am embedded in a profession that helps us see that talking over these deep issues with another caring person is not only appropriate when we are struggling, but perhaps most productive when we are simply committed to our own insight in order to function more responsibly in the world—what Erikson believed was the ultimate purpose and goal of therapy; insight leading to responsibility (Erikson, 1964).

A Look Forward

In this chapter, we detailed basic elements of healthy growth and development. We started by naming the givens—that life is full of challenge and hardship, and if we are to grow strong and resilient, we need consistent attunement and mentoring throughout the lifespan, but most crucially during the first 18 years of life.

This revisiting of the basics sets the stage to help us understand what unfolds when a developing person is overrun by stressors, either because the child’s relational environment cannot provide good-enough attachment, or because the stressors are too many and/or too severe. In Chapter 3 we will apply additional trauma-informed conceptual elements to identify what happens when a child is not growing up in a secure-enough relational environment, preventing foundational support for the development of integrated neural functioning. In Chapter 4, we will zoom in on what dysregulated neural functioning looks like in the classroom—how it displays in students, educators, and the larger community as it impacts school viability and functioning.

Resources for Further Reading

- [The National Child Traumatic Stress Network](#). Offers a wide range of resources, including research summaries.
- [Parenting Counts](#). Attachment and trauma-informed resources.
- [Center on the Developing Child—Harvard University](#). A rich variety of research summaries and resources.
- [Becoming Attached](#). *Atlantic Monthly* article providing an overview of attachment theory.
- [Bruce Perry, M.D., Ph.D.—Attachment: The First Core Strength](#). A detailed description of the attachment bond.

Chapter 3: When Stress and Trauma Overwhelm Coping Resources



[Image: [Portrait of Man](#) | [Unsplash](#)]

“After all, when a stone is dropped into a pond, the water continues quivering even after the stone has sunk to the bottom.”

—Arthur Golden, *Memoirs of a Geisha*

Desired Outcomes

This chapter and the accompanying recommended readings and activities are designed to assist educators to:

- Understand the role of attunement and mentoring in the development of positive and negative neural networks that influence academic and social-emotional functioning.
- Deepen awareness regarding the nature of the Adverse Childhood Experiences survey, the significance of ACE scores and lifespan health and functioning, and how to proceed with caution (ethically) in using them to assess student risk.
- Apply emerging trauma-informed perceptual and conceptual skills by articulating the complex interplay between various types of stressors, the quality of our attachment relationships, the development of integrated neural networks, and the role of social supports in the assessment of student vulnerability and resilience.

Key Concepts

This chapter introduces trauma-informed content domains instrumental to understanding the impact of unmitigated stress and trauma on the developing person. The intent is to deepen educators' conceptual and perceptual skills regarding the myriad factors that contribute to risk and resilience. This knowledge and these skills will inform the creation of trauma-informed school culture and processes. The chapter includes the following key concepts:

- The ACE Survey and its assessment of family attachment vulnerabilities
- Implicit and explicit memory in the formation of positive and negative neural networks
- The General Adaptation Syndrome and the HPA-Axis Stress Response Systems, and their role in helping us manage stress and anxiety, including traumatic events
- The ABCX model of stress and coping theory

Chapter Overview

In Chapter 2 we identified basic developmental needs across the lifespan, with special emphasis on the most formative first 18 years of life. Our intent was to deepen educator awareness that TISP is not merely a response

to students with traumatic backgrounds, but a universal-access education approach based on the developmental needs of all students.

In Section II we focus on methods of responding to students to create the optimum environment in which learning and development can take place. While most educators want concrete tools now because they needed to use them yesterday, we want to give you the knowledge (conceptual skills) that leads to the dispositions of a trauma-informed educator, so that then you can make sense of the skill set. And while we will give you plenty of concrete tools, *we want you to be able to create your own and evaluate any tool, activity, or program that others might give you for its congruence with trauma-informed thinking.*

Having a firm grasp of the conceptual elements informing trauma-informed practice is key to developing trauma-informed expertise.

Having a firm grasp of the conceptual elements informing trauma-informed practice is key to developing trauma-informed expertise.

In this chapter we focus on what happens to students who are overwhelmed by stress and trauma and do not have adequate social supports necessary for successful coping. Children who cannot cognitively, emotionally, and physically self-regulate in age-appropriate ways may be showing the side effects of unmitigated stress and trauma. And often—not always—these students are experiencing attachment disruptions at home, where their caregivers struggle with adequately perceiving and/or responding to the child's need for social and emotional attunement and mentoring. In parent-training materials, this attunement and mentoring process is often grouped into two attachment-focused categories called nurture and structure (Clarke & Dawson, 1998). This need for attunement and mentoring is not met solely by parents, but by all community members invested in the health, growth, and future productivity of children. Hence, school-based social interactions between staff and students, and between peers, are also formative for a child. It is crucial to understand that a child's growth is supported or undermined in multiple environments, lest we place all the responsibility on parents. Schools traumatize children. Social and political unrest traumatize children. Crime and natural disasters traumatize children, among other types of conditions and events.

We begin with an overview of the impact of the Adverse Childhood Experiences Survey (ACE) and corresponding data that has shaped public awareness and response (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2019; Felitti et al., 1998). We clarify its meaning, as it provides insight into hypothesized negative neural networks that may be undermining student school success. We will then expand our understanding of the impact of stress and trauma by examining two innate trauma-response systems: the norepinephrine-driven flight-fight-freeze response and the long-term cortisol-driven General Adaptation Syndrome (Everly & Lating, 2012; van der Kolk, 2014; Vermetten & Bremner, 2002). To help us see the myriad factors that can increase or mitigate our vulnerability to stress and trauma, we will apply family stress and coping theory (McCubbin & Patterson, 1983) as a metatheory designed to not only assess vulnerability versus resilience, but further inspire hope that we can intervene effectively with our students to help them be successful in school. The final concept presented is an elaboration on the formation of neural networks, their central role in dictating a student's ability to function in the school environment, and the key to understanding how to effectively intervene with students who are dysregulated due to unmitigated stress and trauma.

We will then walk you through an application of the concepts discussed thus far as we explore the likely social context, experiences, and risks and resiliencies of Charlotte, introduced in Chapter 2, and Ben, introduced in this chapter. Our intent is to help educators see what lies beneath—what happens on a physical, emotional, and cognitive level when a student experiences stress and trauma within the particulars of their larger social context. We also want to illustrate the complexity of the developmental concepts informing TISP

to guard against relying on sound bites and perhaps missing a more multidimensional way of understanding stress, trauma, and the developing child. This added insight builds trauma-informed educator dispositions, including deeper insight into the role of school as a place for investing in the growth of a child, and doing so by first building school environments informed by the student's attachment needs as foundational to learning.

We end this chapter by inviting you to gather in educator discussion groups and use the worksheets we provide to apply concepts presented thus far in order to deepen your own understanding of stress, trauma, and resilience and more deeply attune empathically to the vulnerabilities of each student.

Adverse Childhood Experiences Survey—A Corrective

During the 1990s, a group of researchers led by Felitti and Anda set out to gather data to support a hypothesis many correlation studies have suggested for decades: That childhood stress and trauma have biological, emotional, cognitive, and social impacts that follow a person throughout their life (Felitti et al., 1998). A joint venture between the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and Kaiser Permanente (CDC, 2019), the process was simple: assess the level of stress the person likely experienced during the first 18 years of life, and compare that to indicators of physical, emotional, and social functioning over the lifespan. The researchers created a 10-item questionnaire, called the Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) Survey, and enlisted Kaiser-Permanente medical care providers in southern California to administer the survey to their patients. They then compared the medical history of respondents with their ACE scores.

Figure 3.1: Adverse Childhood Experiences Survey (Original Version)

Finding Your Score

Circle or mark “No” or “Yes” to the following 10 questions. Add up your “Yes” answers. This total is your ACE score.

While you were growing up, during the first 18 years of life:

1. Did a parent or other adult in the household **often or very often** swear at you, insult you, put you down, or humiliate you? **OR** Act in a way that made you afraid that you might be physically hurt?
No
Yes
2. Did a parent or other adult in the household **often or very often** push, grab, slap, or throw something at you? **OR Ever** hit you so hard that you had marks or were injured?
No
Yes
3. Did an adult or person at least 5 years older than you **ever** touch or fondle you or have you touch their

body in a sexual way? **OR** Attempt or actually have oral, anal, or vaginal intercourse with you?

No

Yes

4. Did you **often or very often** feel that no one in your family loved you or thought you were important or special? **OR** Your family didn't look out for each other, feel close to each other, or support each other?

No

Yes

5. Did you **often or very often** feel that you didn't have enough to eat, had to wear dirty clothes, and had no one to protect you? **OR** Your parents were too drunk or high to take care of you or take you to the doctor if you needed it?

No

Yes

6. Were your parents **ever** separated or divorced?

No

Yes

7. Was your mother or stepmother **often or very often** pushed, grabbed, slapped, or had something thrown at her? **OR sometimes, often, or very often** kicked, bitten, hit with a fist or hit with something hard? **OR EVER** repeatedly hit over the course of a few minutes or threatened with a gun or knife?

No

Yes

8. Did you live with anyone who was a problem drinker or alcoholic or who used street drugs?

No

Yes

9. Was a household member depressed or mentally ill, or did a household member attempt suicide?

No

Yes

10. Did a household member go to prison?

No

Yes

Add up your "Yes" answers. Total: _____

Figure 3.1 <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/childabuseandneglect/acestudy/about.html>

The ACE Survey was intentionally limited in scope. Of all the hundreds of traumatic events a child might experience (and pre-existing instruments to measure them), the researchers narrowed their focus to adverse experiences that might occur in the home, with the exception of one question inquiring about sexual abuse that may or may not have involved a family member.

These 10 questions only assess events that are *indicative of a pattern of parental disruptions* to providing safe, secure, consistent attachment to minor children in the home. Failure to provide good-enough parenting, as we discussed in Chapter 2, then sets the child on a course of increased vulnerabilities to additional life stressors. All of us need one or more stable and reliable caretakers during our formative years in order to build the neurological structures—the internal schemas—needed to be resilient. To deal with daily expectations, whether they involve relational stress, disappointment,

or age-appropriate demands, we need consistent, stable attachment relationships first. To learn, we need to engage from a stable attachment base. To deal with the inevitable traumas that life throws our way, we need that internal stable base. A child who experiences bullying at school has a better chance of that adverse event not disrupting their ability to cope if they have safe and attuned parents to reach out to for help. If the child does not have that home base as a relationally safe place, the child is already stressed and vulnerable to further negative side effects when besieged by other stressors. The absence of other traumas from the original survey is not to suggest that those adverse events are not disruptive or damaging to the developing child. But the researchers wanted to focus on *primary attachment vulnerabilities*, as primary attachment is the foundation upon which the ability to successfully navigate all additional stressors rests.

The international version of the ACE Survey (World Health Organization, 2018) recognizes a host of other non-family adverse events that may be just as disruptive to a child's development, such as war, social unrest, and cultural customs abusive to vulnerable populations that induce severe psychological injury regardless of a child's primary attachment relationships. This is only acknowledged in the original 10-question survey with the addition of a question regarding sexual abuse.

As the researchers began tallying up the number of adverse childhood experiences and comparing them to the biopsychosocial functioning of those persons across the lifespan, they were startled by the results: The higher a person's ACE score, the more likely that person faced significantly greater lifecycle challenges, and the jump between one ACE score and the next showed an exponential increase in lifecycle struggles (CDC, 2019). See Figure 3.2 below for a graph depicting life cycle vulnerabilities that increase with higher ACE scores. The bottom level of the ACE pyramid indicates that an ACE score is predictive of lifecycle challenges. The next level of the pyramid highlights that adverse childhood experiences disrupt neurological development. The third level indicates the resulting social, emotional, and cognitive impairment. The fourth level indicates how vulnerable the person is to then engaging in high-risk behaviors. The fifth level indicates how high-risk behaviors increase vulnerability to disease, disability, and social problems. The sixth and final level of the pyramid signals an early death as a culminating consequence. Visit the SAMHSA (2017) and CDC (2019) websites for a sampling of these results, and you will begin to understand why they have generated global alarm, inspiring trauma-informed institutional practices worldwide.

Figure 3.2: The ACE Pyramid

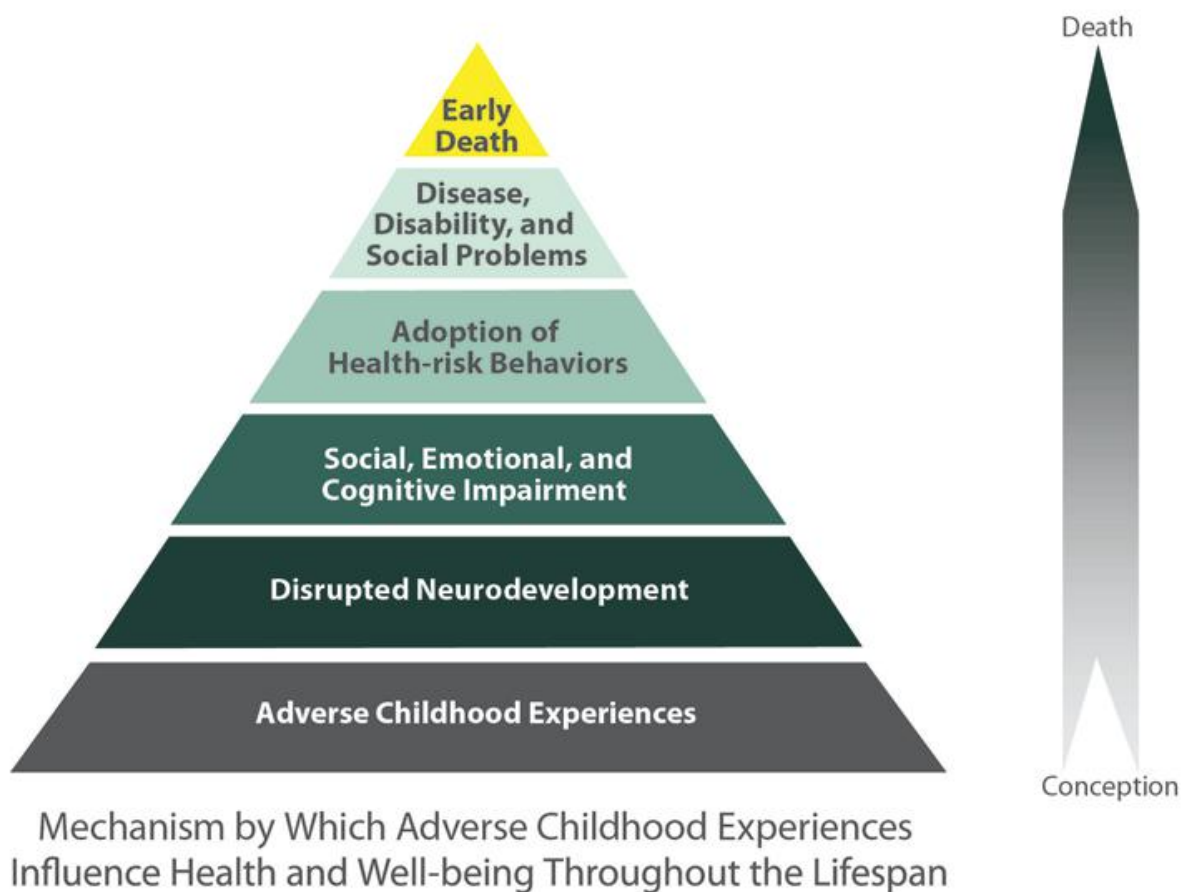


Figure 3.2 [Image: The ACE Pyramid | [CDC Adverse Childhood Experiences Presentation Graphic](#)]

The concern is not just about the correlation between home-based adverse childhood experiences and lifespan challenges, but the percentage of the population with elevated ACE scores whose adult profiles indicate significant struggle. While mental health professionals have always surmised that at least 30% of the population experienced adverse childhood experiences, current ACE data suggests that perhaps more than 50% of adults have experienced a significant number of these events, producing lingering adult effects. These statistics have greatly motivated communities to respond (Anda, et al., 2006; Massachusetts Advocates for Children, 2013; Prewitt, 2014).

Limitations of the ACE Survey

As with all surveys, remember the social setting in which the survey was first created—in this case, the United States. Given the social unrest occurring in many of our communities now, we are aware of the relevance of the international

ACE version (World Health Organization, 2018), as the theory underlying the additional questions may also apply to various populations not considered in the original ACE Survey. The case example of Ben at the end of this chapter will illustrate this.

Many of our adult students have also commented on gender bias present in question #7 related to violence between parents, assuming that only violence against women occurs, and violence against men does not occur or is not as traumatic to a child. When a respondent is trying to discern their ACE score, we invite them to make the necessary adjustment in question wording to describe the type of domestic violence they may have observed in their home.

And finally, we often encounter respondents who find that the ACE Survey does not capture the pain of their childhood. These are persons who report families where they did not feel seen or heard. They describe parents who were emotionally distant, overly invasive, or a mix of those two extremes. No overt abuse, no clear-cut adverse events other than what is captured by question #4; just continual emotional abandonment or manipulation. Their injury is one of not-good-enough attachment as well. Their developmental vulnerabilities will not be readily predicted by an ACE score, but they are vulnerable just the same.

Likewise, as we see in our case examples with Charlotte and Ben, adverse events alone are not 100% predictive. ACE scores do not identify respondents who may have experienced safe parent-like adults who helped them mitigate losses or disruptions within their childhood homes. ACE data also invites additional study to identify persons who developed internal strengths and resiliencies precisely because of what they learned coping with home-based adversity. We caution educators not to use an ACE score out of context or consider it determinative. It is merely a tool for quick insight into the home environment, not an exhaustive assessment. This is why we are placing detailed emphasis on the nuts and bolts of how we ultimately become more resilient versus more vulnerable when faced with either age-appropriate and expected stress, such as school performance demands, or traumatic adverse experiences.

The Ethics of Administering ACE to Minors

The ACE Survey and current data are powerful. More than any other previous study regarding the impact of stress and trauma on functioning, ACE results have motivated communities to respond through a variety of trauma-informed initiatives. For these reasons and more, data gathering needs to continue, and we support that process. In fact, Brenda, in her work with preservice teachers, is comparing ACE scores with empathy and classroom management, exploring whether or not an elevated ACE score coincides with greater levels of empathy.

But we have witnessed both naive and potentially egregious uses of the survey with students under the age of 18. This is one reason why we advocate that educators become experts in trauma-informed practices—in this case, understanding the purpose and limits of psychometric assessment devices, and not using results in a manner beyond their scope of competence and practice. As we mentioned in our Preface, trauma-informed educators will also refrain from referring to someone or labeling someone according to a test score.

We have observed in documentaries and stories from educators and students that the ACE Survey has often been administered in K-12 settings as schools seek to respond to the profound impact of unmitigated home-based stress on many of their students. We share in the alarm; it is what motivated us to write this text. But we are observing some fairly predictable bad habits brewing that reflect the need for educators to develop the knowledge, skills, and dispositions necessary to create trauma-informed learning environments.

We invite all educators developing trauma-informed competencies to understand some of the basic rules and best practices associated with administering surveys (instruments) designed to assess a person's psychosocial functioning. For an orientation to the ethics of utilizing psychometric devices, various codes of ethics related to such devices are referenced here for your review (American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy, 2015; American Counseling Association, 2014; American Educational Research Association, American Psychological Association, & National Council on Measurement in Education, 2014).

One primary issue is a respondent's (and in particular, minor student's) right to informed consent, starting with a description of the theme and purpose of the ACE Survey, why they are being asked to take it, and what you will do with their results. The survey administrators need to understand that when you explain (even in softer language than used here) to a student that the quality of their home relationships may lead to lifelong problems and an early death, that is emotionally distressing and misleading. Students from stressed homes may be getting something good-enough that you do not know. But even if ACE scores were 100% reliable, you are not serving students and their need to become resilient by telling them overtly or via implication that their home environment is bad for them. We undermine hope and instill panic when we tell kids that something is wrong with them because of the stress in their home. They love their families, and they cannot change their home environment; they need school to be a place that helps nurture these family relationships, not label and judge them. Students and parents need to know that the relational values we are promoting at school, we are also extending to parents.

Given the nature of the survey, we are not sure that it is ever appropriate for educators to administer the ACE to minor students. Through relationship with our students, and understanding their family and community contexts, we can surmise the level of home-based stress that might be occurring. You do not need ACE scores to prove your students are stressed; you already see the side effects on a daily basis. But perhaps most important, TISP is a universal design approach to education: Its elements serve the needs of all students to help them meet the academic and social challenges of the school environment. It is not designed for schools based on ACE scores. And if educators understand the intent of ACE, what it is teaching us about vulnerability, there are other ways to more relationally invite students to share about the level of stress in their lives, while giving them the tools to cope and be more resilient, all while honoring and supporting their bonds with family. We know all students are at risk; we don't need ACE scores to prove it. Students need you to see them, to know them—not through a survey, but through the context of relationship.

Should adult students learning about ACE and its correlation to healthy lifespan functioning take the survey as part of class? Of course! It is available online, and once they learn about it in class, most will hop online and take the survey. And chances are they may have a medical provider who will invite them to take the survey someday. There is no better way to take the survey than with guidance from a trauma-informed trained educator who can walk them through the instrument and help each student make sense of their results within a broader conceptual framework.

Human Stress Response Systems

You may be noticing that for almost every piece of difficult reality about the nature of being alive and surviving all the challenges life throws our way, there are these nuggets of hope, life preservers that are all around us to help us cope and

seize the joy and goodness that is waiting for us between and amidst the struggles. Our innate ability to physiologically handle stress, fear, and trauma is one of those life preservers, albeit with all the typical limitations we might expect.

When our body picks up cues that there is a challenge—anything from a mild daily task we may need to finish to an all-out danger—a message is immediately sent to our autonomic nervous system (comprised of the sympathetic and parasympathetic nervous systems) that it's time to step it up so we can meet the demand. The cue to act is received by the sympathetic nervous system (SNS), whose job it is to have “sympathy” for our need to act. This is accomplished by the release of just the right amount of norepinephrine, the precursor to adrenaline, to give us the energy and mental acuity to get the job done. Meanwhile, the parasympathetic nervous system (PNS) is aware that the SNS is expending lots of energy and needs a break now and then to rest and recharge. Its job is to release just the right amount of neurochemicals, acetylcholine among them, to signal the SNS that it did a good job and can now relax. These two systems are in a continuous ebb and flow relationship 24 hours a day, autonomically, often without our awareness. The SNS dominates during the day, getting necessary breaks, thanks to the PNS, when we are still and relaxed; the PNS dominates at night, even though the SNS is responding to all sorts of cues to act even as we sleep. This ebb and flow, with some self-care and attention, runs like an energy-efficient furnace with a fine-tuned thermostat facilitating self-regulation.

When an emergency arises, perceived (such as a nightmare that you are being chased by dragons) or real (when physical or emotional safety is truly under threat), the autonomic nervous system (ANS) activates one of our two internal stress response systems: the locus coeruleus/norepinephrine response commonly called the flight-fight-freeze response (Everly & Lating, 2012; Van Der Kolk, 2014; Vermetten & Bremner, 2002). In this situation, a higher dose of norepinephrine is needed so we can hyper-energize systems designed to help us run if we perceive we can escape the situation, fight if we perceive we can't get away, or freeze, which is a highly sophisticated bodily process that says, “OK, your only chance of survival is to play dead so this threat moves on to something else.”

Within seconds of the flight-fight-freeze activation, our bodies kick in our second innate stress response system, the General Adaptation Syndrome (Everly & Lating, 2012). Driven by the hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenocortical (HPA) axis, our bodies now rely on cortisol, often called “the stress hormone,” to prepare for the possible long-term energy needed in response to the danger (Berardi & Morton, 2017).

Norepinephrine and cortisol (among other chemicals) are amazing pharmaceuticals our body keeps in store for just such a moment as an emergency. They help us with clarity of mind, sharpen our eyesight, and give us increased strength and hope. But it comes at a cost, which our bodies can tolerate as long as the state of emergency is temporary. Both of these stress response systems rob energy from one place to feed another. For example, cortisol steals energy from your immune system, and impairs your ability to absorb nutrients from food. While you are out fighting dragons, you don't need to be fighting cold germs, and you can use energy reserves already stored in your body for fuel. Norepinephrine stops or slows your digestive process; you don't need to use energy to digest food, and in fact, it might be a good idea to keep it stored in your stomach until later when you do need to metabolize those calories to replenish after all that running from dragons. We say this tongue-in-cheek, knowing that some of the functional abilities we gain when our alarm systems go off are not necessarily needed for all emergencies, but it is good to know how these life preservers work, and their limits. For all its strengths and limits, after the emergency has been resolved, our body is wired to return to homeostasis. All systems signal each other, “Job well done; danger is over and everything can go back to business as usual.”

Perhaps the biggest warranty limit is a caution to avoid overuse. When our stress response systems are constantly activated, the body has an increasingly difficult time returning to homeostasis, that sense of calm within the natural rhythm of the ebb and flow of various bodily systems working in sync. Once the circuitry of one system can no longer return to homeostasis, more stress is placed on other bodily systems, and the effect is like tumbling dominoes. We will return to this later as we identify the hurdles an overly stressed student faces just in terms of dealing with dysregulated physiology, let alone unintegrated neural networks.

But for all of us who mumble to ourselves that students should be better able to self-regulate amid the clamor of a classroom, focus more, tolerate frustration, delay gratification, not be so sick all the time, etc.—yes, you are picking up something that’s amiss; you are seeing students whose bodies and minds are not meeting various benchmark expectations because they are overstressed, and in their own language, they are screaming at us to look and listen.

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Stress and Coping

Family stress and coping is a metatheory identifying elements of resilience (McCubbin & Patterson, 1983). Its very title is somewhat confusing. McCubbin and Patterson were among the earliest social science researchers to study resilience from a systemic point of view, surmising that coping with stress and trauma is not merely about the will of the individual, but a communal process—it takes a village to survive.

Coping with stress and trauma is not merely about the will of the individual, but a communal process—it takes a village to survive.

Stress in this theory is defined very similarly to how we are using the word in this text—a demand that life is presenting us, requiring us to act, that activates our stress response systems. The stressor can be a mild annoyance or a life-ending event. Generally, the theory looks at the impact of

stressors that most of us would label as traumatic, as well as the impact of stress pile-up, whereby numerous mild, moderate, or severe events bombard us, overwhelming our coping mechanisms. That last mild stressor may become the proverbial straw that breaks the camel’s back. This theory looks at why some of us are more resilient in the face of stress pile-up, while some of us are not.

In this model, *coping* does not merely mean getting by, with the negative connotation the word is commonly given today. It means healthy thriving, doing well, and on our way to resuming or continuing health and growth, not merely surviving (McCubbin, Sussman, & Patterson, 1983; Rosino, 2016).

This metamodel is useful for us as it reiterates themes we have already discussed regarding the role of internal resources (for example, neural networks) and external resources (the role of the community). It also provides a visual to help us identify concrete ways to support resilience, helping us understand the challenges facing students and educators, as well as giving us a road map in response.

The ABCX of Stress and Coping

The stress and coping metamodel creates a simple visual to assess and identify ways to strengthen resilience: $A+B+C=X$.

A—Nature of the Event

For all the talk about factors that increase our resilience, there is no getting around that some events are more traumatic and devastating than others. For example, much of the research investigating the impact of divorce on children supports that chronic marital discord is more damaging to a child than an amicable divorce (Wallerstein & Blakeslee, 2018). We now can understand the science behind those findings: A child subjected to constant anger and animosity, whether observed between parents or directed toward the child as well, is neurologically impacted by poorly developed positive

neural networks and dominant negative neural networks, as well as hijacked and dysregulated stress response systems. This impairs biopsychosocial health. It doesn't mean children such as Charlotte, described above, are not stressed and grieved as a result of their parents' divorces. But it does mean that students who have limited access to safe, calm, constant attunement and mentoring are most vulnerable to stress pile-up, and hence limited ability to cope. We will see this vulnerability in Ben, whom we introduce below.

The tragic death of Charlotte's mom would have a chance of undermining whatever positive neural networks had developed if her relational environment cannot attune to her in a good-enough way before, during, and well after her mother's death. The nature of this psychological injury, which has neurological (physical) correlates, depends on the type, intensity, and context of the trauma. The threat of injury to self or another, the level of public shame versus community support, and the duration of the event—all of these and more influence the psychological and physical assault on the child or adult experiencing the stressor event. And, sadly, we have little to no control over this. Traumatic events, whether human caused or otherwise, happen. We can only prevent so much; the rest is up to forces outside of our control.

What the ACE Survey has revealed is that the percentage of our students who experience a *high rate of chronic distress in the home*, the type of stress that inhibits the development of neurostructures needed to learn and engage in prosocial behavior, is astronomically higher than previously thought—likely over 50% (CDC, 2019). And this is just capturing the families most unable to provide the type of attachment environment vital to healthy development. Many more children are parented by adults who were denied the type of attunement and mentoring they so desperately deserved, sending them into adulthood unable to provide secure attachment for their children even though their interpersonal relationship struggles are not captured by elevated ACE scores. And other children are highly impacted by neighborhood or communal threats to their safety on a daily basis. These children are also stressed and vulnerable to stress pile-up and dysregulated functioning in response. They have no choice but to live within these environments; they have no power to limit or stop the chaos around them.

Yes, Reality Bites, But ...

We know with increasing confidence that many of our students live in violent, chaotic, emotionally hijacked or disconnected homes and communities, at all economic levels, in which physical and psychological safety does not exist. This reflects a significant level of dysregulation pulsing through all ages and levels of society. A trauma-informed lens cautions us to not blame parents; they (*we*) are all frogs in the pot, slowly being impacted by something bigger than we can fully understand, let alone know how to rectify.

This issue is of primary focus to systems therapists and researchers, and influenced the work of Geoffrey Canada, founder of the Harlem Children's Zone, as chronicled in *Whatever It Takes* (Tough, 2009). Canada became exasperated by historical approaches to combating the social-emotional problems associated with generational poverty. Recognizing that a complex set of issues perpetuate generational marginalization and struggle, Canada took to heart the impact of attachment on the child's developing mind and created neighborhood attachment-focused parenting classes. He trusted that we could help pave the way now for the next generation of adults to have the internal resources to break generational patterns, and the key was by simply fostering good attachment at home, and then continuing that level of care at school. As you read about his work and the relational stance he asks his teachers to take in how they see and respond to students and parents, you are witnessing one of the first trauma-informed school cultures before trauma-informed schools were on our radars.

So, while we are taking a bit of a depressing walk through the terrain of things, trust that there is something we can do despite the enormity and complexity of the issues that created this current state of affairs. Attachment-focused education is not a fad, not a mere theory; it is based on solid evidence that relationships do matter—they do wire our brains and make or break our ability to engage in the academic and social challenges of the school environment.

B – Resources, Internal and External

Here is where you and I have *some* element of control, in that we can access tools to help us when stressed, or in the aftermath of an adverse event. Internal resources, at the most basic, are what we draw on internally to help us cope. They include personality traits such as introversion or extroversion, the capacity to lead with thoughts versus feeling sensations, the preference to be orderly or to function in chaos, the tendency to be an optimist or a pessimist. Notice the personality traits are highlighting typical opposites; different types of stressors call for different responses, and we each have the capacity to use our dominant traits to our advantage or strengthen non-dominant traits as needed. We have control over that. With practice, the extrovert can learn to draw on the strengths of their inner, less dominant introverted side when their safety demands a lower profile. A person who thrives in chaos can learn to be more structured when the situation dictates, such as responding to the fragile medical needs of a loved one requiring regimented care. And we can all learn what traits, such as a sense of humor regarding the limits of self and others, tend to help the sour, bitter aftertaste of life go down with less pain on our psyche. Activities such as art, music, play, dance, spiritual practices, a walk in nature—all of these and more remind us of the good things in life, give our stress response systems a break, and help our left and right hemispheres talk to each other to sort out what's next in life.

External resources are tools outside of us—access to a livable wage, healthy food, medical care, education, job training, transportation, a safe place to live, kinship networks, and community supports. We have limited control over these elements as they are highly dependent on the larger culture's commitment to sustainable communities. But if they exist, and we are physically and emotionally able to nurture or access these supports, they are tools that help us take back control of our lives when adverse events threaten to undermine our health and functioning.

Many of our students attend school with impaired access to their internal resources, even while school is a place where educators can link them up with external resources as those needs become identified. But what this metatheory highlights is that both internal and external resources are required for resilience. TISP teaches us to be mindful that we are building students' internal resources so they can then learn and engage in prosocial interactions.

C – Perspective

Stress and coping theory proposes that this is the element of resilience that we have the most power over, *and the most influential in helping us cope*. Perspective is a thinking process reflecting innate, deep, conscious and unconscious beliefs influencing how we assess a challenge and devise a plan in response. In the movie *Life Is Beautiful* (Cerami & Benigni, 1999), a father seeks to protect his son from the horrors of living in a Nazi concentration camp. He, his family, and community were being systematically stripped of their humanity, tortured, and killed. Yet he wanted to protect his son. Like Victor Frankl (2006) in *Man's Search for Meaning*, the only thing he had power over was his internal thoughts reflecting deeper held beliefs or perspectives. In this way he could protect his son by trying to shape his son's inner worldview—in this case, helping him see the beauty that surrounded them each and every day amidst the barbed wire and the sights, sounds, and smell of death.

One of the most influential researchers on resilience was a medical sociologist by the name of Aaron Antonovsky (1979, 1987). He noted that most of the time we ask why people get sick or crumble under stress, but he was curious about why some people exposed to infectious diseases or social stressors did not get sick, or did not crumble. He noted that much of the time we seek protection by wrapping ourselves in a bubble of sorts; we try to stay away from germs or stressors. But we are bombarded by all sorts of noxious things in the air and within our bodies that our immune systems and coping resources (much of the time) take care of without us even realizing. Why is that? Of particular interest here, Antonovsky wanted to know why some people who survived various traumas seemed to do well and even report greater levels of hope, insight, or groundedness than those who were never exposed to such challenges. It represents a switch from focusing on avoiding pathogens (pathogenesis) to nurturing resilience and growth (salutogenesis).

A factor common to those who cope well is their internal belief system, what Antonovsky called *sense of coherence* (SOC) and identified as the most significant factor in our control that makes or breaks our ability to thrive (Antonovsky, 1979, 1987). Basically, SOC is comprised of three basic ingredients: When you and I can (a) make sense of what is happening to us or around us; (b) discern and have access to culturally available and acceptable resources in response; and (c) believe that life, and the meaning we hold, make it worth coping, we are both motivated and effective in meeting life's challenges. This internal mindset promotes strong coping skills and resilience. We often have little to no control over what happens to us, but we *can* control how we respond. However, this element of coping requires us to access positive neural networks to stand in relationship with negative neural networks in need of taming. Hence, a strong internal SOC is built upon a foundation of attunement and mentoring. We can't just tell a person what to think and believe and then expect coping to increase; it springs from internal confidence built through consistent attunement and mentoring.

There's More to the Story

It is sobering to ponder the role of perspective, of our sense of coherence, in successful coping. And it is exciting to see the resonance of Antonovsky's hypotheses with our advances in how neural networks shape our thoughts, feelings, and behaviors, key to our successful coping in the face of stress and trauma. But Antonovsky's work also helps us understand how hate and bigotry become normative. If his work on SOC has you curious, read more, as you may find it fascinating.

He begins by explaining that SOC is not formed or based on any form of external moral code; rather, it is a deep-seated way of viewing the world that a person's community said was right and good and the way things are. If those rules and viewpoints work in your favor—your community loves you and supports you, and you fit into that community—then the SOC you inherited from that community will work for you. But if you are on the losing end, if you are deemed a problem, especially if they knew the real you, or the available culturally accepted resources are not meant for you but only for others, then the SOC given to you by your community will not work for you, and your coping will become marginal, at best.

Antonovsky's SOC helps us understand why marginalized communities, whether that vulnerability is based on gender, race, ethnicity, nationality, sexual orientation, appearance, or socioeconomics, are so vulnerable to stress, and in particular, unmitigated stress and trauma. Likewise, it invites us to ponder why it may be so difficult to effect change in groups whose mindset overtly invites and authorizes ostracizing others: We are tampering with that person's core way of understanding the world. When an SOC is shaken apart, there goes that person's way of making sense of life. And there go their coping skills, until they have

the hope and confidence to learn new ways of understanding self and other in the world, and surround themselves with new resources congruent with how life is now understood.

In many ways, this is what trauma-informed schools are doing: We are challenging a child's SOC that says love and care is only for others; academic abilities are only for smart kids; the future holds nothing for kids like me. They have learned how to adapt to a hurtful SOC, in ways that bring them further struggle, but they are doing the best they can at learning the rules of how to survive given the lay of the land. We are trying to help them see a new and different reality based on us changing that reality, seeing their worth, and investing in them through our care.

X – Level of Coping vs. Distress (Crisis)

Finally, the unique mix of each person's encounter with a stressful event (A), access to resources (B), and ability to make sense of it through the grid of our inner neural networks (C) dictates how well we cope (signs of health and thriving) when we experience crisis or distress, whether for a season or longer (X). (While the theory uses the word *crisis* to indicate not functioning well and vulnerable to further risk, we use the word *distress* to avoid confusing it with Erikson's use of *crisis*, which means something quite different.)

Coping with distress is not an either/or thing; it exists on a continuum, and commonly changes from day to day, and qualitatively over time. Charlotte likely was experiencing ebbs and flows of distress over a period of years, as her mother's illness followed shortly after her parents' divorce. But other factors in her life helped her continually move back toward the side of coping, even while we know she could easily get yanked into being overwhelmed, moving to distress. Ben, who we will meet in this chapter, has so many strengths, yet factors beyond his and his parents' control are threatening to drag him into a state of chronic distress.

Imagine what our students experience when there is overt violence and abuse in the home, where their personal safety and their worth is undermined on a daily basis through harsh words and disdain. The nature of these repeated events is extreme; their access to resources is almost nonexistent; the mentoring they need to form an adaptive sense of coherence is not happening, allowing neural dysregulation to take hold. Sadly, a mere sign of strength is not hurting themselves or others, just existing. Expecting anything more is too much.

Case Example: Applying Stress and Coping Theory

The theoretical constructs presented in this chapter all talk to each other, giving us a visual of the multisystemic ways in which stress and trauma impact our body and mind, foundational to our capacity to learn and be social. We end this chapter by applying them to hypothetical students, and then asking you to do the same with students under your care.

Charlotte Revisited

In Chapter 2, we met Charlotte, who had experienced two significant traumas—the divorce of her parents and the death of her mother due to cancer. We can surmise that she experienced long-term stressors before, during, and after both events, given the nature of these traumas. Charlotte is not unlike many of us, in that we all experience bad, hurtful, sad,

scary, sudden, unpredictable, and long-term stressful or traumatic events from time to time. The daily drip of stress, such as a parent’s illness, relationship discord, economic uncertainty, unsafe communities, political unrest, socially sanctioned bias and antagonism—the list of possibilities is endless—as well as distinct traumatic events such as death, divorce, and family or community violence will and do challenge all of us, and knock us off our game for awhile as we acclimate to new realities.

But Charlotte had a well-anchored responsive community that tracked her needs and responded likewise. And despite her parents’ divorce, her family relationships were characterized by protection and goodwill. Beginning with her parents, Charlotte knew they were relationally safe, allowing her to fully feel the grief of their divorce and all the fear and confusion that this event puts upon a child. She could take refuge in both parents, receiving validation, comfort, and assurance along the way. Her extended kinship network provided a well-trusted safety net long before her mom became ill. These relationships did not spare Charlotte in her grief; she still suffered a season of incapacitation in one form or another, and she will cycle through seasons of grief perhaps for the rest of her life. But her community—family, friends, and her school—gave her a way to be loved and safely held as she began living this new reality, providing the optimum environment where she could allow her grief and loss to create new and unimagined insight into how to seize this life and find purpose and meaning despite unavoidable suffering and loss. Here is how we might apply components of stress and coping theory to map out Charlotte’s hypothesized risk and resilience factors:

<p>A = Event (Little to no control) An event title is often a summary of a group of stressful events that might include the following:</p>	
<p>1. Parental Discord and Divorce</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ A season of emotional volatility between parents. This would have created a growing sense of fear and unknowing when disagreements went unresolved. Children need to observe adults arguing and resolving arguments. The problem is not discord, but verbal or physical violence, and/or lack of resolution and repair/reconnection. ◦ Or, her parents could have shielded Charlotte from marital discord, making announcement of the divorce an unexpected shock. ◦ Series of calendar events: Announcement of divorce; change in living arrangements; process of negotiating the divorce; finalization of divorce; possible observation of parents investing in new relationships; moving through a year of “firsts” with holiday and family events. 	
<p>2. Mom’s Illness and Death</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Shock, fear, anger, and hopes dashed upon hearing the diagnosis. ◦ Waves of hope and then hope dashed as the disease progressed. The intense associated emotions were ongoing for a series of months, perhaps years. ◦ Learning about death—its process and meaning. ◦ Watching her mother suffer through the illness and treatment process. ◦ Watching other family members grieving and worrying as well. ◦ The gradual process of grasping just what it means to lose your mom. 	

B = Resources—Internal (Some control)	B = Resources—External (Some control)
<p>1. Consistent attachment throughout childhood, including a strong kinship base. We can surmise that she was able to build the internal confidence that she mattered, was loved, and could reach out for help when life became overwhelming.</p> <p>2. Intelligent; curious</p> <p>3. Personality attributes such as sense of humor; enjoyment of social interactions; ability to play; other skills and abilities that give her joy; faith practices, or...?</p>	<p>1. Parents who provided consistent attunement and mentoring.</p> <p>2. Parents committed to amicable divorce and co-parenting relationship.</p> <p>3. Parents who could earn a living wage.</p> <p>4. Extended kinship and community relationships, including faith community.</p> <p>5. Access to medical care, healthy food, safe neighborhoods.</p> <p>6. Embedded in community reflective of her race and cultural identities.</p> <p>7. School community where she was known and supported.</p>

C = Perspective (Sense of coherence; most control and most influential)

Traumatic events in childhood are instrumental in shaping our internal mindsets, those conscious and unconscious beliefs influencing how we view self, other, and the world at large. Left unchallenged or responded to, our initial reactions lead to entrenched, negative worldviews. With a good-enough attachment community, our negative beliefs are softened or mitigated by positive, adaptive beliefs.

It would be logical for Charlotte to vacillate between the following internal beliefs. Initially many of these neural networks would be expressed through attitudes and actions. But in moments of attunement, and over time as she gained the ability to put words to her deepest inner thoughts, she would gain the ability to experience what we would call neural integration between her implicit and explicit memory, and between competing states of mind and life realities. Such integration would allow her to eventually increase her capacity to hold the both/and with greater chance of reclaiming hope and joy. These competing beliefs might be as follows:

Negative Neural Networks	Positive Neural Networks
Bad things can happen at any time; don't trust that anything good will last.	Bad things happen sometimes, but people who love you are there to help you through.
Some bad things make life not worth living anymore.	I can trust that when bad things happen, leaving me without hope that it will be OK, that this is to be expected. It will last for as long as it takes until I find my way through it.
Moms (women) or dads (men) can be jerks, so don't trust them.	Moms and dads are not perfect and can mess things up sometimes, but they can learn from that to grow stronger and wiser.
It was my fault that my parents didn't get along; if I was a better child I could have helped my parents stay married.	While it hurts that my parents couldn't figure it out, their divorce had nothing to do with me. I did not cause it; I could not have prevented it.
Don't ever assume that relationships can or should be permanent. When love runs out, it just runs out. Don't hope or expect anything more.	Deep, lasting relationships are possible. But all of them take work—whether with siblings, friends, parents, or future spouses or my own kids someday. Sometimes we learn how to be better at relationships when we mess it up. My parents are learning how to be better at relationships. I can learn too.
My mom's body failed her and she died. Soon I am going to get sick and die too. Or, thank goodness I'm nothing like my mom, so I will never get cancer and die.	My mom's illness and death are forcing me to realize that we don't know what's in store for our (my) future. But, I can take care of myself today as best I know how, and trust I will find a way through whatever life throws at me in the future.

X = Level of Distress

At any point along the way, whether adjusting to the reality of her parents' divorce or her mother's illness and death, Charlotte will be overwhelmed with a marginal ability to cope as well as have moments of peace and well-being. Some signs of her coping and distress may include the following:

Signs of Distress	Signs of Coping
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Anxiety, depression 2. Anger, general inconsolability, disagreeableness, agitation, acting out, impulsiveness, careless or risk-taking behaviors 3. Lack of sleep, nightmares, increase in physical ailments and illness 4. Lack of concentration; lack of motivation; short-term memory impairment; drop in grades/academic functioning 5. Lack of interest in activities that previously gave joy 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Deep hope despite harsh realities 2. See joy and beauty despite grief, anger, fear; can respond to the attunement and mentoring processes designed to help with self-regulation 3. Able to rest into the soothing comfort of parental caretaking; trust in and reliance on kinship and community networks 4. Able to titrate daily expectations, avoiding being overwhelmed but engaged enough to nurture sense of personal achievement and competence (for example, academics) 5. Absorb self in tasks and activities distracting or giving respite from life's problems (for example, friendships, hobbies, play)

Not everyone is as fortunate as Charlotte—an odd statement given the severity of her traumas. And here lies a key point: A child's true vulnerability may not be based on a particular event, but on a cumulative picture that reveals the relative safety of the developing child's *community*,

A child's true vulnerability may not be based on a particular event, but on a cumulative picture that reveals the relative safety of the developing child's *community*.

as we will see in the story of Ben. Notice the negative neural networks messing with Charlotte's heart and mind. These are universal challenges that she only has the capacity to make sense of and counterbalance due to the strength of her community. In the absence of attunement and mentoring, students are overrun and under the direct control of these

negative neural networks. We will see this with Ben, but even more so with many of the students that give you the most concern.

Ben and the High-Risk Child

Ben was born in California, where he resided until age four, when his family moved to Central America to care for his aging grandparents. His family returned to California approximately two years ago. Midway through his sixth-grade year, Ben's family was forced to move again to a small town outside of Dallas, Texas. This is the family's fourth move since returning to the states. Ben speaks three languages: Spanish, a dialect of his native community in Peru, and English, although his English reading and writing skills are not yet to grade level. Ben presents as shy, quiet, and compliant. Initial testing revealed deficient grade-level skills in all subjects, and he was immediately placed in remedial ESL classes.

Ben's parents have historically been loving and emotionally attentive to Ben's needs. However, they are extremely stressed due to the family's financial uncertainty, extended family responsibilities, and increasing sociopolitical animosity towards non-white immigrant communities. During their first trip to Ben's new school, Ben and his mother were on high alert looking for signs that the school was welcoming and safe for immigrant children and their parents. Within the first minute on campus, they saw other students wearing clothing with political slogans congruent with antagonism to immigrants. Other red flags appeared based on questions asked and not asked, subtleties in body language, tone, and school culture. Both looked for a friendly face among a crowd of those in power, a person who could assure them that school was a safe and welcoming place for Ben.

Ben understands more than his teachers might think about the spoken and unspoken social class system in America. He knows his race, his accent, his name, and his unknown but assumed residency status make him a target. He's learned to be adept at reading body language, decoding the deeper meaning underneath questions and comments from peers and adults. He lives in fear of being bullied by classmates (which he has experienced numerous times in his young life) and merely tolerated by school staff. He knows at first glance who is welcoming and who is disparaging of his presence.

Ben's father now fights depression and uses alcohol in excess in the evenings in order to cope. Ben's mother is increasingly anxious each time she or her husband leave home for fear of being detained by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE); the chronic stress is impacting her physical health. With each move, the family loses its community (external) supports, and must start again finding others who understand their fight for survival and the dangers of living in a town or region hostile to immigrants, unaware of or unmoved by the war being waged against them in broad daylight.

At home, Ben worries for his parents. Have you ever flown on an airplane and endured intense air turbulence? A common coping mechanism is to gauge the seriousness of the situation according to the demeanor of the flight attendants. For Ben, his parents—life's flight attendants—are scared; their level of stress, and their coping mechanisms suggest that the plane is going down! In preparation, his parents often rehearse with Ben and his siblings what to do if they are ever questioned or detained by ICE. And, most disturbing, they are instructed in what to do if Mom or Dad do not return home. The possibility of being ripped from their parents' arms is a daily threat; Ben's parents can assure him that they are doing everything possible to keep Ben and his three younger sisters safe, but they cannot lie. And their own demeanor suggests they are already being consumed by fear. Meanwhile, they need to equip Ben with tips for surviving if the worst comes true, and that includes teaching Ben how to look after his younger siblings.

Now, imagine tending to homework. Imagine carving out the physical and emotional energy (let alone time) to study for tomorrow's test. Imagine how difficult it is to get a good night's sleep when you fear the plane is about to crash. Meanwhile, Ben's fight to cope with the chronic anxiety and fear is taxing numerous bodily systems. He is likely sleep deprived, unable to fully absorb all the nutrients from his diet regardless of its quality, and more susceptible to colds and other illnesses due to a taxed immune system.

Ben is an intelligent, loving child. He's attentive, perceptive, and a quick learner. But he is living in a chronic state of just barely surviving, with threats to the safety of all family members at home and in the community, including school. His compliant, easy-going external demeanor belies what is likely going on inside of him—fear, hurt, anger, longing, and self-doubt as to his worth. While many children may be able to embrace the school day as respite from home-based stress, for Ben school is a microcosm of the larger social community that is the ultimate source of the family's stress. School is jumping into the fire each day. It is neverending turbulence that may eventually bring the plane down.

Neurobiological Impact. We will begin applying this chapter's concepts by first examining how Ben's stressors might be taxing his innate stress response systems, as we described above. During Charlotte's parents' divorce and her mother's illness and death, her sympathetic nervous system (SNS) was often on high alert, kicking in extra norepinephrine (the precursor to adrenaline) in moments of worry or fear. Her body knew that a long journey of coping was ahead, and released cortisol to help her along the way. But as she received comfort and assurance on a regular basis, her parasympathetic nervous system (PNS) was able to give rest to the SNS, releasing acetylcholine, easing bodily systems taxed in its efforts to help Charlotte cope. That process, combined with other mechanisms, helped signal the HPA Axis system to ease up on its need for extra cortisol.

Charlotte was in a season of stress and trauma; her grades suffered, and she experienced grief and existential disorientation. But her community supports enabled her to endure these challenges without her body betraying her, allowing her to engage in the hard work of making sense of and responding to life's injustices.

Ben is a different story. Like Charlotte, he does not have abusive parents; he is loved by them, and knows his parents would lay down their lives for his well-being. But social and economic pressures have taken a toll on their health, and now he is functioning as a parent, worried for their social, emotional, and physical welfare. His parents are increasingly unable to provide him assurance. Home needs to be both a buffer and a training ground for dealing with life's dangers; for Ben, it remains a training ground, but is no longer a buffer, as he watches his father increasingly consumed by alcohol and his mother increasingly immobilized by anxiety.

We can surmise that Ben's autonomic nervous system (ANS) is not able to achieve that necessary balance between his SNS and PNS. Once the ANS can no longer self-regulate, our bodies begin to over- or under-produce the neurochemicals key to response (norepinephrine, cortisol, and others) and relaxation (acetylcholine, and others). Under- or over-production results in domino effects on the regulation of other neurochemicals, such as dopamine and

serotonin, two of numerous neurochemicals dysregulated when we experience chronic stress (Scaer, 2005; Schore, 2003; Siegel, 2012; van der Kolk, 2014; Vermetten & Bremner, 2002).

Meanwhile, our long-term stress response system loses the ability to self-regulate, resulting in under- or over-production of cortisol, among other chemicals (Everly & Lating, 2012; Scaer, 2005; Vermetten & Bremner, 2002). The dysregulation of cortisol leads to a wide range of health issues, including the inability to extract nutrients from food, sleep dysregulation, a compromised immune system, and more.

All of us are predisposed to certain physical and mental health conditions. Some of us get migraines under stress, while others are more prone to intestinal problems. Some of us are more wired to experience anxiety or depression, whereas others may experience various symptoms congruent with mood or psychotic disorders. We do not know what Ben's biological predispositions are, but we certainly will keep an eye out for the first telltale signs of emotional distress via symptoms of anxiety or depression. He is also physically at risk for frequent and perhaps chronic health conditions, all of which will undermine his ability to cognitively engage in school.

Co-occurring with fear is a deep longing for love, safety, and acceptance. Humans crave and need belonging. Without it, we panic, we doubt our worth, we fear for our survival. These are the ingredients of shame. And co-occurring with shame is deep hurt, the soul-crushing, agonizing pain of rejection. Adults come close to knowing this feeling upon the death of a spouse or loss of a relationship through divorce. Life can lose meaning or purpose. Adults are undone by these types of experiences; how much more are children injured? These experiences create entrenched worldviews (neural networks) that lead to a variety of self- and other-destructive behaviors for which we need to assess on an ongoing basis.

Complete Ben's Assessment

Below is a partially filled-in map of an assessment of Ben's risk and resilience factors. Using the concepts discussed thus far, how might you complete the map, similar to Charlotte's map above?

A = Event (Little to no control). Name the event or issue and the specific types of stressors or traumatic events that accompany that event. Use Charlotte's map as an example.

1. Frequent Moving

- _____
- _____
- _____

2. Cultural Antagonism Toward Immigrant Populations and Persons of Color

- _____
- _____
- _____

3. Mom's Anxiety and Decreased Ability to Function

- _____
- _____
- _____

4. Dad's Increased Frequency of Drinking Alcohol to Excess

- _____
- _____
- _____

5. Other

- _____
- _____
- _____

B = Resources–Internal	B = Resources–External
<p>Internal (Some control)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Intelligent evidenced through his social skills, curiosity, ability to speak multiple languages, and ... 2. _____ 3. _____ 4. _____ 5. _____ 	<p>External (Some control)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. An extended kinship system but it is not readily accessible 2. _____ 3. _____ 4. _____ 5. _____

C = Perspective (Sense of coherence; most control and most influential)

The formation of positive neural networks to stand in relationship with and mitigate the power of negative neural networks is key to coping, and key to a student being able to engage in the challenges of the school environment. This occurs within a community of care able to provide consistent attunement and mentoring throughout our first 18 years of life. Hypothesize what negative and corresponding positive neural networks might be competing for Ben's attention, networks capturing his experience of and beliefs about self and other based on his life experiences. Refer to Charlotte's map for an example, and Erikson's chart (Figure 1) for common themes present in neural networks.

Negative Neural Networks	Positive Neural Networks
I am flawed due to my ethnic, racial, and/or national identities.	I am perfect as I am in all of my identities.
Adults/parents are weak and hence untrustworthy.	Adults/parents are amazing survivors even when overwhelmed by trauma.

<p>X = Level of Distress</p> <p>Typically, we assess here-and-now signs of Ben's coping and distress. Since we are hypothesizing this fictional student, include signs you might see in the future as well, given the nature of his current stressors, internal and external resources, and unintegrated neural networks, should they continue on their present course:</p>
--

Signs of Distress	Signs of Coping
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Increasing withdrawal in school; absenteeism; poor quality of work ----- ----- ----- ----- 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Able to attend school on most days ----- ----- ----- -----

Despite the severity of traumatic events experienced by Charlotte and Ben, neither of them may come across our radars as students displaying greater levels of externalized dysregulation often dominate our attention. But none of our students can afford to be placed on the back burner. The power of a trauma-informed approach is reimagining the education environment based on an integration of developmental and resilience theories, informed by advances in the neurobiology of stress and trauma. This universal approach ensures that no child is invisible.

Exercises

Classroom Application

In this chapter, we dug deeper into the formation of negative neural structures that, left unchecked,

dominate our thinking, feeling, perceiving, and behavioral responses to the world. We also illustrated how our neural networks manifest in various signs of coping versus distress. Set aside about 30 or 40 minutes with a small group of peers currently working through this material to apply the concepts presented in this chapter in the exercise described below.

Using Worksheet B-1: Identifying Risk and Resilience in Appendix B, think about a student of concern. Begin by describing the student's positive (including neutral) and negative behaviors in response to the demands of the school environment: everything from academic performance, timeliness, frustration tolerance, and capacity to focus, to social skills with peers and authority figures. List these observations in the X box, for signs of coping vs. distress. Next, go back up to Box A and identify known stressors impacting this student's life. Include a hypothesis regarding the student's access to safe, predictable, attuned, and mentoring home experiences that help or hinder the student's stress response systems in returning to a state of calm, hence promoting homeostasis. Use Charlotte and Ben's maps for ways to expand on describing the nature of the student's challenges. Then, in Box B, identify internal coping resources that you observe the student displaying. What do you surmise are external resources that the student is or is not able to access?

Discerning a student's internal perspectives (Box C) is often tough. The best way to hypothesize this is by decoding behavior, whether verbal, nonverbal, or actions. So, look back over this student's signs of coping and distress. Then, stand back and ask what internal beliefs might be fueling the positive coping behaviors, and what beliefs might be behind the signs of distress. Next, look at the nature of the event(s) and what resources the student may or may not have access to, and ask what a student might nonverbally begin to feel or think about self and the world as a result. Use Erikson's stage summary chart (Figure 2.1) for ways of putting words to internal positive and negative neural networks.

Next, in Appendix B, pull out Worksheet B-2: Domains of Neural Integration Assessment and Planning. Looking at your student's behaviors across the coping-distress spectrum, identify the student's strengths and struggles in the various domains being reflected in their school behavior. Later in your TISP readings, you will be able to return to this worksheet to identify classroom- or school-based activities to help strengthen domains needed to increase positive coping strategies. Be sure to use the charts in Figure 2.5 for a description of each domain.

A Look Forward

In Chapter 5, we will give you a conceptual road map regarding concrete ways to begin intervening on behalf of this child and your other students. In Section II you will be given the tools to develop a concrete action plan. For now, we have only two goals: to solidify your use of trauma-informed constructs to make sense of the complexity of what we are observing and increase your empathy for the profound role neural integration plays in our ability to function. That child who makes us want to quit our job is hurting, sending us messages in code. In Section II, we will unpack specific ways to stand in relationship with all of our students as attuned and mentoring attachment-focused educators.

Resources for Further Reading

- [ACEs \(Adverse Childhood Experiences\) Connection](#). This resource-rich organization collates data from schools implementing trauma-informed practices.

- [The National Child Traumatic Stress Network](#). A site rich with additional research articles and other resources.
- [Trauma, Brain and Relationship: Helping Children Heal](#). This 30-minute documentary video describing attachment is available free online in segments.
- [Bonding and Attachment in Maltreated Children: How You Can Help](#). Bruce Perry, M.D., Ph.D., provides tips on interacting with and nurturing children who may have insecure attachments.

Chapter 4: Trauma and Classroom Impact



[Image: [Child Completing Worksheet](#) | [Pexels](#)]

“Trauma is personal. It does not disappear if it is not validated. When it is ignored or invalidated the silent screams continue internally heard only by the one held captive. When someone enters the pain and hears the screams healing can begin.”

—Danielle Bernock, *Emerging with Wings: A True Story of Lies, Pain, and the Love That Heals*

Desired Outcomes

This chapter and the accompanying recommended resources and activities are designed to assist educators to:

- Identify signs of dysregulated behavior in your students
- Apply basic principles of the neurobiology of stress and trauma to student behavior and its impact in the classroom setting
- Identify the need for a trauma-informed teaching and learning framework

Key Concepts

This chapter focuses on how the brain is impacted by trauma and how that impact manifests in classroom behaviors. It includes an invitation to evaluate classroom management issues and difficult behaviors through a trauma-impact lens, and consider alternatives to traditional discipline models. It includes the following key concepts foundational to trauma-informed competencies:

- The application of neurobiology to the classroom setting, in relationship to academic and social tasks, classroom policies and procedures, and discipline practices.
- Executive functioning impairment and its significance in relationship to classroom expectations.

Chapter Overview

In Chapter 3, you learned what happens when students become overwhelmed by stress and trauma and are without the necessary supports to cope. We also learned how attunement and mentoring can take place in multiple environments, and from community members, in addition to parents. In this chapter we focus on analyzing current classroom challenges through the lens of the impact of trauma. We then explore the neurobiology of trauma, including the impact on executive functioning and cognitive impairment. Last, we challenge you to consider your experiences with your students through the lens of trauma-impact and invite you to move to trauma-informed school practices.

In early September, I (Brenda) received a call from a longtime administrator and friend. She was only a few weeks into the new school year and was already facing significant challenges. At her middle school, she had experienced seven

room clears in seven days. Room clears are significant events. These are conducted during an emergency, where a student is exhibiting such extreme behaviors that they endanger themselves and others in the classroom. In the OEA (2019) report, more than half of the participants reported at least one room clear in their classroom during the academic year. While room clears are not new, and my administrator friend has had these before in her building, she had never seen anything like the frequency or the extreme behaviors that prompted this action. In her building, she identified a group of students with out-of-control behavior. They exhibited quick tempers and explosive aggression over seemingly insignificant events. Teachers were anxious and frustrated with their inability to calm the students and were asking for immediate support from their administrator. My friend was asking me if I thought this had anything to do with past traumatic histories.

The number of children with elevated ACE scores is staggering. “Childhood trauma is an epidemic” (Blaustein, 2013, p. 4).

There are approximately 46 million teenagers in the United States who have been impacted by trauma (Pickens, Siegfried, Surko, & Dierkhising, 2016) and chronic stress, including home and food insecurity (Darling-Hammond & Cook-Harvey, 2018).

“Childhood trauma is an epidemic.”

Therefore, children are entering the school building amidst tremendous emotional upheaval. They bring this emotional upheaval into their classrooms, resulting in poor behavior, due to dysregulation (Morton & Berardi, 2018). Teachers have been highly trained in content and pedagogy, but lack training in traumatology or trauma-informed best practices (Cummings, Addante, Swindell & Meadan, 2017). Consequently, teachers are unlikely to understand the neurobiological mechanisms driving student behavior or respond to the student in ways that acknowledge the role of trauma in their behaviors (Craig, 2016; Cummings et al., 2017; Dutro, 2017; Hertel & Johnson, 2013; Perry, 2009;). Therefore, they interpret the dysregulated student as one who is choosing to behave outside classroom norms. In response, they follow behavior management systems that seek to punish specific behaviors.

So, what is the connection between trauma, academic and social functioning, and behavioral problems? We began to unpack this question through an understanding of implicit and explicit neural networks. Now, let's add insights from learning theory.

Learning Theory

Psychologists and learning theorists have long debated the way in which children learn, and their theories consequently influence how we teach. A few of these significant theorists are John Dewey, Jean Piaget, B. F. Skinner, Lev Vygotsky, Jerome Bruner, and psychologist Howard Gardner. In teacher preparation programs, we study their work in an effort to ground our teaching methodology in sound pedagogical principles in order to promote student academic success. From Dewey, we were encouraged to view learning as both social and interactive. We can see this in classrooms where group work, group projects, or other collaborative activities take place. This theory recognizes the need for learners to interact with each other, to learn from each other, in order to get the best from them.

Piaget introduced the concepts of *knowledge as subjectively known* through direct encounter and *schemas that increase in complexity*, both of which allow students to progress through various stages of cognitive functioning (Piaget, 1952). His work provides a structure for educators to plan lessons accordingly. From this theory we often ask if tasks are developmentally appropriate for the child, or if the challenge is too far outside the student's current stage, and hence presented before the child is ready to learn those skills.

Vygotsky identified the “zone of proximal development,” which identifies that cognitive growth takes place within an optimal level of dissonance. With scaffolded support, the student can then move from one level to the next. Bruner agreed with Vygotsky and his theory of moving from one stage to the next, but added the importance of linking information learned from one concept to the next. Bruner acknowledged that “things in the external environment can

slow down the growth process, whereas others can speed it up” (Fraser, 2016, p. 119). From Gardner we learned about multiple intelligences and infusing classroom activities in a way that students can engage with their strengths.

Classroom management and developing disciplined study habits in students have often relied on B. F. Skinner’s behaviorism theory, whereby operant conditioning (reinforcement systems) is used to shape behavior. Skinner focused on positive and negative consequences for actions, believing the child would repeat behaviors connected to receiving a reward and discontinue actions that received negative consequences. He did not embrace learning through discovery or from problem solving (Fraser, 2016). Nor was he persuaded by attachment theory studies (namely the work of John Bowlby and the controversial researcher Harry Harlow) proving that children’s primary motivation is for relationship and connection, not to avoid punishment or seek reward.

Token Economies and Trauma-Informed Care

Behavioral management programs based on Skinner’s positive and negative systems of reinforcement made perfect sense during a specific era when the power of adult caretakers was not questioned, and extrinsic motivation to be viewed as good and acceptable ruled the day. Despite the seemingly positive results of authoritarian methods of rule, many professionals from a variety of disciplines deconstructed these methods and advocated for a deeper understanding of what motivates human behavior (Bowlby, 1969; Clarke & Dawson, 1998; Cozolino, 2013; Erikson, 1987; Landreth & Bratton, 2015; Piaget, 1952; Palmer, 1993; Pink, 2011; Siegel, 2012).

Before TI principles were applied to schools, trauma-informed care transformed non-academic settings such as youth residential communities, hospitals, and parenting programs. Token economies are incongruent with trauma-informed principles and do not promote health in youth or adults; one of the first steps in transforming to a trauma-informed culture is discontinuing their use (Bloom, 2013; Huff, 2013; Siegel & Bryson, 2012). A hallmark of trauma-informed educator competencies is not merely disavowing positive and negative reinforcement systems, but a display of trauma-informed knowledge, skills, and dispositions indicating why such systems may not be helpful. The Massachusetts Advocates for Children (2005, 2013) program, one of the first U.S.-based trauma-informed school programs, and the work of Bailey (2015), Bloom (2013), Craig (2016), Souers and Hall (2016), and Rossen and Conan (2013), all display this trauma-informed competency, offering critical insight into how, when, and why token economies may be counterproductive to trauma-informed methods and desired outcomes.

It is crucial that trauma-informed educators understand the history of this argument and how token economies can thwart the very outcomes they seek to create. We will unpack this further in the pages ahead, and again in Section II.

These theories created a lens through which we view our students, our role as educators, and the way we believe our students should learn and behave in the learning environment. While many learning theorists placed much emphasis on cognitive development and the child’s interaction with the environment, given the social needs of their times (which differ significantly from our context), these theorists offer little insight into how to manage today’s classroom environment. Teachers and administrators who subscribe to a Skinner-influenced approach, which relies on token economies that reward good behavior and punish bad behavior, are frustrated by the fact that students continue to behave in inappropriate ways in classrooms despite elaborate systems of positive and negative reinforcement options. Similarly, teachers who view their students as Bruner did are acknowledging that students are unable to link their

learning; they are noticing an interruption in the move from stage to stage. And even when activities and lessons are developmentally appropriate (Piaget), student behavior and gaps in learning are making it impossible for students to learn.

We are not discounting the wisdom of these theorists; rather, we are inviting educators to dig deeper into each theorist's underlying worldview and re-examine traditional methods of applying their wisdom, to separate out theoretical tenets from the way we traditionally implement these concepts. And we are introducing a new trauma-informed pedagogical approach to mesh with existing learning theory constructs. We know that teachers actively engage in this process, developing their own pedagogical style based on integrating theory with current classroom successes and needs. We also learned in Chapter 1 that teachers are facing tremendous challenges. Dysregulated students and pressure to be more effective, as displayed in student learning outcomes, are forcing educators to re-examine how they teach and manage their classrooms. Teaching methods continue to be informed by some of the same pedagogical frameworks and strategies successfully used by educators decades earlier, or we are using spruced-up methods incorporating recent advancements in crafting more engaging, student-participatory, postmodern learning methods. Meanwhile, in response to severe and dangerous student behavioral issues, some schools are doubling down on law-and-order token economies based on behavioral modification student management systems. So, why are we still experiencing crises in the classroom that continue to worsen?

Trauma and Executive Functioning

Chapter 3 provided an explanation of the neurobiology of trauma, including the impact of unmitigated stress and trauma on neural integration. Physician Bruce Perry (2006) provides a global summary of brain functioning, and its role in controlling our thoughts, emotions, and physical sensations, and hence choice of action:

“The human brain is complex, comprising hundreds of billions of cells (neurons and glia) organized into thousands of neural networks. The brain mediates hundreds of important functions from heart rate regulation to appetite to motor movement to thinking and creating. To keep us alive, our brain is designed to sense, process, store, perceive, and act on information from the external and internal worlds. To do this, a brain has hundreds of neural systems, all working in a continuous dynamic process of modulating, regulating, compensation – increasing or decreasing activity to control the body’s physiology.” (p. 22)

ACE data and trauma-informed knowledge of brain functioning are requiring educators to re-evaluate our classroom pedagogy and school culture in order to respond to the needs of children and youth in our care. Research tells us that:

“Trauma can impact learning in ways that can be seen and hidden in the classroom. Given that the educational system is based on the ability to regulate behavior and the ability to take in and recall previous information and learning, students with trauma histories are at a marked disadvantage for academic achievement, through no fault of their own.” (Morton, 2018, p. 75)

In order for students to be successful in school, they need to develop and access the higher-order executive functioning centers of the prefrontal cortex. “The captain of the cognitive ship” (Blaustein & Kinniburgh, 2018, p. 259), executive functioning refers to a series of cognitive skills we employ to meet day-to-day expectations and



[Image: [Jesse Orrico](#) | [Unsplash](#)]

challenges. Kaufman (2010) presents two strands of executive skills: a metacognitive strand and a social/emotional regulation strand. The metacognitive strand includes “goal setting, planning/strategizing, sequencing, organization of materials, time management, task initiation, executive/goal-directed attention, task persistence, working memory, and set shifting” (p. 4). The social/emotional regulation strand includes “response inhibition (also known as impulse control), emotional control, and adaptability” (p. 4). Executive functioning also includes academic and social skill competencies such as reading and comprehension, writing and language arts, memorization, and problem solving (Blaustein & Kinniburgh, 2018; Craig, 2016; Siegel, 2012). Kaufman (2010) defined executive functions as “those elements of cognition that allow both the *stop* and the *think* parts of that wonderful habit teachers try to develop in the children with whom they work: to pause (even briefly!) and review options before leaping into action” (p. 2). A student overwhelmed by unmitigated stress and trauma will experience changes in brain structure impairing executive functioning. Examples of impaired executive functioning include an inability to predict consequences of their actions or choices, slow reaction time to situations or stimuli, cognitive inflexibility, impaired capacity to encode memories, and inability to track and follow complex and multifaceted instructions (Cozolino, 2013; Craig, 2017; Everly & Lating, 2012; Siegel, 2012).

So, how does this manifest in the classroom? Let’s consider three aspects of executive functioning: working memory, attention, and impulse control. Working memory stores information temporarily for quick retrieval. In a classroom setting, this can mean storing the directions given in class to complete an assignment or perform a specific task.

Attention is the ability to focus on a specific stimulus and ignore distractions. Think Piaget and the mental schemas we use to sort, categorize, and hierarchically rank. Linked with attention are impulse and emotional control. Inhibition or restraint is the ability to act or refrain from acting based on what is most wise in that moment despite impulse; it is the ability to act intentionally rather than impulsively. Imagine the student not only unable to commit your instructions to memory, but now easily distracted by their peers or a passing bird flying outside the window.

Emotional control is a multi-dimensional process related to intensity and perspective. The less consistent attunement and mentoring a student has received, the greater likelihood that they will not have the neural circuitry to control the level of intensity they emotionally and physically feel from both threats and joys in their environment; their level of arousal will not match the circumstances, which includes both under- and over-responding. Likewise, they will be prone to emotional experiences connected to internal neural networks shaping perspective of an event.

Intensity refers to the strength of an emotion, including the corresponding level of physical arousal associated with that emotion. We expect intensity to be related to the nature of the experience: for example, we will experience a deeper level of grief over the loss of a family pet than the loss of a favorite pen or drinking cup. Regulation of the intensity of emotion—the ability to not experience the loss of a cup as intensely as we’d experience the loss of a pet—is dependent upon stable and consistent attachment, attunement, and mentoring over time, especially during the first 18 years of life.

When you ask the student to refocus rather than watching peers or the bird, they may feel embarrassment at being singled out and become overwhelmed, blushing, with increased heart rate and self-consciousness. Internally, they may be hurling a bunch of negative self-talk towards you or themselves. The other aspect of emotional self-regulation is perspective, as we discussed in Chapter 3, and the connection emotions have with our internal neural networks. The child may know that they have a difficult time following classroom directions; they may be feeling shame at being redirected. Now their emotional response is exacerbated by the perspective, the internal neural networks that tell them they are stupid or that adults are overly critical.

This tumbling of being unable to track classroom activities by encoding instructions into working memory, becoming distracted, and then being chastised may lead to a full-blown emotional surge of shame, manifested in whatever type of meltdown is congruent for that child, whether it is extreme withdrawal, crying, or rage. The heightened state of alarm further impairs higher-order reasoning and language expression, leaving the student without the ability to articulate what they are feeling or ask for help (Landreth & Bratton, 2015; Massachusetts Advocates for Children, 2005; Morton & Berardi, 2017).

These are the executive functioning consequences of neurocircuitry overwhelmed by repeated or constant norepinephrine and cortisol dysregulation, by a limbic system not able to catch a break, keeping mind and body in constant states of high alert. These are the consequences of impaired and disrupted communication between the limbic system and prefrontal cortex (Everly & Lating, 2012; Vermetten & Bremner, 2002; van der Kolk, 2014). These executive

functions are foundational for learning, and when disrupted, are indicative of dysregulated neural networks most often caused by unmitigated stress and trauma. It explains why students continue to struggle despite the best efforts of educators to create more engaging lesson plans and more targeted behavioral intervention plans, which devolve into exclusion-based consequences for a student, further exacerbating the underlying causes of the dysregulation.

Impacted Executive Functioning or Intentional Bad Behavior?

The classroom teacher can easily misinterpret poor behavior as simply defiance or apathy. However, consider these behaviors and attitudes through the lens of fight-flight-freeze behavior. Acting out, fighting or other physical aggression, defiance, hyperactivity, and acting emotionally combative, while rude or dangerous, are often fight reflexes in response to neural networks signaling danger. The child who appears withdrawn, does not complete homework or in-class assignments, skips school, does not have many friends, or is engaging in risk-taking behaviors like taking drugs is likely exhibiting trauma-induced flight behaviors (Berardi & Morton, 2017b; Souers & Hall, 2016). Freeze behaviors can be a bit complex to detect and represent a more severe coping response. These can include severe withdrawal; dissociating, which can look more like daydreaming; difficulty focusing; and challenges with short-term memory (Berardi & Morton, 2017b; Everly & Lating, 2012). These behaviors are often met with punitive responses, which can range from poor grades on assignments to exclusion from the learning environment. Teachers logically experience frustration due to the student's lack of engagement in the learning process. Teachers are on their own to interpret the actions of a student and provide support to that distressed student amidst a classroom of children. Without understanding the experiences of students impacted by trauma, and the role of trauma in their cognitive and executive functioning, teachers are unable to mitigate stimuli that could trigger a stress response or learn how to help the child return to a state of calm after a triggering event (Holmes, Levy, Smith, Pinne, & Neese, 2014).

Let's consider the experiences of children from foster care, a population of students who have likely experienced unmitigated stress and trauma and are most vulnerable to impaired executive functioning. Children in foster care have been found to score significantly below their school peers on standardized exams, with researchers reporting a deficit of between 15 and 20 percentile points (Emerson & Lovitt, 2003). Researchers also found that 30% to 96% were performing below grade level in math and/or reading. For foster youth with an average age of 17.5, 33% were reading below the sixth-grade level, 31% had reading skills between the sixth- and eighth-grade levels, and 18% were reading at the ninth- to eleventh-grade levels (Shin, 2003). This population has taught many care providers a new way of interpreting misbehavior, as well as new strategies in response. Next to shaming and excluding a child, the worst thing we can do is not respond. A trauma-informed approach is not about excusing behavior due to the child's circumstances or past history. But it is asking educators to seize moments of disruption as an opportunity to mentor a child into what it means to be human, and do so through attunement (Siegel & Bryson, 2012).

Suspensions and Expulsions

Teachers depend on the ability of students to verbalize their needs and what they do not understand, and to answer questions when called upon. Unfortunately, once the student's stress response has been activated, their intentions become muddled and their actions can be misinterpreted. Even if we can understand their behavior through a trauma-informed lens, we might still be prone to responding through a behavioral modification-consequence model with no proof of such an intervention helping the child learn and mature. As students deal with internal shame, inadequacy, and anger, they become dysregulated, and they experience emotional overload. In the absence of attunement and mentoring responses, the student is likely to experience continued escalation, resulting in classroom exclusion, such as removal to

the office or another classroom. Recess or other breaks, perceived as rewards, may be taken away. These students are then more likely to face even more serious consequences, such as suspension or expulsion (Perry, 2006).

Attachment vs. Operant Conditioning Behavioral Modification Programs

Debate over how best to inspire “good” behavior or citizenship has always occurred. Proponents of a rehabilitation or growth model advocate addressing intrinsic, unmet needs of a person. Proponents of a reward/punishment system advocate for strict, clear consequences that express community disapproval and inspire more desired behavioral traits (Gilligan, 2012; Pink, 2011; Smith, Fisher, & Frey, 2015). This debate continues to take place in correctional facilities, residential care settings, and schools.

In most school environments, discipline systems are designed to correct unwanted behavior and to teach what is expected or what behavior is appropriate for the situation, a law-and-order approach based on a reward/punishment system. These discipline systems rely on punitive responses based on the assumption that the student will learn from their choices through the application of positive and negative reinforcement (Craig, 2016; Flanagan, 2017; Ristuccia, 2013). Newer iterations of the model seek to promote prosocial behavior with greater emphasis on distributing positive rewards for desired behaviors, and ignoring (most) negative behaviors (Smith, Fisher, & Frey, 2015). All of these are based on Skinner’s model of operant conditioning, pairing punishment with a behavior you wish to extinguish (even if that punishment is lack of recognition), and reward with a behavior you hope is repeated (Smith & Woodward, 1996).

Attachment theory proponents stand in opposition to Skinner’s hypothesis that people are primarily motivated by the experience of seeking pleasure (a reward) and avoiding pain (a punishment or negative consequence). For example, Erikson (1987) believed humans were motivated by a search for identity within the context of relationship, unlike Freud, who believed we were ruled by our id’s drive to seek pleasure and avoid pain. Bowlby echoed Erikson’s sentiment by hypothesizing that our prime need and drive was to attach (1969). Both of them stood in opposition to operant conditioning methods.

We mention this here because mental health professionals with proven trauma-informed expertise know that this debate was settled decades ago. We do not dispute that operant conditioning works at times. I use potholders precisely because I will never forget burning my hands. If I want to get picked to play on the baseball team, I have to strive to increase my skills. I refrain from calling my mother names, *if the consequence (upsetting her or getting my allowance docked) matters to me or rage doesn’t consume my better judgment*. But we know that ultimately, health and well-being, cooperation and motivation, are deeply connected to being seen, heard, and trusted as valued members of a community, reflecting the basics of attachment as attunement and mentoring (King, 2018; Siegel & Bryson, 2012; Terada, 2019).

Trauma-informed providers are also keenly aware that token economies promote competition and shame (Bloom, 2013; Terada, 2019). In an environment where we have limited strong and reliable attachment figures, we are more prone to intense emotional responses at the slightest hint that we are not good enough. Not getting as many stickers as our peers provokes the neural networks of being a failure, or not as good as others. Rather than promoting a resolve to strive harder, it feeds the negative neural networks outlined in Erikson’s model (Figure 2.1), namely inertia or compulsion that ultimately taps into shame, leading to despair. In today’s culture, reward-based systems do not positively shape behavior, other than in those students who already have the well-established circuitry to compete for prizes by engaging in

prosocial behavior. For the vast majority of students, they just nurture neural networks of shame and doubt.

As you will see in future sections, a hallmark of any trauma-informed system is reworking policies and procedures that are vestiges of operant conditioning methods. And lest you think that TISP does not advocate systems of accountability, remember that attachment includes both attunement and mentoring. Discipline is a process of seizing an event to coach a student, a process we will unpack in future chapters.

However, as presented earlier, students in survival mode often act impulsively and without the ability to deeply consider the ramifications of their actions and choices. Removing a student from the classroom does not address the underlying issue that caused the negative behavior in the first place. “We cannot simply assume that all students possess the skills needed to meet school-based expectations or that they are simply choosing to disobey school rules” (Ristuccia, 2013, p. 260). Therefore, punishing through exclusion is more often ineffective than effective as the punishment does not move the child out of survival mode, nor does it promote school as a safe place, academic achievement, or a sense of relational connectedness (Ristuccia, 2013).

Suspensions and expulsions derail the educational process.

Let’s consider the school exclusion rates of foster children as an example. Scherr (2007) found that 24% of children and youth in foster care had either been suspended or expelled from school, compared to the national average of 7% for all

Suspensions and expulsions derail the educational process.

children. Researchers have found that suspensions predict negative student outcomes, including lower grade point average, higher absenteeism rates, diminished reading ability, high dropout rates, criminal behavior, and drug use (Hemphill et al., 2014; Souers & Hall, 2016). Without programs or processes to address these negative behaviors, and without support through corrective approaches that acknowledge the influence of trauma impact, students become adults in the criminal justice system or welfare recipients (Monahan, VanDerhei, Bechtold & Cauffman, 2014).

Class Impact

The challenges described above cannot help but impact the entire class. When one student experiences dysregulation, fight-flight-freeze responses can derail even the best planned lesson. Teachers describe significant classroom management challenges in these situations, as we heard in Chapter 1. Students’ response to those struggling with dysregulation can range from deep empathy to sheer frustration. I was in a meeting with two middle school students in attendance. When I asked how their year was going, they described many positives, but then honed in on classes where they had reached their threshold for tolerance. They described poor student behaviors as “robbing” them of opportunities to do projects or group work because their teacher had said the class was not able to handle it. They shared frustration about not getting their questions answered because the teacher was spending significant time with those exhibiting poor behaviors.

When we meet with school administrators and teachers, we are often asked about our views on discipline systems and policies. Often, people assume that being trauma-informed means we encourage schools not to hold specific students accountable for their actions. Nothing could be further from the truth! Trauma-informed means that we attend to two things simultaneously: (a) connecting and developing a relationship with the student, and (b) walking alongside the student as they are held accountable for their actions. Being trauma-informed invites teachers and administrators to develop a healthy, positive attachment relationship with their students. It requires a disposition that views misbehaviors as both a message to decode and an opportunity to mentor that student in the direction of neural integration and

continued growth. It is only then that students can begin to feel safe, heard, and seen in ways that promote resilience, and over time, decrease misbehavior.

Case Example

A few years ago, I (Brenda) was teaching a high school English elective course. One of my students was Alex. Alex had a reputation for being difficult, disrespectful, and apathetic toward school. His name was often mentioned in the staff lunch room. Alex and I connected. I learned that at 17, Alex had already experienced significant adverse situations that clearly had impacted his academic and social functioning. But, he felt safe in my classroom. He turned in his homework and participated in class. So, you can imagine my alarm when he burst into my first period class one morning absolutely panicked, shaking, and shouting that he needed me. Turns out, Alex chose to smoke marijuana that morning in his car, in a local grocery store parking lot, and was reported by a bystander. Alex was chased by the police to the school, where he parked and ran into my classroom. I listened to Alex. I let him know how serious this was and what school policy and procedure would be. As he began to sob, I gently put my arm around him and told him I would go with him to the office, and would stay with him as long as I was allowed. As we walked to the office together, I encouraged him to be completely honest with the authorities and to tell them everything, just as he told me. Alex ended up being expelled from school. However, he completed all assignments for my class while he was out, and successfully passed the class. I have a picture in my office of the two of us at graduation. It reminds me of the power of connection and impact of deep hurt.

Summary Observations

As educators, we have students who are processing and responding to information in different ways from their peers. In the situation with Alex, it would be easy to look at the situation through a policy lens. Did Alex make poor choices? Yes. Did those choices fall within school discipline policies? Yes, and, there was an opportunity to attune and mentor by walking alongside the student while holding him accountable for his actions. TISP offers a framework for recognizing the signs of a student in the midst of hyperarousal due to an actual or perceived threat, and designing a response to first de-escalate the arousal, then, in partnership with the student, proceed in a new way that nurtures connection and competence.

Teacher Impact

Survey results tell us that staff are feeling increasingly stressed, burnt out, and unprepared to support all learners. One educator summed up the list of stressors challenging their overall health and career satisfaction as a result of striving to “meet district criteria, student needs, parent worries, and family obligations, and keeping it all in balance. I could spend 23 hours a day at school and still not be done.” The severity of students’ need and the pressure this places on staff are reflected in each request we receive to provide TISP training, as well as in recent surveys of educators in our home state (Morton & Berardi, 2018; Oregon Education Association, 2019). Teachers are indeed being impacted by secondary trauma and compassion fatigue. This is leading to increased teacher absences and thoughts about leaving the profession.

I (Brenda) met with a math teacher this week. Standardized exam scores were released and math was hard hit. As the math teacher began to share her perceptions, she blamed herself for the underperformance students in her classroom. She talked about the strategies and methods she had tried, growth mindset language, encouragement throughout the class, and engaging activities. Yet, only a handful of students passed the exam. She couldn’t help but wonder if she was

doing something wrong. She shared, “As a math team, we are hurting. We want our students to succeed but we have not been successful.” As a department they were putting in even more hours planning together and debriefing weekly. They analyzed their grades from every angle, looking for the answer. It was heartbreaking to hear her say, “Maybe I need to quit.”

In December 2018, it was reported that one million teachers left the profession (Sherman, 2018). Compassion fatigue is something that all who work in helping fields need to be aware of. There are many ways to combat compassion fatigue by implementing self-care practices. We will explore compassion fatigue, signs, symptoms, and self-care in Chapter 16.

Let’s consider what teachers have shared in light of what we learned about executive functioning. Without these essential skills, there is absolutely no way students can take in the instruction, track the procedures, remember the formulas in math, or stick with a book that challenges their abilities. What if the strategies each teacher implemented were a series of scaffolded interventions as precursors to then being able to access executive functioning skills? How might that improve academic achievement?

Case Example: Conceptual Application—Story from the Classroom

Let’s consider, once again, the experience of foster children. In addition to having brains wired for survival and scanning the environment for danger, foster children are also working through the challenges of the foster care system, including a new home environment (Morton, 2017), while attempting to meet academic expectations. What can this look like in the classroom? Here is just one example.

I was visiting an elementary school to observe a teacher candidate. After my debriefing with my candidate and her cooperating teacher, the cooperating teacher asked if I had a few minutes to offer her some advice. Over the weekend the teacher had decided to completely makeover her classroom. This included, among many things, moving desks into a new formation and creating temporary nameplates for her students. Her plan was to see how the students did in this new arrangement before she taped down the nameplates and made the seating a bit more permanent. She greeted her students Monday morning and welcomed them into their new classroom and to their new desks. One student, however, was deeply upset. He found “his” desk, but it had another student’s name on it. (While the student was able to easily identify it as “his” desk, to the teacher and me, it looked identical to all the other desks in the room.) He quickly became dysregulated, and had what she described as a “complete meltdown.” His behavior escalated to the point that she needed to call the office for assistance. While he eventually did calm down, his behavior took a turn for the worse after the classroom makeover.

I asked her to tell me about the student, including anything she knew about his living situation, life at home, etc. As she shared, I learned that he was a foster child, and then it all began to make sense. This young boy had been recently removed from his home and placed into foster care with a family in the district. To this boy, his classroom, his desk, his school supplies in that desk, all provided him with safety and stability. He could count on the consistency of his classroom while his home situation was anything but consistent. I suggested she move him back into “his” desk and immediately tape his name back on that desk and see how he responded. She did exactly that, and welcomed him in the next morning, showing him his desk and his nameplate.

Unfortunately, similar situations are all too common, albeit not over a desk or a nameplate. This example speaks to the miscommunication that occurs when educators do not have a conceptual framework to anticipate the deeper impact of a school practice, and the student is unable to self-regulate or articulate their needs in a way that is classroom appropriate. This causes the teacher to respond to behaviors with classroom exclusionary discipline practices, which can build to suspensions and expulsions, further exacerbating the situation. The teacher was unaware of the attachment-based meaning of classroom physical structure, rituals, and routines. Through his behaviors, it was clear that this child was upset. If asked, this young boy, more than likely, would not have been able to explain why he reacted the way he did. However, trauma-informed knowledge and dispositions allow us to have greater insight into the impact of our behavior, and to empathically attune as a precursor to monitoring various necessary and unnecessary classroom

challenges. With this insight comes deeper understanding regarding the power of unmitigated stress and trauma and the significance of secure attachments.

Our point is this: Children, especially those who have been impacted by trauma, have unregulated and unintegrated positive and negative neural networks that impair executive functioning. Therefore, recovery from unmitigated stress and trauma requires us to implement strategies to help students repair these neural networks in order to learn, with learning also being a key tool for further healing and development.

But where do we begin? The task can feel overwhelming. We start with perhaps one of the most important dispositions and accompanying skills that are used daily regardless of a student's familiarity with a trauma-informed classroom: *Connection*, the provision of safety and stability, often called attachment, which we know includes both attunement and mentoring. And we begin with attunement. Students must feel safe before we can mentor, before we can teach them to self-regulate, before we can teach content. We do this in part by creating schools and classrooms characterized by stability, consistency, rituals, and routines intentionally chosen for congruence with trauma-informed principles. Will all classroom management challenges be solved by assigning a desk and a nameplate? Oh, how we wish! But, trust that one of the most powerful responses to the current chaos many of you face on a daily basis will involve a team of people—not just you—identifying ways to help each child be seen, heard, and included. This basic strategy can be implemented at any time of year, allowing you to initiate a classroom “reset.” We will unpack concrete strategies for this and additional tasks in the remaining sections of this text.

Exercises

Conceptual Application—Questions to Ponder

1. What are the greatest challenges in my classroom?
2. What behaviors displayed by my students might be fight, flight, or freeze responses?
3. Do I have rituals, routines, and consistency in my practice?
4. What is one thing I want to change in my classroom or in my practice tomorrow?

A Look Forward

This text identifies trauma-informed educator competencies as a specialty that all educators are now being expected to master. In Section I, we unpacked the rationale for such a paradigm shift in the way we conceptualize creating educational communities. We identified the severity of the need we see in our students, and unpacked trauma-informed concepts to help us understand these challenges

We wrap up this section by presenting trauma-informed best practices for responding to unmitigated stress and trauma. By identifying factors that promote or undermine health and best-practice response strategies, the educator will understand the elements of Trauma-Informed School Practices, comprising trauma-informed competencies congruent with our roles, contexts, and settings as educators.

Resources for Further Reading

- [Trauma Sensitive Schools](#). This organization offers a wealth of resources on their website, including two volumes titled *Helping Children Learn*.
- [Child Trauma Toolkit for Educators](#). Provides information for people working with traumatized children in school settings.
- [The Heart of Learning: Compassion, Resiliency, and Academic Success](#). Information and resources for teachers, including practices and strategies.
- [Child Mind Institute—"How Trauma Affects Kids in School"](#)
- [Trauma Informed Schools—United Kingdom](#). Numerous resources as well as an early history lesson into the origination of trauma-informed schools.
- [Visalia Schools and Positive Reinforcement Behavior Modification System](#). A school community questions a reward-based discipline system's impact on child development.
- [Nancy Woodard—Embrace Civility](#). Resources on bully prevention and intervention, promoting civility, collaborative problem solving, and protecting children from online stalking and bullying.
- [Harlem Children's Zone](#). Rich resources for nurturing culture change based on principles of attunement and mentoring.
- [Maintaining Education for All Gets Tougher as Teachers Leave in Record Numbers](#), (Sherman, 2018).

Chapter 5: Trauma-Informed Response Best Practices



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“The more healthy relationships a child has, the more likely [the child] will be able to recover from trauma and thrive. Relationships are the agents of change, and the most powerful therapy is human love.”

—Bruce D. Perry, *The Boy Who Was Raised as a Dog: And Other Stories from a Child Psychiatrist's Notebook*

Desired Outcomes

The previous chapters have provided an overview of the factors that increase risk and resilience before, during, and in the aftermath of stress and trauma. Here, we identify trauma-informed best practices in response, with a special emphasis on observing common themes across settings in which trauma-informed care is provided. This overview and the accompanying recommended readings and activities are designed to further develop educator trauma-informed competencies as demonstrated by:

- Understanding the myriad settings in which trauma-informed care serves the well-being of individuals and communities.
- Identifying best-practice response themes for increasing resilience and recovery from unmitigated stress and trauma present in all trauma-informed settings. This will prepare educators for Chapter 6, which details the Tri-Phasic Model of TISP.

Key Concepts

Key concepts include the following:

- The role of community and tangible services as evidenced through *Psychological First Aid*
- The general *tri-phasic model of recovery* as reinforcing the principles of attachment, self-regulation, and the integration of neural networks key to executive functioning and resuming one's life course, while also increasing our understanding of grief and mourning in the healing process
- Attachment, self-regulation, and competency (the ARC model) as recovery principles evident in trauma-informed care across multiple relational settings

Chapter Overview

We began Section I with an overview on the state of affairs in many education settings: Students face enormous obstacles to being able to meet the academic and social challenges of the school environment. Many students arrive at school developmentally unable to respond to its academic and social demands, and still others have their ability to function undermined by school environments that are in a state of chaos due to peers unable to self-regulate draining the time and attention of school personnel (Oregon Education Association, 2019). This strain is felt by educators as well, with all persons suffering the consequences.

This severity of need corresponds with the correlation between unmitigated stress and trauma, and its impact on meeting the academic and psychosocial demands of the developing child. Researchers and practitioners have responded by expanding the application of social and behavioral science theory to education. Section I proceeded to unpack advancements in trauma-informed care, starting with revisiting the basic mechanics of the role of attachment, defined as attunement and mentoring, in creating the neural structures needed to feel safe and secure, a prerequisite to emotional self-regulation. Finally, we acknowledged that the inability of a given environment to provide adequate attachment to children is not merely a parental challenge, but a challenge impacting the greater community, a system-wide cultural issue that ultimately requires all of us to re-examine how we position ourselves in relationship to each other. Acknowledging the breadth and depth of the problem reminds the trauma-informed specialist not to scapegoat parents, as we recognize that our domain of influence is only in how we work with our students and each other. This reinforces the strength of TISP, a universal-access approach designed to help students (and school staff) experience the school setting as a secure base characterized by attunement and mentoring. This environment is prerequisite to promoting greater capacity to self-regulate, which in turn allows learning and social development to occur.

In this chapter we examine trauma-informed best practices that yield promising results in helping persons and systems increase resilience and heal from the damaging impact of unmitigated stress and trauma. We will provide thematic overviews, whether the application of specific practices or protocols discussed are designed for clinical (therapeutic) or community (non-clinical) settings, as the themes are congruent with principles of attachment and neurobiology as we discussed in Chapters 2 and 3. Our intent is twofold:

- Deepen the educator's knowledge base as prerequisite to claiming trauma-informed educator competencies
- Further anchor TISP strategies as originating in trauma-informed concepts

At the conclusion of this section (Chapter 6), we outline the Tri-Phasic Model of Trauma-Informed School Practices. The model includes a general overview of educator knowledge, skills, and dispositions required at each stage of implementation. Given your familiarity now with the conceptual elements underlying trauma-informed practice, the elements comprising the model will make greater sense, as you can see directly how they relate to trauma-informed research. In the remaining sections of this text, we will anchor all school- and classroom-based applications within this model.

Caution – Just Because It's Called "Trauma-Informed" Doesn't Make It So

Throughout the 1980s and 90s, advances in the field of traumatology brought to our attention the importance of early response in mitigating the impact of a traumatic event, perhaps preventing the onset of PTSD (Bremner, 2002; Everly & Lating, 2012; Figley, 2002, 2006; Myers & Wee, 2005; Scaer, 2005; Solomon & Siegel, 2003). While early response is a good thing—and even better are preventive activities to increase resilience—we were still in the early phases of identifying just what those early intervention activities might look like. For many licensed therapists, those interventions looked similar to what might occur in formal

treatment environments. For others, advancements in crisis intervention and debriefing were all the rage. We called ourselves trauma responders, when in fact many of us were operating without full awareness of the knowledge and dispositions required for astute perceptual and conceptual skills that inform safe and effective practice.

Much good arose from those mental health first responders, but much wasted energy as well. There is a saying among therapists that when all you have is a hammer, everything looks like a nail. Given one good tool, in the absence of multiple tools and a conceptual basis for understanding what situation calls for the use of those tools, we begin to think we are skilled builders, when in fact we are not.

Trauma-informed mental health professionals, regardless of a practitioner's license title, have come a long way. We know that there is no such thing as a one-size-fits-all solution, and that each situation, context, and role we are asked to inhabit calls for different perceptual and conceptual skills to inform what it is we do—our executive functioning. And given the advances in our understanding of trauma and recovery, professional mental health organizations are still in the early phases of adopting trauma-informed competencies that must be embedded within their curriculums (CACREP, 2015). As of this writing, trauma-informed educator competencies have not been identified, which is the primary aim of this text: To clearly define the knowledge, skills, and dispositions comprising trauma-informed educator competencies.

The cautionary tale is this: Just because a program or technique is called trauma-informed, it does not mean that it is, and it does not mean that the implementation of that activity was embedded in a broader trauma-informed context or setting. To that end, we caution educators to not assume that a program, process, or activity is trauma-informed simply because it is labeled as such. As you develop trauma-informed competencies, you will be able to identify when a technique or strategy in the absence of conceptual grounding is irresponsible. You will be able to assess the credentials of a person or organization proposing a program as trauma-informed. And, perhaps most redeeming, you will understand how to take a questionable idea or program offered as trauma-informed and find a way to implement it, to tweak it, to transform it, in a trauma-informed manner congruent with your expertise and the needs of your students.

Overview of Best Practices

The Tri-Phasic Model of Recovery

As early as 1886, Pierre Janet (Van Der Hart, Brown, & van der Kolk, 1989) identified that persons in a state of distress required professionals to envision a three-phase treatment process:

- First, help a distressed person establish an inner sense of safety and stabilization, given that the nature of their past or some current stressor is causing social, cognitive, and/or emotional dysregulation. This *safety and stabilization phase* requires professionals to recognize that the person seeking services needs to trust the provider and trust that they are not in immediate danger before they can dedicate energy to strengthening external and internal resources needed to increase their window of tolerance for distressing thoughts, feelings, and physical sensations.
- Once the person can self-stabilize, thereby increasing their capacity to tolerate and self-regulate when encountering distressing thoughts, feelings, and sensations, the person is then ready to engage in the emotionally

stressful work of articulating the traumatic events causing the distress, and work through the meaning and impact of those events. The heart of this phase is what we now describe as memory integration work, in which we encounter and rework inner positive and negative neural networks. It is the *working-through process* that is the heart of therapy or recovery.

- Once the person is able to remember and mourn, hence integrate, these realities in a more conscious (aware) way, they can envision how they might want to let their history inform rather than stop their life. *Moving forward* with a renewed sense of purpose and meaning is now more possible.

This tri-phasic model comprised of (a) safety and stabilization, (b) remembrance and mourning, and (c) reintegration or re-engagement is a foundational concept guiding trauma recovery, whether working with children or adults, and regardless of treatment model (Baranowsky, Gentry, & Schultz, 2005; Herman, 1992; Shapiro, 2018).

Two elements are of particular interest to TISP. The first is the reiteration of the role of attachment as attunement and mentoring: Once again we see best practices supporting a universal principle that when we feel seen and valued, our anxiety circuits calm down, and we are more able to learn coping skills needed to tolerate anxiety and stress. And once we have gained mastery over our internal responses to current or past traumatizing events, we are in a place to learn new ways of thinking and responding to those realities.

The second item of note will serve educators well as we seek to make sense of student responses to attachment attitudes and actions they begin to experience in the classroom: Safety and stabilization skills are designed to increase our window of tolerance for distressing memories and the associated thoughts, feelings, and sensations.

...often students display a spike in dysregulated behavior when in emotionally attuned environments. While some of it is testing—"Do you really care about me?"—most of it is remembrance and mourning in code, a flushing of the injury permitted by the peroxide of care...purging the toxic residue of trauma, including negative neural networks that say they are not lovable or worthy of care and you are not trustworthy.

caring foster homes: Kids who seemed mild-mannered despite their trauma background suddenly display moderate to severe behavioral struggles. The intensity of those feelings—of being seen and heard, of being empathically caught and cared about—can overwhelm us with the pain of grief, allowing us to fully feel the hurt of past traumas, along with its accompanying distorted negative neural networks, laced with shame and doubt.

What this means is that often students display a spike in dysregulated behavior when in emotionally attuned environments. While some of it is testing—"Do you really care about me?"—most of it is remembrance and mourning in code, a flushing of the injury permitted by the peroxide of care. (We bet you never thought of care as peroxide!) They are not choosing to do this. And it is important to realize that the psychological motivation isn't always about testing whether you really mean it, although your inconsistent response may lead them to learn you are not trustworthy. Rather, the vast majority of time, they are just purging the toxic residue of trauma, including negative neural networks that say they are not lovable or worthy of care and you are not trustworthy.



[Image: [Jon Tyson](#) | [Unsplash](#)]

A teacher in one of our trainings relayed an odd experience she had with a student who was displaying clear signs of emotional and social dysregulation. At one point in their interaction, the teacher simply offered the student a glass of water. The student sensed the act of attunement and was stunned, remarking that no one had ever showed her such care. It resonates with a conversation I (Anna) had where an adult, learning to receive care for the first time, declared that if he let himself feel care, he might crumble into dust and fly away. Likewise, we often see bewildering responses from children who are able to finally settle into calm, safe, and

As mentioned in the call-out box accompanying this section, in the heyday of disaster trauma response work, mental health professionals tended to overuse new tools and misapply existing tools related to traditional treatment models, not totally aware of how to conceptualize the needs of persons and communities in the aftermath of a traumatic event (Sommers & Satel, 2006). Many persons thought that by enacting a procedure listed as PTSD preventative, we were protecting survivors from future distress. This is the equivalent of using a trauma-informed classroom strategy with the hope that it will fix our classrooms. Other mental health professionals assumed that because they work with trauma in their clinical practice on a daily basis, they could just “do what they do in the office out there in the field,” the hammer-nail problem. These professionals sought to solve valid, real problems, but were not operating from a foundation of trauma-informed knowledge, skills, and dispositions—all three of which must work together so that the strategies employed are congruent with one’s setting, context, and role.

Traumatologists had long been publishing findings indicating these nuances of difference between immediate and long-term needs of survivors, with those needs occurring along a time continuum related to pre- and post-event needs together with signs and symptoms of traumatic incident distress (Brymer et al., 2006, 2012; Everly & Mitchell, 2008; Myers & Wee, 2005; Scaer, 2005). That continuum of care recognized that recovery, at all stages, required an awareness of a person’s need for safety and stabilization (physical and emotional, and the ability to self-regulate), followed by services congruent with what was most needed at that stage and context (whether tangible physical resources such as food, shelter, and clothing, or clinical services to help recover psychologically from abuse or a traumatic event), and then access to additional resources to re-enter or re-engage life given its new realities or demands. The tri-phasic model of trauma recovery was revealing its relevance across the trauma-informed care spectrum.

As disaster mental health entered the mainstream, the trauma-informed community became increasingly aware of the need for mental health professionals to ground their response work in research and applicable techniques and strategies in a phase- and context-specific manner. (For further information, refer to the list of trauma-focused professional organizations included in the Resources for Further Reading list at the end of this chapter.) Building on the work of Everly (Everly & Lating, 2012), a group of practitioners and researchers formalized a protocol called *Psychological First Aid* (Brymer, et al., 2006, 2012). This program incorporated a growing consensus regarding the nature of resilience, the neurological impact of stress and trauma, and factors that maximize post-traumatic growth. It was designed for first responders, regardless of their role as medical, mental health, or citizen volunteers, as all persons serving the needs of survivors are providing a type of first aid necessary for long-term recovery.

The protocol consists of eight identified need themes of survivors, entitled Core Actions. Each of the Core Actions is accompanied by a description of the knowledge, skills, and dispositions required to enact it. The sponsors of the protocol, the National Child Traumatic Stress Network and the National Center for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, offer a guided tutorial in *Psychological First Aid*, and recommend that professional as well as citizen responders receive training in the protocol from an experienced trauma-informed trainer. See Figure 5.1 for a summary of the Core Actions, along with a link to access the online tutorial. This protocol is now the gold standard guiding all first responders, including educators responding to school-based traumatic events.

Figure 5.1: Psychological First Aid: Eight Core Actions

1. **Contact and Engagement:** To [connect with survivors as] initiated by survivors, or to initiate [contact]

in a non-intrusive, compassionate, and helpful manner.

2. **Safety and Comfort:** To enhance immediate and ongoing safety, and provide physical and emotional comfort.
3. **Stabilization (if needed):** To calm and orient emotionally overwhelmed or disoriented survivors [as appropriate for role and training].
4. **Information Gathering on Current Needs and Concerns:** To identify immediate needs and concerns, gather additional information, and tailor Psychological First Aid interventions.
5. **Practical Assistance:** To offer practical help to survivors in addressing immediate needs and concerns.
6. **Connection with Social Supports:** To help establish brief or ongoing [contact] with primary support persons and other sources of support, including family members, friends, and community helping resources.
7. **Information on Coping:** To provide information about stress reactions and coping to reduce distress and promote adaptive functioning [as designed by trauma-informed sources].
8. **Linkage with Collaborative Services:** To link survivors with available services needed at the time or in the future.

Figure 5.1. [About PFA](http://bit.ly/2YY26nR). <http://bit.ly/2YY26nR>.

Of interest here is not only an invitation to train school personnel in the protocol as is congruent with the needs of a trauma-informed school, but an invitation to examine the trauma-informed conceptual elements present in the Core Actions. First is the centrality of attachment. In the preceding chapters we identified the role of attunement as instrumental in helping students feel “seen,” valued, and welcome—what we mean by emotional safety. Once students know that they are safe, they can engage in self-regulation practices that further relax their stress response systems, allowing academic learning and prosocial skill building to resume. At the core of Psychological First Aid is the provision of safety—making sure a survivor knows they are physically safe, their needs and distress are seen, and help is available to them, leading to a sense of emotional safety as precursor to beginning the work of recovery.

Second, attachment is best provided within the context of one’s community. Psychological First Aid recognizes that this attunement process is best provided by connecting survivors with their community. As you dig deeper into the Core Actions, a responder is advised to recognize that they can serve the survivor best by connecting them with known, trusted others, such as the survivor’s immediate family and friends, as their relational community—their attachment base—has the greatest potential for activating their coping skills. For students, school becomes their second home base, a place where they spend a significant portion of each day.

Third, you will see that once a survivor’s stress response systems are more manageable – not necessarily calm—they need tangible “things,”—whether food, shelter, clothing, or long-term assistance. These tangible items are congruent with the nature of the traumatic injury, in this case, a recent disaster. In schools, the traumatic injury is unintegrated neural networks propelling a student to stay in a chronic state of alarm and dysregulation. Once a student metabolizes the attunement offered by the school environment, emotional-regulation skill building is the tangible thing most needed. Then, a student is not only able to engage in the academic and social challenges of the school environment, but

needs these challenges and successes in order to continue on their developmental path, successes that are central to strengthening a sense of internal competence crucial to building hope and mustering the courage to envision a future.

And finally, the Psychological First Aid protocol was created in response to the vast array of trauma responders who were misapplying good strategies or employing strategies that were doing more harm than good. We see this tendency continuing today, as many settings attempt to be trauma-informed without a grounding in the knowledge, skills, and dispositions prerequisite to exercising the perceptual, conceptual, and executive skills key to safe and effective implementation.

In the school environment, attachment as attunement and mentoring is built upon the same conceptual elements as Psychological First Aid; responders offer attachment as attunement and resourcing.

A trauma-informed responder is helping persons achieve a sense of safety and then providing tangible items needed to cope, all within the context of community, enabling them to re-engage in life, both its immediate responsibilities and future goals.

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The ARC Treatment Framework

For the past two decades, a group of clinician researchers have analyzed treatment outcomes with children who suffer the consequences of unmitigated stress and trauma. Their data mirrors the tri-phasic recovery model, and is further detailed to highlight specific tasks in each stage in the Attachment, Regulation, and Competency (ARC) treatment framework (Blaustein & Kinniburgh, 2007, 2019; Kinniburgh, Blaustein, Spinazzola, & van der Kolk, 2005). Having initially observed that optimum treatment outcomes were not necessarily tied to one therapeutic protocol over another—for example, a cognitive behavioral therapy approach versus a narrative therapy approach—the researchers learned that recovery was most influenced by providers who followed a series of trauma-informed principles or concepts. This finding is similar to literature on Common Factors, indicating that one theoretical model of therapy might not be better or worse than another; rather, it is a series of practitioner dispositions, along with practitioner perceptual, conceptual, and executive skills, that are highly indicative of successful therapeutic outcomes (Sprenkle, Davis, & Lebow, 2013).

The primary clinical population that gave rise to ARC is children who have experienced pervasive or chronic stress and abuse over the course of their lives—what the ARC researchers call complex developmental trauma. The impact of repeated adverse events impairs development, and the effects of unmitigated stress and trauma have a compounding effect given that repeated psychological injuries pile one on top of another. What they discovered is that when children in a state of dysregulation due to trauma receive adequate attunement, they become able to respond to direction and build internal coping resources needed to self-regulate. Then, and only then, can they use higher-order cognitive functioning, a competency needed to engage in the hard work of recovery and continued growth. Regardless of a clinician's treatment modality, when these trauma-informed concepts inform the clinician's perceptual, conceptual, and executive skills, children show a remarkable ability to respond positively to treatment, and resume growth and development (Blaustein & Kinniburgh, 2007, 2019). The ARC model mirrors the theory and findings of those applying the tri-phasic model in other treatment settings with adults and children (Baranowsky & Gentry, 2005; Herman, 1992; Shapiro, 2018)

Recovery as Neural Network Integration

The above overview of best practices across the continuum of care shows that they all share common elements key to resilience and recovery in the aftermath of a traumatic event or unmitigated stress and trauma.

Attachment, as attunement and mentoring, is a prelude to being receptive to learning the social-emotional regulation skills needed to self-stabilize. This is a prerequisite to access executive brain functions needed to continue the healing process and resume developmental challenges, all of which bolster a person's sense of competence and self-efficacy, key themes in strengthening resilience.

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Each of the models reviewed above acknowledges that unmitigated stress and trauma lead to disrupted and unintegrated domains of neural processing. Revisit Figures 2.1 and 2.3 in Chapter 2. When the negative implicit

memories of our left hemisphere (as described by Siegel in Figure 2.3) take root and grow into neural networks reflected in self- and other-defeating worldviews (or what Erikson called internal core pathologies, as shown in Figure 2.1), and are left unmitigated by right-hemisphere positive explicit memories crucial to self-stabilizing and counterbalancing life-enhancing worldviews (or internal strengths), we are prone to operating in the world in reaction to unintegrated traumatic experiences and other losses.

Dysregulation can be further described using Siegel's domains of neural integration. For example, our reaction to bodily cues (Vertical domain), our Interpersonal struggles, and/or contrariness to what seems to be competing states of mind (State domain) may tip us off that we have Horizontal and Memory integration work yet to do. To work these neural systems we need to be mindful of bodily cues while reworking perspectives (internal negative and positive neural networks comprising our Narrative domain) with greater empathy and receptivity. This allows us to become more fully aware and present, as reflected in Conscious integration. As we more effectively engage in the here and now, and become able to hope for and envision our future, we are in a much better place to absorb Transpiration experiences and gently hold Temporal neural networks whose messages are always nipping at our heels in one way or another.

Summary Thoughts

Best-practice trauma-informed response models all describe a *scaffolded* process across multiple care settings. Most encouraging is that the ingredients required to help persons heal and grow are universal principles of care that promote healthy growth and development for all persons—children, adolescents, and adults alike.

The tri-phasic model of therapeutic recovery, Psychological First Aid, the ARC treatment model, and TISP represent four trauma-informed metaframes guiding systems of care across a variety of settings. Whether a student is expected to live a good portion of their day in a learning community while reeling from the effects of unmitigated stress and trauma, a client is undergoing the deep psychotherapeutic work of recovery, or a survivor is just now beginning to recover from a sudden traumatic event, we are hearing a consistent message: Attune to each other, and then move in with the skill building—the processes, the structure—to scaffold their next milestone in coping and recovery, with each step forward allowing persons greater access to and use of higher-order thinking processes key to resuming their life.

As you now know, unmitigated stress and trauma damage the brain, and recovery is a brain-healing process. These processes of break and repair are embedded and dependent upon relationship. Trauma-informed work does not get lost in the debate over “is it nature or is it nurture?” It is both! The remainder of this text will provide guidance on how to help repair and nurture brain structures challenged by typical and expected developmental tasks or undermined by unmitigated stress and trauma.

The Tri-Phasic Model of Trauma-Informed School Practices

Having reviewed major concepts informing trauma-informed practice, you are now better able to understand the meaning and rationale informing TISP. The *Tri-Phasic Model of Trauma-Informed School Practices* details the knowledge, skills, and dispositions congruent with trauma-informed educator expertise, with special emphasis on the application of these competencies within school systems, in individual classrooms, and in service to the *Person of the Educator*.

In many ways, the *Tri-Phasic Model of TISP* belongs here in our overview of trauma-informed best practices. This document provides a blueprint for the remaining sections of this text, detailing educator competencies informing teacher preparation and educator credentialing programs. It is intended to be easily accessed by schools transforming to trauma-informed programming, and higher education institutions securing qualified faculty to design and implement coursework according to these competencies. To facilitate easy access, the *Tri-Phasic Model of TISP* is presented in the following chapter.

Taking Inventory

In the preceding chapters, we unpacked the need for schools to re-evaluate how to respond to the academic and social-behavioral challenges of students exacerbated by unmitigated stress and trauma impairing their readiness to learn. We then provided an overview of trauma-informed concepts, detailing the nature of trauma, factors that contribute to risk and resilience, and best-practice strategies underlying all parts of the trauma-informed care spectrum.

Before we move forward, we invite you to ponder the following questions as a way of solidifying your emerging trauma-informed competencies. The first set of questions invites you to reflect on the *Person of the Educator* challenges we've introduced in this section. The second set of questions invites you to professionally evaluate what you have absorbed thus far, and to identify hopes and concerns as you move into the remaining chapters of this text.

Exercises

Person of the Educator: Questions to Ponder

Part 1: Review of Your Developmental Journal

We have invited you to apply trauma-informed concepts to your own developmental history as a way to metabolize constructs presented, but also to honor that the process of intentionally integrating our neural networks—increasing our insight into our own way of being in the world, so we may be more intentional and aware, more *integrated*—is a lifelong process crucial to our social and emotional health. You matter and the quality of your life matters! And, your chosen profession is exhausting, requiring intentional acts of self-care. Reflect on the following questions related to working through your developmental history:

- What questions or exercises have been most insightful regarding your own life history?
- What questions or exercises have been most alarming or emotionally challenging?
- What relationships or life experiences have you identified that had the most impact on helping you overcome the negative impacts of life's stressors and challenges? Persons or experiences that affirmed your worth or abilities, or the goodness of life?

Part 2: Therapy as a Wellness Gift

Many students in graduate mental health practitioner degree programs (Anna's students, for example) are required to participate in therapy as clients for two reasons: First, in recognition that we have no right to bring others into their interpersonal journey unless we have done so ourselves, and remain committed to that practice throughout our careers. And second, to experience therapy as a discipline, exercise, or process we choose not just because something in our life is not working well, but because none of us came with a user manual, and a trained third party can help us encounter parts of our inner life that we may not be likely to do on our own. Life—both our external and internal worlds—is full of challenge and mystery. The process of therapy, as coined by Erik Erikson, is all about engaging in an exploration of our internal meaning-making systems, to increase our own neural integration, so we stop unconsciously passing on to the next generation what was perhaps passed on to us in overt actions or emotional code.

As it relates to the *Person of the Educator* work, we invite you to think about ways to tend to your own emotional and physical well-being. One option is to engage in your own wisdom-making process following Erikson's lead by working with a counselor/therapist. We are not recommending it “because it's needed.” And we recognize that you are not facing the same pressures as are licensed therapists engaged in the assessment, diagnosis, and treatment of clients. Rather, we (and we admit this is Anna's bias) want to expand your thinking about therapy as an act of self-care and a method of further encounter with the concepts embedded in a trauma-informed specialty, not an activity restricted to those experiencing mental health difficulties.

Then & Now

In Part I you have absorbed the nature and impact of unmitigated stress and trauma, explored factors that help us be both vulnerable and resilient, and understood the neural networking process as dependent upon a community-wide embrace of being in “good-enough attachment” relationships with each other, characterized by attunement and mentoring. Before you begin implementing change strategies, ponder the following questions for discussion with your colleagues:

- What has been the most salient or impactful *personal* “aha” moment thus far in your readings and activities? Why and how so?
- At the beginning of this text or course, what might have been your hesitations or points of skepticism

related to TISP?

- Are those items still in question for you, or have these items been resolved?
 - For some items, the questions will remain unanswered, perhaps even intensified. For other issues, you may begin seeing greater clarity.
- Note the items shared by your colleagues, as their answered and unanswered questions may also yield important process notes.
- In Chapter 6 we review specifics of the Tri-Phasic Model of TISP, and in the remainder of this text we explore systemic planning strategies for schools and districts initiating TISP. What questions or concerns do you hope we address?
 - As an administrator, what are your concerns?
 - As a classroom educator, what might you hope the administrative team addresses? How do you hope they proceed in paving the way for TISP implementation?

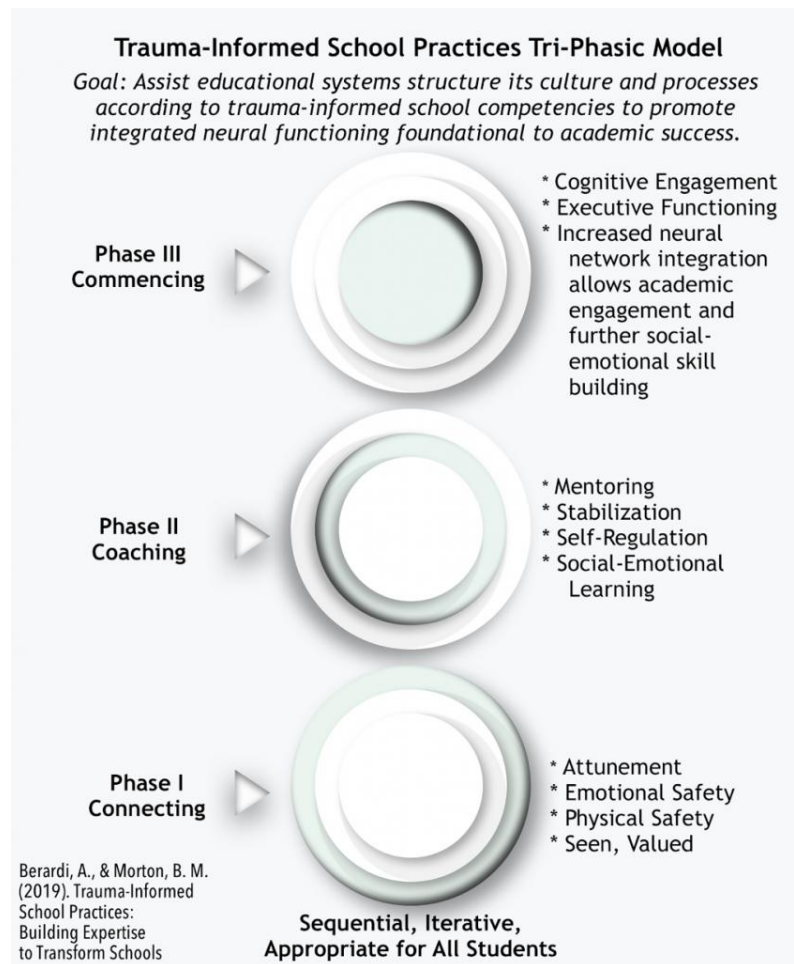
Resources for Further Reading

- [National Center for PTSD—US Department of Veterans Affairs](#)
- [National Child Traumatic Stress Network—Psychological First Aid](#). Follow links to participate in a free online Psychological First Aid course.
- [The Trauma Center at the Justice Resource Institute](#). Access more information regarding the ARC treatment model, and other resources regarding responding to childhood abuse.

Trauma-Focused Professional Organizations

- [Green Cross Academy of Traumatology](#)
- [International Critical Incident Stress Foundation](#)
- [International Society for Traumatic Stress Studies](#)
- [Trauma Response Institute. \(2019a\). Portland, OR: George Fox University](#)

Chapter 6: The Trauma-Informed School Practices Tri-Phasic Model



“Learning is not attained by chance, it must be sought for with ardor and attended to with diligence.” —*Abigail Adams*

“Safety and security don’t just happen, they are the result of collective consensus and public investment. We owe our children, the most vulnerable citizens in our society, a life free of violence and fear.” —*Nelson Mandela, Former President of South Africa*

Desired Outcomes

This chapter consists of a single document: *The (TISP) Tri-Phasic Model*, preceded by an expanded description of the document's elements. It provides a metaframe for academic institutions preparing educators to develop trauma-informed educator competencies, and for districts and schools transitioning to Trauma-Informed School Practices. This document, along with the remaining chapters in this text, will enable educators to do the following:

- Guide academic environments, including districts and schools, in the transition to trauma-informed school practice, including strategic planning processes required for successful implementation
- Provide a structure in which to evaluate appropriate training resources and programs claiming to be trauma-informed
- Advise higher education teacher preparation and educator certification programs in securing qualified faculty to develop trauma-informed educator curriculums and provide instruction for those courses or units
- Inform mental health training curriculums preparing practitioners to serve in school environments as verified trauma-informed providers

Key Concepts

This chapter contains the Trauma-Informed School Practices (TISP) Tri-Phasic Model educator competencies. It is preceded by an expanded description of the document's elements. Key concepts defined include the following:

- The TISP Tri-Phasic Model description and goal
- The four guiding principles of TISP
- The identification of prominent pre-existing trauma-informed response models corresponding to the TISP Tri-Phasic Model
- The TISP Tri-Phasic Model as an education system's change model
- Trauma-informed competencies organized according to an integrated model of educator skill development

In the preceding chapters, we unpacked an overview of the severity of need for schools to re-evaluate how to respond to the academic and social-behavioral challenges of students exacerbated by unmitigated stress and trauma, impairing readiness to learn. We then provided an overview of trauma-informed concepts detailing the nature of trauma, factors that contribute to risk and resilience, and an overview of best-practice strategies underlying all ends of the trauma-informed care spectrum.

We end Section I with a summary of the Trauma-Informed School Practices Tri-Phasic Model, a metaframe representing a coalescing of trauma-informed concepts as applied to the education environment. Refer back to this summary in the remaining sections of this text, as it is the guiding blueprint for each element and stage of implementation and evaluation.

As we prepare to unpack specific trauma-informed educator competencies, we begin with an overview of the TISP Tri-Phasic Model. Its purpose and goals are detailed, as well as conceptual elements informing the model. It reinforces that implementation is multi-layered, with all aspects of planning and implementation needing to be embedded in trauma-informed knowledge, skills, and dispositions that inform educator perceptual, conceptual, executive, and professional skills.

We then detail trauma-informed educator competencies within the TISP Tri-Phasic Model. This model is grounded in trauma-informed concepts, best practices in response to increasing wellness and recovery from stress and trauma, and the authors' knowledge and expertise in the application of trauma-informed knowledge, skills, and dispositions to the educational setting (Berardi & Morton, 2017; Morton, 2018; Morton & Berardi, 2017, 2018). Conceptual domains include an integration of traumatology, neurobiology, and developmental theories as it relates to optimum development and the impact of unmitigated stress and trauma on development.

The Trauma-Informed School Practices Tri-Phasic Model

Description

The Trauma-Informed School Practices Tri-Phasic Model is a metaframe for developing educator competencies required to safely and effectively implement trauma-informed school practices. It is a universal-access approach to learning for use by teacher preparation and educator credentialing programs, mental health professionals working within educational settings, and districts, schools, and staff transitioning to trauma-informed practices. TISP also applies to higher education, both undergraduate and graduate settings. The model details the knowledge, skills, and dispositions congruent with trauma-informed educator expertise. It is based upon trauma-informed research integrating advancements in the neurobiology of stress and trauma, developmental theories, and best practices regarding how to help persons recover and resume development. This text emphasizes the application of these competencies within K-12 school systems, in individual classrooms, and in service to the *Person of the Educator*.

This phase model is both sequential and iterative. While each phase scaffolds a student's ability to engage in the tasks

of successive stages, students and the school environment are continually looping back around, cycling through each phase in both small, immediate cycles on some elements and large, long-term cycles for other elements.

Goal

Trauma-Informed School Practices recognize that developmental, social, and cultural pressures, in addition to unmitigated stress and trauma, disrupt the formation and integration of neural networks foundational to social, emotional, and cognitive developmental processes, impairing a student's ability to be successful in academic environments. The goal of TISP is to assist all elements of an academic environment in structuring its culture and processes according to trauma-informed school competencies to promote a student's integrated neural functioning, which is foundational to academic success.

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Guiding Principles

Informing each phase are the Four Core Values of Trauma-Informed School Practice, identified by the authors as reflecting distinctive characteristics of trauma-informed programming across all phases of practice (Trauma-Informed School Initiative, 2019).

Attachment-Focused. Attachment and attachment-focused developmental theories, further supported by advancements in neurobiology, provide concrete and practical insight into relational processes that either support or interrupt brain development. The integration of neurobiology and developmental theories also provides the rationale for the primacy of attunement and mentoring to promote neural integration, which is the key to resuming development and achieving success in the academic environment.

Attachment theory also informs TISP's embrace of a consistent ethic of care. It advocates for attuned, mentoring, and collaborative dispositions and practices with students, as well as between coworkers and community members. These commitments support the well-being of each other and the community as a whole. This value is evident in TISP's *community-driven* emphasis on the *Person of the Educator*, and in TISP Tri-Phasic knowledge, skills, and dispositions.

Neurobiology-Informed. Trauma-informed practitioners rely on advancements in our understanding of the neurobiology of development, stress, and trauma. This knowledge base informs the educator that students struggling in the school setting are demonstrating unintegrated neural networks congruent with common and expected

developmental challenges, often exacerbated by unmitigated stress and trauma. Advances in our understanding of stress and the brain require educators to continually re-examine existing school practices, not just teaching and learning methods.

Strengths-Based. There is no doubt that unmitigated stress and trauma damage the brain and impair functioning, causing great distress throughout the lifespan. The statistics, such as those gleaned from the ACE Survey, continue to shock our senses. As difficult as these facts are to absorb, embedded in trauma-informed concepts is great hope regarding how we can effectively intervene. A strengths-based trauma-informed approach trusts that when we create attachment-focused learning communities, our efforts are healing, allowing students to increase resilience and resume development.

A strengths-based trauma-informed approach trusts that when we create attachment-focused learning communities, our efforts are healing, allowing students to increase resilience and resume development.

A strengths-based approach also invites us to understand broader socio-cultural factors contributing to considerable challenges for adults in providing secure attachment bases for minor children, whether in the home or in their communities. Such insight into macrosystem factors contributing to social attitudes and behaviors reminds trauma-informed educators to not blame caretakers or

systems, but view each other as partners and fellow trauma-informed students-in-training alongside educators learning the same. We will discuss this further in Chapter 10.

Community-Driven: Community as a Place of Welcome and Inclusion

Ethic of Care. Trauma-informed practice is ultimately a commitment to being in community in a manner that provides a welcome and inclusive environment fostering relational safety and well-being, the basic ingredients we all need to thrive throughout the lifespan. This value is present in all aspects of TISP. A consistent ethic of care means that the relational values educators extend to students are offered to each other as well. Caring about educator well-being is a central value as expressed in *Person of the Educator* practices, in recognition that attuned and supportive interpersonal relationships nurture resilience and well-being amidst the challenges of educating highly stressed students. In addition, *Person of the Educator* as a professional development standard promotes effective implementation of trauma-informed practice.

Participation by All Stakeholders. TISP is much more than providing educators with classroom strategies; it requires a system-wide change in culture and practice implemented in a developmental process requiring short-, intermediate-, and long-term planning. This system-wide implementation process requires collaboration among multiple stakeholders, as elaborated on below and illustrated in Figure 6.1. All stakeholders must be included in trainings and have a voice in the trauma-informed transition process. This includes students and parents, who are crucial partners in building trauma-informed communities. Their voices and involvement are imperative in both creating a successful trauma-informed environment and promoting student neural integration processes.

Multicultural Inclusion. Central to the relational ethics of TISP's community focus is multicultural inclusion. Trauma-informed practice recognizes that significant stress and trauma are caused by implicit and explicit social values and mores related to aspects of our social identities that are either privileged or marginalized.

These contextual identities include race, gender, sexual orientation, ability, appearance, citizenship, religion, and socioeconomic status, among others. TISP's universal-access approach includes a commitment to understanding the influence of dominant worldviews, systems, and laws on marginalized populations and the added risk of stress and trauma this presents to students and staff.

Trauma-informed practice recognizes that significant stress and trauma are caused by implicit and explicit social values and mores related to aspects of our social identities that are either privileged or marginalized.

Congruence with Established Trauma-Informed Response Models

Trauma-informed educators are part of a larger family of trauma-informed professionals. Whether trauma-informed principles are applied in clinical (psychotherapeutic) settings or in community (non-clinical) environments, unifying principles are present across all service-delivery models. For each phase, we will highlight how the Trauma-Informed School Practices Tri-Phasic Model corresponds with well-known established trauma-informed response models.

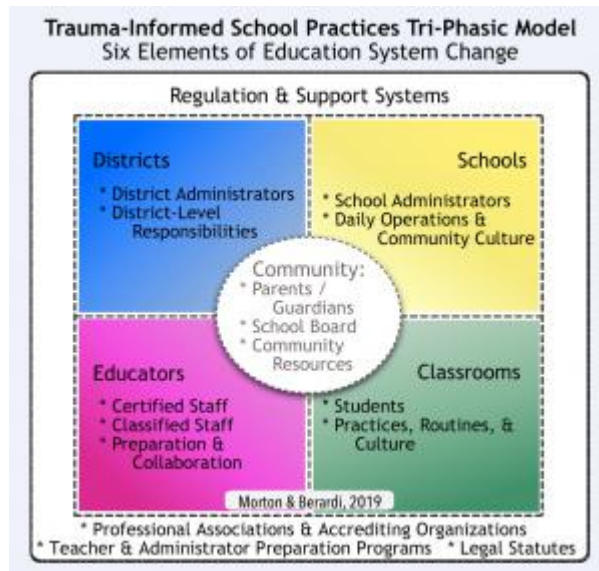


Figure 6.1

Organizational Change Process

The TISP Tri-Phasic Model is based on trauma-informed competencies designed specifically for education environments, complex systems charged with the care and development of students over extended periods of time. Therefore, the application of TISP includes organizational change strategies congruent with trauma-informed practice. Trauma-informed educator competencies focus on six system elements; each contains its own subsystems and tasks, with an awareness that all systems overlap and intersect.

Districts. District administrators are key to the success or failure of transitioning to trauma-informed practices. Trauma-informed practice requires the acquisition of knowledge, skills, and dispositions in content domains that have historically not been a part of teacher and administrative credentialing programs. It represents a change in guiding ethos and culture, a developmental process that requires clear support and leadership. In the absence of an administrator acquiring

trauma-informed competencies, TISP will be reduced to a set of techniques leading to mixed messages for staff, guaranteeing lack of buy-in, misapplication of strategies, and poor outcomes.

District administrators are responsible for clearly supporting TISP, demonstrated through:

- Actively pursuing TISP competencies in order to fully grasp the knowledge base and ethos of trauma-informed education systems
- Networking with other districts and schools who have transitioned or are transitioning to trauma-informed programming
- Securing the funds to sponsor system-wide trainings
- Vetting and authorizing training in TISP
- Supporting all personnel, students, and community members (board, parents, and guardians) in TISP training congruent with context, setting, and role
- Being open to critically analyzing their own roles, school practices, and various school programs for congruence with TISP
- Intentionally creating District and School Strategic Planning Teams

Schools. Likewise, school administrators also share in prime responsibility for facilitating a successful TISP transition process. They focus on all activities, tasks, routines, and rituals of a school that occur on a daily, weekly, and seasonal basis, including such items as class transition and bell schedules; class and lunch schedules; student announcements; special assemblies; and other activities that create a school identity and culture. The school subsystem includes the school's policies, procedures, programs, and curriculum, and specific systems like discipline policies, class sizes and space, and other supplemental programs such as AVID. It includes a school's administrative structure and how it organizes its staff subsystems and the cooperation between those subsystems, including classroom teachers,

instructional aides, parent volunteers, school counselors, school psychologists, support staff, cafeteria and maintenance staff, and bus drivers.

Educators (Certified and Classified). TISP views all staff persons that serve students throughout the day as educators. Certified educators are classroom teachers; given the intensity of their work with students, this system level focuses most dynamically on them. While the needs of classified educators are addressed under the *School* system, elements of relevance for them are also found within the *Educator* system.

This system element recognizes the need for educators to receive TISP education, training, and supervision in the acquisition of trauma-informed school competencies congruent with their role and context. To accomplish this, educators require school and district administrators to allocate appropriate support in time and financial resources. In addition, TISP-trained educators must be present on District and School Strategic Planning Teams as school subsystems are evaluated and re-envisioned to be congruent with trauma-informed practices.

Classrooms. This element focuses on the student in addition to the culture, policies, practices, and pedagogy within a particular classroom. A partial list of subsystems includes classroom culture, rules, rituals, routines, behavioral management strategies, and physical resources available to the student congruent with TISP attunement and mentoring activities. It also includes attention to the physical space, such as room size, layout, seating, acoustics, and visual stimuli such as lighting, wall color, decoration, and resource displays. TISP classroom structures, practices, and physical settings are inclusive of student voices and leadership.

Community. This fifth element of a school system includes key stakeholders who may not be regularly involved in the daily routines of a school. Most prominent are parents and guardians (caretakers), who hold the greatest investment in the academic and social-behavioral success of their children. They are central partners with educators and key to the ongoing success of trauma-informed learning environments. Part of the strategic planning process is providing TISP orientation for caretakers interested in volunteering as classroom assistants. TISP schools place great emphasis on being a community; not only are additional adult caretakers needed in this setting, but their involvement mirrors the core values informing TISP.

Community members also include the general public committed to the education of its citizens, the next generation of its leaders. Community interests are most centrally represented in school board members. These stakeholders must make informed decisions regarding how best to support administrators, schools, staff, students, and their families, including financial decisions regarding TISP training and implementation processes. TISP is also invested in its board members acquiring TISP knowledge, skills, and dispositions congruent with their context and role to ensure continuity of care throughout the system.

The final part of the Community element is the community-based resources we access on behalf of our students and their families, such as youth organizations, medical care providers, legal-aid services, housing and food assistance, and mental health care, to name a few.

Professional Regulation and Support Systems. The education profession is crafted and regulated by three external systems invested in the viability and rigor of the profession in order to maximize outcomes for students. *Professional associations and accrediting organizations* advocate for defining the expected competencies of an educator, while also ensuring that educators receive the necessary professional support to engage in their work. *Legal statutes* governing the licensing and certification of educators, as well as laws governing what a society expects of its education systems in preparing its students as emerging adults, are also instrumental in ensuring the presence of quality educators and other resources in order to maximize a student's ability to meet those benchmarks.

Educator preparation programs for teachers, administrators, and other school-based professional roles are charged with integrating these two structural supports to mentor higher education students through the acquisition of the knowledge, skills, and dispositions of an educator. Graduates of these credentialing programs are then expected to be able to embrace their professional identities as educators, along with the tasks associated with their particular role.

This three-part regulatory and support system ideally reflects the wisdom of current educators, student voices based on current outcome data and emerging cultural shifts, and a society's commitment to preparing all citizens to be contributing members. Given its role in preparing the next generation of educators, this system element carries a significant responsibility to adopt TISP competencies in order to produce knowledgeable and skilled trauma-informed educators.

The process of helping current education systems update their knowledge, skills, and dispositions requires time, labor, and funds from systems short on these resources. School districts and students need regulation and support systems to jump in and begin the transformation process as well. Updated accreditation standards provide impetus to higher education programs to revise their curriculums. Fidelity to our students, educators, and the broader community requires higher education faculty to crosstrain and co-teach with their counselors/mental health educators, as credentialing boards expect licensees to demonstrate trauma-informed competencies. As these three systems are informed by advances in traumatology and learning, we provide schools the ultimate resource through qualified graduates ready to step into trauma-informed school environments, without those schools needing to invest more money, yet again, to train new staff.

The Trauma-Informed School Practices Tri-Phasic Model contained in this chapter is intended to provide a cross-check for districts transitioning to trauma-informed practices, and is a road map for educator credentialing programs to evaluate and adjust their curriculums. In Chapter 11, we envision a revised teacher standards document incorporating the competencies outlined in the TISP model.

This three-part regulatory and support system ideally reflects the wisdom of current educators, student voices based on current outcome data and emerging cultural shifts, and a society's commitment to preparing all citizens to be contributing members. Given its role in preparing the next generation of educators, this system element carries a significant responsibility to adopt TISP competencies in order to produce knowledgeable and skilled trauma-informed educators.

An Integrated Model of Trauma-Informed Educator Skill Development

Educator and Mental Health Developmental Model Integration. As noted in the Preface, TISP identifies skill competencies using an integration of educator and mental health skill development models (Figure 6.2). Educator competencies are often understood through the acquisition of knowledge, skills, and dispositions. These competencies are further operationalized as proficiencies for classroom teachers. Mental health competencies are often categorized according to perceptual, conceptual, executive, and professional skill arenas. Integrating schemas found in both education and mental health models has great utility to our work here, and it is congruent with TISP, an education model representing an integration between education and trauma-informed social-behavioral science knowledge domains.

Table 6.1 An Integrated Model of Trauma-Informed Educator Development

	Knowledge: Theories, concepts; practice data informing professional practice competencies	Skills: The discernment processes, actions, and behaviors of the professional	Dispositions: The internal attitudes, worldview, and commitments of the professional reflecting the profession's knowledge base and practice standards
Perceptual: Attuning to environmental cues; observing what we see, hear; tracking sequence of events as well as broader context and deeper layers of meaning; both spoken and implied	Perceptions informed by knowledge base	Perceptions utilized in discerning how to act	Perceptions effect change in the professional
Conceptual: Organizing and categorizing environmental cues according to various constructs, models, and theories congruent with one's profession	Conceptual ability to synthesize multiple content domains into a complex whole	Conceptual abilities allow practitioner to discern immediate, short-range, and long-range goals, and plan accordingly	Conceptual abilities aid in discerning a hierarchy of priorities and the ultimate purpose, meaning, or intent of a professional expectation
Executive: How the professional chooses to respond; the act of discerning needs and strategies in response; actions	Executive functioning is grounded in the wisdom of the profession as currently understood	Executive functioning is grounded in best-practice strategies	Executive functioning reflects professional dispositions congruent with the setting, context, and role
Professional: Activities, processes, structural responsibilities, including legal, ethical, personal, practice, and organizational responsibilities congruent with one's profession	Professional functioning revealed in ongoing education, training; practitioner is aware of the legal, ethical, and professional competencies expected of the professional	Professional functioning evident in education, training, and supervision opportunities, self- care practices, abiding by law and ethics of profession, and contributing to the profession through mentoring and other professional activities	Dispositions evidenced in commitment to professional activities

Table 6.1

Professional Development: Person of the Educator. TISP professional competencies includes an awareness that the health and well-being of the educator, the *Person of the Educator*, is crucial to safe and effective practice and reflects the trauma-informed value of a consistent ethic of care. This is important due to the stress associated with teaching, increasing the risk of many educators experiencing secondary trauma and/or leaving the profession. The TISP education and training process is designed to nurture engagement with trauma-informed concepts, including an emphasis on self-care, thereby maximizing TISP efficacy on behalf of the needs of students and educators. For example, choosing to strengthen one's own self-regulation skills increases educator resilience while also modeling that these skills are necessary and beneficial across the lifespan, not just for students.

The remainder of this chapter details the Trauma-Informed School Practices Tri-Phasic Model according to the

knowledge, skills, and dispositions required for each phase. The document applies trauma-informed best-practice strategies according to the purpose, goals, and context of educational settings.

This format is intended to serve as a blueprint for revising educator training programs, as well as school systems targeting their development of TISP competencies. It is not an implementation manual; the remainder of this text details strategies for implementing TISP, and is based on the theory and corresponding competencies as outlined in this document. Much of the information detailed above is repeated in summary form in order for this document to be reproduced separate from the text when in use. Refer to the above model overview when expanded definitions of key concepts are helpful.

The Trauma-Informed School Practices (TISP) Tri-Phasic Model

Description

The Trauma-Informed School Practices Tri-Phasic Model is a metaframe identifying trauma-informed competencies for all educators regardless of role. It represents a systemic approach for use by educator training programs revising curriculums to include the development of TISP competencies, and educational systems transitioning to trauma-informed programming, a universal-access framework designed for all students. It is based upon trauma-informed research integrating advancements in the neurobiology of stress and trauma, developmental theories, and best practices regarding how to help students resume development impeded by unmitigated stress and trauma. This three-phase model is both sequential and iterative.

This document does not identify specific competencies per educator role. Rather, it provides a global blueprint for successful TISP implementation to guide schools in transition, as well as educator preparation programs incorporating trauma-informed competencies as expected educator outcomes. In Sections II and III we offer specific application of these competencies to each of the six system elements identified in the Organizational Change Process in Figure 6.1.

Goal

Students are challenged by a variety of life stressors in addition to unmitigated stress and trauma, all of which impair developmental processes crucial for succeeding in the school environment. The goal of TISP is to create educational settings in which all students can actively integrate life experiences, as encoded in positive and negative neural networks, in order to enhance their capacity to effectively engage in the academic and social-emotional tasks required at each stage of their education.

Guiding Principles

TISP incorporates trauma-informed concepts summarized within four core principles:

- **Attachment-Focused.** Attachment-focused developmental theories, further supported by advancements in neurobiology, provide concrete and practical insight into relational processes that either support or interrupt brain development. These knowledge components provide the rationale for the primacy of attunement and mentoring to promote neural integration, key to achieving success in the academic environment. Attachment theory also informs TISP's embrace of a consistent ethic of care. It advocates for attuned, mentoring, and collaborative dispositions and practices with students, and between coworkers and community members. This value is evident in TISP's community-driven emphasis on the *Person of the Educator*.
- **Neurobiology-Informed.** Trauma-informed practitioners rely on advancements in our understanding of the neurobiology of development, stress, and trauma. This knowledge base informs the educator that students struggling in the school setting are often demonstrating unintegrated neural networks congruent with common and expected developmental challenges, often exacerbated by unmitigated stress and trauma.
- **Strengths-Based.** A strengths-based trauma-informed approach trusts that when we create attachment-focused learning communities, our efforts are healing, allowing students to increase resilience and resume development. It also recognizes that there is a complex set of factors undermining safe, secure attachment across all levels of social relationships, with no one person or system to blame. Rather, each person and system is capable of becoming a secure attachment base for students, whether at home, at school, or in other community settings.
- **Community-Driven.** This principle emphasizes community as a place of welcome and inclusion.
 - *Ethic of Care.* Trauma-informed practice is ultimately a commitment to being in community in a manner that provides a welcome and inclusive environment so that each person can thrive throughout the lifespan. This includes educator well-being, a central value expressed in *Person of the Educator* practices, a professional development standard that also promotes effective implementation of trauma-informed practice.
 - *Participation by All Stakeholders.* TISP requires a system-wide change in culture and practice implemented in a developmental process requiring collaboration among multiple stakeholders, all of whom have a voice in the trauma-informed transition process. This includes students and parents, who are crucial *partners* in building trauma-informed communities.
 - *Multicultural Inclusion.* Trauma-informed practice recognizes that significant stress and trauma are caused by implicit and explicit social values and mores related to aspects of our social identities that are either privileged or marginalized. TISP's universal-access approach includes a commitment to understanding the influence of dominant worldviews, systems, and laws on marginalized populations and the added risk of stress and trauma this presents to students and staff.

Congruence with Established Trauma-Informed Response Models

Trauma-informed educators are part of a larger collaborative of trauma-informed professionals. Whether trauma-informed principles are applied in education, community, or clinical mental health settings, unifying principles are present across all service-delivery models. For each of the three phases, congruence with the following established response models will be highlighted: tri-phasic recovery models, including the ARC model (Baranowsky, Gentry, & Schultz, 2005; Blaustein, 2013; Blaustein & Kinniburgh, 2019; Kinniburgh, Blaustein, Spinazzola, & van der Kolk, 2005; Herman, 1992; Shapiro, 2018); Psychological First Aid (Brymer et al., 2006; Brymer et al., 2012); and Siegel's domains of neural integration (Siegel, 2012, 2015; Siegel & Bryson, 2012).

Organizational Change Process: A System Application

TISP identifies the knowledge, skills, and dispositions essential to creating trauma-informed learning communities. It addresses the application of trauma-informed competencies to scaffold change within the six systemic elements of educational settings, identified in Figure 6.1: *Districts*; *Schools*; *Educators* (certified and classified); *Classrooms* (including students); *Community* (caretakers, board members, and community resources); and *Regulation and Support Systems* (professional and accreditation organizations, teacher and administrator preparation programs, and legal statutes, including the laws and policies governing licensing, certifications, and student learning outcomes).

An Integrated Model of Educator Development

TISP conceptualizes trauma-informed educator development through an education and mental health integrated model whereby knowledge, skills, and dispositions are delineated according to perceptual, conceptual, executive, and professional domains. Professional competencies include an emphasis on the *Person of the Educator* and the extension of a consistent ethic of care to coworkers aligned with trauma-informed practice. This focus on the development and well-being of the educator also promotes effective application of trauma-informed school practices, and recognizes that educators are often susceptible to secondary trauma.

TISP Tri-Phasic Model Competencies

Primary Dispositions

Disposition 1: Trauma-informed educators create environments that promote the neural integration of their members (students and educators) in order to maximize students' academic and social success at each developmental stage.

Disposition 2: Trauma-informed educators commit to learning the knowledge, skills, and dispositions required to implement trauma-informed practices according to their role and context in order to promote safe and effective learning communities.

Disposition 3: Trauma-informed educators are committed to embedding trauma-informed rituals and practices within the daily, weekly, and seasonal routines of a school and classroom, providing a sense of repetition that deepens internal safety and stabilization. Repetition also emphasizes that basic TISP building blocks are continual and constant, not merely a phase that is completed in order to move to the next phase.

Disposition 4: Trauma-informed educators are aware of socio-cultural factors that increase student risk or resilience, and they are committed to creating an educational environment that is welcoming, safe, and inclusive of all persons.

Disposition 5: Trauma-informed educators are committed to a consistent ethic of care whereby the relational values offered to students are extended to self and one another.

Phase I: Connecting: Attachment Part 1: Attunement

Description

Both a Phase I goal and a foundational skill embedded in all aspects of TISP, *Connecting* addresses the primary need of students to experience adults attuning to their affective states, current needs, and successes in order to feel both emotionally and physically safe and welcome in the school environment. It reflects the recognition that until we feel seen, heard, and valued, key indicators of secure attachment leading to the thoughts, feelings, and sensations related to safety, we cannot self-regulate (stabilize). And until we establish a sense of safety and stabilization, we cannot resume growth or daily tasks, all of which require higher-order executive functioning.

On a systems level, *Connecting* includes District and School commitment to creating trauma-informed learning environments as a prerequisite to academic and social success for all students. In response, District and School personnel attune to the needs of *Educators* (all employees), subsystems, and the interfacing of subsystems to develop TISP competencies and offer support in the training and implementation processes. Districts also take the lead to include *Community* members (board members and parents) in TISP

orientation processes. With this greater system support, Educators are then able to begin implementation strategies with Classrooms.

Congruence with Established Trauma-Informed Response Models

This phase corresponds with the safety needs identified in Stage 1 of the tri-phasic model of recovery, the Attachment phase in the ARC model, and the initial stages of Psychological First Aid. Implementation tasks are based upon neural network integration strategies.

Dispositions:

Phase I–Disposition 6: Trauma-informed educators understand the primacy of attachment theory, and its emphasis on attunement, to the neural development of both students and adults throughout the lifespan.

Phase I–Disposition 7: Trauma-informed educators are committed to attending to *Person of the Educator* wellness practices in recognition of their vulnerability to secondary trauma. This includes a commitment to understanding their own relational and developmental history influencing their own neural integration, foundational to strengthening resilience and well-being.

Phase I–Disposition 8: Trauma-informed educators recognize that the success of trauma-informed practices requires involvement and support from all levels of the school system: administration, school, staff, classroom (including students), and community (school board and caretakers).

Tasks:

District and Community: Attuning to the Need for Transition to TISP

A. Create District-Based Strategic Planning Team

Phase I-1: District administrators understand that transitioning to trauma-informed practices is a developmental process. Therefore, administrators authorize a District Strategic Planning Team comprised of multi-level administrators, classroom teachers, and other school personnel (including board members and caretakers) to identify overall intent and initial, intermediate, and long-term goals. Immediate tasks are specifically identified, along with a timetable for evaluating progress and planning specifics for the next phase of the transition process. [Executive Skills]

Phase I-1.a: This District Strategic Planning Team prepares for the planning process by engaging in TISP-focused readings and trainings, and includes additional personnel who have expressed interest in trauma-informed school practices. [Executive Skills]

Phase I-1.b: The District Strategic Planning Team consults with additional sources as part of early-phase goal and task development, such as other districts that have transitioned to trauma-informed practice for strategic planning advice and trauma-informed trained educators and mental health professionals to evaluate training opportunities and programs. [Executive Skills]

Phase I-2: The District Strategic Planning Team discerns a strategy most suited for their district. This includes strategies for attuning to the needs of each school while gathering staff interest and deciding on best methods for initiating the transition process, such as whether to begin with one school or multiple schools and one grade level or multiple grade levels throughout a district, and identifying costs associated with training staff. [Executive Skills]

B. Commit to District-Wide Training

Phase I-3: District administrators and school board support trauma-informed training, including education and supervision in trauma-informed educator competencies. [Executive Skills]

Phase I-3.a: District administrators support the inclusion of board members, administrators, and caretakers (parents and guardians) in TISP trainings along with educators (certified and classified) to foster mutual learning and to nurture collaborative relationships. [Executive Skills]

Phase I-3.b: District administrators support the inclusion of board members, caretakers, and all school personnel in specific trauma-informed school practice trainings congruent with their roles. [Executive Skills]

C. Support the Change Process

Phase I-4: District and school administrators support each school and classroom evaluating, adding, and/or changing school practices and routines to promote school as an emotionally and physically attuned environment promoting an internal sense of safety and stability prerequisite to learning. This includes daily, weekly, and seasonal rituals as determined by each school and classroom teacher, and in collaboration with students. [Executive Skills]

Phase I-4.a: District and school administrators support cross-collaboration among schools to promote thematic consistency in routines and rituals in order to promote a scaffolded experience for students as they progress through K-12. [Executive Skills]

Schools

A. Create School-Based Strategic Planning Team

Phase I-5: Schools understand that transitioning to trauma-informed practices is a developmental process. Therefore, each school authorizes a School Strategic Planning Team comprised of administrators, classroom teachers, and other school personnel, including board members and caretakers, to identify overall intent and initial, intermediate, and long-term goals. Immediate tasks are specifically identified, along with a timetable for evaluating progress and planning specifics for the next phase of the transition process. [Executive Skills]

Phase I-5.a: The School Strategic Planning Team prepares for the planning process by engaging in TISP-focused readings and trainings, and by including additional personnel who have expressed interest in trauma-informed school programming. [Executive Skills]

Phase I-5.b: The School Strategic Planning Team consults with additional sources as part of early-phase goal and task development, such as other schools that have transitioned to trauma-informed practice for strategic planning advice and trauma-informed trained educators and mental health professionals to evaluate training opportunities and programs. [Executive Skills]

Phase I-6: The School Strategic Planning Team discerns a strategy most suited for their school. This includes strategies for attuning to the needs of staff and students while building staff interest, deciding on best methods for initiating the transition process such as beginning with one grade level or cohort, and identifying costs associated with training staff. [Executive Skills]

Phase I-7: As momentum builds, the *School Strategic Planning Team* will design subcommittees in anticipation of the need to establish policies and practices of school personnel and subsystems according to trauma-informed school practices. These subsystems and associated personnel include discipline programs and processes; TISP-trained parent classroom partners; TISP-trained instructional assistants; and the tasks and interfacing of special education, school counselors, and school psychologists with classroom teachers transitioning to trauma-informed classrooms. [Executive Skills]

B. Commit to School-Wide Training

Phase I-8: Schools support trauma-informed training, including education and supervision in trauma-informed educator competencies. [Executive Skills]

Phase I-8.a: Schools collaborate with district to support the inclusion of board members, administrators, and caretakers (parents and guardians) in TISP trainings along with educators (certified and classified) to foster mutual learning and to nurture collaborative relationships. [Executive Skills]

Phase I-8.b: Schools collaborate with district to support the inclusion of all school personnel in specific trauma-informed school practice trainings congruent with their roles. [Executive Skills]

C. Support the Change Process

Phase I-9: District and school administrators support each school and classroom evaluating, adding, and/or changing school practices and routines to promote school as an emotionally and physically attuned environment promoting an internal sense of safety and stability prerequisite to learning. This includes daily, weekly, and seasonal rituals as determined by each school and classroom teacher, and in collaboration with students. [Executive Skills]

Phase I-9.a: District and school administrators support cross-collaboration among schools to promote *thematic* consistency in routines and rituals in order to promote a scaffolded experience for students as they progress through the K-12 process. [Executive Skills]

D. Evaluate and Adjust Discipline Methods Congruent with TISP

Phase I-10: The School Strategic Planning Team engages in preliminary evaluation of the discipline methods used by various schools within the district, or within the school of focus. [Executive Skills]

Phase I-11: Schools may opt to commission a discipline subcommittee to more formally evaluate a current program and design needed adjustments. This subcommittee is comprised of TISP-trained (or in-training) personnel, including classroom teachers at all grade levels associated with the target school(s), school counselors, special educators, instructional assistants, and administrators responsible for behavioral management policies. [Executive Skills]

E. Evaluate Current Job Descriptions and Subsystems

Phase I-12: The school administrator and the School Strategic Planning Team or subcommittee trained in TISP collaborate to evaluate and adjust current practices per educator role and context (subsystem interactions) for congruence with TISP. This includes the roles of classroom parent and instructional aides,

school counselors, school psychologists, special education teachers, and support staff as they interact with and support educators (classroom teachers) and classrooms (students). [Executive Skills]

Phase I-13: School administrators monitor adjustments to personnel job descriptions due to trauma-informed practice needs. This process ensures that all personnel are not required to merely add more tasks to current responsibilities and reflects a consistent ethic of care. [Executive Skills]

Phase I-14: The School Strategic Planning Team or subcommittee trained in TISP is commissioned to evaluate current supplemental school programs (e.g., AVID) for congruence with TISP practices and the specific adjustments being implemented within a particular school or district. This subcommittee is comprised of classroom teachers at all grade levels and other personnel associated with the target school(s) and the program(s) under evaluation. [Executive Skills]

F. Provide Focused Resources and Supports to Educators and Classrooms

Phase I-15: Pedagogical practices, including classroom management, are the processes most impacted by a transition to trauma-informed practices. Therefore, schools provide ongoing training and implementation support for classroom teachers. [Executive Skills]

Phase I-16: Schools support TISP training for instructional assistants and parent volunteers to assist with *Connecting* and *Coaching* activities congruent with their roles and in response to the needs of a particular class or student(s). [Executive Skills]

Educators—Certified and Classified

A. Commit to the Change Process

Phase I-17: Educators participate in TISP trainings and commit to mastering the knowledge, skills, and dispositions of the Trauma-Informed School Practices Tri-Phasic Model in anticipation of the scaffolded, incremental change they will be implementing in their classrooms. [Executive Skills]

Phase I-17a: Educators recognize that while Phase I strategies can be implemented immediately within a classroom, Phase I–III strategies must be congruent with a larger trauma-informed framework and are best implemented in tandem with changes co-occurring on the school system level and in classrooms also serving the same students. [Perceptual and Conceptual Skills]

Phase I-18: Educators apply trauma-informed concepts to deepen their understanding of their own life narratives to facilitate greater understanding and implementation of TISP concepts in a manner congruent with the model. [Professional Skills: *Person of the Educator*]

Phase I-19: Educators learn techniques to strengthen their own self-regulation skills given their risk for secondary trauma as educators, and to model congruence with trauma-informed principles, indicating that neural network strengthening is a lifespan task. [Professional Development: *Person of the Educator–Educator Affect Management*]

Phase I-20: Educators participating in trauma-informed training are aware that community (board members, caretakers, and community supports), district, and school personnel are participating as well, inviting evaluation of current school rituals, routines, programs, and systems of collaboration; Educators look for opportunities to contribute to these discussions.

B. Prepare to Implement Phase 1 Strategies

Phase I-20: Educators recognize that attunement from the adult toward the student, combined with teaching students how to attune to others, builds a student's sense of safety and self-worth, increasing receptivity to learning self-regulation skills crucial to academic engagement. [Perceptual and Conceptual Skills]

Phase I-21: Educators recognize that attuning to students is also a mentoring process whereby the act of putting words to a student's experience helps increase the student's ability to notice and put words to their thoughts, feelings, and needs directly, rather than indirectly. [Perceptual and Conceptual Skills]

Phase I-22: Educators learn various *Connecting* strategies, attachment-focused communication skills designed to foster greater levels of attunement to a student's stated and unstated thoughts, feelings, needs, and implicit and explicit beliefs (neural networks reflecting *perspective* (Chapter 3), which is influencing behavior). [Executive Skills–Educator with Students:]

Phase I-22.a: Educators identify strategies for implementing these skills in the classroom. Once implemented, they become part of the rhythms and rituals of the classroom. [Executive Skills]

Phase I-22.b: As educators increase TISP mastery, they ultimately create implementation strategies congruent with the needs of their students and the style of the educator. [Executive Skills]

Phase I-23: Educators evaluate the physical attributes of the classroom, such as seating, lighting, acoustics, and visual stimuli including wall color, decorations, and learning prompts for congruence with environmental factors that promote a sense of welcome, care, calm, predictability, order (simplicity), and structure (rather than chaos). [Executive Skills]

Phase I-24: Educators practice a consistent ethic of care by examining daily rhythms and routines, communication methods, and other relational practices among and between staff for congruence with trauma-informed concepts. This includes actively seeking implementation and evaluation input from all staff, displaying curiosity and openness. [Executive Skills]

Phase I-25: Educators collaborate to discern a language system to utilize with students that does not necessarily include the words “trauma” or “trauma-informed” while clearly conveying the ethos, guiding values, and goals of a trauma-informed school. [Executive Skills]

Classrooms

Phase I-26: Educators identify vulnerable students and specific behaviors to either strengthen or minimize based on individual student observation and team collaboration. [Executive Skills: Phase I–III Preparation]

Phase I-27: Educators identify universal student needs and specific developmental behaviors to either strengthen or minimize. [Executive Skills: Phase I–III Preparation]

Phase I-28: Educators work in partnership with students, explaining the trauma-informed values and practices of the school and classroom. [Executive Skills]

Phase I-28.a: Educators actively seek student ideas and feedback for ways to enhance school and the classroom as a welcoming space, safe to risk stepping outside of comfort zones and walking with each other when stress is overwhelming. [Executive Skills]

Phase I-29: Educators intentionally scaffold relational skills of mutual support between peers that create a

common narrative to make sense of challenging events experienced by a student or the class as a whole, and to gather in support of each other. [Executive Skills]

Phase I-30: Educators actively demonstrate the importance of each student to the classroom community by affirming each student and illustrating that their competence is needed for the good of the group. [Executive Skills]

Phase I-31: Classroom teachers collaborate with other educators and staff serving the same students to discuss continuity of attunement micro-skills others are using with students and/or teaching students to use with other students. This continuity reinforces safety, stability, and the internalization of the skills. [Executive Skills]

Phase I-32: Educators build on and expand the use of these strategies in support of students' capacity to attune to and support the safety and well-being of each other. [Executive Skills]

Phase I-33: Students are included in discussions about the making of a trauma-informed school community, and their input is directly requested in creating various rituals and practices.

Phase I-34: Educators design a documentation system to capture student receptivity to the culture shift initiated by trauma-informed attunement practices. [Executive Skills]

Phase II: Coaching: Attachment Part 2: Mentoring

Description

Basic to increasing resilience in the face of recovering from a recent event (such as a local disaster or a major school or classroom disruption) or from sustained unmitigated stress and trauma is helping students achieve a sense of safety and stabilization. Phase I addresses the need for safety. Phase II addresses stabilization; it comprises its own phase, given the distinct scaffolding of social-emotional skills and practice foundational to increasing executive functioning necessary for academic engagement and learning throughout the education process.

Stabilization refers to the capacity to self-regulate in response to thoughts, feelings, sensations, and social interactions that activate trauma memories and other unintegrated neural networks. Initially, it involves learning skills and techniques to calm physiological arousal that help decrease panic-response neurochemicals, such as norepinephrine, and increase calming neurochemicals, such as acetylcholine. This then allows students to practice stabilizing techniques that address perspectives (Chapter 3) based on distorted or false perceptions and thoughts fueled by negative neural networks. This is the most challenging and lengthy process, perhaps lifelong. But as a student repeatedly experiences attuned community, increased confidence in their capacity to calm arousal, and deepening awareness of the internal thoughts, feelings, and perspectives fueling arousal symptoms, the student is much less overwhelmed by this process.

These skills increase a student's self-awareness and compassion regarding how to respond to life challenges, while increasing awareness and empathy for those around them, all within a community of care. This is the essence of what helps a student feel safe, a precursor to engaging in academic developmental tasks, a never-ending process of (a) facing new demands that challenge their abilities (courage and confidence); (b) accompanied by the need for focused attention (immediate, short-term, and long-term

memory); amidst (c) possible criticism, even failure from time to time (a sense of shame and inadequacy challenging competence); and then on to (d) mastery of that particular challenge.

The TISP Tri-Phasic Model is contextualized to educators whose role is primarily coaching students through the challenges associated with academic and social skill competencies expected at each grade level. Teaching and practicing such skills in classroom settings is different than teaching at home by caretakers or in a therapeutic clinical setting. To help students establish a sense of safety and stabilization prior to full-capacity academic engagement, educators need to teach and practice social-emotional self-regulation skills in large-group, small-group, and one-to-one settings. Educators teach and then continually coach students in the use of those skills, mentoring them through difficult social and emotional challenges that inevitably happen throughout the day.

The *Coaching* phase is foundational to *increasing* executive functioning. Unfortunately, the academic setting cannot protect a student from the social and emotional challenges of academic demands until the student has built the internal confidence to face such challenges. But an understanding of the neural functioning that is under construction in a trauma-informed school setting reminds the educator that the more a student rests in the rituals and rhythms of a trauma-informed setting, the more confidence builds over time, as does executive functioning. This deeper understanding of perspectives (fueled by unintegrated internal implicit and explicit memories) undermining executive functioning, and the scaffolding of confidence and skill-building to function in the school environment, requires educators to transform the culture and practice of a school, not just a classroom, while also looking for student gains over time.

Congruence with Established Trauma-Informed Response Models

The second phase of the TISP Tri-Phasic Model corresponds with elements of Phase 1 of the tri-phasic model of recovery. This phase details a person's need to strengthen internal and external resources key to the stabilization that is prerequisite to working through the experiences that are the source of the dysregulation. It corresponds to the second stage (Regulation) of the ARC model, which also addresses the internal regulation needs associated with stabilization. It correlates with Psychological First Aid in that the provision of needed resources, in this case self-regulation skills, is required once a person has achieved a sense of physiological and emotional safety. Implementation tasks are based upon neural network integration strategies.

Dispositions:

Phase II–Disposition 9: Trauma-informed educators understand the primacy of attachment theory, and its emphasis on mentoring, to the neural development of both students and adults throughout the lifespan.

Phase II–Disposition 10: Trauma-informed educators understand that student behavior, in part, is often a reflection of unintegrated neural networks due to past and/or current unmitigated stress and trauma, and require the student to first establish a sense of safety and stability prior to commencing with here-and-now developmental expectations.

Phase II–Disposition 11: Trauma-informed educators understand that persons all along the lifespan are influenced by past experiences shaping perceptions and emotional responses. It is a lifelong task to

understand this connection while learning to self-regulate in the face of intense emotional responses to current events.

Tasks:

District and Community

Phase II-12: Districts understand that this is the most labor- and skill-intensive element of transforming to a trauma-informed school in culture and practice, and offer ongoing TISP training, supervision, and peer support as needed.

Phase II-13: As a result of their own TISP training, district personnel and board members understand the importance of adequately resourcing schools as it relates to the neurological development of students as foundational to executive functioning. Of particular importance are adequate staffing, manageable class sizes, and learner-friendly physical settings.

Phase II-14: Districts understand that TISP requires an examination of underlying values and messages conveyed in school discipline programs and support a trauma-informed re-evaluation of existing programs.

Phase II-14.a: Districts do not view repeated behavioral disruptions as a sign of educator classroom mismanagement or student failure. Rather, districts rely on a team approach to discerning the needs of all students when disruptive events are frequent, signaling that a student's particular needs may be beyond what can be provided in a particular class or school setting.

Phase II-14.b: Districts are aware of how classroom disruptions impair the development, including academic success, of all students, and support classroom management systems that protect and honor the needs of each student.

Phase II-15: District-level personnel and community members (caretakers and board members) continue participation in their own TISP training. [Executive Skills]

Phase II-16: Districts support School Strategic Planning Team recommendations regarding providing TISP-trained parents and educational aides as classroom support personnel.

Phase II-17: As a trauma-informed mindset is more fully grasped, districts envision a data-gathering agenda that may not be captured in current desired statistics. [Executive Skills]

Schools

Phase II-5: Schools immediately and intentionally re-evaluate discipline methods and processes according to trauma-informed program needs as this is crucial to creating a trauma-informed school culture and supporting educators implementing trauma-informed classroom methods. [Executive Skills]

Phase II-5a: Schools consult with other districts that have undergone a similar evaluation process, and investigate the accessibility and utility of various verified trauma-informed student management programs if the District and/or School Strategic Planning Teams have determined that current programs are incongruent with trauma-informed practice.

Phase II-5b: Schools understand that current student management methods may need to remain firmly in place while evaluating and transitioning to a new system, even as attitudinal and behavioral shifts reflecting Phase I (Connecting) skills can be implemented immediately.

Phase II-6: Schools provide adequate attunement and concrete response to classroom educators' needs for immediate and ongoing support, especially during the early phases of implementing elements of Phase I and II culture through the introduction of various rhythms and routines. [Executive Skills]

Phase II-7: Schools offer a variety of resources in anticipation of a student's need to self-regulate within or outside of the classroom. Schools are especially mindful of viewing or implementing self-regulation options not as a negative consequence, but as a sign of progress that a student is able to actively choose and/or participate in options offered.

Phase II-7.a: Schools understand the role of recreational physical activity (play) and the visual and performing arts in providing students with a method to discharge energy fueled by stress response systems, and they refrain from using these activities as leverage to motivate a resistance to behavioral impulses.

Phase II-7.b: Schools do not view repeated behavioral disruptions as a sign of educator classroom mismanagement or student failure. Rather, schools rely on a team approach to discerning the needs of all students when disruptive events are frequent, signaling that a student's needs may be beyond what can be provided in a particular class or school setting.

Phase II-7.c: Schools are aware of how classroom disruptions impair the development, including academic success, of all students, and support classroom management systems that protect and honor the needs of each student.

Educators—Certified and Classified

A. Develop Scaffolded Self-Regulation Routines, Rituals, and Practices

Phase II-8: Educators participate in ongoing reading, trainings, and peer support to further identify and create student self-regulation skills congruent with their classroom needs. [Executive Skills]

Phase II-9: Educators understand that self-regulation works in tandem with attunement, and is a four-step, multi-skill process: (a) identifying cues; (b) self-calming in order to reduce the intensity of the cues; and then (c) reflecting on the source, need, or meaning underlying the initial activation; leading to (d) intentionally choosing how to respond. [Perceptual and Conceptual Skills]

Phase II-10: Educators understands that insight and self-regulation alone does not resolve the impact of stress and trauma. Learning this four-step process is key to widening our window of tolerance for stressful events. Increasing tolerance for the discomfort is crucial, as the underlying source and meaning (the trigger) often requires a season of time to accept, make sense of, sort out, or resolve. [Perceptual and Conceptual Skills]

Phase II-11: Educators understand that self-regulation is along four domains: affective, physiological, cognitive, and behavioral. In preparing to implement skills in the classroom with individual students and as a group, the educator is able to gather and categorize specific self-regulation activities to strengthen specific aspects of neural functioning, using such resources as Siegel's domains of neural integration. [Perceptual, Conceptual, and Executive Skills]

Phase II-12: Educators understand that each student must practice self-regulation skills regularly in order to develop competence and confidence. These go-to strategies help maintain and strengthen processes in progress, reinforcing ongoing neural integration messages you are helping students deeply encounter. [Perceptual and Conceptual Skills]

Phase II-13: Educators understand that each student must repeatedly experience states of emotional and behavioral regulation *and* dysregulation in order to practice neural integration strategies designed to increase student self-awareness and confidence in one's ability to tolerate discomfort. [Perceptual and Conceptual Skills]

Phase II-14: Educators design and implement strategies to promote affective, cognitive, and behavioral regulation, in response to the need states and perspectives (reflecting unmitigated implicit and explicit memories) and current environmental demands underlying episodes of dysregulation. [Executive Skills]

B. Person of the Educator

Phase II-15: Educators recognize that building self-regulation strategies into the classroom and school culture is the most challenging aspect of TISP requiring added attention to self-care strategies. [Perceptual and Conceptual Skills]

Phase II-16: Educators create rhythms and rituals to support the work and well-being of each other in response to the stress and potential secondary trauma associated with responding to the developmental needs of their students. [Executive Skills]

Phase II-17: Educators regularly participate in peer consultation not merely to evaluate classroom effectiveness and learn new ideas, but to debrief their own internal cognitive and affective responses to classroom challenges. [Executive Skills]

Classrooms

A. General Strategies

Phase II-18: Educators continually inform students about how the trauma-informed classroom and school (using predetermined terminology) view your time together as a learning community, including how self-regulation struggles are viewed, and how the teacher and students will be invited to respond in various rituals, routines, and practices. Educators include student voices in creating systems of response.

Phase II-18.a: Educators identify a range of activities, including visual, auditory, and kinesthetic aids, to teach and practice self-regulation skills. Scaffolded instruction and practice occur in daily and weekly rituals and routines, in designated teaching moments, and are woven into lesson plans as they relate to and reinforce class content.

Phase II-19: Educators create time to deepen and practice self-regulation skills by teaching students how to identify mild to more heightened states of arousal (self-awareness processes and accompanying ranking system) related to a particular need as expressed in thoughts, feelings, and/or sensations. [Executive Skills]

Phase II-19.a: Educators provide insight and tools for helping students increase their window of tolerance for heightened states of arousal even as they provide tools to lower or mitigate further arousal. [Executive Skills]

Phase II-19.b: Educators provide resources to students in response to internal need states for use

according to level of arousal. The educator and students regularly practice identifying the need state and assessing what coping resources are most helpful or needed in the moment. Peers are coached in how to support each other in these moments. [Executive Skills]

Phase II-20: Educators teach students how to understand what is occurring within their bodies when assessing need states, teaching students about brain and body functioning in a manner congruent with student context.

Phase II-20.a: Educators support and facilitate strategies that increase a student's competence and confidence in their ability to actively target and change or counterbalance a state of mind, whether it is a thought, feeling, or physiological response. [Executive Skills]

A. Affective and Physiological Regulation

Phase II-21: Educators will instruct students in how to identify and rank emotions and other internal body sensations (arousal states) indicating a current need. [Executive Skills]

Phase II-21.a: To reduce the intensity of these cues, educators teach and utilize self-soothing or self-calming responses, sometimes called self-rescue skills. Once a student learns how to self-calm, the student has greater access to executive functions required to process and verbalize deeper wants, needs, and perspectives underlying the activation. [Executive Skills]

B. Cognitive Regulation

Phase II-22: Educators recognize that deeper levels of cognitive insight into what ultimately fuels dysregulated behavior, whether congruent or incongruent with current social demands, is a lifelong process in varying ways; they are able to discern what is necessary in the moment to increase a student's secure base—the internal sense of safety and stabilization needed to take the next step in their development. [Perceptual and Conceptual Skills]

Phase II-22.a: Educators prepare to help students understand how differences of opinion activate feelings and sensations that fuel discord. Self-regulation skills aimed at increasing the window of tolerance for the discomfort include dialogic cognitive strategies aimed at normalizing differing viewpoints and need-states of self and other.

Phase II-23: Educators teach students about the complexities of how our thoughts and perspectives influence and are influenced by feelings, sensations, actions, and events, using various forms of exploration and expression in activities ranging from individual and group practices to activities accompanying academic lessons. [Perceptual and Conceptual Skills]

C. Behavioral Regulation

Phase II-24: Educators understand that the process of attunement (*Connecting*) and mentoring (*Coaching*) is designed to increase student insight into a behavioral impulse even as they are being coached in the practice of increasing intentional choice in response to internal arousal states. Educators understand that when a student is in a defensive state, often they cannot necessarily answer “why” they choose a behavior, nor are they able to access executive functions needed to engage in a repair process.

Phase II-24.a: Educators explain to students how behavioral disruptions will be viewed and managed through a process of helping students self-regulate, as precursor to identifying need states underlying the behavioral reactions, and then engaging in a repair or accountability process.

Phase II-24.b: As part of the psychoeducation process of self-regulation skill development, educators help

students identify thoughts and feelings influencing behavioral impulses. The source of arousal states may be related to a struggle unrelated to the current social environment, and/or a misinterpretation of current social exchanges, and/or an inability to tolerate opinions and need states of others, and/or anxiety in response to the academic demands of that moment.

Phase II-25: Educators nurture the student's capacity to accurately read the emotional expressions of others anchored within the context of that setting. This ability helps students identify misinterpretations of the social environment fueling affective and behavioral reactions. This social skill also nurtures a supportive peer environment. [Executive Skills]

Phase II-25.a: Educators build on and expand the use of these strategies in support of students' capacity to attune to and support the safety and well-being of each other. [Executive Skills]

Phase II-26: Educators utilize a well-rehearsed process of identifying behavioral activation cues in a student, whether a student directly or indirectly alerts peers or teachers that they are in need of using a class resource.

Phase II-26.a: Educators can easily access school system resources when a classroom needs assistance due to a student's inability to behaviorally self-regulate, impairing the student and classmates' abilities to maintain physical and/or emotional safety.

Phase II-26.b: Educators design and use attunement and mentoring practices to help all class members debrief shared experiences that were disruptive, scary, hurtful, and/or sad. This includes classroom events, as well as other distressing communal events such as a recent disaster, an act of violence, or an injured or now absent classmate. Educators understand how these events activate the stress response circuits of all class members, including each student's own unmitigated stress and trauma neural circuitry.

Phase II-26.c: Educators seize the aftermath of disruptive classroom events as a time to practice attuning to class needs to have their experience acknowledged, in order to integrate that experience and return to a sense of school and classroom as a safe and welcoming space. Educators understand that this is a key underlying concept related to attachment and the formation of integrated neural functioning: walking students through processes of "connection-break-repair" in which their experience is mirrored and validated as a precursor to using executive functions to make sense of the event and continue class engagement.

Phase II-26.d: In the aftermath of a disruptive behavioral event, educators engage in an insight and repair process with the student(s). Educators practice honoring the need state of the student even while holding the student accountable for the behavior. Repair processes are enacted, along with the identification of additional internal and external resources that might be accessed now and in the future.

Phase II-26.e: Educators rely on a team approach to discerning the needs of all students when disruptive events are frequent, signaling that a student's needs may be beyond what can be provided in a particular class or school setting.

Phase II-27: Educators understand the role of recreational physical activity (play) and the visual and performing arts in providing students with a method to discharge energy fueled by stress response systems, and they refrain from using these activities as leverage to motivate a resistance to behavioral impulses.

Phase III: Commencing: Increased Executive Functioning and Developmental Task Engagement

Description

Phase III represents a student's increased ability to engage in executive functioning congruent with age-appropriate developmental demands, including academic and social skill competencies. Increased safety and stabilization are precursors to a student's capacity to engage in higher-order thinking processes associated with learning. This capacity to engage executive functioning is crucial to neural integration processes. It is this recursive pattern of engagement in the school community and integrating internal neural networks that promote increased growth and resilience, which in turn allow the student to meet various developmental challenges throughout their education.

On a daily basis, educators see the impact of unmitigated stress and trauma on student learning and behavior. However, their context and role does not advise or allow for the direct therapeutic processing of these events, even though educators must work with the side effects of these events as they manifest in indirect ways. The enactment of tasks in Phases II and III differs from clinical treatment environments in that educators are not directly helping students work through traumatic memories. Rather, educators are working indirectly with traumatic memories through trauma-informed attunement and mentoring embedded in all aspects of the school day.

In this stage, the attunement and mentoring skills most emphasized are the deepening of insight and self-regulation skills of Phase II, and using day-to-day school experiences as opportune moments to further neural integration. It is a recognition that increased executive functioning allows greater levels of academic engagement, which, in turn, activate implicit and explicit memories that invite and allow greater levels of neural integration. For example, as a student becomes engrossed in a novel required for a literature class, the struggle of a character may invite recall of the student's own losses, prompting a grieving response, cueing the school environment to attune to and mentor that student through that memory integration moment. This allows the student to practice utilizing budding internal and external resources in service to strengthening positive neural networks to mitigate negative neural networks. The rhythms and rituals embedded through all aspects of the learning environment reflect this recursive process of learning through encounter.

Commencing indicates that the student is now able to increase their attention to academic engagement. This reflects a strengthening of neural network integration as a result of a subjective feeling of safety and well-being due to an attuned and mentoring environment (external resources) as well as growing skills in self-regulation (internal resources). It is not suggesting that a student is no longer highly influenced or limited by their life context and challenges. Rather, school is now a safe and secure base that allows the developing person to encounter grievous, unjust, and fearful realities with greater levels of confidence that they matter and are seen and cared about, paving the way for the courage to tolerate the demands of the maturation process. With this comes a knowing that they can continue learning coping skills while deepening hope in the goodness of life and their place in it, even as they increase their sense of competence as they are able to meet a challenge, such as learning to read or advancing in math skills or resolving peer

conflict. The internal neural structures needed to engage in learning are now in place and will continue to be strengthened through the daily rhythms and rituals of the trauma-informed environment.

Congruence with Clinical and Community Response Models

Phase III corresponds with the working through tasks of Phase II and the re-engagement tasks of Phase III of the tri-phasic models (re-entry). It corresponds with Phase III of the ARC model (Competency), and the later stages of Psychological First Aid's core action in recognition that recovery is a long, ongoing process of using and further developing resources. Educators rely on knowledge of brain functioning and neural integration processes in order to continually evaluate how to scaffold additional classroom activities based upon neural network integration strategies.

Dispositions:

Phase III–Disposition 12: Trauma-informed educators are aware that students process unmitigated stress and trauma in both direct and indirect ways as they engage in all aspects of the trauma-informed educational environment, and they are able to offer an attuned and mentoring response.

Phase III–Disposition 13: Trauma-informed educators are skilled in attuning to grief and mourning responses that often accompany academic engagement as neural networks integrate, which allow for deeper connection to memory and its meaning to occur.

Phase III–Disposition 14: Trauma-informed education systems include licensed mental health professionals available for students requesting or needing access to professional trauma-informed recovery services.

Phase III–Disposition 15: Trauma-informed educators understand how to weave *Connecting* and *Coaching* practices into academic lesson plans, as the learning process, both the process of learning and the content to master, is also crucial to the integration of neural networks impacted by unmitigated stress and trauma.

Phase III–Disposition 16: Trauma-informed educators understand the nature of a student's academic and social-emotional functioning in the classroom, and how best to meet the individual needs of each student, whether in a traditional classroom or with additional assistance.

Phase III–Disposition 17: Trauma-informed educators advocate on local, state, and national levels for greater understanding of the neurobiological impacts on a student when either (a) the student cannot self-regulate or (b) the student is repeatedly exposed to peers unable to self-regulate, leading to frequent episodes of classroom disruption. This constant state of dysregulation and exposure to peers in such states cause more stress and trauma for all students.

Tasks:

District and Community

Phase III-1: Districts continue supporting the District Strategic Planning Team and the TISP transition process through active evaluation and revising of its current district-wide programs and systems.

Phase III-2: Districts continue supporting School Strategic Planning Teams and the TISP transition process including each school's program, policies, routines, and rituals for TISP congruence evaluating.

Phase III-3: The District Strategic Planning Team actively implements its strategies for continuing the training and supervision of trauma-informed school practices, including advanced training in executive functioning and social-emotional learning; orienting new and substitute staff in TISP; and expanding orientation trainings to personnel, caretakers, and board members who have not yet had the opportunity to participate.

Phase III-4: Districts identify and secure adequate resources to determine the appropriate classroom setting for students unable to self-regulate as an act of care and fidelity to the needs of all students. Such resources include in-class instructional assistants and alternative classroom settings.

Phase III-5: Districts confer with School Strategic Planning Teams to identify both traditional and TISP-congruent data needs, and they assist in the process.

Phase III-6: Districts recognize the professional expertise of educators and support their contributions to advancing TISP.

Schools

Phase III-7: School administrators and the School Strategic Planning Team understand that trauma-informed school practices cannot be implemented in isolation and therefore create teams or subcommittees to encourage and support staff learning and implementing trauma-informed practices.

Phase III-8: Schools continue supporting the School Strategic Planning Team and the TISP transition process including the evaluation, revision, and creation of programs, policies, routines, and rituals for TISP congruence.

Phase III-8.a: The School Strategic Planning Team actively implements its strategies for continuing the training and supervision of trauma-informed school practices, including advanced training in executive functioning and social-emotional learning; orienting new and substitute staff in TISP; and consulting with the district on expanding orientation trainings to personnel, caretakers, and board members who have not yet had the opportunity to participate.

Phase III-8.b: School administrators and the School Strategic Planning Team recognize that the purpose of discipline practices is to connect and coach students with impaired executive functioning and limited social-emotional self-regulation skills so that they can learn and grow as a result of the encounter.

Phase III-8.c: School administrators and the School Strategic Planning Team actively evaluate current student management practices for congruence with TISP.

Phase III-8.d: School administrators, together with the School Strategic Planning Team, understand that when evaluating the efficacy of trauma-informed behavioral management systems, it is important to evaluate the entire system and how it manages students with dysregulation issues.

Phase III-9: Schools continue to identify and secure adequate resources to determine the appropriate classroom setting for students unable to self-regulate as an act of care and fidelity to the needs of all students. Such resources include in-class instructional assistants and alternative classroom settings.

Phase III-10: Schools confer with the District Strategic Planning Team to identify both traditional and TISP-congruent data needs and assistance in data collecting and analysis processes.

Phase III-11: School administrators recognize the professional expertise of educators and colleagues, and they support their contributions to advancing TISP.

Educators – Certified and Classified

A. Deepen Self-Awareness and Regulation Skills

Phase III-12: Educators continually assess student receptivity to and utilization of rituals, routines, and practices reflecting the dispositions and goals of Phase I (*Connecting*) and Phase II (*Coaching*), making adjustments based on direct and indirect student feedback.

Phase III-13: Educators use conceptual knowledge of how to promote integrated neural functioning to identify additional or repeated use of self-awareness and self-regulation skills to further advance student neural integration in service to strengthening executive functioning. This process is evident in the routines and rhythms of the school day, but it is also firmly embedded within lesson plans as the subject matter or activity invites. [Perceptual and Conceptual Skills]

Phase III -13.a: Educators continue to use a variety of tools to help students increase their window of tolerance for heightened states of arousal, even as they provide tools to lower or mitigate further arousal. This includes methods for identifying and responding to the affective, physiological, cognitive, and social cues instigating an arousal state. [Executive Skills]

Phase III-13.b: Educators support and facilitate strategies that increase a student's competence and confidence in their ability to actively change or counterbalance a state of mind, whether it is a thought, feeling, or physiological response. [Executive Skills]

Phase III-14: Educators provide students the opportunity to identify and integrate various aspects of their identity, history, strengths, vulnerabilities, hopes, and fears, the multiple aspects of who they are now and wish to be in the future, to strengthen hope and courage to envision and pursue goals. [Executive Skills]

Phase III-15: Educators are aware that once a student establishes an internal groundedness facilitated by attunement and self-regulation, a foundation is then present upon which they can dare to envision personal immediate and long-term goals. [Perceptual and Conceptual Skills]

Phase III-16: Educators participate in supervision or peer-consultation processes promoting TISP reflective practice. Such processes intentionally include focus on the *Person of the Educator* congruent with the nature of trauma-informed practice and the risks to educators for secondary trauma.

Classroom

Phase III-17: Educators identify student learning objectives and activities across the curriculum that invite vicarious or parallel moments (via externalization) to engage in their own trauma-processing and neural domain integration. [Perceptual and Conceptual Skills]

Phase III-18: Educators view challenging events, whether involving cognitive, affective, or behavioral states disruptive to self or other, as opportunities to practice attuning to self and other and use strategies in response. [Perceptual and Conceptual Skills]

Phase III-19: Educators actively acknowledge the skills a student is practicing, offering support and coaching as needed. This process of mirroring to the student what you are observing reinforces the student's executive functioning, increasing awareness of what is happening and how they choose to respond. [Executive Skills]

Phase III-20: Educators debrief individually and as a group shared experiences in order to create optimum opportunity to integrate the full meaning of an event, promoting neural integration; reinforce executive functioning meaning-making systems central to coping; and invite transpirational moments when students can see each other's common humanity with curiosity, openness, and empathy, including the student who was initially most challenged, as well as other students who may have been activated by the event. [Executive Skills]

Phase III-21: Educators help students identify positive attributes unique to them as observed in their classroom social interactions and functioning through direct mirroring, peer feedback, and student self-reflection to deepen development and identification of internal positive neural networks.

Phase III-22: Educators provide opportunities for students to envision a future grounded in trauma-informed principles of care (without using this term) characterized by physical and relational safety even as they envision and pursue desired goals congruent with their skills, abilities, interests, and desires. Educators enlist student input on putting descriptive words to this type of relational environment as they see it evidenced in school and in caring relationships with family and friends. [Executive Skills]

A Look Ahead

In Section I, we provided a detailed assessment of what is happening in many of our schools, exhausting educators and leading some to question the sustainability of our work, while all of us worry about the ramifications for the next generation of students who are growing up ill-equipped to meet the demands of adult life. We then provided an overview of trauma-informed concepts detailing the nature of trauma, factors that contribute to risk and resilience, and an overview of best-practice strategies underlying all ends of the trauma-informed care spectrum. This illustrated that trauma-informed care has universal applicability, an insight that helps us understand the needs of all students. We concluded this section by collating all of these elements into the TISP Tri-Phasic Model, detailing the competencies congruent with becoming a trauma-informed educator. This framework identifies the knowledges, skills, and dispositions key to helping students be successful in all aspects of their development.

In Sections II and III, we elaborate on specific processes, skills, and strategies for transforming your school or

classroom into a trauma-informed learning environment. Now that you understand the metaframe and the conceptual elements comprising the trauma-informed approach, you will be participating in the development of concrete strategies as well.

SECTION II: IMPLEMENTING TRAUMA-INFORMED SCHOOL PRACTICES

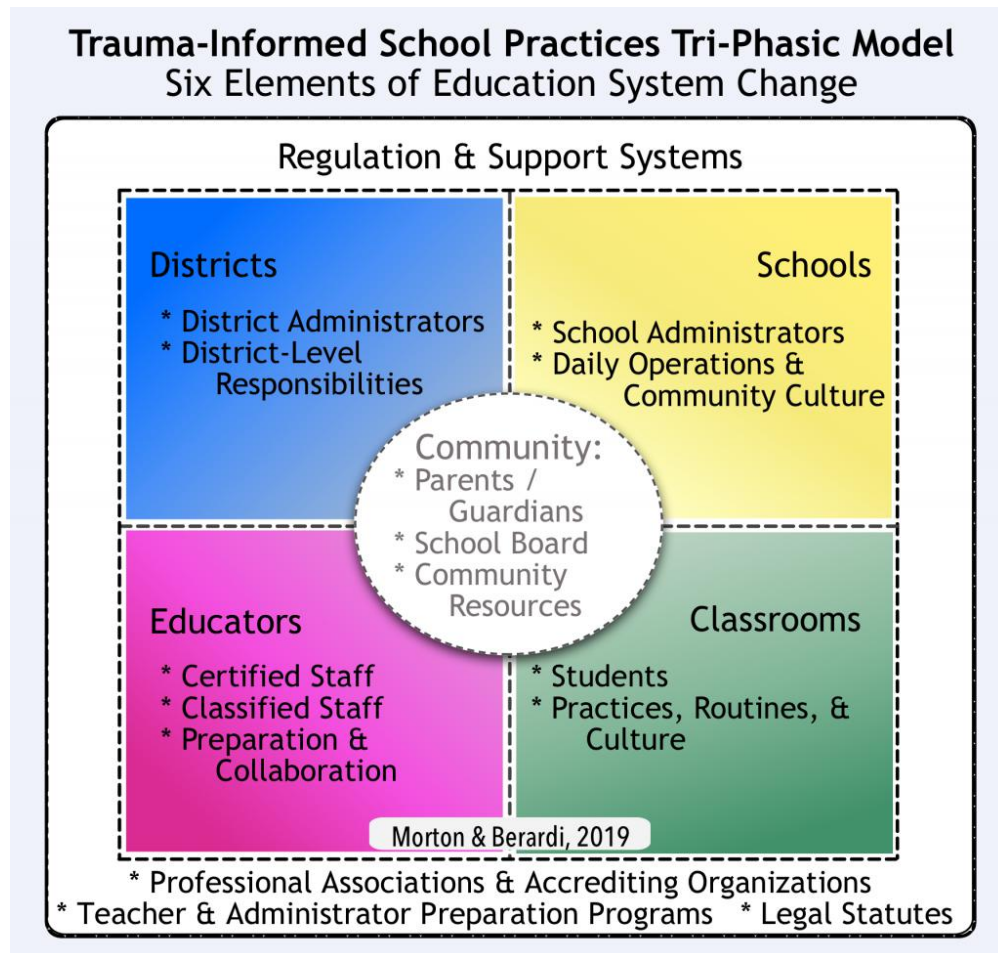
In Section I, we reviewed foundational concepts informing a trauma-informed approach to education. Armed with this information, you can better understand its application to school environments—the focus of Section II.

We begin with identifying the six elements of an education system requiring change in order for TISP to be effective for students. Chapter 7 explores Phase I preliminary themes and tasks that Districts, Schools, and Educators need to address prior to implementing change in the routines and practices of Schools and Classrooms. Community member inclusion is addressed as a District task. The change process is guided by a diverse Strategic Planning Team on the District and School levels, and an Action Plan for classroom teachers.

Chapter 8 addresses the specific needs of classroom teachers, who engage in the most sustained contact with each student. Focus on implementing Phase I of TISP is emphasized as well as further developing the classroom teachers' Action Plan.

Phase II focuses primarily on strategies for mentoring students in self-regulation skills. This is the central challenge for students requiring the greatest amount of assistance in response to significant behavioral dysregulation. Chapter 9 provides guiding principles for conceptualizing and responding to behavioral disruptions in a manner congruent with TISP premises and goals.

Chapter 7: Planning for Transition to Trauma-Informed School Practices: District, School, and Educator Considerations



Trauma-Informed School Practices Tri-Phasic Model

“If we use how we were taught yesterday to teach our children today, we are not preparing them well for tomorrow.” –Daniel J. Siegel, *Pocket Guide to Interpersonal Neurobiology: An Integrative Handbook of the Mind*

Image Description

The picture introducing this chapter is a diagram of the six elements of education system change corresponding to the Trauma-Informed School Practices Tri-Phasic Model. The outer box identifies the Regulation and Support Systems consisting of professional associations and accrediting organizations, teacher and administrator preparation programs, and legal statutes. The center of the diagram consists of four adjoining boxes, one each to identify Districts (district administrators and district-level responsibilities); Schools (school administrators, daily operations, and community culture); Educators (certified staff, classified staff; preparation and collaboration); and Classrooms (students; practices, routines, and culture). At the very center of the image is an oval overlapping the four adjoining boxes, identified as Community (parents, guardians, the school board, and community resources).

Desired Outcomes

This chapter invites all layers of the education system to implement preliminary steps towards becoming a trauma-informed learning community. Specific focus is on Phase I dispositions and tasks as applied to Districts, Schools, and Educators. At the conclusion of this chapter, school professionals will be able to:

- Identify specific aspects of your role requiring a trauma-informed shift in perspective
- Gather additional resources to deepen trauma-informed conceptual knowledge as it relates to your role
- Create or join a Strategic Planning Team on the District and/or School level, according to your role
- Develop an Action Plan, with detailed elements of immediate and short-range goals
- Begin implementing Phase I in your District, in Schools, and with Educators

Key Concepts

This chapter provides specific ideas and recommendations for implementing Phase I of the TISP Tri-Phasic Model. Key concepts discussed include the following:

- Transitioning to a TISP learning community first requires a *shift in perspective* reflecting trauma-informed knowledge and dispositions
- TISP implementation as a *developmental process* with immediate, short-, middle-, and long-range goals

- TISP invites all school personnel to be aware of *isomorphic processes* that either model trauma-informed response best practices or undermine the efficacy of TI efforts
- Strategic Planning Teams as a central element for sharing tasks, collaboratively seeking all stakeholder input, and establishing a concrete, manageable, and purposeful developmental trajectory

Chapter Overview

Chapter 6 introduced the Trauma-Informed School Practices Tri-Phasic Model for education systems transitioning to trauma-informed practice. We identified six subsystem elements that require participation in the transition process in order to promote sustainable and effective trauma-informed learning environments (see Figure 6.1). Sections II and III of this text take each of these six system elements and identify strategies, guidelines, and recommendations for implementing TISP. In this chapter, we address Phase I dispositions and tasks related to Districts, Schools, and Educators. As we address District tasks, we also identify steps to include Community members (caretakers and board members) in planning processes.



Phase I: Connecting

Phase I (*Connecting*) and Phase II (*Coaching*) of the TISP Tri-Phasic Model are the most labor-intensive phases. The *Connecting* phase addresses the primacy of attuning to a person's experience and need, as well as attuning to the larger social setting (using perceptual and conceptual skills), and then acting (executive skills) to convey care, understanding, and safety (both physical and emotional) as a precursor to helping a person or a system move forward with the tasks at hand. These perceptual, conceptual, and executive skills are grounded in attachment theory as informed by neurobiology.

In essence, Phase I perceptual and conceptual skills invite us to examine and perhaps change our perspectives on how we view our learning environments, each other, and our students. These changes in perception are recursive with increasing our mastery of trauma-informed content domains, especially as it relates to stress, neurodevelopment, and their relationship to a student's capacity to function in the school setting. Chapter 7 primarily focuses on these preliminary tasks related to

Connecting perceptual and conceptual skill tasks.

The executive skills of Phase I, the actions we take ideally reflecting the shifts in our perceptual and conceptual schemas, consist of two themes: planning and implementing. Planning is envisioning needed based on what we now know and what we hope to achieve. Implementing is taking action congruent with the goals of Phase I according to our roles. In this chapter, coinciding with identifying preliminary mindset shifts, we focus on planning and implementing Phase I as follows: In Districts, we invite administrators to form a District Strategic Planning Team, setting the stage

for breaking the long-range goal down into phases even as implementation begins almost immediately. For Schools, including administrators and the School Strategic Planning Teams, a similar goal-setting process unfolds, with emphasis on supporting school staff. Chapter 7 is one of two chapters focusing on Phase I for Educators, with and discusses developing the educator's perceptual and conceptual skills as applied to developing an initial Action Plan, as well as gathering ideas and resources prior to implementing Phase I and II strategies with students, whether in the classroom or throughout the school system. Chapter 8 addresses specific implementation of Phase I executive skills in the Classroom by teachers (Educators), with special emphasis on *Connecting* skills with students.

For each subsystem discussed, our planning implementation recommendations will directly mirror the dispositions and tasks identified in Phase I of the TISP Tri-Phasic Model. We invite you to read Chapter 7 with the TISP document open, and pen and paper at hand. Let's begin an implementation plan together.

District



District System Element

This element of the education system refers primarily to district-level administrators and staff, with the recognition that most decision-making processes related to TISP implementation reside here, most notably with the district superintendent. District administrators are also responsible for setting the relational tone of a district. You are viewed as steering the ship; all personnel seek to understand your intentions and anticipate your next move. Districts are the ultimate voice of the learning community and the most likely liaison between Community (as represented by school boards and parents) stakeholder concerns and school personnel charged with responding. And while Schools and Educators may have the most contact with caretakers (parents and guardians), Districts are ultimately accountable to the parents of the students in their care.

For district personnel, if we could take your pulse right now, a reading which indicates your own level of interest in implementing trauma-informed practice within your educational system, what might it say? A low reading might suggest that you are skeptical of the idea, even though you may see the logic in elements of the mindset. Perhaps the overhaul is too expensive, timely, and uncertain. A moderate reading may indicate that you would love to see a district or school transition to trauma-informed practice, yet you are too aware of the systemic elements that could make or break the process at any point along the way. Or, your pulse may be quite high, resonating with the rationale and wanting this for your students and staff in response to the crisis all levels of the system are experiencing right before your very eyes.

We think there is wisdom in every perspective, a grain of truth in most lies, and a falsehood in most truths. The same applies here. TISP does require much heavy lifting with no guarantee of sustained better outcomes for students and educators despite data to the contrary emerging from trauma-informed schools (Berger, 2019; Crosby, Day, Somers, & Baroni, 2018; Jones, Berg, & Osher, 2018; Mendelson, Tandon, O'Brennan, Leaf, & Ialong, 2015; Stevens, 2012). There are many factors that may sink a district's best efforts, but they will not include poor choices made on your part if you are armed first with TISP conceptual and perceptual knowledge. We need the skeptical to walk beside us, as their insight may be just what is needed when we get stuck, even though we will jump into the work before us trusting that the data and the current state of affairs demand we change course.

First Steps

Having taken a deep dive into the reality that students with unintegrated neural networks are overwhelmed and unable to adequately respond to the developmental demands of the academic environment, you are now ready to make some changes. You have been hearing throughout this text that the problem of inadequate neural development cannot be solved by a few teachers employing basic trauma-informed classroom strategies, even though it may be helpful for that teacher and their handful of students during that given day or class session. You understand that the educational community needs to change. We start this process with a few preliminaries as you begin charting your course.

Take It One Step at a Time. Map out the long-range process. Break it down into phases. Then dig into just the first steps of the immediate goals (this chapter).

Trust That You Are on a Journey. And you are going to be taking your school community along with you. Soon, each segment of the system will be working through their own process of dissonance, skepticism, interest, hope, and excitement.

Don't Go It Alone. Consult with other district administrators who have decided to transition to trauma-informed practice. Find ways to rely on each other for mutual brainstorming and support. Talk with administrators who have made the switch; they are full of wisdom about glitches and gains along the way.

Keep Reading. Read more about neural integration and learning, about stress and trauma, about schools who have become trauma-informed. We list resources at the end of each chapter linking you with additional trauma-informed educator materials.

And Read Some More, Specifically Relevant and Reliable Leadership Resources. Consult administrative leadership resources about how to nurture systemic change *using methods congruent with the culture and ethos of trauma-informed practice*. You have read how trauma-informed practice, regardless of setting, invites the professional to embody the heart of its findings. Briefly summarized, having moved beyond mere theories of the social and behavioral sciences, various philosophies, and belief systems, we can say with scientific certainty as revealed in advances in neurobiology, that community is life-giving and crucial to nurturing well-being, health, and consequently, productivity (Cozolino, 2013, 2014; DeCocio, 2018; Siegel, 2012). The relational stance of TISP (attachment as attunement and mentoring between adults and children, and attunement and mutuality between adults) is not merely good for students, but school personnel as well. These relational values are key to sustained health and productivity for each person throughout the lifespan.

Reach for resources that invite a collaborative leadership style that includes employee voices. This is what your building administrators and classroom teachers will be invited to do in relationship with their constituents. Reach for leadership models that acknowledge how being truthful and forthcoming promotes a sense of safety, paving the way for accessing effective coping resources. This is the work of classroom teachers, mirroring what a child knows—yes, life is hard, scary, unfair, and unpredictable, but we are going to find our way through this together.

By forthcoming, we mean discussing the harsh realities along the way as you see it from your vantage point, as well as realities that are of importance to your staff. Last year, we heard a story from a district that had an unprecedented number of tragedies strike its community during summer break. This included the deaths of multiple students and teachers, and life-threatening injuries and illnesses to additional students and staff. These traumas resulted from separate incidents ranging from sheer accident, to acts of violence, to human bodies just failing unexpectedly from time to time. Staff and students were pulsating with grief, fear, and sadness. And not one administrator said a thing! Crickets!

Think about that for a moment. Stress and trauma tap on our implicit and explicit memory circuits. To make sense of an event, we need to process it—not just what happened in the here and now, but with the understanding that current stressors reach into our reservoirs of memory. Each time a significant event impacts a community and that community thinks it is better to not discuss it—for whatever reason, be it legal concerns or just not wanting to bring more stress to people—that community's silence is deafening. However, when we create space to verbally acknowledge an event or a current stressful or traumatic reality (not force a discussion or debriefing), and we empathically attune to what members

of our community might be experiencing, we are seizing a golden opportunity to promote community cohesion, healing, and growth.

This mindset is inviting you to perhaps get out of your comfort zone, as you are being asked to relate to your staff in the same way classroom teachers will be relating to their students.

Trust in the Power of Role Modeling. A system's view of social change relies heavily on the observation of how patterns of attitudes, as displayed in verbal and nonverbal communication or actions, reverberate throughout a system. In Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecosystemic model of human growth and development (see Chapter 10, Figure 10.1), he captures this same sentiment when describing how the overt and covert values and mores of a culture are the most powerful contributors to identity formation and a sense of well-being. Just like a yawn is catching, so are the covert and overt values of persons with great influence in a system. As systems' therapists try to help organizations understand how to change their culture, or how to make sense of a relationally toxic element, or break a pattern or habit that members of a system seem to keep cycling through season after season even though its members may come and go, we are looking for what we may call parallel processes or isomorphic patterns (Bernard & Goodyear, 2018; Falender & Shafranske, 2004; Todd & Storm, 1997). When you set in motion a series of actions congruent with an internal attitude and covert beliefs, that becomes a pattern (in attitude and action) likely to be picked up by those around you, whether they can clearly articulate it or not. Actions incongruent with an unspoken attitude are immediately perceived, sometimes in nonverbal ways, as confirmatory messages reflecting the inner attitude. For example, when a person or an organization promotes care for you but you pick up relational values that are to the contrary, the incongruence is merely revealing more about the ultimate inner message. More concretely, it is the proverbial shout of "No, I'm not angry!" Okay, we know you are angry and are having a difficult time owning up to it.

All that to say, as you convey your genuine hope that we can be effective community members with our students who are most impacted by unmitigated stress and trauma; as you pledge your commitment to learning right beside your staff; as you convey patience for the learning and implementation process, which stems from your own inner sense of calm and hope; all of that will be catching. Your staff will feel that each step of the way is manageable. Fear of failure or the stress of the urgent lessens in intensity, even though you are still feeling the pressure of not quite being sure or ready. A sense of hopeful community energy begins to creep into the workplace. This, by the way, is the exact energy classroom teachers will be seeking to build with their students: congruent, honest, caring, attuned communication lessening fear and inspiring hope and other coping resources.

Hold Things Lightly. This is a tough one. TISP will be inviting you to eventually re-evaluate most things you take for granted or have worked tooth and nail to implement and make a success. It reminds me (Anna) of decisions to buy a new piece of furniture or paint walls. The synergy of how things used to work together suddenly does not fit anymore, causing a domino effect of problems. But when the remodeling is done, it is like new life has been breathed into a space. That is what is likely to happen here. Truth telling now...first up might be a re-evaluation of student behavioral management policies, as this system is intricately linked with the culture and hands-on coaching messages we are employing with students. How we handle dysregulated student behavior—meltdowns, tantrums, threats of violence, acts of defiance—these are just the moments we *need* to walk through with our students over and over again to give them opportunity to use the safety, stabilization, and insight-building skills we are teaching them in class before we usher them through a repair process. We need to totally reimagine what their behavior means, but most importantly, we need to reimagine how to respond. And yes, it still includes limit-setting, consequences, and boundaries, but the delivery method might be from a totally different ethos than currently used by your schools.

Other systems might need retooling not because something is inconsistent with the TISP ethos, but simply because of the domino effect: Change to one part of a system requires others to adjust. As you move through the process, holding things lightly does require some deep breaths and an assurance that any changes can be thoughtful and well-timed, congruent with the discernment of your trauma-informed strategic teams. But for now, pay attention to your own comfort or lack thereof when you think of treasured systems that might beg for reconsideration.

What Are Your Resources?

Reflect on the following questions, either on your own or, better yet, in discussion with another administrator traveling a similar path as you.

1. TISP is inviting you to take the long view: Implementation takes time; it's a gradual process to reach all elements of a system. What about that is freeing? What about that is concerning?
2. What trauma-informed resources have you discovered? Ask those around you what they have found helpful.
3. What is your leadership style? What resources have impacted you the most?
4. What is your internal response when imagining the possible need to change TISP-incongruent systems, or systems impacted by the domino effect? How do you deal with change when that change is imposed upon you by a new paradigm (such as TISP) or some other force other than you choosing such a change? Everyone's style of response is different, not unlike what you will likely encounter in various pockets of your education community. Pay attention to how you respond to forced change, as a way of empathically connecting with staff who may not be too receptive working through change processes.
5. Review the TISP Primary Dispositions #1–5, and the Phase I Dispositions #6–8, found in the TISP Tri-Phasic Model document in Chapter 6. What TISP values and dispositions do you resonate with? What challenges you the most? And what items might invite your concern or skepticism? Share these with other administrators working this process. Or save them for a moment to share with your District Strategic Planning Team as you begin your deliberations.

Partner with *Community* Resources—A District Administrator's Reflections

Reach out to the community for support and resources. One of the greatest things about our trauma-informed journey is the high number of community groups that have become our partners in helping kids. Mental health providers, the Department of Health and Human Services, the county health department, health insurance providers, and law enforcement all have a vested interest in improving the lives of children. Early on in our work, we invited community members to join our staff in TISP professional learning sessions, and convened several meetings that included school administrators and leaders of various community organizations. That resulted in both stronger connections between groups and a combining of resources that benefits all organizations.

–Bruce, District Office Administrator

Create a District Strategic Planning Team

The first part of not going solo and working in collaboration with others is creating a District Strategic Planning Team. This team becomes the steering committee for the entire process, even though participants may change and subcommittees will be formed.

Choosing Group Members. Don't be alarmed by the potential size of your Strategic Planning Team as you read through the following elements of assembling a team. Imagine this team is shaped like a series of interlocking hands, with many moving parts, rather than an encapsulated small band of people. A traditional small team may design large-scale, intricate plans full of scaffolded goals along a leisurely timetable. But the only persons who understand it and are excited by it are the members of that isolated group. Think of this team as key to energizing educators throughout the district who will also be sharing updates and serving as liaisons with School Strategic Planning Teams. The nature of this process and this team does invite an intentional team management process, which will be discussed further below. For now, imagine your team as having many functions, and people are needed to play their part.

When assembling a strategic team, it is critical that your group be comprised of the following:

- **Trauma-Informed Participants:** This is not a committee for staunch naysayers and those invested in protecting a pre-existing idea or program, although both types of participants might be welcome to attend and speak into various meetings. In fact, a structure of transparency as conveyed in open meetings is a wonderful way to build trust. This is a planning committee that will be required to apply distinct knowledge, skills, and dispositions to the evaluation and implementation of program change; it requires new perceptual, conceptual, and executive skills. The planning team is a group of educators (all roles) who are in the process of acquiring or deepening TISP competencies *and want to or will be asked to implement TISP within the district.*
- **Participants Open to Sharing a Process:** Participants willing to learn TISP through mutual readings, continuing education, and conferences will be personally challenged as a part of the trauma-informed professional development process. Team members will need to anticipate that the committee is a place to share how the subject matter challenges and impacts their own worldview and personal experience.
- **A Diverse Group of Educators:** Diversity on a TISP implementation Strategic Planning Team must take into consideration a number of factors pertinent to the nature of the task:
 - *The Nature of the Subject Matter—Responding to Unmitigated Stress and Trauma:* In congruence with the guiding values of trauma-informed best practices, TISP implementation processes need to be honoring of staff and students. In order to practice TISP as part of the implementation process, we need to hear each other's stories and the social contexts in which they are embedded. By attuning to each other, we can co-design processes that are honoring and growth-promoting. This process is facilitated by committees comprised of stakeholders from a variety of backgrounds and contextual identities including race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, worldview, age, ability, and other identifiers at risk of being socially misunderstood, unseen, vulnerable, and/or marginalized.
 - *Representative Stakeholders within Each of the Six System Elements:* The District team will be facilitating a "Board to Bus" change process, and therefore needs the insight and assistance of educators inhabiting a variety of roles throughout the district, with some positions possibly filled by state-level education administrators or community volunteers. While the team is diverse and comprised of many persons,

remember that the team can be built in stages, with subsystems of the team often working independently from the larger group and utilizing your established communication systems to share updates with the rest of the group. An ideal list of District Strategic Planning Team member positions to eventually fill includes:

- Superintendent
- Data Analyst
- Grant Manager
- Curriculum Director/Director of Teaching and Learning
- Behavior Specialist
- Principals: one each per school level
- Principal or another administrator from a school identified as participating in initial implementation plans
- Classroom Teacher: one representative from each school
- School Resource Officer
- Board Member(s)
- Parent: one representative from each school
- Trauma-Informed Licensed Mental Health Provider with skills in parent-focused groups
- Local Trauma-Informed Training Team: preferably a partnership with a teacher educator and counselor educator
- Representatives from a variety of roles, including special education, school counseling, school support services such as cafeteria, maintenance, and transportation services
- Additional members of strategic significance and/or with high interest

Basic Strategic Team Structural Elements. The superintendent and those persons initially giving shape to the District Strategic Planning Team need to consider the following, either prior to gathering team members or as initial business tended to by the group. Each item will invite its own discernment process by district administrators.

- **Increase Incentives and Decrease Barriers:** Time, level of effort, logistics, ambiguous purpose and processes, and uncertain potential for results to be implemented are committee motivation killers. Happily, if we plan ahead we can minimize most of these items, increasing the likelihood that educators will find service on a Strategic Planning Team rewarding and worth their time and effort.
 - As is embedded in these guiding principles, many of the concerns about time, level of effort, and the purpose of the team can be clearly articulated as key people begin to meet and craft the team.
 - To reduce time and logistical barriers, depending on your context, consider rotating meeting location, or using an agreed-upon central location. Vary meetings between online asynchronous checking in on tasks and bi-weekly or monthly in-person meetings. Or, host meetings online. Key to remote meeting is guarding against creating more barriers by poor sound and visibility. Assuming adequate internet strength and meeting application veracity, online meeting barriers are common when blending meeting styles in which a group is meeting face-to-face together and others are meeting remotely without using adequate screens or microphones. Be aware that TISP requires much cognitive strategizing as well as personal connection; if meetings are even more stressed by limits to technology, this will impact group dynamics. You might not have much choice; just find a way to attune to these challenges.
 - Make the time commitment a part of a participant's job, not an additional task to an already maxed-out job description. Nothing decreases interest and builds resentment more than having an impossible job description and then being asked to do even more. Consider how each committee person can let go of something for the duration of their service. For example, perhaps a strategy for protecting time and enhancing a consistent meeting place would be to require various members of the team to work at the district office on occasion, depending on the task at hand. Educators would then be relieved of their daily responsibilities on those days. Allow your context and team to guide you in how to honor and protect your coworkers' time.

- **Invite Membership Rotation:** This is a large undertaking, and some potential planning team members may fear eternal consignment while others may enjoy hunkering down for the long haul. Build in permission for each member to reevaluate their team role on a yearly basis, with no pressure to leave or continue as long as the fit is mutual for all. The focus of the team will change over time, also inviting members to reevaluate level of involvement.
- **A Plan for Cataloguing and Sharing Information:** This large, complex change process and its corresponding Strategic Planning Teams need administrative support from a person designated as the primary coordinator of all logistics and communications. Fully functioning TISP Strategic Planning Teams are often large (in larger districts) and consist of many moving parts, including subcommittees. Often, elements of the team may not regularly connect in person with other parts of the team. A system of gathering summaries available to all committee members will be crucial. Likewise, this role would also track communications that would be disseminated throughout the district, including to Community members. This sharing begins building awareness, interest, and trust.
- **Clear Expectations of Time Commitment:** This is a new adventure, and the motivation, the nature of your district, and other factors dictate how slow or fast schools or teacher cohorts within your district are interested in acting now. Whatever your context, be clear with your team members, even if the message is “time commitment unknown at this moment.” Logic suggests that meeting frequency may be high initially as the team gets its bearings. Subcommittees may meet more regularly once a short-term agenda has been established. Invite your team to understand that the first phase will be solidifying first steps, and with that comes clarity regarding time commitments.
- **A Clear Sense of District Administration Involvement:** The team needs a clear sense that district administrators are not just delegating this to others. If the superintendent is merely giving staff permission to learn about TISP and implement strategies in schools and classrooms, the process is going to stall and become ineffective. District administrators do need to learn the content domain, have a regular presence in various strategic team meetings, and contribute their voice in communications distributed to team members and the greater district environment.
- **Craft a Team Process Management Plan:** As mentioned above, most strategic implementation teams start small but eventually become more complex as foundations are built. Depending on your context, this team could be rather large, with schedules difficult to manage. With all other items described here in place (a plan for sharing information, clear expectations, decreasing barriers, membership rotation, etc.), decide how central committee meetings will occur, the “when, where, and who,” how subcommittees will function, and how each element of the team will report back to the whole group. This might be sketched out by a small group of district administrators, or crafted by the initial team once assembled, or follow an initial structure designed by the district to be re-evaluated once the team digs in. But, this process needs to be crafted, clearly articulated, and utilized.

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Strategic Team Initial Tasks. A TISP strategic plan may span a number of years as you envision how to bring consistency to a student’s progression through your school system. It is important to note that when starting anywhere in this process, from teachers eager to change the culture and practices within their classrooms to principals seeking to transform an entire school, student outcomes require our attention to the big picture. Attunement and mentoring are needed across the first 18 years of life to maximize a developing person’s likelihood of entering adulthood ready to cope with life demands.

The process of integrating neural networks to enable executive functioning is not a single-dose process: it is continual. The challenge for Districts is to envision how to create a seamless process for students whereby they enter a trauma-informed preschool or kindergarten class and graduate from a trauma-informed high school.

The process of integrating neural networks to enable executive functioning is not a single-dose process: it is continual. The challenge for Districts is to envision how to create a seamless process for students whereby they enter a trauma-informed preschool or kindergarten class and graduate from a trauma-informed high school.

The District Strategic Planning Team must also address the risks and benefits of educators in some schools, some grade levels, and some departments engaging in the change

process while colleagues and school systems serving the same students are not on the same page making changes. First, the good news: Any changes made will benefit that teacher or staff person and the students they serve. And change most often initially occurs in haphazard, hit-or-miss patterns. The bad news: Partial involvement is a frustrating disaster waiting to happen that is demoralizing to the staff person who has caught the vision and is engaged in the work of acquiring TISP competencies. The work of one classroom emphasizing self-regulation prior to and while learning is undermined by other classrooms or student management systems not embodying the same ethos. Consistency and continuity across the day, across classrooms, and across grade levels are key to success.

Most persons and systems can tolerate almost anything if we know why, and that the discomfort is temporary on our way to fixing a problem. When a clear plan exists to gradually bring all elements of the system on board, if only one department or one grade level or one school can initially start the process, we can rest assured that others will be joining in due time. We can't build this in a day, but the District Strategic Planning Team does need to see the big picture even as very tough decisions need to be made regarding where to start despite limits and drawbacks.

The initial tasks of this undertaking include the following:

- Agree on common reading materials and training. This promotes a common knowledge base and a chance for mutual reflection. This reading list is not only for the team members, but required reading for all personnel choosing to start the trauma-informed transition process.
- Determine how you want to start. We have observed some districts beginning with a small group of educators, primarily classroom teachers, who are committed to the process and have full support of the district. These districts envision the end goal and support pockets of the system engaging in the challenge in their own style and timing. Rachel's story below illustrates this type of process. We have also observed districts that have chosen to start with primary grades, for example kindergarten through third grade across a district, giving time to bring successive grades on board, with the goal of creating a foundation for current students. Geoffrey Canada took this approach, including his decision to start with expectant parents and parents of infants and young children, putting them through a program he calls "Baby College" (Tough, 2009). Others have chosen to allow a single school to transform its culture and practices, spearheaded by a principal or administrative team deeply committed to the trauma-informed educator approach. Trust you will jump in according to what is best for your constituents; just remain aware of the larger picture and plan accordingly.
- Design a set of training strategies. There is much to consider here, which we have elaborated on below. In summary, this may include:
 - Trauma-informed educator book clubs or learning communities set up by school, grade level, role, or common interest
 - Professional development support for trauma-informed educator conferences and training workshops
 - District- or state-sponsored trauma-informed educator training events
 - Implementation coaching and peer supervision training events
- Expand your team to include key stakeholders in the group targeted for initial implementation.
- Assist school(s) to set up a School Strategic Planning Team, a context-specific version appropriate for schools, and begin the initial implementation plans.
- As part of your short-range goals, identify systems each School team may need to re-evaluate as more staff

participate in TI education and preparation activities, versus what systems are best if first evaluated by the District team. Most notable is the need to assess and re-evaluate school- or district-wide behavioral management systems. This is a Strategic Planning Team task force project that will quickly move up in urgency. However, this evaluation process must be facilitated by a cohort of educators in a variety of roles who have completed initial trauma-informed education. This ensures that program evaluations and proposed changes are congruent with trauma-informed student behavioral management goals. We recommend that the planning team create space to consult with trauma-informed education trainers, and perhaps sponsor in-service day trainings dedicated to this topic.

- As your immediate and short-range plans take shape, spend a moment glancing toward the long-range plans to identify tasks that may need attention now in preparation for those far-off goals. For example, this might include developing a plan to further train more staff in varying roles, prepare parent classroom volunteers, and add grades and schools to increase continuity for the growing student.

What Conferences or Trainings Are Right for You?

Trauma-informed educator trainings are increasing nationwide. Are all of these good investments? Quick trauma-informed how-to articles are also trending. We read a one-page article on becoming trauma-informed by practicing active listening. Is that all it takes, or is that most helpful for just piquing interest, or encouraging the experienced trauma-informed educator to not forget a basic building block among many? Given the plethora of books and conferences, and our limited time and budgets, where do we start?

Trauma-informed training is near and dear to our hearts, so much so that we offer a continuing education based certificate in TISP (see Appendix C, Trauma-Informed School Practices Certification Program), as well as a postgraduate certificate in trauma-informed services through the [Trauma Response Institute at George Fox University](https://www.georgefox.edu/counseling-programs/clinics/tri/index.html) (George Fox University, 2019a, 2019b) (<https://www.georgefox.edu/counseling-programs/clinics/tri/index.html>). But we are only one option among many good options. The following recommendations are intended to help you invest wisely.

1. Build interest among your staff *first*, rather than overwhelm with quick strategies or deep course content. This might be a series of in-service workshops in which a trauma-informed professional can provide insight into the impact of unmitigated stress and trauma on executive functioning in the classroom, and its long-term consequences as exemplified in ACE scores. And then move the group to glancing inside trauma-informed schools to catch a vision of what is possible.
2. Once interest is present, provide access for your staff to an introductory trauma-informed education course or workshop prior to amassing implementation strategies. We would never want to certify a teacher before that person absorbs foundational concepts informing educator proficiencies. You would never want a counselor or therapist to offer trauma-informed services before absorbing the knowledge, skills, and dispositions of that specialty prior to practice. Likewise, giving educators strategies before providing the background conceptual elements is irresponsible and a setup for failure. This textbook aims to help facilitate this foundational knowledge acquisition process and guide you to deepen your readings. Another good option is to consult with a trauma-informed training team for introductory trauma-informed CE workshops or university-based credit courses.
3. Now your staff members are ready to absorb strategy sessions and workshops even while buzzing

with their own creations. Most often, strategy-based trainings are found through trauma-informed educator organizations. These conferences are often expensive. But with introductory conceptual elements already in place, your staff will be ready to more fully appreciate everything offered in such venues, as well as vet what is or is not trauma-informed or appropriate for their context. Besides conferences, think of investing in training videos such as those offered by organizations listed at the end of this chapter under Resources for Further Reading. Local trauma-informed CE/university course training teams should be able to offer implementation strategy workshops as well.

4. Use local trainers for implementation coaching. Educators building TISP competencies benefit from coaching processes within the context of peer-consult groups. This model represents yet another blending of training processes common in education and mental health training programs. The integration of trauma-informed perceptual, conceptual, and executive skills in direct work with students is not strengthened by merely following a series of steps or instructions related to a strategy, but by reflection in consultation with other trauma-informed educators. We have utilized this process for a few years now and think it is the most crucial training element to solidify TISP competencies.
5. Network and stay current. What are other schools and districts doing? What has been effective in those places and how might that work in your setting? New discoveries regarding the neuroscience of stress, trauma, and learning are occurring daily; how might you curate this data and share with your learning community?
6. Share what you are doing. One of the best ways to deepen learning is to share it with colleagues. How might classroom teachers be supported to present at teacher conferences, with their colleagues, district administrators, and/or school boards? Does your school or district encourage staff to network by sharing their work in educator publications and professional social media sites?
7. Create a staff TISP mentoring program. Until the Regulation and Support Systems, that element of charged with identifying training and competency standards for the profession, make advances so that teachers and administrators graduate with TISP competencies, you are likely to be starting from scratch with each new hire. How can you utilize TISP skilled staff to facilitate TISP Learning Communities for all new hires? This is perhaps the most cost-effective method to keep the training process going until all sectors of a District are on board the TISP bus.

As previously stated, Districts hold the most influence in getting the ball rolling in an intentional, clear, and measured way that can make or break the engagement of the learning community and TISP's potential success on behalf of students. It helps to hear the experiences of other administrators. We close this section with an insightful reflection from Rachel. In her story you will hear the dispositions of a trauma-informed educator. Follow along with the process she details, but listen even more closely to how she empathically attunes—how she connects—with her staff as she invites them to join her in this journey. She is modeling a consistent ethic of care, the very relational stance we are inviting each of us to have with students.

A District Administrator's Story

Our district made a commitment to becoming trauma-informed after the administrative team spent most of a school year learning about the impact of trauma on the developing brain and the resulting long-term health outcomes. Collectively, we all agreed that dedicating time and resources to helping every single member of our district understand how childhood trauma impacts development and the educational experience was the only choice we could make—it was just the right thing to do. As one member of the team stated, “Not sharing this information would be educational malpractice.”

After that decision was made, the daunting task of shifting perspectives at all levels of our district began. Knowing that this work is about changing the hearts and mindsets of the adults in the system, not fixing the kids, we recognized that we had to take our staff on the same educational journey that the administration team traveled. We had to allow time and space for our people to develop and wrestle with some pretty significant understandings, including realizing the impact of their own traumatic life experiences.

Collectively, we all agreed that dedicating time and resources to helping every single member of our district understand how childhood trauma impacts development and the educational experience was the only choice we could make—it was just the right thing to do. As one member of the team stated, “Not sharing this information would be educational malpractice.” *Rachel, District Administrator*

We started this journey by bringing nationally renowned speakers to our small district to create a solid foundational understanding of both the definition of trauma and its impacts both developmentally and physiologically. This burgeoning understanding was deepened and strengthened through an interactive simulation of one child's early life experiences prior to arriving at school. Throughout this initial phase of the journey, rich conversations connecting new understandings to current reality became a frequent occurrence. Staff were excited to have validation of something that they always knew to be true, but didn't have a way to define— a confirmation that a child's life experience did impact their life at school. As staff grew to accept and embrace a philosophy of supporting all students academically, socially, and emotionally, the rich conversations of recognition quickly shifted to the often repeated question, “Now that I know this, what do I do?”

Staff became almost desperate for information and strategies to better support all students now that they understood the impact of childhood trauma. However, it was with intention that we did not provide a laundry list of strategies, but rather sought to deepen understanding of how personal experiences impact interactions with others. It was only in engaging in a continued reflection on personal beliefs and attitudes, and an emphasis on fostering a growth mindset, that staff started to come to the realization that their most powerful tool for supporting students impacted by trauma is their attuned response.

As staff began to realize the importance of remaining regulated and predictable in their interactions with students and others, the journey toward becoming trauma-informed took divergent paths based on levels of personal investment in achieving the larger goal. Just as with any professional learning focus, there are some staff members who readily embrace ideas and opportunities to learn more, and others remain more distant and need additional time and evidence before shifting their thinking. For some staff members, the

response to this information was almost immediate— they joined a cohort of teachers dedicated to learning more about the neurobiology of trauma, and creating classroom cultures and instructional spaces that help students build skills to deal with both the stresses of everyday life and traumatic experiences. Other staff members embraced the staff wellness aspect of a trauma-informed approach, seeking to understand and mitigate the effects of secondary trauma, a common experience for school personnel. By intentionally building professional learning opportunities that were differentiated to the needs and interests of the staff, the foundation for effort broadened and strengthened.

Creating the solid foundation was critical as buildings began to design system-wide shifts in their policies and practices to reflect a trauma-informed approach. Intentionally focusing on shifting the system facilitated the alignment of practices, the creation and implementation of a common language, and an ongoing commitment to creating instructional spaces that are safe, consistent, and predictable throughout the entire district. We continue on this journey and are still very much a work in progress, as in learning more about becoming trauma-informed; we recognize there is still so much that we need to learn. It can be difficult maintaining the balance of high relationship and high expectations that is central to this work, but it is so important in providing all of our students the supports that they need to not get stuck in their story, and realize that their past and/or current experiences do not define their future. —Rachel, District Office Administrator

Chapter 7: Exercise 2

Reflections on Rachel's Story

Rachel shares a powerful story regarding how she and her colleagues came to the decision to implement trauma-informed programming, and then designed a measured, clear, and developmentally sequenced process to move their educational system toward the goal of trauma-informed practice. Her work will illustrate foundational strategies to move an educational system toward successful and sustainable implementation of TISP as will be discussed in our last chapter. For now, reflect on the following:

1. What is most striking about Rachel's story and experience?
2. If you could ask her questions, what might you want to know?
3. How would you describe the way Rachel conceptualized and spoke of her staff?
4. Have you ever experienced administrative role models who you knew viewed and treated their staff as professional colleagues, experts in their own right, and worthy of respect despite tough challenges and the role you merely inhabit in each other's lives at this moment? "Acting as if" might be easy, as we've been coached on how to be respectful in the workplace. But how might an administrator's internal attitudes of viewing staff as annoyances or threats to progress, or as a force to keep at bay, creep through

in nonverbal or covert ways?

5. If you notice your administrative staff viewing their coworkers with similar dismissive or demeaning attitudes, how might you inspire them to re-calibrate that inner attitude? Take heart as this is the same process each staff person will be invited to undertake when it comes to their challenging students, as well as their attitudes and relational stance with administrators, other coworkers, and caretakers.

School



School System Element

As you read through Section I of this text, did you find yourself making connections between situations, events, or escalating behavioral challenges in your school and a student's history of trauma? We would not be surprised if you found yourself thinking back to a recent interaction or disciplinary event and now acknowledging that change is needed in order for that student to be successful. Let's shift our focus to taking a critical look at the School. This element includes the activities, tasks, and routines that regularly occur in the school building. It also includes the responsibilities of each school's administrative team. As we invite you into this section, we encourage you to make a quick list of items relevant to your school's daily routine, structure, policies, and programs such as bell schedules, lunch schedules, discipline policies, class size, space, etc. One way for you to do this is to begin the day through the eyes of a student. Walk through their experience

over the course of a typical day, beginning with the bus ride to school. Then, weave in those things that happen with regularity, but not daily, like fire drills, lockdown drills, assemblies, etc., by adding those to your list. Now shift to consider school policies and procedures that govern student behavioral expectations. One to specifically consider is your school's discipline policy. Last, how do school staff members interact or collaborate with each other over the course of the day? We imagine you now have a lengthy list.

In this section, we walk you through considerations and elements of Phase I implementation. The notes you take, ideas you jot down, and questions you have will assist you in creating your School Strategic Planning Team and identifying your immediate and short-range goals.

First Steps

Commit. Trauma-informed practices is a complete mindshift and requires a transformative process. In order for this to be successful, you need to fully commit. This commitment begins with building your own TISP competencies, and can take a number of forms in each step of the process. However, without a firm commitment from you to do this work, it will be difficult at best for you to lead your school through this transition.

Lead by Example. As discussed above in the District section, in order for administrators to lead their school through trauma-informed education transformation, they must lead by example by becoming trauma-informed themselves. We

really cannot emphasize this enough! Nothing is more awkward than when we are presenting at trainings and it is clear that only the staff are engaging in the activities and readings and not the administrative team. As an administrator leading your school community, I am sure you can see where this is heading. Teachers and staff begin internally asking, “Is this a subtle way of saying our administrators are blaming me for poor student outcomes? Is this important? If I want to implement trauma-informed practices, will my administration support me? Is this a safe space for me to be vulnerable and share challenges as I implement trauma-informed practices?” And ultimately, if teachers and staff perceive the answers to be what they fear most, the status quo rules the day.

Be Vulnerable. Create a safe environment for teachers and staff to be open and vulnerable, and to share what they need to be successful trauma-informed educators. This includes the willingness to deeply listen to your teachers and staff and critically analyze what they are saying. Are there school policies and/or practices that are not congruent with TISP that are creating barriers to successful implementation? Are teachers being held to a specific standard or specific practice that is hindering their ability to connect with students? Have you created a safe environment for your teachers and staff to be vulnerable as they learn and implement TISP? And, if you find the answer is “no” to these and other questions your staff brings to your attention, are you willing to address them?

Build the School Strategic Planning Team. In the previous section on *Districts*, we emphasized the importance of collaboration with all stakeholders, given that TISP requires system change, not just classroom adjustments. Reread the section discussing the District Strategic Planning Team, as the School team serves the same function but specific to the school's role in the change process, including the following:

- Identify the various roles represented by staff on the School level, and invite representatives from each of those groups to join the team. This includes classroom teachers from each grade level, and from core subjects as well as the visual and performing arts; coaches; other certified and classified staff; instructional aides; parent volunteers; bus drivers; and licensed mental health practitioners who might serve your school.
- As discussed on the District level, systems and the ways staff work together may all eventually need re-evaluation and adjustment; this requires diverse voices representative of the various programs and student population. Avoid dual representation. For example, if a classroom teacher represents AVID, do not have that person fill two roles—AVID presentation and classroom teacher for that grade level or subject area. Your team needs clear voices and representation.
- The same organizational and communication structures on the District level apply here: Your team might start with a small inner group, but as positions fill, design an organizational structure allowing subgroups to work independently of the large group with a clear process for all parts of the team to provide updates for the team and the larger School community.
- School-level subcommittees would include the following designed to address various role-specific needs: classroom teachers, school counselors, school psychologists, instructional aides, parent volunteers, and classified staff. For some of these subgroups, a few gatherings a year might be good enough as you work through common readings, or discuss what implementation in your area might look like. For others—for example, school counselors—after you meet initially on your own, many of your remaining meetings might be with classroom teachers, as these two roles will be required to readjust interactions and systems of mutual support. A system of centralized information sharing will help you figure it out as you move along.
 - School subcommittees also include special focus agenda items, such as re-evaluation of student management policies, lunch room processes, school lighting and use of space, etc. Some of these tasks require larger workgroups than others, but all of them require team members committed to developing TISP competencies. For example, a team doing the initial evaluation and investigation into behavioral management policies needs to include classroom teachers from various grade levels, school administrators, and those most responsible for responding to students who cannot function in the traditional classroom. But if the persons on this team have not been participating in a TISP training and learning process, they will not be able to evaluate and create new processes that are TI congruent.
- The School team needs to have representation on the District team in order to foster communication and not

duplicate efforts. It is ideal if a district-level administrator and a Community representative from the board are invited to participate in various aspects of the School Strategic Planning Team as well.

- And as indicated for the District level, it is imperative that School administrators identify themselves as TISP-in-training. This process will fail if we think it is merely about classroom teachers changing the culture and practices of the classroom. School administrators must change their mindset and practices, as well as lead by example.

The initial tasks of the School Strategic Planning Team also mirror District initial tasks. Most notable:

- Engage in a learning process to inspire deeper awareness of what TISP is, and discernment regarding where to begin.
- Design in-service activities and events to build interest and momentum among your school staff. Watch for signs of staff who are already all-in and willing to serve on the team.
- Gather an initial School Strategic Planning Team to discern method of implementation. If a District team is already in place, school administrators or other members of the school team may already be in communication regarding decisions for initial implementation plans. For example, your school may have already decided to train one grade level or one teacher cohort group based on a District-level strategy. Or, you might have decided to change school-level systems, daily rituals, and routines during Year 1 as classroom teachers develop an implementation Action Plan to begin in full swing during Year 2. Either way, design the immediate and short-range goals based upon your ultimate goal or mission statement.

Short-range goals for the School Strategic Planning Team include the following:

- Re-evaluation of each staff's role according to a trauma-informed ethos. Much emphasis is placed on the role of the classroom teacher in Classrooms, discussed in Chapters 8 and 9. Do not neglect focusing on changes needed in other certified and classified roles.
- Re-evaluation of school-based practices as discussed further in this section. Most important is designing rituals, routines, and processes congruent with TISP purpose and dispositions as it relates to Phase I and II tasks. The implementation of these changes is largely driven by the administrative team, as co-designed by the School Strategic Planning Team.

Provide Education and Training. Recently, I (Brenda) was invited to meet with an administrative leadership team to talk about trauma-informed practices. During my time with the team, I was offered a tour of the school, which included a calming space in the main office and several classrooms where calm-down spaces had been created. I learned that the school made the decision to fund these spaces in all classrooms for consistency. The calming space was inviting and included sensory objects for a child to engage with. I approached the classroom teacher and asked about his experiences thus far implementing the calming space. How did he introduce it to students? Were students using the space? What, if any, impact did this have on his students? And, why did he choose to have this added to his classroom? Unfortunately, his response was disappointing, but not unexpected. Yes, students were using the space, but it really had little impact on the classroom management challenges he identified. When I asked if he had received any training on why calming spaces can be effective, he said no. He used the space as a “time out” center where he sent students to reflect on their poor choices or behavior. This teacher had resources in his classroom that would support trauma-informed practices, but he had received no any educator and training, and did not know how to use these resources in a scaffolded way to help all students as part of a larger social-emotional coaching process. It is no wonder he did not see this as being effective.

In Chapter 5, we cautioned that not all things labeled trauma-informed are authentic. As you may have already discerned, “trauma-informed” or “trauma-sensitive” sells. Each of us has attended workshops and conferences, read school implementation books, and reviewed discipline programs that claimed to be “trauma-informed.” However, not all of them are the real deal.

Other pitfalls include the idea that a simple set of strategies is all that is needed; good money is then spent on energizing—and worthy—strategy trainings, but these are prematurely offered in the absence of understanding the conceptual elements underlying trauma-informed practice. With limited resources to transform your school, it is important to maximize those resources and not fall prey to a speaker, trainer, or program that is not truly trauma-informed, or presents an unrealistic vision of how the competencies and transformation process takes place. This is also true of mental health professionals. As mentioned previously, not all licensed mental health practitioners, or those with social and behavioral science competencies such as school counselors and school psychologists, are trained in trauma-informed response. Therefore, choosing the right people to train school staff is critical. We encourage you to do your homework and select well-trained professionals to work with your school.

Are you familiar with the proverb “Give a [person] a fish and you feed [them] for a day. Teach a [person] to fish and you feed [them] for a lifetime” (Tripp, 1970)? Consider this proverb in light of trauma-informed practices. Knowledge of neurobiology and best practices in response are foundational to Trauma-Informed School Practices.

As a teacher, I (Brenda) can appreciate the desire to receive classroom strategies that could easily be implemented in the classroom tomorrow.

However, as shown in the example above about calming spaces in classrooms, without a conceptual understanding of the neurobiology of trauma and best practices in response, it is nearly impossible to discern how a specific strategy could work for your group of learners.

As a teacher, I (Brenda) can appreciate the desire to receive classroom strategies that could easily be implemented in the classroom tomorrow. However, as shown in the example above about calming spaces in classrooms, without a conceptual understanding of the neurobiology of trauma and best practices in response, it is nearly impossible to discern how a specific strategy could work for your group of learners.

To support the development of TISP competencies, we created a certification program for educators (Appendix C).

The program teaches participants how to fish by acquiring

the knowledge, skills, and dispositions of trauma-informed competent educators. Strategies are introduced once the educator can conceptually assess their appropriateness and manipulate their prescribed procedures to contextualize them for their students. And the implementation of those strategies co-occurs with group supervision and peer consulting. Our training methods are born from our own observations of open-minded educators riding the wave of excitement, only to bump up against obstacles that they were not equipped to foresee. While this is all typical and expected on the road to system or paradigm change, we think the urgency and interest in TISP now requires more emphasis on thorough and reliable training processes.

Create Space. Once you have a team of educators participating in training, it will be important to create space for each subgroup per role to gather to support each other. For classroom teachers, this could include authorizing substitutes so that the group can visit each other’s classrooms and watch a specific lesson, or see how a strategy is being used, or how a teacher is guiding her class through social-emotional learning. For the student discipline evaluation subcommittee, it could mean engaging in a Professional Learning Community (PLC) based on common trauma-informed behavioral management system readings, visits, and interviews with trauma-informed districts and schools, while beginning the revisioning process by crafting a student management mission statement. Coaching and peer support can be instituted once a program redesign is in place. By observing others, we gain ideas and insights into our own practice. We also support the work of our colleagues by providing feedback. In addition to observing each other, PLCs dedicated to elements of trauma-informed practice become an indispensable tool for developing and deepening TISP competencies for all staff in your school.

Evaluate. We encourage you to spend time evaluating the efficacy of the TISP transition and its impact on your school community. This evaluative process also connects with the recommendation above on being vulnerable and listening to

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your school community. We encourage you to evaluate current roles and job descriptions, efficacy of transition, visuals, rituals, and discipline policies in your school. In Chapter 12, we will explore this topic further.

Roles and Job Descriptions. Let's think about this category holistically. For example, how does your school view the role of parents/guardians in the school community? Is the way in which your school views their role, and the ways in which they have been invited to participate, congruent with TISP? How could you rework their role to support TISP? We recommend that parents receive an orientation to TISP as part of the preparation process to become classroom aides. We will discuss this further in Chapter 10.

And, for school teachers and staff, how do they interact with one another currently? How does your school, under a TISP model, need those groups to interact and support one another? Is this model supporting your school community in strong ways? If not, we encourage you to begin a list of possibilities. What do you want those roles to look like? Trust that as you absorb this text and other trauma-informed school writings, gather a team, and work through the TISP Tri-Phasic Model disposition and tasks, your strategic team will have plenty of thoughts regarding how to answer these above evaluation questions.

Efficacy of the Transition. Recently, I (Brenda) presented on our *TISP Tri-Phasic Model* at a national conference for K-12 schools. I attended a session presented by administrators on their experience moving to a trauma-informed model. They shared what they had learned from their own trial and error, and made recommendations on how others may want to proceed. As I listened to their presentation, I was excited about the work that they had done and how the changes they made were indeed supporting students. During their presentation, they shared concern about their behavioral discipline data and the fact that they were not seeing the improvement they had hoped. A few questions from session participants during their question-and-answer piece revealed the answer; unfortunately, the administrators lacked understanding of the neurobiology of trauma along with best-practice response strategies. They knew that their students had experienced significant adverse childhood experiences (elevated ACE scores) that were likely impacting behavior. However, they were unable to connect ACES to its role in undermining neural integration processes, and did not know how to design behavior management systems according to best practices in response. Instead, they continued to use current practices adopted by their district, thereby missing a significant piece of the puzzle. What a great example of evaluating the efficacy of transition! This group gathered and analyzed their data, and with humility shared what they just couldn't understand. By getting to this point and asking folks to review their data with them, they were able to identify the missing piece. We encourage you to do the same! We will explore this topic further in Chapter 12.

Early-stage tasks of the School Strategic Planning Team include a number of elements congruent with your short-range plans and are highlighted in the TISP Tri-Phasic Model disposition and task list. Basic to your particular goals are the following three tasks:

Visually Assess Your Learning Environment. The hallmark challenge of students today is to build neural networks to increase integrated thinking, feeling, and intentional behaviors, all of which are basic to executive functions needed to learn. For many students, their capacity to regulate environmental stimuli, whether in the emotional-relational environment or the physical environment, is challenged.

For students who cannot filter noise, cramped classrooms, echoing large spaces, and other ambient noise will constantly activate their stress response systems. For those with highly attuned visual sensors, spaces with lots of supplies and decorations sprinkled with important messages and reminders will be overwhelming. Many others are impacted by fluorescent lights and the lack of natural sunlight. Most schools today do not have windows that open, and lack fresh air; think of how nice it is to see sunlight shining into a room, catch a passing rain shower, or breathe in fresh air flowing through a window. These are neurological boosters that help all of us enjoy our surroundings, and feeling a spark of joy makes the task at hand more pleasurable. Many schools today lack these basic elements of welcoming environments. This requires us to be creative.

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This task asks team members to consider the physical space in your school and in your classrooms. What messages

do they convey? Are they congruent with TISP? Consider what visuals are present that need to be changed or created to reinforce the following:

1. TISP building blocks of care, community, and the importance of each class member or student. These visuals will reflect the class or school's TISP-informed motto or guiding values.
2. Psychosocial learning tools, namely how our brain works, the importance of our emotions, and how to increase tracking of thoughts, feelings, wants, needs, and behavioral choices in response.
3. The teacher and students' co-created processes for identifying need states, helping out a peer, tools at everyone's disposal, and other relational processes you have implemented.

Continue the evaluation process by asking the following questions:

1. What wall decorations and other physical display items are currently prominent that are contrary to the messages you are trying to create?
2. What current items might need to remain but not be centrally located?
3. What items (resources) could be stored in cabinets or behind curtains on shelves to simplify the visuals in a particular space?
4. What items need to be removed from walls or shelving, and what items need to be changed, such as lighting, seating, furniture arrangements, or wall paint?
5. What is your source of light, and is there a way to soften it even while creating bright well-lit spaces where needed?
6. How does sound travel through a particular space, and are there ways to contain or muffle noise where large groups of students need to meet?

In her book *Reaching and Teaching Children Exposed to Trauma*, Dr. Barbara Sorrells (2015, p. 165) recommends the following for classrooms:

1. Neutral color on the wall
2. Subtle or no pattern on floor covering
3. No more than two-thirds of the wall space covered with posters, bulletin boards, or materials
4. Child-sized furniture in natural colors
5. Materials stored in natural-material baskets
6. Overstuffed chairs and loveseats for reading and resting
7. Displays made of natural materials such as interesting rocks, pinecones, wood pieces, and so on
8. Cozy spaces or interest centers to divide up the room

Evaluate and Design School and Classroom Rituals. Just as you did with physical space above, examine what rituals you have in your school. Think about those that occur daily, weekly, and on occasion throughout the school year. A resource rich with ideas is *The Morning Meeting Book* by Kriete and Davis (2014). Do these ritualactivities mirror the goals of a trauma-informed school, congruent with how we are identifying the nature of students' need and best-practices in response? Your evaluation will help you identify what to change or implement congruent with TISP. Here are a few ideas to consider:

1. Check-in grounding and attunement rituals: Many schools prefer to design a welcome and focusing ritual each morning where students reflect on how they are doing by taking a thought-emotion-physical feeling scan, to

practice attuning to self and others and the giving and receiving of care, and to build a sense of safety and stability. And then the group shifts into the goals of the day or class period. Many of these same schools have end-of-the-day rituals for transitioning out of the hard work of the day, grounding bodily responses, and giving the sympathetic nervous system (SNS) a few minutes to rest thanks to the parasympathetic nervous system (PNS) before they head on home or to their next set of daily activities.

2. To ease transitions, classroom teachers often design rituals at the beginning and end of a class, day, or week, and at the end of an academic term prior to an extended break. Some rituals may be more in-depth, while others are quick anchoring activities. We offer resources at the end of each chapter. But the conceptual elements underneath each activity are emphasizing self-awareness (internal neural network processes as detailed in Figure 2.5), self-rescuing or soothing, showing care for peers, and acknowledging that life is hard, but we can find help, fun, and joy along the way—all within a spirit of curiosity, care, and hope that they can increase their sense of well-being.
3. What rituals give structure to a day, a week, and a season, knowing that the repetition creates a sense of reliability, stability, and predictability?
4. What is already in place that might be appropriate but not as a grounding, skill-building, or community-focused ritual, and hence needs moving or replacing? A teacher shared how she was expected to greet students at the door with an immediate message regarding the behavioral expectations of the class and the learning goals of class for that particular session. TISP is asking that students be greeted at the door with a metaphorical Welcome sign, with a few moments of personal check-in, and then a shift in focus to the day's agenda.
5. Nurture your own creative strategies by scanning other implementation books and searching YouTube, Pinterest, or other social media sites dedicated to trauma-informed school practice.

Evaluate and Adjust Student Management Processes. Have you considered the philosophies informing your current discipline policies? We invite you to critically analyze your current practices. What do you want your discipline program to do? We revisit this topic in Chapter 9. But for now, we offer the following to get you started:

1. Desired Mindset/Internal Framework: What is the goal of your behavioral management system? It is most often revealed in both overt messages (mission statements) and covert messages (attitudes and dispositions of the staff enacting the policy; end result as revealed in student responses).
2. Method for Teaching Students and Staff This Mindset: This includes practices and approach. How is it working for students and staff?
3. Techniques, Tools, and Resources to Teach and Support the Student: What are they teaching students? This connects with the overt and covert values and goals of the program.
4. Debriefing Practices: How do you debrief with staff and colleagues and invite a common response protocol with others in contact with the student? Does your management program give you a rationale and guidelines, or do you need to re-create or create the process to reflect TISP dispositions?
5. Existing Programs: What is already in place that works? Can a current system merely be adjusted or do you think a new system is needed?
6. Needed Resources: You may find that your current system is congruent with TISP messages, but your school is not adequately resourcing classroom teachers, leaving you overwhelmed and under-supported with highly dysregulated students.

As we have repeatedly stated, be patient! This is a developmental process. Support the change, and know it won't happen overnight. Be available to your school community to listen when they are struggling with implementation, celebrate when you see how things are positively impacting kids, and give yourself and your school community space to really let TISP take hold. Regularly evaluate how you are practicing self-care, and remind your school community to do the same! You will get there, armed with a strategic plan and a diverse support team.

Strategies vs. Culture Shift

When moving to Trauma-Informed School Practices (TISP), it is important to understand that TISP is not about implementing a set of classroom strategies, or launching a new discipline policy, or rewriting the student handbook (although it may involve all three). TISP is about creating a new culture: one of compassion and caring and consistency. One of my favorite sayings is, “Culture eats strategy for breakfast.” It’s possible to run staff through a series of professional learning experiences, agree to some common classroom strategies, modify some discipline policies, and think you’re trauma-informed. But if the culture of the classrooms and school hasn’t changed, it won’t have deep or lasting impact. A big part of being a school or district leader is to establish culture. And the truth is, every educational leader establishes a culture, intentional or not. A great thing about TISP is that it helps school leaders create a positive, caring culture that both teachers and kids enjoy living in (Bruce, District Office Administrator).

Educators



Educators System Element

As mentioned above, Phase I of the TISP Tri-Phasic Model includes two types of tasks: preparation activities consistent with the perceptual and conceptual tasks, and implementation activities congruent with the executive tasks. This chapter focuses on the preparation activities for Educators, while Chapter 8 focuses on Phase I implementation strategies.

No doubt the stories and experiences of educators from Chapters 1 and 4 resonated with you. Even if your classroom is not as significantly dysregulated as those in the stories we have shared, perhaps you left those chapters with a specific student in mind. Did you have an “aha” moment? The realization that you can meet the needs of your students is exciting, and yet we acknowledge you may also be feeling a bit nervous. We encourage you to be patient with yourself and your colleagues as you begin the Phase I process of planning and implementation.

First Steps

In the beginning sections of this chapter, as we reviewed the initial steps for District and School Strategic Planning Teams, you began visualizing basic preparation tasks of your initial Action Plan. By committing yourself to reading through this textbook and participating in other trainings, you are taking steps to develop TISP perceptual and conceptual skills prior to making any immediate changes in your classroom and in your own practice. As you begin

implementing initial strategies into the classroom, you will be doing so in tandem with changes occurring throughout your school community.

As you begin this section, we summarize the initial planning (preparation) tasks of your Action Plan, most of which has already been alluded to in the District and School materials above. We encourage you to read through the suggestions below with pen and paper in hand to make notes on how you want to move forward. These notes will assist you in creating the classroom strategies implementation activities portion of your Action Plan, which will be the focus in Chapter 8.

Commit to the TISP Process. Just as was stated above in the School and District sections, we challenge Educators, regardless of role, to also commit to developing TISP competencies. This is not something you can do halfway.

After reading through Section I, we are certain you are able to identify students in your classroom that have been impacted by unmitigated stress and trauma. Knowing that there is something you can do to immediately address their needs calls for action. And, you do not have to wait for your entire school to be onboard! Take the initial steps to pursue training and education so you can feel confident in the changes you will make. Acquiring deep knowledge, skills, and dispositions as a trauma-informed educator will serve you and your school community well!

We challenge Educators, regardless of role, to also commit to developing TISP competencies. This is not something you can do halfway.

Partner for Success. Partner with your instructional assistant, special education teachers, school counselors, parent volunteers, and others who are in your classroom regularly. We know how frustrating it can be when you make the decision to move in a new direction and not everyone is on board. Moving to a new culture and new practice, it will be important that you and those who work with your students are all on the same page. Meet regularly. Discuss the changes and how you can all work together. Identify challenges and discuss in advance how you will work together to meet those challenges. And advocate for your coworkers: Are persons occupying these roles represented on the School Strategic Planning Team? Is training being offered specific to these varying roles? You have much on your plate; training coworkers in the model might be too much to ask of you in this early stage.

Meet with your school administration team. Are they on board with what you wish to do? Is there anything that would create a barrier to your implementation? We are often asked about throwing out a specific program or completely overhauling school policy in an effort to create a TISP model. As we have discussed above and in previous chapters, yes, systems need re-evaluation, but do this intentionally, and with a team of people who have been building TISP knowledge and dispositions. In other words, go slow! You need policies and procedures to remain in place while you are transitioning these to a TISP model. This can also mean negotiating with your administrative team to make subtle adjustments as the wisdom of the group identifies such helpful changes.

Let us give you an example. While we were working with a school during a training, a group of teachers expressed concern that the current behavioral management program at their school included some practices that were not rooted in trauma-informed ethos and practice. These educators wanted to seize moments of dysregulation as opportunities to deeply connect with their students, coaching them when they made decisions that were not helpful to the student or the class. Yet, the current behavioral management plan required that such incidents be documented in a manner that further alarmed students. Their specific concern was that teachers were required to use a brightly colored form, designated by students as the “bad behavior” report. Upon seeing the form, the student immediately knew what was coming, spiking fear and mistrust, thwarting a teacher’s ability to connect and coach the student. So, how could they move forward? By partnering with their administrative team, they were able to present a trauma-informed rationale for altering the process enough so that documentation processes could still be honored, but not in a way that communicated fear and alarm for the students. Their plan was well received by the administrative team and they were given the green light to proceed. Understanding conceptual principles, partnership, and communication are key!

Person of the Educator—Know Yourself. As you worked through the Developmental Journal presented in Section I, what did you learn about your own history or upbringing? Did you begin to reconsider some experiences from an attachment and neurobiological perspective? Knowing yourself is really key. Who you are, including your own attachment patterns and history, influences the way you will interact with your students. This includes the way in which

you regulate your own emotions. Have you ever stopped to name the events or actions of others to which your own response looks and feels dysregulated? In those moments, something deep inside of us is yanked, and we respond in a manner that may surprise us or others. We are likely reacting not just to the content of a current event, but to a deeper memory. This is what is commonly referred to as “triggers.” Others did not cause it; no one “makes us” feel anything; the relational environment touched on our own unintegrated neural networks and we had a logical thought, feeling, or sensation in response. If you identify your own triggers, you have struck gold, as it gives you an opportunity to do the deep work of healing, even as you are seeking to not be so yanked by events. We encourage you to spend a few minutes to do this now.

Chapter 7: Exercise 3

Know Yourself

1. What did you identify as your triggers?
2. What typically sets these off?
3. Explore how to tame your response. Figuring out how to disconnect a reaction takes time and deeper thought. But we can pair our response with the same tools we are providing our students:
 - Name the event that has you activated (#1 & #2 above);
 - Identify what you are thinking and physically and emotionally feeling;
 - Reflect on how this might be connected with your own history of unmitigated stress and trauma, or life-themes of importance to you;
 - Pair these reflections with a deep diaphragmatic breath, to calm the stress response even while promising you will explore your own need to process these issues more closely;
 - Affirm that the student’s behavior is likely not about you (unless you responded out of your own reactions) but is a reflection of their own hurt and pain; and
 - Affirm that while you might need to put your own stress response aside when in the middle of an activating event, you are listening; you will continue attuning to your own current needs and background history so these events grab you less often and less intensely.
4. Tuck your responses aside to pull out again in Chapter 12 when we discuss compassion fatigue and self-care.

Our life experiences have shaped us. How do your life experiences show up in your classroom? Are you aware that they are showing up? I remember when I (Brenda) first learned about triggers. Almost immediately, memories of intense situations with students surfaced. I was now able to name what I was feeling emotionally and physically and could identify why it had escalated to that point, and what I needed to do in the future. I have my preservice teachers do an exercise where, just like you, they are challenged to name their own triggers. Often they are able to name one or two, but inevitably a significant person in their life identifies another one. By naming these, we can plan both physically and emotionally for when we are activated by a student’s behavior.

In Section I you engaged in a series of exercises designed to help you understand your own perspectives reflecting your own neural networks, the storage place for the meaning beneath your triggers. And in Chapter 12 we will identify

self-care practices in response to our own vulnerabilities and risks for compassion fatigue. But let's first revisit a story we shared in Chapter 1 of my (Brenda's) teacher candidate who was in a third-grade classroom, working with a dysregulated student who would tear up his worksheets. Each time the student ripped up his papers, the teacher candidate felt completely disrespected. Yes, you guessed it! Her trigger was feeling disrespected. Once she was able to name how she physically and emotionally reacted, she was then able to create a plan for how to respond in the future.

Observe School and Classroom Structures. In the above School section, you read about evaluating the physical space of your school and classroom, including the trauma-informed rationale guiding the review. As you apply those concepts to your school and classroom, make note of your observations. What recommendations might you offer regarding adjustments to the school's use of its space in regards to wall color and decorations, lighting, seating, and acoustics? While changes might be only minimally possible, naming the wish list increases awareness and often inspires unanticipated solutions.

You have the greatest level of control over your classroom. Educators are notorious for spending their own money on supplies, and we caution you not to go down this path. But as you look around, what changes can you make using your school's available resources? One cohort of teachers identified wall color and fluorescent light covers as quick fixes for warming sterile classrooms and was able to gather those supplies from a local home improvement store that was willing to donate supplies. Pinterest and YouTube have a plethora of ideas on how to create visuals that emphasize social-emotional learning. As you work through the classroom strategy implementation portions of your Action Plan (next chapter), return to this section every now and then as new ideas will continue to form.

Observe School and Classroom Processes, Rituals, and Routines. Your district and school administrators are hearing a clear message about the need to evaluate myriad systems and processes for TISP congruence. Such an evaluation requires a diverse team of educators well on their way to developing TISP competencies. As you develop TISP competencies, your voice in this evaluation and revision process is crucial.

Student behavioral management systems are perhaps first up on the list of systems needing re-evaluation. What concerns or worries do you have about TISP inviting a reconsideration of your current practices? Trust that this evaluation occurs within a diverse arm of the Strategic Planning Team on both the School and District levels. In preparation to join such a team, revisit this topic as discussed above under School.

Other school practices include assemblies and daily, weekly, or seasonal rituals or routines. Do all students enjoy and seem to benefit, and if not, which students tend to be left out? Are these systems or practices congruent with TISP? If not, why? With a bit of rethinking or reworking, could they be?

A group of teachers shared with us their frustration over an award assembly that took place each month in their elementary school. The specific purpose of the assembly was to recognize a small group of three to five students for being good citizens in the school community. The group of teachers explained that this assembly had become a significant trigger for some of their students, and for them. They each had one or two students who did not want to attend because they said it was always the same students being recognized and it would never be them. This assembly had reinforced for some of its members that they were not seen or valued. Does this mean the school should eliminate the assembly? Not necessarily. Perhaps what is needed is a re-envisioning of the way in which the school recognizes its members. What school-wide practices in your school might need re-envisioning?

Rituals are collective activities designed to symbolically reinforce an idea or value conducive to the health or goals of a group. The daily Pledge of Allegiance is designed to foster a sense of national identity and citizenship; pep rallies are intended to celebrate school spirit and school identity; and graduation ceremonies illustrate celebrations and rites of passage into the student's next phase of life. Rituals and routines reflect the cultural values we are attempting to both teach and embody.

These practices are not rewards, as if student A worked harder than student B and thus deserves recess or a break. Safety and stabilization practices, self-care, and community building exercises are necessities, like water to a parched mouth.

These practices are not rewards, as if student A worked harder than student B and thus deserves recess or a break. Safety and stabilization practices, self-care, and community building exercises are necessities, like water to a parched mouth.

What rituals do you have in your school? Think about those that occur daily, weekly, and on occasion throughout the school year. Do they reflect the dispositions and help

you achieve the goals of a trauma-informed school? What would you like to change or suggest during implementation of TISP? Consider rituals and routines to create the following culture:

- To embody care: Activities using attunement skills; not just between adults and students, but students attuning to each other.
- To support self-regulation: Activities set within a slower, less stimulating tone to practice relaxation and self-awareness skills promoting increased sympathetic and parasympathetic nervous system regulation, and moments anchoring leading to sensations of safety and well-being. This also helps to bring coherence to the day's events, and readies the brain to move short-term memories into long-term storage during the upcoming night's sleep.
- To ease transitions: A previous activity has stimulated thoughts, feelings, and sensations; the student experienced challenges requiring extended periods of practicing delayed gratification and frustration tolerance. Compartmentalizing and clearing space for the next set of tasks is a skill we all must learn through years of practice, but is especially hard for a student impacted by unmitigated stress and trauma. Transition rituals at the beginning and end of a class, or the beginning and end of a day, or week, or season, each of varying lengths of time and focus, become anchors, little oases in the middle of our hard work.
- To create a sense of stability and predictability: Never underestimate the power of a routine, and its contribution to helping a student access the inner confidence that they can manage the tasks of a day. These predictable events are truly lifelines.

Imagine climbing a rock wall; each time you have secure footing or reach a ledge to catch your breath, you breathe a sigh of relief, grateful for your safe arrival, and then eye the next stretch ahead of you. Transition rituals are facilitating this same process.

Never underestimate the power of a routine, and its contribution to helping a student access the inner confidence that they can manage the tasks of a day. These predictable events are truly lifelines.

As with evaluations of your physical space, as you further develop classroom strategies, revisit this section of your Action Plan to jot down more ideas, as rituals are a key tool in helping students experience school as a safe and anchoring space.

Identify Assessment Needs. Assessing the efficacy of TISP with staff and students will provide useful data in service to you and your students. While we will address this issue in greater detail in Chapter 12, now is the time to place your assessment needs and wishes on your radar. Items to consider tracking include:

1. Student attitudes displayed in classroom atmosphere
2. Behavioral challenges in frequency and intensity
3. Student response to your interventions when having behavioral challenges
4. Student use of self-regulation resources and techniques
5. Your sense of efficacy when dealing with challenging encounters
6. Student engagement in the rituals and other learning moments
7. Student feedback on how they felt heard or tended to during a difficult encounter

Evaluate and Adjust Student Management Processes

In Chapter 8, we will walk classroom teachers through a process of evaluating your classroom behavioral management practices by applying TISP goals and guiding values to your re-visioning process. Above, under the School section, you will see a series of questions to ponder as you are articulating what is and is not working with your students, and how TISP is inviting you to re-evaluate these processes. Hold these thoughts for now, and we will return to them in greater depth in the next chapter.

Mindset

In our review of the District and School elements, we identified a few attitudinal recommendations such as becoming a TISP student, being open to change, and exercising patience with the developmental process of developing a new competency. These mindset practices apply to Educators as well. However, we leave you with two additional recommendations: Find your voice, and give yourself grace.

Find Your Voice. After working through the items above, you no doubt have some ideas on how you want to proceed. As you begin implementing TISP, your insight will deepen even more. We encourage you to listen to your school community and seek out opportunities to contribute to discussions around change. You know your students. You know what their needs are. Be empowered to advocate. Your voice is important!

Give Yourself Grace. As you begin to implement these practices into your classroom and your own teaching, we encourage you to be patient with yourself. Realize that you will continue to have good days and days that challenge you. You will feel at times like you made progress with a specific student, only to see them revert back to previous behaviors. Don't give up!

As you begin to implement these practices into your classroom and your own teaching, we encourage you to be patient with yourself. Realize that you will continue to have good days and days that challenge you. You will feel at times like you made progress with a specific student, only to see them revert back to previous behaviors. Don't give up!

And, don't be hard on yourself! You are establishing rituals and routines that are allowing you to connect, coach, and then commence. These take time to become routine for you and your students.

In Chapter 8, we will walk you through the implementation tasks of an Action Plan. Our focus is on classroom teachers, since these Educators engage in the most intense heavy lifting. Regardless of your role, however, we recommend that you absorb these materials as well. As all staff watch the culture shift and practices of a trauma-informed classroom,

we gain ideas on how to make adjustments to our roles and daily routines.

Non-Teaching Educators

We imagine that if you are a non-classroom-teaching staff person, you might be very accustomed to reading materials for educators that solely focus on the classroom teacher. You are likely adept at filtering out elements of these materials that do not relate to you, while also looking for ways to contextualize what is being discussed for your area.

Meanwhile, when teachers or administrators begin discussing school challenges, we imagine that at times your voice might not be heard, or these colleagues might speak for you with no clue as to your challenges. We experienced this recently when discussing what a trauma-informed environment would look like from the moment a student boards the bus to the moment they step off that bus at the end of the school day. We began discussing the role of the bus driver

in this process, with little awareness of how we were speaking “about” them rather than inviting them to the table to speak into their own needs and experiences. We were made aware of our exclusionary language, and suddenly we were case in point regarding the concept we were trying to drive home: All of us regardless of role are a part of the education team, and we all have a place at the table to be considered and to speak into our mutual work, even those education community members who may never step foot inside of our buildings.

While non-teaching staff roles are diverse, and we cannot give a perfectly attuned ear to each role, this space directly addresses the importance of your voice and involvement in TISP—specifically, what Phase I tasks might look like for you.

Preliminaries:

- Gather together with staff in your role or in similar roles so you can share this process without filters and a full voice.
- Anticipate that you and your peers are going to be able to identify the type of training or orientation that is most suitable for your role. Most initial trauma-informed school trainings do provide general trauma-informed content suitable for all staff. But many other trainings are focused on classroom strategies, and may be frustrating for non-teaching staff or just require the use of your well-developed filters. We are encouraging District and School Strategic Planning Teams to invite non-teaching staff to trainings. Inquire ahead of time whether the content is preliminary trauma-informed education or classroom-teacher specific. This is helpful information for you, but also reminds those planning the trainings to consider the non-teaching staff.
- If you have not been asked already, inquire about representation on a District or School Strategic Planning Team. Whether it is you or another person in your role, you might be thinking, “Why would I want to volunteer to do work on top of a full docket of tasks?!” Trust that (a) the level of work varies by circumstance; (b) the team members are also information liaisons for coworkers curious about the TISP process; and (c) your observations and work with students matter, and therefore your voice is needed!

Non-classroom certified educators and administrators, such as school counselors, school psychologists, principals, and vice principals, will have plenty of opportunity to identify how trauma-informed practices invite changes in their work with students and coworkers. Likewise, they will eventually be working with School Strategic Planning Teams as systems or patterns of interactions are re-examined. But for classified staff who are the steady force behind administrative services, food service, maintenance, and transportation services, you are directly impacted by school culture and student interactions even as you contribute to that culture and are adult caretakers of these students. TISP for you will include the following:

- A deeper understanding of the lives and minds of students, both the ones you worry about as well as the students who give you the greatest challenge.
- A greater awareness of how powerful it can be to warmly embrace a student in your particular role.
- Trust that changes you are asked to make with students stem from a shift in perspective and attitude. Your care and acceptance are already likely evident in your verbal and nonverbal actions; TISP training processes merely invite you to be more aware and intentional in providing attachment-based *Connecting* and *Coaching* skills congruent with your role.
- A chance to network with coworkers about how TISP might be inviting you to identify your own history with unmitigated stress and trauma, or how your own K-12 experiences did or did not provide you a safe and supportive environment. Attuning to the trauma of others brings our own histories to the foreground. A TISP school culture invites staff to give to each other what we are giving to our students—an attuned ear and response.
- And finally, TISP is inviting you to evaluate your own job description and how work tasks or processes might be adjusted in accordance with the TI ethos. For example, an administrative assistant whose office is a waiting space

for students pulled out of classrooms for disciplinary reasons decided to totally redesign the space and workflow to create a sense of safety and calm for students. She adjusted seating arrangements and lighting, and now she greets each student by asking if there is anything she can help them with as they wait, or if they want a cup of water. The student is welcome to rest a moment and catch their breath, knowing they are seen and cared about regardless of why they are there, and the admin assistant puts down what she is working on and refuses to answer phones until this connecting ritual is complete. There are no books that address how to re-envision her space or job tasks, but by attending trainings, she began identifying ways to re-envision her role. We imagine you will do the same!

Lessons Learned from a TISP Administrator

The first thing to understand is that the journey into trauma-informed practice is a trip the adults take, not the students.

When you first start, it's easy to think, "All right! I'm going to learn why kids misbehave and don't want to learn math (or whatever subject), and I'm going to be able to fix them so they behave better and learn quicker." But it's not that at all. It's way more about the

adults: about learning how traumatized kids think and feel and behave, and then to have the courage and humility to create the space in classrooms and schools for each student to succeed. It's about adults letting go of the way many of us were raised and taught "back in the day," where teachers and principals were the bosses and the kids were simply expected to obey what the bosses said. And if they didn't, punishment was handed out, with the expectation that the punishment would correct bad behavior. So one of the first things a principal or superintendent should ask him or herself is, "Where is my staff on this kind of shift? How 'old school' are they?" Get a gauge on how much effort, time, energy it's going to take to move the staff.

—Bruce, District Office Administrator

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A Look Ahead

In this chapter we detailed initial Phase I activities and considerations for implementing TISP in Districts and Schools. We included initial planning considerations for Educators in preparation for implementing Phase I in the classroom. In Chapter 8, we focus specifically on the work of classroom teachers and the implementation of their Action Plan with students. We continue to develop Phase I in preparation for Phase II implementation.

Resources for Further Reading

- [Trauma and Learning Policy Initiative](#). We mentioned this group earlier in the book. They published a research

report on the implementation plans of school districts and the efficacy of their work.

- [Creating a Trauma-Informed Team](#). This is a webinar created by the Division of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services, Bureau of Prevention Treatment and Recovery.
- [Creating Sanctuary in Schools](#). This group offers a model for organizational change.
- [Optimum Learning Environments for Traumatized Children](#). Another perspective on educating traumatized children.

Chapter 8: Implementing Trauma-Informed School Practices in the Classroom



[Image: [Riccardo Annandale](#) | [Unsplash](#)]

“Yesterday I was clever, so I changed the world. Today I am wise, so I am changing myself.” –Rumi

Desired Outcomes

This chapter specifically focuses on Phase I implementation strategies for classroom teachers. The information is also helpful for all educators, regardless of role, as understanding the shift in culture and practices within the classroom allows you to envision ways to support classroom teachers as well as adjust your own work with students. At the conclusion of this chapter, classroom teachers will be able to:

- Begin implementing Phase I practices into the classroom
- Utilize their TISP support network to review and reflect on initial implementation efforts
- Identify system networks and resources that are working and have yet to be developed
- Identify key indices of student responsiveness to Phase I activities

Key Concepts

In Chapter 7, educators within all levels of the school system laid the preliminary groundwork in preparation to implement trauma-informed practices. This chapter addresses the specific goals and tasks of classroom teachers implementing Phase I practices into the classroom. Key concepts reviewed include:

- Revisiting the rationale behind creating attachment-focused classrooms
- A review of the nature of change as a scaffolded, developmental process over time
- Attachment as attunement and mentoring, with primary focus on what attunement looks like the classroom
- Further development of the classroom teacher's Action Plan in anticipation of heading into Phase II processes

Chapter Overview

In Section I, we explored the crisis that exists in most K-12 classrooms today, with many traumatology and education professionals surmising that unmitigated stress and trauma are primary disrupters to student readiness to learn. We dug deep into the content domains that comprise trauma-informed concepts, with primary emphasis on the nature of attachment relationships and its role in neural development, a key factor that enables students to engage in the challenges of social-emotional and academic learning. Advances in trauma-informed knowledge and practice, together with the alarming data emerging from ACE studies, are

forcing all social systems to re-examine overt and covert values and practices, and acknowledge that the way we have organized ourselves or functioned in the past no longer works today.

Education systems have now joined this movement. By choosing to become a trauma-informed educator, you are indicating that you have absorbed the underlying trauma-informed knowledge—the data, the social and behavioral science content domains—and are ready to transform your school or classroom into a trauma-informed space to maximize a student’s potential to learn.

In the previous chapter you identified the preliminary tasks that each element of the school system needs to address in order to make this transition a success for both educators and students. It illustrated that it is a team effort—no one role can do this alone.

This chapter addresses moving to the actual implementation of *Phase I* of TISP within the classroom. It focuses primarily on the role of classroom teachers, the educators who engage in the most intense developmental work with students. However, this chapter will also be important for instructional aides and parent volunteers so they can understand the teacher’s classroom management system and teaching pedagogy, both of which are highly influenced by TISP. Likewise, school counselors and other student support services must familiarize themselves with the work of the trauma-informed classroom, as teachers will need their assistance in ways congruent with TISP.

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Phase I: Connecting



Educator System Element

Implementing Phase I is easy: Focus on creating a classroom that is relationally safe and trustworthy. That’s it! Observe what you are doing and how it is being perceived by a variety of students, make adjustments, and keep at it every day and in every class. Yes, there is a bit more: Relax about the fact—or grieve the dream—that you cannot implement a fully trauma-informed classroom immediately, that your students’ responsiveness to this new culture does not manifest in better behavior overnight, and that student meltdowns are still going to occur. Breathe into the idea that you and your students—and your colleagues—are embarking on a journey, and you will see small and big changes along the way, as well as heartache and frustration. This slow pace of change is yet another reminder that TISP is not about a set of strategies, but a culture change in how we see and respond to students and hopefully each other, and trusting that if we attune and mentor accordingly, we

will see healing and growth.

Summarizing what we are doing in Phase I might be easy. But doing it might feel like another matter. In the remainder of this chapter we break this process down, giving you concrete ideas and strategies for implementing TISP Tri-Phasic

Model educator competencies. We begin with identifying the nature of attunement behaviors between educators and students. We then move into elements of a detailed Action Plan, along with samples and exercises for you to follow along. When you feel lost in the details, return to this section for a quick reminder that it is quite simple once we realize TISP is all about standing in relationship with our students based in an understanding of what we all need when overwhelmed by unmitigated stress and trauma.

Practicing Attunement Behaviors

Education is an amazing profession with big-hearted, strong-principled conductors of the most complex of symphonies called a classroom! If you have been working in the classroom for any length of time, you have learned to master your reactions, stay focused, stay positive, while becoming adept at heading off catastrophes, setting boundaries, and giving redirects with swift clarity. A teacher recently remarked that parents are increasingly asking her for advice on how to manage their children at home. She and her coworkers were wondering why this is now a common request. We get why parents seek you out as they likely say to themselves, “Look what these teachers can manage with a few dozen kids at a time; surely they can help me manage just my own?!”

We highlight your skills for a few reasons. Perhaps most important is our recognition that whenever something we already do well, in this case showing care to our students, is put under the microscope, it can inhibit our natural abilities to engage in that activity. We may fear not doing it “right” or doing more harm than good, especially given our deeper awareness of just how fundamental attunement is to the developing mind. In the mental health training world we call this inhibition “paralysis by analysis”; many of us are good listeners until suddenly “listening” has become a professional skill for which we are being evaluated.

We also want to emphasize that attachment, as exemplified through attunement and mentoring skills, is more than just being pleasant or kind. We think educators are most skilled at mentoring, and are naturally kind given your passion for the well-being of your students. But TISP is asking you to understand or accept that attunement is just as important as mentoring (teaching). In fact, it is the precursor to a student being receptive to your mentoring, whether you are coaching them in self-regulation skills or an academic subject.

Many of the Action Plan items we discuss here and the classroom strategy resources we offer will load you up with numerous attunement strategies, most notably activities that help students build community with each other. Here, we want to take a look at what attunement looks like one-to-one, between you and a student.

Attunement is all about you showing a *welcoming* stance with a student. You see them; you see all they have shared of themselves thus far, and you see who they have the potential to become; you value them and are there to offer support and care. You believe in them, with all of their strengths and struggles. And with that, your eyes and ears are open to what they are bringing to you in this moment. You are tuning into their frequency as best as you are able, and you will keep attuning until they tell you through words or body language that you got it right.

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we all play our roles and our verbal and nonverbal messages ideally should emanate from this common script, in this case, the schemas for “classroom-teacher-student”.

In a trauma-informed classroom, we are changing the scripts associated with this complex set of schemas. Now we are saying that first up is attuning to the need states of students so they can become anchored (that sense of internal emotional and physical sense of safety), and *then* they can “decenter their other need states” enough to access and focus on their need to learn.

This is the monkey wrench we are throwing into your typical routine. The first part of this text unpacks why we need to restructure these schemas. Here we explore what it looks like to place an emphasis on attunement practices, rituals, and routines at specific times of the day as well as embedded in our lesson plan delivery. Throughout your TISP development process, it is highly recommended that you observe TI classrooms in action and listen to classroom teacher stories, whether in person, on YouTube, or in training videos. Meanwhile, thematically, here are a few key attunement interpersonal skills or traits you may observe in those trauma-informed classrooms.



Phase I: Connecting

This shows in your facial features, body stance, and eye contact. It is demonstrated through your words and actions.

When you communicate with your student, the student is taking in all of this sensory data—your verbals and nonverbals—and matching it against a current need state. They are seeking to attune to you as well: Is my teacher “getting me”? What is my teacher telling me about their receptivity to me? Or am I expected to put my needs on the shelf as I respond to their need? The unspoken and spoken rule of most classrooms is that it is the student’s job to attune to the needs (expectations) of the teacher: Pay attention and learn. Teachers are expected to only attune to the student’s academic interests. Those are rules we use everywhere: We know what a setting is expecting of us, so

Connecting (attuning) is all about *catching* the immediate need state of a student, and as they feel *held* by your attunement, they are more apt to allow you to *guide* them accordingly, whether it is back on task or back on task through a process of practicing a self-regulation skill first. Attunement is capturing (*Connecting*), holding (*Coaching*), and guiding back to task (*Commencing*).

Connecting: Tracking Student Messages

Student Nonverbal Cues. If you have had the opportunity to be around infants and toddlers, and certainly your own students, you know the telltale signs of slight agitation that indicate a potential meltdown. Attachment theorist John Bowlby (1976) called these signals separation anxiety, meaning that the child’s sense of calm was dissipating as a need state was now on their

radar. That need might be for comfort or adventure; it covers a range. The infant or toddler needs an attachment figure to read these cues and to warmly and openly communicate “I see you and hear you, let’s figure this out.” Sometimes that acknowledgement is all that is needed, often referred to by attachment theorists as a quick “refueling”; the child just

needs to know you are there so they can manage the anxiety, returning to an inner sense of safety, and then confidently proceeding back to sleep or adventure-seeking. Other times they need more, such as being held or help fixing a problem. The more a preschool child receives this type of attunement, the more they can tolerate mini-deserts when the adults around them cannot attune as often.

Historic classroom-teacher-student schemas expect school students to enter class with a growing ability to need less of this type of attuning, refueling in little moments during the school day, and then refueling in extended ways after returning home. We know that many of our students are not coming to school with the ability to manage these mini-deserts very well, and hence we need to build in more routines of attunement to help them self-regulate and focus on learning.

Obvious nonverbal cues are behaviors a student displays indicating that they cannot focus on the class activity, whether they are distracting others or withdrawing. You would see a lack of focus in their eyes, an emotional expression captured in facial muscles that communicate being bored, angry, overwhelmed, tired, annoyed, disinterested, or preoccupied. Psychomotor agitation through foot tapping or squirming is common.

The underlying need state yanking their attention can be anything from being stuck on the academic task to a limited ability to access working memory, distraction due to noise and visual overstimulation in the classroom, or a frustrating interaction they had earlier in the day. Their limbic systems and implicit memory circuits may be pulsating with underlying anxiety due to unmitigated stress or trauma currently present in their life, further eroding attention span.

Student Verbal Responses. When a child is leaving that optimum state of arousal—a little of which is needed to focus—and headed toward overload, you will hear it in their voice as well, whether in tone, volume, and pitch, or in statements revealing a perplexing attitude or perception. A student not able to return to focus when redirected says “No,” or “Make me,” or flies into a rage. A dismissive eye-roll combined with “Whatever” is a very effective message telling you that anxiety has placed the student in a fight-or-flight mode. Our goal, in that immediate moment, is to decenter however we feel when we are mocked, belittled, or disrespected (by first compassionately acknowledging how this activates us at times), and see a student presenting with a wonderful opportunity to experience attunement on the way to self-regulation. They cannot self-regulate in that moment, so their belligerent behavior is their only weapon of protection. Look past it and reach out to them as we explore below.

Connecting (attuning) is all about catching the immediate need state of a student, and as they feel held by your attunement, they are more apt to allow you to guide them accordingly, whether it is back on task or back on task through a process of practicing a self-regulation skill first. Attunement is capturing (Connecting), holding (Coaching), and guiding back to task (Commencing).

Connecting: Attuned Educator Response (I See You)

Verbal and nonverbal cues require a response, but not always of the same type or intensity. Let's imagine a three-level approach: Level 1 (think “green light means all is still OK) is just watching with a caring eye to see if the student can summon their own self-regulation skills and then return to task on their own. You do this every day, and most often students are able to squirm a little and find their way back. As you begin scaffolding self-awareness and response strategies in the classroom, on this level (slight agitation or distraction) you would be looking to see if they are using any of these skills, such as putting their head down for a moment to focus on breathing and other mindfulness or thought-focusing exercises. Your attunement response might be a smile, a warm head nod, a gentle cue that says you see them and are cheering them on and all is safe and OK. This allows them to relax and breathe into using their coping resources. Meanwhile, internally, you are beaming with joy watching this young person tracking and responding to their internal need states.

A Level 2 response (a yellow light signaling “proceed with cautious attention”) is when a clear touch point will be

helpful in anchoring the student so they can summon the internal reserves to return to homeostasis, that sense of calm needed to return to task. It's the equivalent of warmly and encouragingly saying "I see you" loud enough to be seen across a crowded room. Classroom teachers do this all the time! Each time you redirect a student, you are providing an anchoring touch point. When you try to rope a student's attention back to an activity, you are saying, "I see you floating away. I've got you. Come on back." Here is where your voice tone, pitch, and level need to convey calm, confidence, and clarity within a spirit of care. Each of us has our own interpersonal style, and examples might include:

- Honoring the student's request to use a calming space whether it is in the classroom or another designated place in the school.
- Honoring the student's need to withdraw from the task, especially as they learn to decrease their activation without disturbing other students.
- Walking close by, addressing the student by name and asking the student, "How are you doing?" Imagine you have already taught the class that when you ask that question, you are inviting them to do an internal body scan of what they are physically or emotionally feeling, or what they might be thinking or needing that is yanking their attention—and that it is a good moment for some of the self-care or self-regulation (whatever descriptor words you give these exercises) skills you practice in the classroom together. And imagine that when a student is asked that question, they are not in trouble! You are truly inquisitive; you don't really know if the student does want help or wants a little more time using their own ideas and options.
 - Beforehand and in actual practice, you help students learn the script for this new classroom practice. A "Thanks, I've got it" or "I'm hanging in there" (ask the students to come up with sample statements) means "Thank you, I needed some help getting back to focus; I've got it from here." Whereas, "I'm trying...not so sure," or "I think I could use some help," or "Can I use this _____ (resource)?" or similar statements indicate that they need help.
 - Younger students might need an easy, concrete multiple-choice script, such as "green light" for "I've got it," "yellow light" for "I need just a little help," or "red light" for "I need big-time help!" Anchoring this process with classroom visuals is also helpful.
 - Older students, once they have seen the process in action and trust that you are truly there to provide an anchor, need less of a script guiding a response, as they get what your intentions are and they understand this is part of the class culture.
- With our own children, we might place an arm on a shoulder or give a little hug. The equivalent of that in a classroom might be joining them in their activity, pulling up a chair, and engaging the student in a conversation about their work. As they trust your intention—you are partnering with them—if they only need a little bit of an anchor, this might help them bring their attention back. If more is needed, they now have your ear for more direct coaching into identifying and responding to a need state.
 - Another substitute for the anchoring that comes through safe touch is a virtual hug through a relaxation and focusing exercise. If you see other students also off task, take it as an opportunity to invite everyone to take a quick break for this exercise. Planned ahead of time so you can pull it out when appropriate, it would likely begin by asking students to close their eyes, take a few deep belly breaths (diaphragmatic breathing), and scan their bodies, thoughts, and feelings, as all of them are working so hard and it's a good moment to pay attention to what that feels like. What does it feel like using so much brain power? Where is it hard? Where is it fun? You are increasing their awareness of their domains of neural integration (see Figure 2.5) while also giving them a chance to calm anxiety responses creeping through the room.
- Now is a good time to refer back to Figure 2.5. For each of the nine domains of neural integration, the original chart includes examples of movie, book, or TV characters that illustrate an aspect of the brain function being described. In the far right column we give some ideas on how you can strengthen neural integration for that element of brain functioning. As you develop your Action Plan, begin to sketch out activities you might develop to strengthen these neural networks. As you teach your students about the different ways the brain functions, ask

them to come up with book or movie characters relevant to them and/or what they are reading in class.

A Level 3 response (red light—"Stop the business as usual and help me!") is where you see the student no longer able to control their response. Ideally, trauma-informed practices prevent many Level 3 responses. As you see agitation building, your TISP strategies work, especially as the student trusts the process and lets you guide them through a rough moment. But there will still be plenty of times when your student will be overrun by a cascade of neurochemicals driving thoughts, feelings, and behavioral responses. They need a life raft, and quick. Attunement says they need safety and containment before they hurt themselves or someone else.

Let's unpack this scenario conceptually first. In Chapter 5 we reviewed Psychological First Aid, a way of responding to the intense needs of a student or adult in crisis due to a sudden traumatic event. The process mirrors the trauma-informed tri-phasic process of providing safety (*Connecting*), then accessing resources (*Coaching*), and then fostering long-term coping to resume life (*Commencing*). The brain of a student in the midst of a major dysregulation event does not know the difference between a danger aggravated by the social environment (whether a real danger or a misperception) and some type of internal trigger. It is the same neurochemistry in response to an act of violence or a natural catastrophe. The brain is highly calibrated to sensing danger and places us in fight, flight, or flee mode. Psychological First Aid is designed to help us return to a sense of calm amidst stress so we can maximize coping skills in order to survive and thrive.

The initial connecting skills of Psychological First Aid are a direct match with the way water rescue teams are trained. Have you ever watched promotional videos for the amazing men and women who rescue people caught in stormy seas? These professionals, dressed in all-weather ocean gear, descend into treacherous waters, and as they approach a victim, they greet that person with an upbeat, positive "Hello, my name is _____. How are you today?" (We can only imagine how we'd respond!). But it is quickly followed by "I'm going to help you get out of here, but you need to follow my direction. Can you do that?" Of course we want out of danger, so of course we are going to do whatever they say! In Psychological First Aid, it is the same thing: When we see someone overly dysregulated due to the fear and trauma of the precipitating event, and they are unable to receive and respond to comfort from caring others around them, we walk on over and begin by getting through loud and clear that we are here to help. It is the same three-step process: (a) approach and warmly greet; (b) mirror their current predicament, the "I see you are having a tough time and I'm here to help"; and (c) provide clear instructions on how they need to help you help them, the "I need you to work with me to help you get to a better place." This is what Phase I *Connecting* means by providing safety and stabilization, and the Level 3 Code Red is the place it is most vividly practiced.

Imagine this student is aware of the classroom culture—that we all view blow-ups and meltdowns, as described by Daniel Siegel's (Siegel & Bryson, 2012) brain image of "Flipping Our Lids," as signs that we are having a tough time, our brains are registering a need or danger, and it's an opportunity to grow and build confidence that we can survive these moments. Imagine that the student knows the adults in the room are not going to think less of them, and are just grateful to walk together through whatever that tough moment is about.

When the scaffolding is in place, and has been repeatedly spoken about and practiced in stages over time, you have taught the student to internalize a script. And that script is tapping into a fundamental wish all of us have: to be seen and cared about, especially when we are in distress.

Now, when you approach this dysregulated student, they know you are a safe, caring person throwing them a lifeline.

Imagine they know that when you invite or tell them to come out of the classroom with you, or go to the calming space—whatever self-regulation processes are congruent with the current level of need—it is not because they are a nuisance, or are disliked. It is a sign that they, the student, matter; that the teacher and classmates care about them and want to see them not in distress anymore.

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cared about, especially when we are in distress. Now, when you approach this dysregulated student, they know you are a safe, caring person throwing them a lifeline.

Educator Nonverbal Messages: In this moment, your nonverbals include direct eye contact, and yes, a firm resolve that says, “I see you are in distress. I’m here to help.” This is hard, as angry resolve is a more common image of how to set a strong boundary and is what we hope or expect will help a student back down. But, this is both true and not true. In many Level 3 situations, we need to exude strength and intentionality, but coupled with care, not disgust or “I can win this thing” anger. We all want others to help us stop being our own worst enemy. Occasionally you will hear a child say, “I wanted you to stop me.” Boundaries do feel loving, especially from a trusted other. But a boundary embedded in angry disapproving energy, in the absence of a long history of trust, makes that act of care fall flat.

Two examples to help illustrate this combination. A few years ago, I (Anna) heard a longtime high school football coach giving a national radio interview on trauma-informed school practice as applied to sports coaching. He described how in his own youth, a coach yelling at you meant he saw you and was invested in you improving; it felt caring. That was the script, and it worked for him, given that his coaches did care about him, as did his wider community. But he realized that his students were not interpreting his yelling and loud, anger-filled commands as care, but as shaming statements about their abilities and worth. Once he finally had the perceptual and conceptual skills to make sense of his players’ responses to him, he found a way to switch up his verbal and nonverbal coaching style.

Another example is how we struggle to intervene in public abusive events without incurring the murderous wrath of those we are confronting. Occasionally my students and I (Anna) will talk about how to intervene on behalf of children when we see an overwhelmed parent become physically or verbally shaming or aggressive in public. Beyond facing their anger if we yell back in response to the personal outrage we feel on behalf of the child, we also worry that publicly shaming the parent will further make the child vulnerable when public eyes are no longer present. We employ the same concepts here: empathically connect with the parent who is in distress, and offer a lifeline. We practice seeing beyond our own anger and leading with genuine care and support for the parent: “Do you need a hand? Can I help you with that? Can I get the door for you?” as we approach with a smile, a heartwarming nod to convey that we know managing kids is hard.

When a student is in a red zone, threatening harm to self or others, throwing verbal assault bombs like their life is in jeopardy and you are their mortal enemy, you can practice approaching that student and using their name as you say in your own words, “I see you are having a hard time; how can I help you? OK, just watch me for a second; take a breath and trust we can figure this out. Do you want to use _____ (a space you may have designated as a calming, private area), or step outside with me for a few minutes, or visit _____ (a designated person or office at their disposal when needed)?” You are giving them choices, as you already do, but with a spirit of helping them use their coping resources in partnership with you at that moment.

If a student is so dysregulated that they need physical help to prevent harm to themselves or others, you and/or the staff trained in those techniques are carrying out that intervention process with the same spirit. I (Anna) had the honor to work with a child abuse detective for a few years before he died in a tragic accident. At his funeral, I learned that Randy was a trauma-informed police officer long before the term “trauma-informed” was ever coined. One of his colleagues described how Randy would arrest people. He was big and strong, and as he was restraining “the bad guys,” as they called them, he’d calmly talk to them, affirming he had no desire to hurt them, but wanted to help them avoid harm to self or others, and he believed in their ability to help make this arrest process go as smoothly as possible, and to fix whatever mess they were in. His coworkers said he was one of the only officers to regularly get thank-you notes from people in prison or on parole who cited Randy’s care as life-saving during one of the most horrific moments of their lives.

I use this image of Randy’s work with those he arrested because we all need role models for enacting boundaries and consequences while not losing sight of the humanity, vulnerability, hurt, and longing underneath and fueling some of the most dysregulated behavior of our students. They need us to set clear, firm boundaries. Once they return to a state of calm, they need us to walk them through repair and amends processes. And we need to know why and for what purpose *we* act in those moments. If it is because we are merely outraged on behalf of others or because our own stuff was triggered, we will lead with anger and a desire to punish the student. We will take great joy in not giving them stickers or sending them to in-school detention. If we lead with a desire to stop the pain—both the pain driving

the dysregulated student and the pain that student is causing other students—we will display with a firm resolve and intentionality grounded in care and hope.

And if our goal is to address the unmet need of the offending student, to give them the best chance of accessing their own hope, and empathy for self and other, our intervention energy, even when we need to clear a room, call for supports, or restrain a student from further acts of violence, will be laced with an honoring of their personhood. “We’re here to help you calm down, to help you stop hurting yourself and others. I know you can work with us. We’re going to keep holding you here until you calm down and we get you some help.”

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We often hear educators concerned that many of today’s discipline management systems do not include amends processes, unless you are using a reparative justice or similar school management approach. Justice-making is an odd paradox of sorts. Students who hurt others the most, whether through bullying or physical violence, are often telling us a story that someone harmed them and never made amends. Their perceptions of self and other are now distorted, and they are taking out their shame and self-loathing on others. Why should they, a student, apologize or feel remorse when a parent or trusted adult has never cared about what they did or are doing to a child? And how can we, as adults, expect a student in this circumstance to act like an adult when they have never been treated with the sustained attunement and mentoring that are the foundations of empathy and personal responsibility?

To close the loop on the teaching moment of a dysregulated event where peers were frightened, physically threatened or harmed does require the student to make amends according to the nature of the event. But we need to meet them first with empathy and support, and mentor them through what the amends process looks like and why it is good for everyone involved, including that student.

General Attunement Verbal Messages

Attunement messages are not just offered by educators when we see our students in the green, yellow, or red zones of dysregulation. Most attunement messages are displayed through a process we call *active listening*. When we are exploring the richness of this interpersonal skill (entire books have been written on the subject), we often break it down into two parts: communicating or mirroring that we heard the *content* of the person’s verbal message, and mirroring that we heard the *deeper meaning* of their message, expressed either nonverbally or through what meaning tends to emerge from the message as a whole. We engage in these interactions with a sense of openness, care, and curiosity as we strive to make sure we are hearing it correctly rather than distorted by our own presuppositions or struggle to track.

It is quite amazing what being heard feels like—not being agreed with, but being understood. In an exchange with a student when we are trying to use active listening skills, we will know when the student feels heard; their body language will shift, as might their verbal responses. A teacher relayed a story of a child who was highly distressed as he participated in an activity meant to be a fun reward for a week of hard work. The teachers’ presupposition was, “the students should be loving this activity,” and thus they did not immediately track the obvious meaning of the student’s cues—crying and facial expressions of fear. When the teacher moved in with a connected, attuned offer (to step outside of the activity so the teacher could understand what the student was trying to communicate), the teacher learned that the activity was too similar to a very scary and abusive recent event involving visuals similar to the class activity. Once the teacher “got it,” the student had a good moment of crying, feeling safe to no longer hold back the fullness of his hurt and pain activated in that moment. And in this case, the teacher’s deeper understanding signaled that something more was needed on behalf of this student (rather than merely listening, agreeing to disagree, etc.). The teacher was able

to offer the student an alternative space to enjoy his well-earned break and rejoin the group after the current activity concluded.

Chapter 8: Exercise 1

Practice Active Listening

Often we think we are better at active listening than we are. When we are in a hurry or slightly activated ourselves, most of us struggle with this basic communication skill. Take a moment to practice the following active listening exercise with a colleague who is also working through this material. It is an amended communication tool commonly used in couples therapy (Luquet, 2015). This structure is not practical for most conversations; what we are aiming for is to practice mirroring content and underlying meaning while decentering our own opinions and internal emotional responses.

Designate who will be the Speaker and who will be the Listener. The Speaker is asked to pick an easy topic, something unlikely to trigger either of you, as this first round is to just practice the skills. Let's imagine that the Speaker has checked in with the Listener to make sure this is a good time to talk about this topic. If the Listener says yes, that consent means three things: They have the time to listen; they are in a space to put aside their own opinion and emotional reactions on this topic; and they have time for you to reciprocate, in that you will then listen to them. This is what we do in a dialogue. Our schema for "conversation" says, "I will listen to you if you listen to me, and that helps me to put aside my opinion long enough to be able to track what is important to you, as I know you will then offer me the same." Here, in this exercise, we are just deconstructing it, as the conceptual elements of this schema are important for us to put into clear words.

Instructions

In the instructions below, we also offer sample dialogue as a glimpse of what it may look like in action.

Conversation #1: An easy topic to practice the nuts and bolts:

- **Speaker:** Share your topic in a small bundle of information. For example, let's say you are going to share how much you love tulips. You might say, "This time of year is my favorite because the tulips are in bloom."
- **Listener:** Your job is simple. Merely tell the Speaker what you heard. For now, being a "parrot" is great: "I heard you say that you love this time of year because the tulips are in bloom. Did I get that right?"
- **Speaker:** Let your Listener know if they got it. In a real conversation, you are already adept at picking up cues that a Listener missed the message. Here, we are reminding ourselves to pay attention to these cues by overtly asking each other if we got the messages correct. It is also important not to take it personally if the Listener got your message wrong; in fact, the more they get it wrong, the more it proves the point that active listening is hard work! They are not being careless. Our brains compete with so much internal noise that we often don't encode what we just heard. Repeat your packet of information until they get it right and you can finally say, "Yes, you got it right."
- **Listener:** Once you get the message correct, ask your Speaker, "Is there more?" In this exercise, we are asking the Speaker to give you their full message in little packets because on stressful topics, we tend to

ramble on, leaving our Listeners in the dust a few hundred words ago. This is a reminder that when we have something important to say, we have the responsibility to break it down into pieces to help our Listener track. “Is there more?” or “Would you like to tell me more?” is an acknowledgement of appreciation that the full message is being delivered in little parcels.

- **Speaker:** Pay attention to what it feels like to have someone ask you if there is more to your message. It feels good! If there is more to your message, go ahead and add to it. For example, “I am so in love with tulips, I got really mad the other day when I saw that someone brought a pot of tulip bulbs into the break room and didn’t even bother to give it water and sunlight!”
- **Listener:** Uh-oh, what if that was you who disregarded the care of those tulips?!? Breathe, and put it aside. No confessing, no apologies, no correcting distorted facts. Just stick with the Speaker’s message: “You love tulips so much, you got mad at discovering that someone didn’t properly take care of a pot of tulips they left in the break room with no sunlight and water. Did I get that?”
- **Speaker:** “Yes! What a jerk that person was.”
- **Listener:** “And that person was a jerk.”
- **Speaker:** “Yep, you got it.”
- **Listener:** Now, sum up the message: “I’m hearing you say that you love this time of year given your love for tulips. And it really got you mad to discover someone left a pot of tulips in the breakroom where there was no sunlight or water. And whoever did that must be a real jerk. Did I get that, or did I miss anything?”
- **Speaker:** Correct until they get it right. Do not add to the message; just confirm they captured what you said. “Yes, you got it right.”
- **Listener:** Now comes the icing on the cake. Taking in the whole message, their spoken and unspoken messages, what might you imagine the Speaker is feeling? How might you let them know you see the deeper meaning? Trust they will let you know if you get it right or wrong. It might sound something like this: “I think I am hearing you say just how much you enjoy tulips and it is so maddening when you don’t see others taking care of them. It must have been so sad to see these tulips wasting away in that dark and dry room. Did I get that?”
- **Speaker:** Don’t be surprised if suddenly you tear up over tulips! When someone captures the essence of what is important to us, we feel it deeply. It is quite amazing. Wrap up your turn as Speaker by letting your Listener know if they got it. “Wow, you got it. I didn’t realize I felt so deeply about tulips!” Now, offer to switch. “Thank you for listening. Would you like us to switch and have me listen to what is important to you?”

Conversation #2: A stressful conversation to practice self-regulation as you listen:

In this round, pick a more stressful topic. Maybe it is something that happened in your classroom or a meeting with a parent or another coworker. If we follow up on the above example, we might imagine that the new Speaker is “the jerk who left the pot of tulips to rot and die in the breakroom.” Using this possibility as an example, let’s go for it.

(New) Speaker: Pick a fictitious or real situation that you think might be meaningful to your Listener. We are inviting the Listener to become ever-so-slightly activated as they are listening to you. In the above scenario, it might be something like this, as you check to see if the Listener has the time and emotional bandwidth to listen: “Thank you for the offer. I’d like to take you up on it, but let me make sure you are up for the topic. I’m the person who left the pot of tulips in the break room. Can I share my thoughts with you?”

Listener: If this were a real scenario, you’d be feeling your anxiety response systems go off. Perfect! You might be feeling ashamed and embarrassed for calling them a jerk, or rage that your friend was the culprit. In

this case, we are asking your Speaker to go with a school scenario that might be of interest to you. If the Speaker vents about a student or parent, you might feel defensive because you like these people; you might think that your colleague brought the situation on themselves; or their experience might highlight your already simmering frustration with some element of your school's way of doing things. Most of the time, we are being asked to listen when we are activated. If your Speaker's topic does activate you, pay attention even as you put it aside to listen. "Yes, I have time to listen."

- **Speaker:** Give a piece of your message.
- **Listener:** Mirror it back until you get it right, and ask if there is more.
- **Speaker:** Share more, but limit your message to no more than three packets of information as most Listeners can't hold more than that in one sitting.
- **Listener:** Sum up the whole message, and check in to see if you got it right.
- **Speaker:** Offer corrections until they get the whole message, being careful not to piggyback more onto the original thought.
- **Listener:** Now go deep, and share what you see the Speaker might be feeling, or what deeper importance this message has to them. The Speaker will let you know if you got it right.
- **Speaker:** Affirm what pieces of their ponderings caught the deeper meaning and feelings, and what parts don't fit.
- **Listener:** Just mirror their response.
- **Speaker and Listener:** Thank each other for the process.

Take a few minutes to reflect on this experience. What was hard; what felt nice? Did you feel frustration when your Listener couldn't get it right? We all do until we trust our Listeners and know that these misses are common and not intentional. As the Listener, did you feel an internal sense of activation, either in resonance with or in reaction to the Speaker? Were you bored or was your mind wandering? How did you acknowledge it to yourself and put it aside?

And finally, how might the skills of this exercise be put into action in the classroom? In one-to-one conversations with students and coworkers? If you are part of a cohort working together to implement TISP in your classroom or school, make an agreement to meet again to share your experience and observations as you practice the spirit of this exercise (not the steps verbatim) in real conversations.

Action Plan



Classrooms System Element

In Chapter 7, you began to design an initial Action Plan in preparation to implement TISP into the classroom. With greater TISP perceptual and conceptual clarity, you are now ready to fill in the implementation details of this plan. Grab those notes and reacquaint yourself with Phase I goals, dispositions, and tasks (see Chapter 6), as the ideas below represent the enactment of these items.

Your Classroom Motto or Mission Statement

What do you want your students to know about you and the classroom that communicates they are safe and welcome? Most often, teachers are bringing students into a big adventure, as learning unleashes thoughts and feelings that expand minds

and visions of self, other, and the world. Yet, many of our students are unmotivated and not nearly as excited as we are. So, we decorate our walls with enticing images of that adventure, we give impassioned speeches, and we create engaging, entertaining introductory lessons. All of that is logical and good, but in due time, not as the first agenda item of the day or the class. This is very contrary to school systems that expect you to bombard each student with learning objectives and then expect each child to cite chapter and verse regarding what was accomplished in that past time slot.

Think of your classroom as an invitation over to your place for a picnic. Rarely do we sit our guests down and begin plating the meal as soon as they arrive. We greet each other, gently checking in and connecting before we sit down and dig in. How do you want to invite your students into that space and ease them into the adventures of that meal?

For most of our students, the expectations of the classroom are challenging, if not terrifying. Students may fear being unable to follow along and keep up with academic demands, or fear being disliked and perhaps picked on. If you lead with a narrative about the wonders of everything students are going to learn this year, we promise you that only those students who are excited to learn will experience the energizing, hopeful, adventurous benefits of a norepinephrine surge. For students who fear math, think they can never learn to spell, struggle to read, are shamed by imperfect grades, or are just overwhelmed, placing academics at the bottom of their list, that inspiring speech about what they are going to learn will push them into a flight, fight, or freeze response within the first few minutes of your picnic.

No doubt most classroom teachers feel fear that they will not be able to cover lesson plans and keep all students on task and up to speed within the allotted instructional time of a given day, week, or term. Time is of the essence. In Phase I, you get a chance to attune to your own anxiety about time pressures, as you relax into trusting that as you (and the greater school system) settle into the trauma-informed culture and cadence, learning will advance with fewer impediments; the time you spend on *Connecting* and *Coaching* is banking instructional time and efficacy.

So, more specifically now, what is the attunement-focused goal for your classroom? Describe the ambiance you want to create that will guide the choices you make about all aspects of managing your classroom and the delivery of your lesson plans. As we think over our own classroom mission statements, they express that we strive to create a community in which students:

- Feel welcome, as evidenced in our actions and attitudes displayed in our verbal and nonverbal communication, including our voice tone, pitch, and volume; our eyes and facial expressions; our body posture; and how we speak to and about our students. We strive for our responses to communicate that we are curious to get to know each student, to understand how they think, what they are feeling, what is important to them, what they understand

and what they do not.

- See that we are concerned about *them*, not their performance. As one of our students said, “I want to teach students, not subjects.” We want our students to know we are invested in them doing well in life, both today and tomorrow. And while learning is a key part of their health, we trust that they will love learning once they know that they matter, that they are cared about, and that it is safe to stumble along in the process of learning.
- Know that struggle is OK and expected. We struggle to learn subjects; we struggle with learning how to be a good friend; we have fears and insecurities. We don’t always know how to be sad or angry or scared, and sometimes we make hard situations worse. We are all in the same boat, needing to learn not to fear our struggles. And we promise not to shame or punish anyone because of a struggle. We promise to walk beside each other, even when struggle is learning how to make something right or to fix a problem that we created.
- Know that we can’t wait to discover what each student does well. All of us have hidden talents and interests. All of us discover new things about life every day. And we look forward to hearing and watching each student soar in their own way and in their own time. Our students will be teaching us as much as we hope to teach them.
- Know that we need them to make our classroom a warm and inviting learning community. When one student is hurting, we all hurt. When a student is happy and excited, their joy is contagious. When someone is struggling, another peer might have the perfect way of helping out. We share time together every day, and when a student is unable to join us or engage with us, we feel that loss. We promise to remind each other every day of how much we see and appreciate each other.
- Know they are welcome to join us whether they like our class or not. This class, this time together, and having them be with us is the most important lesson we practice each day in each class.

Know that struggle is OK and expected. We struggle to learn subjects; we struggle with learning how to be a good friend; we have fears and insecurities. We don’t always know how to be sad or angry or scared, and sometimes we make hard situations worse. We are all in the same boat, needing to learn not to fear our struggles. And we promise not to shame or punish anyone because of a struggle. We promise to walk beside each other, even when struggle is learning how to make something right or to fix a problem that we created.

This is the feeling we want our students to receive each time they enter our classroom: that they are more important than that lesson plan, that test score, or our teaching evaluation. These items do matter; we are not suggesting that you ignore these pressures or realities. But we know that for the vast majority of students, they will not learn, they will not want to learn, and perhaps most startling, they cannot learn, until they know you truly see and value them, and they can calm inner anxieties enough to access their executive functioning. Phase I *Connecting* is based on the premise that if we create a culture of care, student developmental growth processes will kick into high gear, making learning both possible and a tool to further healing and growth.

Classroom Observation and Assessment

In order to understand the relationship between the physical setting of our classroom and the potential influence it can have on our students, we created an assignment for participants in our trainings. We encourage teachers to sit in their classrooms at the end of the day and experience the space through the eyes of their students. We ask them to analyze the noises they hear, the lighting, the decorations in the room, the arrangement of desks, etc. Then, we ask them to collate their observations in the chart below. We challenge you to do the same! Experience your classroom through the eyes of your students. Use the chart below to complete this exercise. It is followed by an example a participant shared with us.

Classroom Observation and Assessment

Element Observed: Lighting

- Observations:
- Morning:
- Midday:
- End of the Day:

Element Observed: Spacing

- Observations:
- Morning:
- Midday:
- End of the Day:

Element Observed: Acoustics

- Observations:
- Morning:
- Midday:
- End of the Day:

Element Observed: Visuals

- Observations:
- Morning:
- Midday:
- End of the Day:

Element Observed: Movement/Flow

- Observations:
- Morning:
- Midday:
- End of the Day:

1. Is the physical space conducive to creating a safe, calm, predictable, “doable” learning environment for the stressed student?
2. How is the literature informing your assessment? In other words, what is it about the neurobiology of

trauma that impacts how a physical space influences a sense of safety and focus vs. anxiety and activation?

3. What changes would you like to make in order to facilitate the student's growing resilience?

Element	Changes to Make
Lighting	
Spacing	
Acoustics	
Visuals	
Movement/Flow	

Classroom Observation and Assessment Example

Element Observed: Lighting

- Observations:
It feels OK. I have a variety of lamps that help out with different lighting, and I use them at different times for different activities.
- Morning:
It is a little dark in the morning when I turn off the lights and use the lamps, but it is calming.
- Midday:
This feels pretty good. It is still pretty dark at times, but when the sun is out it feels pretty good.
- End of the Day:
This feels pretty good. It is still pretty dark at times, but when the sun is out it feels pretty good.

Element Observed: Spacing

- Observations:
My room feels tight at times.
- Morning:
It is pretty good in the morning, but it is my smallest class.
- Midday:

It is OK in my core 2, but it is not a huge class.

- End of the Day:

It feels really tight at this part of the day because it is my biggest class and it is a needy, demanding class.

Element Observed: Acoustics

- Observations:

The acoustics are not bad. I bought some speakers to help with the acoustics in the room.

- Morning:

Not bad.

- Midday:

It works OK I have a chatty class, but we are able to get things done.

- End of the Day:

This is my biggest and loudest class. It makes it kind of hard at times.

Element Observed: Visuals

- Observations:

I read that it is good not to have too many visuals, so what I have up is pretty basic.

- Morning:

Same

- Midday:

Same

- End of the Day:

Same but bigger class.

Element Observed: Movement/Flow

- Observations:

My room feels very tight at times, since it is a portable.

- Morning:

It is pretty good in the morning, but it is my smallest class.

- Midday:

It is OK in my core 2, but it is not a huge class.

- End of the Day:

It feels really tight at this part of the day because it is my biggest class and it is hard to move everyone around.

1. Is the physical space conducive to creating a safe, calm, predictable, “doable” learning environment for the stressed student?

I try my best to create a calm, predictable environment, but it is somewhat hard in the portable. I currently have an empty portable next to mine, and that has been nice because it gives me some more room to operate and do science. I still feel like I do not have enough space to do what I would like to do. This is even more important for when students are stressed.

2. How is the literature informing your assessment? In other words, what is it about the neurobiology of

trauma that impacts how a physical space influences a sense of safety and focus vs. anxiety and activation?

It is making me think about how my class size and space are pretty limiting. Last year I had a smaller class and we did not rotate, so I had some more flexibility and room to work and more things around to do that. I think in a more traditional elementary environment there are more options for movement and changing things like desk arrangements and lighting and environment than in the rotating middle-school-type schedule that we currently have. A lot of what I have been reading is useful, but harder to do in a rotating schedule.

3. What changes would you like to make in order to facilitate the student's growing resilience?

I would like to work on having a calming corner and some other places for kids to take a break. I wish I had some more room to have some wiggle room for kids and ability to move around a bit more than I do.

Element	Changes to Make
Lighting	I would like to have more different lighting for kids. I would like some different settings and colors, as well as some low-light and bright-light areas for kids so that they could take a break or rejuvenate themselves depending on what they need.
Spacing	I am really hoping to have smaller classes or more room in the future. I really don't have the space that I would like. I really want to have more designated break areas for kids and more room for the students to spread out. It is hard because I am in a portable and just don't have that much room for big classes of near 30.
Acoustics	I bought a personal amplification device this summer. This has helped me some with the acoustics of the portable. I taught in a brand new smart building in one of my previous schools and was kind of spoiled by that. I had built-in speakers and audio, which made a big difference in my ability to teach. I think that would be something I would work toward being able to do. I also think letting the kids work on their own personal audio devices would be really good.
Visuals	I think I do OK on visuals, I know there are some mixed ideas on whether or not it is beneficial for rooms to be very busy visually, so I have backed off from my room being so visually stimulating.
Movement/Flow	I am really hoping to have smaller classes or more room in the future. I really don't have the space that I would like. I really want to have more designated break areas for kids and more room for the students to spread out. It is hard because I am in a portable and just don't have that much room for big classes of near 30.

- How is the literature informing the changes you want to make? In other words, what is it about the neurobiology of trauma that impacts how a physical space influences a sense of safety and focus vs. anxiety and activation?

I think the big one that I am seeing is having a variety of different scenarios depending on the student

needs and making a focus on teaching them how to use the different parts of the room, if you are building in a calming corner or different areas where kids can work on different things. I think having different areas is really good so that kids know that they can take breaks and feel comfortable in the class and feel supported.

If their needs are getting met in class, they are less likely to need to leave the class for discipline/counseling/regulation.

–Glenn, Middle School Teacher

A Classroom Teacher's TISP Learning Process

I very vividly remember attending the first trauma class and desperately just wanting a *strategy* that I could rush out and implement. The most important thing I learned and at the forefront of *everything* in trauma-informed practice is this: it's not just a strategy. The critical component for reaching a child with the effects of trauma is making meaningful connection. No strategy alone will work with a child for whom entering a classroom feels equivalent to entering a perilous danger-laden space due to the life he or she has been dealing with. Connection with an attentive and caring adult can be an entry into a safe space for the child. –Doreen, Classroom Teacher

Assessment

Once you make changes in your classroom, you will want to assess the impact of those changes on student academic and behavior outcomes. In Chapter 12, we address the importance of gathering data to track the efficacy of your efforts as displayed in student engagement and learning. We also need to track how school personnel are engaging and responding to TISP. Take a few moments to glance through the data gathering section of Chapter 12 as you reflect on what data you may wish to track in your preparation and implementation processes. Just as you would in your lesson plan, determine the most appropriate assessments. What do you want to track? What do you want to observe? What data will you collect? Once you identify these items, add them to your Action Plan.

Action Plan

Create an intentional, concrete, and doable TISP implementation plan commensurate with your role/position. Design your Action Plan with an academic year implementation in mind. Follow the outline below. Be as concise or detailed as you want when completing the outline. It is designed to serve you; it is a roadmap that we expect will change often as you begin the implementation process. After you have completed the outline, distill a summary of key goals or desired tasks into the chart.

I. Your Role (Position; School; Grade Levels; Subject)

II. Mindset

- How are you changing or expanding your mindset as a trauma-informed educator?
- Take what you created above and word it as a mission statement: something succinct and encouraging that you can post where you can see it to remind you and ground you.
- What do you want to put in place to support you? Who else is implementing a trauma-informed Action Plan and might partner with you for mutual support?

III. Physical Setting

- To increase self-awareness (ie., brain functioning, emotions, etc.)
- To inspire mutual care
- To explain classroom/school community values
- What is already in place
- Items to create/add
- Resources to tap

IV. Rituals and Routines

- To embody care, slow it down (relaxation, self-regulation), bring coherence to the day's events
- To ease transitions—beginning of a class; end of a class; beginning and end of day, week, term, year
- To create a sense of stability and predictability
- In your classroom—rituals to create
- In broader school—rituals you'd like to see be created
- What is already in place
- Resources to tap

V. Classroom Management

- Desired mindset/internal framework
- Method for teaching students your mindset, practices, approach
- Techniques, tools, resources to teach and provide the student
- How to debrief with colleagues and invite common protocol with others in contact with the student

- What is already in place
- Resources to tap

VI. Broader School System

You may have little to no influence on certain areas of school functioning, but list what you wish would be in place to reinforce the messages you are trying to embed in your students' experience in your classroom.

VII. Parents

- How might you want to connect with them? While the literature speaks of including parents, not much trauma-informed school programming exists for them. Ask your School or District Strategic Planning Teams about the goals for offering TISP orientations to parents.
- Until your District or School begins offering parent resources, decide how you will:
 - Explain the shifts in your school or classroom practices
 - Explain how children learn best by first learning to self-regulate
 - Explain the importance of their role as parent supports in the classroom: how you and parents work as partners
- What are you already doing that communicates partnership with parents/guardians?
- If you could write up a one-page handout to give to parents about your conflict resolution or challenging-behavior response methods, how might you explain it?
- This sample handout might be a collaborative project for your team during the academic year as you conspire together to design a consistent conceptual schema and specific techniques (mirrors Section VI above).
 - The content of the handout would be the same information you would be sharing, teaching, and modeling with the students.

VIII. School Strategic Planning Team

In your Action Plan, you are a Strategic Planning Team of one when it comes to making changes in your sphere of direct influence. But, you will need support from peers who work closely with you and/or work with your same students. The School Strategic Planning Team is designed to be that place where you can share your experiences and share where you need greater system support. This team is also the place to turn for updates on the timetable for additional changes slated in the support structures around you as more of the school transitions to TISP.

In your Action Plan, identify the team members you need to check in with to keep them informed of your insights and experiences. Also, request information regarding your school's larger plan and how updates are shared among staff. Your School Strategic Planning Team is also the place to share your own continuing education and resourcing needs.

IX. Assessment

- What do you want to assess? (Read through the first portion of chapter 12 for ideas.)
 - For example: student attitudes displayed in classroom atmosphere, behavioral challenges, student response to your interventions when having behavioral challenges; your sense of efficacy when dealing with challenging encounters; student engagement in rituals and other learning moments;

- student feedback on how they felt heard or tended to during a difficult encounter.
- Identify three items you'd like to assess, and identify a data gathering method.

Action Plan Examples

The following examples are taken from Action Plans created by teachers. We share these to encourage you as you work through your own Action Plan.

Action Plan Example

Heather, Elementary Teacher

I. My Role: I am a first-grade teacher.

II. Mindset:

A. Becoming more trauma-informed feels like exactly the right direction for me personally and for our district. I have such a better understanding now when I look around my classroom of what might be going on in their brains and its connection to their behaviors.

B. My rough wording at this point would be something like “To cooperatively build a classroom of learners who are mindful of their behaviors and have the skills they need to face both academic and social challenges.”

C. I think that the teachers who are also taking this course at my school will be a great support for each other. Not only are we good friends, but I believe that we share a strong dedication to helping become a trauma-informed school. I do think that continuing the strong communication with admin will be really important. Knowing that we have the support of the district to keep trying new things is so important.

D. I would love for my students to adopt an understanding of their own brain and what it means to have a regulated brain. I also hope that they can use that knowledge to help our classroom really feel like a safe and loving community.

E. In our classroom, we have had classroom meetings with a focus on building relationships and having a strong sense of classroom community. We have frank conversations about our brain and how we all work differently and might react differently. I have worked very hard on being a teacher who uses positives rather than negatives for discipline. I have also worked very hard to always be building relationships with my students. Special lunches, notes, and time together are really important to me.

F. I know that I will need to work on my consistency in speech and actions regarding behavior. I have often had multiple systems going on at once because I am trying to think of what would be best for each student. Really working on a common system will be important for me moving forward.

III. Physical Setting:

A. I think I will be doing more reading in our classroom texts as well as looking online at how other teachers have set up calming stations in their classrooms. I know there are other teachers in our district who would be a good resource.

B. I already have my classroom set up with an area at the back that is a little calmer. It just doesn't have many supplies that students could really use. For creating the kangaroo pocket, I have plenty of pocket charts—I just need to think about what it really is going to look like.

C. I really would like a space that feels very calming and separated from the rest of the room. I think that I will need to move some furniture so that I can see the space from any spot in the room.

IV. Physical Setting:

A. I think that my classroom space is already relatively calming as far as colors and natural light. I try to keep the amount of stuff on my walls to a minimum, but that can be tricky. I will have to think about what should be up on the walls around a calm space. I was thinking of what might be available as far as a good image of the brain that could be up as a reminder. I know that in some classrooms teachers have a chart with different emotions. That might be something I should find too.

B. I think that reminders up around the room that this is a shared space give the impression of mutual care. Having up things that the kids have made or including their work on the walls helps them feel like this is really their classroom.

C. I will have up our school PBIS rules and the Kelso poster that all rooms in our building have up.

D. See A.

E-F. See A.

V. Rituals and Routines:

A. I think starting the day with a classroom meeting where we take time to talk and connect is important. Always beginning by reviewing the schedule and any changes in the day can help too. Greeting the students individually and taking the time to hear about their evening was good.

B. I usually have used a countdown to help my students transition because I think that gives them a sense of how much time is actually passing. I will have to do some thinking about if this would be stressful or helpful. I know that some teachers use songs, and that is something that might be more calming. I will research this more. I am pretty good at making sure we discuss any changes to the week and I also put notes on our big calendar of any upcoming events.

C. I get to make my own schedule for the most part each year, and I do try my hardest to make sure that the days are as similar as possible. I also try to make sure that I am at school as many days as possible and I have the same sub whenever possible.

D. I firmly believe in beginning and ending the day in the same way as much as possible. This year with classroom meetings, I tried to start each day with a game or activity that was enjoyable. I end each day with our "moment of awesome" where we watch something funny or tell jokes. I plan to keep these up, as well as adding in other breaks and mindful moments during the day.

E. I really wish there was a way to start the day off for all of our students somewhere other than the gym. I really value that we have team time and the kids get to move and sing and dance, but for some students it

really is an overwhelming amount of noise and activity first thing. At the end of the day for bus line it is even less structured, and that is really hard for some of our students. We have started having some students be in a separate room that is calmer, but there isn't much room and it can still be pretty loud and unstructured. I really think it would be nice if we could calm the end of the day down. I really liked an idea from our interview with the school in MA about breakfast buddies. I think if there was a check-in for some of our students and a chance to visit with an adult before they got into the classroom, that would be really helpful.

F. We do have some students start and end their day in our sensory room. Our principal does do check-ins with some students or there are students who start their day in the office, but as a school we don't have much in place for the broader student population.

G. I would really like to keep talking to other teachers as well as looking into other methods for transitioning and creating classroom routines.

VI. Classroom Management:

A. I want to start the year with the mindset that this classroom can be a safe and strong community with the feeling of a family. It is always my goal to never yell, stay calm, and set a loving tone for the room. I think that starting the year with time spent on mindfulness and really building community will help both the students and me.

B. I think that spending time really talking during classroom meetings is so important. It is a good time to learn together about the brain, being regulated, staying safe and calm together, and other practices we want in our classroom. I plan to use the mindfulness cards and other activities to help with this.

C. I think that the kangaroo pouch idea is a good one, but I also know that as a class we might need more strategies. I will keep researching more ideas.

D. I really liked the system mentioned by the principal we interviewed in MA. They have something they call a "red letter" that goes out to all staff who will be working with a student during the day so they are all aware of what is going on. I think that is a good plan but also taking the time to talk and debrief is going to be really important. I am hoping that there can be some of our team who set up a regular meeting.

E. I know we have some professional development time in this upcoming year dedicated to this.

F. Other schools in our district and outside of it and the texts from this class. I would really be happy to be a resource for my building on this.

VII. Broader School System:

A. I really think that building in time for our staff to share what we are struggling with and trying on our own would be so good. PLC time for math and writing has been useful, and time in this area would be really useful too.

B. Next year it is one of my goals to start doing some home visits. I know that I do a great job reaching out to parents who reach out to me, but I am not always as successful making sure that I am doing more than a monthly newsletter to reach out to everyone. This is an area where I really know I need to work on improving. I think explaining the idea of mindfulness in our community might be tricky in some ways. I know that in our building we have been cautioned against using the word "yoga" to describe stretching in our classrooms because of parent concerns. I think that being really clear that part of my goal, as an educator, is to help their child grow and learn about their own thoughts and brain is going to be how I would approach communicating about this.

VIII. School Strategic Planning Team:

A. I think any team should have people from all parts of our district. We need to hear from admin, teachers, classified, bus drivers...everyone needs a voice. I think this committee should be a way for people from all parts of our district to share ideas and concerns, and then to plan together how to move forward as a district. I think there should be time to talk and share, but then they should be working on a district action plan. I think, by the fall, if we had two representatives from each area, that would be a huge accomplishment and a great start. I think that there might be red flags around confidentiality and recognizing the importance of different teaching styles. I really think open conversations, and continued education for our staff on how important being trauma-informed is, are where to start. I think most people who work with children do really care about them, and all workers are going to be interested in something that would make their job go more smoothly.

B. I would be happy to be on a committee like this. Of all the different learning I have done about education, I truly feel the most passionate about this as what will make the biggest difference in the lives of our students. I feel dedicated to this community and our kids. I also believe that this would really be helping our teachers as far as less burnout and better relationships with their students. This would be a great thing to be a part of!

IX. Assessment:

A-B. I want to track student attitudes, behavior challenges, as well as their ability to focus on academics. I know that it is going to be tricky to track things like this, but I think that our data can be the best way to reach out to teachers who might be hesitant about how worthwhile this is. I think that journaling is usually the best way for me to gather data.

Chapter 8: Exercise 4

Action Plan Chart

This chart provides you with space to intentionally consider changes in your physical space, visuals, rituals, and discipline. Use this chart to plan out your implementation strategy from your Action Plan. Below, you will find examples that we hope will guide and inspire.

Item:

- Purpose:
- Resources:
- Materials:
- Start Date:
- Outcomes:

Action Plan Chart Example

Heather, Sixth-Grade Teacher

Item: Classroom space for calming down and becoming regulated

- Purpose:
To give students the resources they need to calm down and get their minds ready for learning
- Resources:
 - Pinterest?
 - Other district teachers who have already done this
- Materials:
 - Headphones and iPod with relaxing music and/or mindfulness apps
 - Calming activities like glitter bottles or coloring sheets
- Start Date:
I hope to have this set up this summer so I can introduce my students to it on the first day
- Outcomes:
 - Less classroom meltdowns
 - Ability to focus
 - Participation
 - Happier and better regulated students

Item: Kangaroo Safe pocket

- Purpose:
 - To help students feel safe and loved
 - To help students understand what it means/looks like to be regulated in the classroom
- Resources:
Lessons on what a regulated and deregulated brain look like
- Materials:
 - Pocket chart with spots for each student
 - Kangaroo for each student
- Start Date:
First day of school
- Outcomes:
 - Acceptance of each other
 - A sense of community

- Trust and support

Item: Classroom meeting with a focus on mindfulness

- Purpose:
To give students the strategies to be mindful of their actions
- Resources:
Mindfulness cards and book
- Materials:
Mindfulness cards and books, plus varied materials for the lessons
- Start Date:
First week of school
- Outcomes:
 - Creating a classroom with mindful students
 - Giving students skills to use when they are on their own

Action Plan Chart Example

Caryn, Sixth-Grade Teacher

Item: Color Scheme in Classroom

- Purpose:
Physical setting: I plan on repainting my room so that it has more calming colors, and I plan on using a more calming color palette throughout my décor
- Resources:
Trauma 500
- Materials:
Paint (I already have this), new cloth in new color scheme for bulletin boards, new borders, etc.
- Start Date:
First day of school
- Outcome Measures:
Observation data.

Item: Lighting

- Purpose:
Physical setting: I plan on purchasing light covers to make the light in my room less abrasive
- Resources:

- My colleagues that have used these before
- Online educator discussion groups where I first heard about them
- Trauma 500 book
- Materials:
Light covers (already in my Amazon cart waiting to be purchased)
- Start Date:
One month into the school year (after outdoor school)
- Outcome Measures:
I may not put them up until after the first month of school. This way I can see how the change in lighting affects the class

Item: Layout

- Purpose:
Physical setting: I plan on recreating the layout of my room so that there are more spaces that I can devote to trauma-sensitive programming. In addition, I want to add more plants to the six that I currently have in my classroom. The kids LOVE them!
- Resources:
My own knowledge and trial and error
- Materials:
Plants, carpet squares for floor seating that is moveable
- Start Date:
First day of school
- Outcome Measures:
Observation data

Item: Animals

- Purpose:
Physical setting: I am going to have some cute mice as pets
- Resources:
Help for Billy
- Materials:
Calico mice and all the equipment
- Start Date:
First day of school
- Outcome Measures:
Observational data

Item: Photographs of Kids

- Purpose:
Visuals: I plan on creating a large collage art piece right next to my classroom door that will stay up the entire year. On it will be pictures of each of my students as well as a square of space where they can represent themselves in some abstract way
- Resources:

Fostering Resilient Learners

- Materials:
Old magazines for collage making, cardstock squares, photos of my kids (next year)
- Start Date:
First day of school, but it will probably take a month to finish it
- Outcome Measures:
Observational data

Item: Calming Space

- Purpose:
Rituals: This year I created what I called “the calming zone” at the back of my classroom. This had all kinds of sensory items, etc., at it and I had kids use it to regulate
- Resources:
Fostering Resilient Learners
- Materials:
I need more 100% quiet fidgets (a few broke). I need a new comfy chair (might use my rocker)
- Start Date:
First day of school
- Outcome Measures:
I have a check-in sheet that I have used all year for this. It is helpful when trying to track who are my frequent flyers as well as if I have noticed a shift in their overall manageability. (Incidentally, I did notice a huge difference!)

Item: Pacing Space

- Purpose:
Rituals: I plan on creating a space that is a designated pacing space. I let kids go for a walk if needed, and I have a special pass for this, but this will be one more officially designated space
- Resources:
Help for Billy
- Materials:
Laminated footprints. I think I am going to use animal prints, specifically panther prints, as we are the East Elementary Panthers!
- Start Date:
First day of school
- Outcome Measures:
Observational data

Item: Regulation Rituals

- Purpose:
Rituals: Deep breathing at the beginning and end of each lesson, or at the very least twice a day
- Resources:
Fostering Resilient Learners
- Materials:

I need to create a set ritual for deep breathing (like, step one, do this, step two, do this, etc.)

- Start Date:
First day of school
- Outcome Measures:
Observational data

Item: Restorative Justice Combined with Love and Logic

- Purpose:
Discipline: I have used a Restorative Justice/Love and Logic combo this year and I want to continue with it, but I also want to see what I can combine from the Discovery model (which I am being trained in this summer) into my classroom discipline
- Resources:
 - Love and Logic training manual
 - Restorative Justice readings
 - My own experience with Reggio Emilia/natural consequences
 - Discovery Model
- Materials:
Posters that have key rules and “sayings,” like “use your words”
- Start Date:
First day of school
- Outcome Measures:
Observational data

Chapter 8: Exercise 5

Conceptual Application—Questions to Ponder

1. What are you observing in your classroom?
2. What connections are you making between student behaviors, social-emotional learning, and executive functioning?
3. Can you identify one way to implement social-emotional learning in your classroom tomorrow?
4. Can you identify one executive functioning skill you want to teach or practice tomorrow?
5. What mindfulness skills might be needed to scaffold this process?

A Look Forward

In this chapter, you created an action plan for TISP implementation. We acknowledge that the exercise was more than likely challenging and perhaps a bit daunting. Remember, you can implement in small pieces just as Caryn did in her example above. Now that we considered how to implement TISP in your classroom, we move to present application of TISP to behavioral disruptions in your classroom. In Chapter 9, we consider the philosophies undergirding your current beliefs on the goal and role of discipline, and how *Connecting* and *Coaching* are foundational to supporting student social-emotional development.

Resources for Further Reading

- *Executive Function in the Classroom: Practical Strategies for Improving Performance and Enhancing Skills for All Students*, by Christopher Kaufman.
- *Executive Skills in Children and Adolescents: A Practical Guide to Assessment and Intervention*, by Peg Dawson and Richard Guare.
- *Fostering Resilient Learners: Strategies for Creating a Trauma-Sensitive Classroom*, by Kristin Souers and Pete Hall.
- *The Trauma-Sensitive Classroom: Building Resilience with Compassionate Teaching*, by Patricia Jennings.
- *Trauma-Sensitive Schools: Learning Communities Transforming Children's Lives, K-5*, by Susan Craig.
- *Trauma-Sensitive Schools for the Adolescent Years: Promoting Resiliency and Healing, Grades 6-12*, by Susan Craig.
- *Reaching and Teaching Children Exposed to Trauma*, by Barbara Sorrels.
- [Attachment & Trauma Network, Inc.](#) This group is devoted to creating school-wide trauma-sensitive reform.
- [Healing the Hurt: Trauma-Informed Approaches to the Health of Boys and Young Men of Color](#). This group focuses specifically on young men of color and ways to support them.
- [Trauma-Informed Schools Learning Network for Girls of Color](#) This is a resource for schools and groups working specifically with girls of color.
- [TSA: Treatment and Services Adaptation Center \(Resiliency, Hope, and Wellness in Schools\)](#) Their mission is to promote trauma-informed school systems that provide prevention and early intervention strategies to create supportive and nurturing school environments.

Chapter 9: Responding to Behavioral Disruptions Using Trauma-Informed School Practices: Principles and Practices



[Image: [Nicole Honeywill](#) | [Unsplash](#)]

“Every child needs to learn how to be responsible, to manage their thoughts and feelings, and to know they are loved and cared about.” –Fred Rogers

Desired Outcomes

This chapter identifies Phase II *Coaching* strategies for all educators, with special focus on classroom teachers. At the conclusion of this chapter, educators will be able to:

- Identify the goals of *Coaching* that inform the process of teaching students social-emotional and self-regulation skills
- Understand the interconnectedness of the five tasks of social-emotional learning, and its application to the integration of neural states
- Apply conceptual elements embedded in scaffolded social-emotional skill building

Key Concepts

This chapter presents the following key concepts:

- Scaffolding social-emotional skill building using Siegel's states of neural integration and the five skills of social-emotional learning as a conceptual overlay
- Analyzing challenging student behavior to gain deeper understanding of student needs
- The significance of teaching and practicing social-emotional and self-regulation skills daily with our students

Chapter Overview

In this chapter we unpack *Coaching* by focusing on social-emotional and self-regulation skills our students need. We encourage you to view classroom management and/or student correction as an opportunity to *coach* the student by reinforcing social-emotional and self-regulation skills in the midst of student decisions or interactions that do not go as we hope. These skills are critical to student academic and social development, yet they are often overlooked. We continue to review and apply Siegel's nine states of integration, providing additional practice and classroom application. We also dig into classroom interventions by giving you ideas and examples. This chapter will challenge you to critically analyze your own philosophical view of classroom management. Last, we provide a framework for viewing challenging student behavior to assist in deeper understanding of the needs of the students you serve.

Classroom management or student intervention is the number one area where teachers report needing more

support or training. This chapter serves to show the connection between neural integration, self-regulation, and social-emotional learning as key strategies in classroom management.

Phase II: Coaching



Phase II: Coaching

You might be noticing that Phase I and II activities often blend into each other. As you are *Connecting* with students, you are moving them into self-regulation instruction or activities almost immediately. As relational trust and TI routines take hold, safety and stabilization activities are always working in tandem.

Phase II, *Coaching*, is all about helping a student achieve a sense of physiological and emotional stability, an inner sense of being grounded, of being in charge of their thoughts, feelings, physical sensations, and actions. It is the inner footing that ultimately helps us feel safe. We achieve this by first experiencing attunement—being seen and valued. Then, we need mentoring, consisting of being coached through various self-rescue practices again and again, followed by using them on our own as we are coached in the use of deepening self-regulation skills. It is a scaffolded and iterative process that builds over time as the student moves through various developmental challenges. Once a student is no longer at the

mercy of their stress response system, the real work of growth—both academic engagement and accessing deeper levels of neural integration—begins to move at a faster pace.

Educators have long understood that social and emotional learning (SEL) skills are crucial to the student's developmental process that enables access to executive functioning. SEL is commonly understood to consist of five core competencies (Collaborative for Academic, Social, & Emotional Learning, 2013). We define these competencies here as they relate to TISP:

Self-Awareness. Self-awareness refers to the ability to recognize and identify various internal need states as expressed in thoughts, feelings, and sensations, and with increasing practice, to identify how these internal states contribute to our behavioral choices. Using Siegel's domains of neural integration (Figure 2.5), activities focusing on *Vertical* integration begin the self-awareness process. This is a precursor to learning additional skills such as self-soothing to tame heightened states of arousal, or unraveling distorted thoughts or beliefs to harness impulsive reactions. For example, an intense feeling of shame or anger, or an impassioned thought related to a misperceived indignation, may lead to an impulsive behavioral response, making matters worse for self or other. The more a student practices various strategies for increasing self-awareness, the more likely they are to choose self-management strategies.

Self-Management. Like self-awareness, self-management is a deepening ability requiring increased *Vertical* integration. As we identify internal cues, first we need to quickly respond with self-management techniques to calm the intensity of these thoughts and sensations. Most often, self-management employs self-soothing or self-rescue skills designed to calm our stress response systems. Self-management skills are then needed to increase our band of tolerance for the intensity of these experiences. This ability, to both defuse and tolerate the intensity of these inner

stress responses, is a precursor to being able to resist reactions, set goals, delay gratification, and tolerate frustration, all ingredients to intentional action. As you can imagine, it is also a *lifelong learning challenge* consisting of multiple layers.

Eventually, effective self-management skills require greater access to executive functioning, as we need to learn how to focus on the internal thoughts and beliefs fueling the emotional and physical cues. This refers to the role perspective plays in our stress response and coping systems, as we reviewed in Section I. Until we learn how to start listening to our internal dialogues—the thought processes revealing our innermost wants, needs, fears, and beliefs—we will continue to be vulnerable to various types of dysregulated reactions to the social environment or our own immediate need states. Just like self-awareness, self-management requires educators to envision a scaffolded building of skills that occurs over the years.

Social Awareness. The heart of social awareness is being able to interpret events around us with some level of insight. We historically might say “accuracy,” but often we don’t really know the meaning underneath what we observe or experience until we inquire more. Social awareness also includes the ability to understand how our actions impact others.

Like the other skills, social awareness deepens over time. It is a complex skill requiring increasing integration of *Horizontal* and *Memory* neural networks, as our own unprocessed memories often are the source of our social misperceptions. Hence, it is learning not only to read emotions and connect current context to the logic of a communication sequence, but to do this against the backdrop of our own memories seizing our thoughts and feelings. This is a key process trauma-informed educators need to prepare for, as it may remain baffling that simple use of learned skills and techniques always needs practice and relearning.

Relationship Skills. Many educators find great utility in student management programs that offer concrete instructions and cues informing students of the socially appropriate behaviors expected of them in the school environment. Other schools opt for methods that teach guiding principles as the birth of prosocial behaviors; see Resources for Further Reading at the end of this chapter for links to sample programs. TISP reasons that the more a student is shown care and regard through consistent attunement and mentoring, the more the student is receptive to mentoring in how to treat others. Then, learning guiding principles and processes for fostering respect, safety, and community reinforces the relational values they are receiving from the adults around them. These challenges are a part of our *Interpersonal* neural networks that are often clouded by our own history of being on the receiving end of injustice, neglect, or abuse influencing our *Narrative* neural networks, among others.

Responsible Decision Making. As we experience greater levels of neural integration within all nine domains, we are better able to be fully *Conscious*. From this vantage point we are able to discern how to act in the moment and for what purpose as it relates to the past, present, and future. Here is where *State*, *Temporal*, and *Transpirational* neural networks add complexity to our discernment processes. The ability to tolerate our own ambiguity, to see a deeper meaning to life, and to want to be part of something beyond our immediate needs or reactions often directly or indirectly influences present decision making challenges. The more we are able to attune to these domains, the greater our ability to act with intentionality.

This too is a lifelong task. Moral developmental theories help us break this process down, understanding that we start from more simplistic schemas of right and wrong, moving to increased levels of empathy, to seeing larger moral principles in service to a commitment to principles of care and justice (Gilligan, 2009; Kraus, 2009; Wikipedia Contributors, 2018). Our students live in a culture where acting on impulse and at the expense of others is the norm. Daily we are teaching them to practice listening not only to their own internal cues, but to the needs of others around them, holding empathy for self and other as they discern how to act in the midst of being hurt, confused, scared, or angry.

As we examine how to scaffold self-management processes, take comfort in knowing that starting with the basics is necessary and appropriate, even while you commit yourself to seeing the end goal and developing further SEL activities to deepen neural network integration over time. The developmental nature of *Coaching* also reminds Districts, Schools, and Educators to create a way for classroom teachers to work together on SEL skill building with students they share in common, and to share about progress and concerns as students pass on to future grades.

Creating Self-Soothing and Self-Management Spaces

Many trauma-informed educators are discovering positive student engagement with various self-awareness and self-management techniques implemented within the classroom. How we employ those techniques can vary. A student can choose to use some techniques no matter where they are, such as diaphragmatic breathing (as long as they are still and not expected to talk). Other skills are practiced in large-group class activities.

A common technique is to create a space where a student can escape from the fray of the classroom, practice self-calming skills, and then return to class. These spaces are called calming centers, peace corners, break rooms, or whatever term a particular class might choose. Ideally these spaces are stocked with a variety of tools so a student can choose whatever method helps them engage in the self-awareness and management process. For them to be effective, students need to learn the skills, as well as have a clear structure for how, when, and for how long to use the space. Other techniques include affirming that a child's desk or table space can be used as a calming center when needed—that sense of permission to go off task for a few minutes to give their brain a break as they engage in a calming activity geared to help them get back on track. The same structural rules apply here as well, such as not disturbing peers, setting a time limit, and perhaps giving the teacher a sign, not so much for permission but to affirm a sense of partnership; the teacher knows the student is struggling and a warm, acknowledging glance is anchoring, especially if more external assistance is needed. The actual techniques for increasing self-awareness and self-management are the student and teacher's toolbox to create.

Trauma-informed classroom teachers who have used calming centers for any amount of time begin to learn what does and does not work. Search for their stories on YouTube, in trauma-informed school resources, at conferences, and education journals. And as you create your own classroom resources, add your experiences to the mix. In all new movements, we need to hear stories from front-line intrepid adventurers.

Chapter 9: Exercise 1

Siegel's nine domains of neural integration are a useful template for identifying how various psychosocial learning moments in any given class are an opportunity for neural integration growth. Refer back to that list as you work through the following.

Scaffolding SEL skills is the content area requiring the most research and learning for trauma-informed educators. Trust that beginning SEL activities are commonly presented in many trauma-informed classroom application resources. However, to be able to assess your students' broad and changing SEL coaching needs, you will need to understand the conceptual underpinnings and dig for additional resources. This activity is designed to help you get started.

Instructions:

1. Using Figure 2.5 as a starting point, take each of the nine neural domains and identify the following:
 - How would you explain this brain function to your students? Identify instructions, visuals, and examples that might be useful.
 - Where in the student's academic studies is this neural state already being explored or practiced? How might you help a student see this in a more clear way? For example, what stories or books do your students read, and how might you use a character's narrative to illustrate a neural state?
 - Imagine this neural state deepening over time. Perhaps the maturity occurs during your time with that student; in other places, it occurs over a span of a few academic years. Identify a social-emotional skill or practice you might use in an early, middle, and more mature stage of this state's development.
2. Share your ideas with those working through this process with you.

Elements of TISP Student Behavioral Interventions

In the second half of this chapter we focus explicitly on Phase II, *Coaching*, with an emphasis on elements of a trauma-informed educator response to students needing help when severely dysregulated. We are not providing a manual on how to implement a comprehensive student behavioral management system. Rather, we are providing you with basic trauma-informed tenets that should be embedded in whatever student management system you use, as they will influence how you respond to students needing help with regulation. To help orient you to the dispositions and concepts informing individual response to students, we start by identifying elements of the larger behavioral management system.

By student or behavioral management systems, we mean relational values, behavioral expectations, and the consequences of not living up to these community expectations. Relational values and behavioral expectations identify the code of conduct we expect from each other based on our context (a school, including various spaces within the school such as classrooms, restrooms, lunch areas, etc.), and the way we value one another and our own selves. For example, when we are in the library, the context might invite quieter hushed voices. But in outdoor recreation areas, we might be able to scream to our heart's content. Our values regarding how to treat self and others dictate that each person will treat others respectfully, whether whispering or yelling. You are likely familiar with the role context plays in inviting some behaviors and not others, and most school-based relational value systems emphasize respect for self and other. The TISP ethos complements these existing principles.

How these relational values and behavioral expectations are taught is a key aspect of a student management system requiring trauma-informed review. An existing management program might emphasize a list of rules and scripts for being a respectful peer. Such systems are recognizing that many students are not embedded in communities where an emphasis is placed on such relational skill-building. A trauma-informed approach is not going to disagree with that observation or goal, but it will ask us to be aware that memorizing behavioral scripts does not integrate neural networks that build insight and empathy. Likewise, a system based on a token economy (a consequence or reward process) is also contrary to trauma-informed ethos and practice (Bloom, 2013; Cederlof, 2019; Flanagan, 2017; King, 2018; Pink, 2011). What you will notice below are not recommendations on what to avoid, rather on what relational elements to place front and center in whatever method you choose. *Coaching*, built upon the foundation of *Connecting*, recognizes that we are now reaching a student's primary intrinsic need to be seen and valued, which naturally inspires goodwill to return those relational values toward others: the basics of empathy. And now your instructional scripts will be metabolized in ways that you ultimately intend.

TISP also emphasizes that struggle is developmentally expected and even necessary to learn. Therefore, adults are celebrating a student's hard work, whether that means they met some benchmark standard for a social-emotional or academic task, or used some of the self-regulation skills offered to them, regardless of progress yet to occur. Hence, giving rewards to students who had an easier time reaching benchmark behavioral expectations and denying rewards to those who plowed through more neural network integration to make small gains is viewed as undermining the very values TISP is trying to teach.

Such reward systems further shame and undermine hope and willingness to risk within students whose level of neural dysregulation increases their vulnerability to such shame. This leads many of these students to check out, and perhaps resent feeling marginalized. It is just one more reminder that they are different, inadequate, not valued or seen.

This issue illustrates the element of a student behavioral management system most influenced by TISP: examining the overt and covert values and meaning to our system of consequences, and what we may consider appropriate or timely consequences. For example, might our covert values really look and sound like punishment, rather than values of instruction and accountability? A zero-tolerance policy for certain behaviors might be enacted more out of anger toward the student than as a way to protect other students while the offending student has the chance to receive remedial help before returning to class. What you will observe in the scenarios below is an invitation to pick apart our internal mindset as we practice setting a boundary, and as we connect and coach a student back into a place of self-regulation prior to accountability.

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Mindset

In my (Brenda's) teacher preparation program, we were taught that there was a connection between good teaching and classroom management. The principle was simple: create engaging lessons and you won't have classroom management challenges.

It didn't take me long to realize that engaging lessons are important, but my ability to manage the behaviors and emotions of middle and high school students rested on more than my lessons. But, as a new teacher, I struggled with self-doubt about whether I was good at my job. I viewed each classroom management issue as my own personal failure.

It didn't take me long to realize that engaging lessons are important, but my ability to manage the behaviors and emotions of middle and high school students rested on more than my lessons. But, as a new teacher, I struggled with self-doubt about whether I was good at my job. I viewed each classroom management issue as my own personal failure.

I know that I am not alone. As we mentioned in Section I, teachers have shared with us how they feel like they are not enough for their students; they feel a sense of helplessness as they struggle to curb poor choices amid growing student

needs. When we teach TISP classes, we have our teachers create a list of the behaviors, actions, and attitudes they see in their classrooms that are concerning to them. No doubt your list would mirror what they have shared. And, we see the connection, even if it is subconscious, between student behavior and their perceived effectiveness as an educator. We hope that if this is you, you will set these thoughts aside, knowing that the best lesson in the world is still no match for a dysregulated brain.

Behavior, Interventions, and Discipline

At the beginning of Chapter 8, we shared the idea of green, yellow, and red lights to assess a student's movement toward greater levels of dysregulation. This is a way for you to gauge where your students are and perhaps where they are heading if they are not able to access inner coping resources to return to a state of calm or focus. Students, through their behavior, are telling us what they need. We read their verbal and nonverbal messages and make decisions on how best to proceed. One teacher shared with us that she can physically see her kindergartener begin to emotionally escalate and then blow up. She learned quickly what she needs to watch for and strategies to help that child de-escalate to reduce the blow-ups or meltdowns.

As teachers, we have become adept at reading the room: absorbing verbal and nonverbal cues and pivoting when needed to keep students engaged in a lesson, or predicting when the debate in our classroom could erupt if we do not manage it carefully. But, we also need to teach social-emotional skills regularly and with intentionality. This is, by far, our best intervention strategy. Students cannot do what they have not learned to do.

Interventions

As presented earlier, the ability to self-regulate is key. Without this skill, it is difficult at best to tame emotions and focus on learning. As educators, we must hone the skills of perception and connection. By *Connecting* with our students, we gain understanding of their experiences and needs, and insight into what may cause them challenges in the classroom. This allows us to read our students throughout the day and adjust when necessary.

Think about a student in your classroom who you know struggles with self-regulation. Perhaps this is a student who can become frustrated easily or seems to have a quick temper. Our goal is to help our students practice self-regulation throughout the day by reading them and helping them increase their window of tolerance without flipping their lid.

Let's consider what this could look like in the classroom. I (Brenda) had a student, Kristi, who had a very difficult time working in small groups. From the outside looking in, it appeared that everything and anyone could set her off without a lot of warning. When I planned an activity that required small groups, I would connect with Kristi to let her know what I had planned. I tried to always have the day's agenda on the board so everyone knew that day's plan for the class, but this was also to support Kristi and others who struggled with self-regulation.

Students could refer to the agenda on the board to determine how long I had planned for a particular activity or lesson. Once we moved into small group time, and I had established the goals and expectations, I would circle around to Kristi. With a warm smile I was able to connect with her, let her know I remembered this would make her uncomfortable, and remind her that she could take a break as needed. Kristi was able to refer back to the board to know how much longer the activity was planned for, and then could assess her needs during that time period.

Now, Kristi was a high school student, and we had worked on this over the course of the semester. I slowly increased the length of small group time to help her increase her window of tolerance. Kristi also knew that during small group time, I would be circling the room and checking in with her regularly. These check-ins could be as simple as making eye contact across the room—a quick reminder to her that I saw her, I knew this could challenge her, and she was safe. For me, this intervention became common practice, and I noticed it began to head off emotional outbursts from this student who started with a small window of tolerance.

Discipline

In Section I of this text, we began a discussion about discipline. As a quick refresh, in Chapter 4, we discussed

impaired executive functioning and self-regulation ability in relationship to discipline systems. Systems that use punitive responses to student behaviors in an effort to help that child “learn” to make a different choice next time are ineffective, because they assume that the child knows of a more appropriate response and chose not to use it, and that the punishment will encourage a better choice next time (Ristuccia, 2013). We also pointed out that being trauma-informed does not mean giving children a free pass when they violate the norms of our classrooms or schools. So, how do you hold a student accountable under a trauma-informed model?

Let’s first consider the purpose for discipline. Refer back to your own Action Plan reflections when we invited Schools and Educators in Chapters 7 and 8 to prepare for a trauma-informed reflection on discipline policies. What is your own personal philosophy on discipline and student management in your own school or classroom? Does your philosophy align with the policies and procedures in your school? In a TISP model, we are prepared for our students to make mistakes and act in ways outside the norms we established. We seize this moment to reinforce what we have been teaching. This is what Phase II is all about: *Coaching*. This is our opportunity to recognize that unwanted behavior is a student calling for an unmet need to be addressed. This is our chance to reinforce our connection with that student. We do this by metaphorically catching them and holding them, by reminding them that we see them, we hear them, and we value them.

Let’s return to the story I (Brenda) shared in Chapter 1. My student teacher was in a third-grade class and had a student who would enter class in the mornings really angry, and rip up the worksheets he was handed. What I didn’t share in Chapter 1 is what my student teacher did in response. First, she created a calming space in the classroom, and then she introduced this space and taught the kids how to use it. She taught a series of mini-lessons on emotions and how to express them. She then made a habit of photocopying multiple copies of the worksheets, just in case! She immediately began greeting her students at the door each morning and welcoming them into the classroom. She worked hard to connect with her student who was particularly angry. And, when the inevitable blow-up came, she was ready...and so was the student. She smiled at him during his meltdown and empathically connected by saying she was sure he must have had a very difficult morning, but she was glad he was there. She invited him to the calming space, where he sat down and began using the tools he was taught to use. When she checked in on him a few minutes later and invited him back into the learning environment, she reminded him of the expectations. He joined without ripping up the worksheet.

She did what we are advocating. Support your students by encouraging them to self-soothe and self-regulate, using the strategies you have taught them. Then, debrief the situation and seek to understand what triggered the reaction or response you witnessed. Then, take that moment to coach them through ways they could have headed that blow-up off at the pass. And, don’t forget to use this moment to acknowledge any relational damage that occurred as a result, and what is needed to restore relationships with peers.

In a perfect situation, this can all be done in the classroom, in the midst of the blow-up or emotional outburst. However, there are times when this is just not the best course, or the blow-up is putting the child or others at risk of harm. Removing the child from the classroom to a safe space may be the best course of action, but the steps remain the same. In the midst of the upheaval, we are catching that student, making sure they know we are there, we are seeing them, and our connection has not splintered because of this situation. Once the child has returned to a state of calm, we can debrief and hold them accountable for what occurred.

Key Elements of the Educator’s Behavioral Management Mindset

- View dysregulated moments as an opportunity to connect and coach.
- Gently let the student know you are with them, and will work this through together.

- Have self-regulation tools/strategies familiar to the student at the ready.
- Practice ahead of time so that when needed, everyone goes into muscle memory.
- Affirm the student for working the process from dysregulated to regulated.
- Now engage in further dialogue regarding the student's experience and needs (furthering the child's neural integration), and any amends processes needed on the part of the student, class, or educator.
- Find a way to celebrate the student's work or progress.
- As the behaviors continue to take hold, find ways for this student to be of encouragement to peers. We all can learn together.

Dysregulated Student Impact on Class and Teachers

Dysregulated students impact the entire class, including the teacher. We were in the middle of a trauma-informed training with a group of teachers when one teacher asked to debrief a situation she had just had in her classroom. The short version was that in the middle of recess, four students began fighting. It appeared to come out of nowhere: one moment things seemed fine, and the next she heard the scuffle. The teacher quickly called for help defusing the situation. One student, an innocent bystander, jumped in to help. He was physically larger and stronger and able to help restrain a couple of the students while help was coming from the office. All four students were removed from the playground and walked to the office, where the administration hoped to get to the bottom of this event. The teacher and the other students on the playground were left reeling from the incident. In fact, the teacher retelling the event was still dealing with the aftereffects of the adrenaline surge.

All students must feel safe in the classroom and school environment in order to learn. Students who are not suffering from unmitigated stress and trauma in ways their classmates are become victims of those classmates' dysregulated behavior. As the classroom becomes a place of unpredictability and chaos, learning is impacted and relationships get severed.

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Student Interaction

When we provide training to schools and districts, we have our students complete an exercise titled "Student Interaction Analysis." In this assignment, the participants are asked to reflect on a recent event or situation with a student that did not go well, and then analyze it using what they have learned thus far about trauma-informed practices. We introduced elements of this exercise with Ben and Charlotte in Chapters 2 and 3. The full exercise is included below. We invite you to work through this exercise.

Applying TISP Perceptual Conceptual Skills: Student Interaction Analysis

Identify a difficult interaction you had recently with a student. Using what you learned in Chapters 1-4, work through the following:

1. Analyze the interaction according to the following:
 - Describe the events exhibited in class. Using your perceptual skills, what was the sequence of events?
 - Observe your student
 1. What did they say?
 2. What did their affect, tone, body stance, demeanor tell you?
 - Internal Resources (Think back to Siegel's domains of neural integration)
 1. What did the student do well?
 2. What strengths did they exude in that situation?
 3. What did the student struggle with?
2. After observing your student's behavior and hypothesizing on internal resources, begin hypothesizing on your student's perspective and neural networks that are driving the behavior.
 - First, what is known about the life experiences, circumstances, or traumas of this student?
 - What external resources might this student have—or not have?
 - Based on all of the above, identify the hypothesized perspective.
 1. List hypothesized negative neural networks.
 2. List hypothesized positive neural networks as we did in class.
 - Based on all of the above, what might be additional logical learning and social challenges this student may face or exhibit?
3. Retell the event: In light of Chapters 1-4 and any additional trauma-informed readings you may have done, offer a brief trauma-informed summary of what happened for or with this student.
4. Final personal reflection.
 - What was this exercise like for you?
 - What was difficult?
 - What was inspiring?
 - Any final “aha” moments?
 - What changes might you want to make, or are you already experimenting with or exploring as a result of learning about the domains of neural integration?

Below is an example from a teacher who completed this exercise.

Student Interaction Analysis

Clint, Middle School Teacher

During my third period class, a student who was not currently in the class entered in the middle of the lesson, got in the face of and started yelling at a student in the class. I walked over and, as calmly as possible, told the student that she needed to leave. I had to repeat myself several times, but eventually she did and I escorted her to the office. Her tone and demeanor very clearly indicated that she was operating out of her “downstairs” brain in “fight” mode. I later learned that she mistakenly believed the other student was spreading rumors about her. This student does a good job of advocating for herself and ensuring that her needs are met. However, she struggles with trusting others and has a strong desire to protect herself from being hurt in the best way she knows how.

This student has been in our school for about a year, having previously been in a challenging situation with some trauma. Her mother cares about her, but she probably rarely has had the benefit of an extended support network. A potential negative neural network might be something like “Others can’t be trusted, and if someone is trying to hurt me, it is up to me to protect myself.” A positive neural network might look something like “If someone is trying to hurt me, there are some trusted people I can go to for help.” Since building trust takes time, this student is going to continue to have struggles in threatening situations (real or perceived) until they are able to develop stable, trusting relationships.

A student of mine heard a rumor that another student was spreading rumors about her, which created an emotional and social threat. Since one of her dominant neural networks is that others can’t be trusted, she immediately assumed that the rumors were true and that it was up to her to do something about it. This stress response activated her limbic system and caused her to enter “fight” mode, come into my classroom, and proceed to yell and scream at the student alleged to have spread the rumor.

It was difficult to put myself into the place of the student. I can speculate about what is going on in her brain, but I don’t feel like I have enough knowledge yet to be very confident in my hypothesis. However, I do feel like I am able to recognize when a student is in fight-flight-freeze mode. This exercise has reinforced the importance of not going into fight-flight-freeze mode myself.

Putting It All Together

How do we apply what we have learned to the students in our care? We want to give you an opportunity to work through a mini case study from one of my (Brenda’s) student teachers, a real story of a student and the interaction. We invite you to read through and then consider the questions that follow.

Mini Case Study

Emily, Student Teacher

This year, I had a student in my seventh-grade Humanities classroom, Scott, who consistently showed up to school late. He shuffled into the room with his head down. Scott also tended to lash out at me whenever I called on him in class, telling me to “shut up” and “leave me alone,” and muttering unintelligibly under his breath. The other kids didn’t like sitting next to him because he “smelled weird and ate his boogers.” He seemed to realize that he was a persona non grata with his peers and would push his desk out of the row of desks to face the wall.

For months I greeted Scott by name each morning and told him I was happy to see him. He would nod at me, but not much else. Any remotely personal questions were rebuffed with a shrug and a glance at the door. His file in the counselor’s office didn’t reveal much other than a physical altercation with another student back in fifth grade. It wasn’t until parent-teacher conferences that I learned anything about Scott’s background. Instead of his mom or dad attending the meeting, his grandmother came. She sat down wearily and just said, “What did he do this time?”

She went on and on about what a horrible student Scott was and how he was “useless” at home, too. When asked about his family situation, Scott’s grandmother responded, “My son, Scott’s dad, was just as useless as Scott. Mama’s no good either.”

It turned out that Scott’s parents were addicted to meth. His father died of a meth overdose before his mother took off. Scott was left in the care of his grandparents, who did little to hide their disdain for Scott and his parents. Scott lived in an environment with people that consistently belittled him and devalued him.

After meeting Scott’s grandmother, I started asking Scott to help me with tasks around the room, like collecting papers and erasing whiteboards. We didn’t become “friendly,” but he seemed more at ease in the room and stopped pushing his desk against the wall.

One day in mid-January, Scott didn’t show up to class. This was unusual because Scott was never gone or even tardy. I was about to call down to the office to see if he was in the building, when my classroom door burst open. Scott stormed in and slammed into his seat. His cheeks were red and his hair stuck to the sweat on his forehead. Before I could ask what was wrong, he turned to the class and said, “They’re all talking about me behind my back. They’re all horrible. I shouldn’t have to be here.” I asked Scott if he wanted to step out into the hallway. He raised his voice. “Why should I be in trouble? I didn’t do anything wrong!” Scott was quickly losing his cool. He stood up and began pacing the room, telling me and anyone who would listen, “It’s just not fair!” Several students stood up and moved like they were going to try to calm Scott down, but I motioned them back to their seats. Scott slammed his fist into desks as he passed them.

Someone had slipped a note into Scott’s locker; it read, “Nobody likes you here. White trash.” It was a single note with some cruel words, but that was all it took to throw a wrench into Scott’s precarious emotional state.

Nearly all of the important people in Scott's life had made him feel that he was no good. Now, one of his peers confirmed these fears and it was too much.

I calmly invited Scott to step into the hallway or else I would have to call down to the office to have him removed. I paused and began breathing deeply. I exaggerated my breaths and soon I heard Scott trying to mimic me. After about 15 seconds, his breathing slowed and he pushed open the door to the hallway. Another teacher stepped in for a moment, and I followed him.

He was already crying, sitting against a locker. I sat down next to him and he told me what happened. We spoke for about five minutes and we talked about all the reasons why Scott did belong and all the ways he added to our community. He apologized as I walked him down to the office.

Questions to ponder:

1. Given what was shared, are there items from the Key Elements of the Educator's Behavioral Management Mindset evidenced in Emily's interaction with Scott?
2. How would you suggest welcoming Scott back into the classroom?
3. How could Scott feel seen, heard, and valued?

Culture Shift

In the past, with students who present behavior and/or attendance problems, a common response of staff members has been to blame the family and create an adversarial relationship with parents. The call home was something like this: "Sorry to say that your child missed school, or disrespected a teacher, or got in a fight, and now needs to be punished." As we have learned more about trauma and ACES, conversations with students and parents are less about punishment and more about finding solutions, creating space for change, and helping families connect with resources in the community. —Bruce, District Administrator

Teaching Social-Emotional Learning

As mentioned previously, we need to teach our students the social-emotional skills they need to be successful. These lessons can be taught at any point in the day and reinforced through your curriculum or through modeling them for your students. In my classes, I (Brenda) try to be intentional about modeling both social-emotional learning strategies. I teach in two- to four-hour blocks, which can be challenging. However, it is a great opportunity to build in mindfulness practices, breathing exercises, words of affirmation to peers, guided imagery, etc. I found that I needed and looked forward to these just as much as my students! And, with these built into the lesson plan, we could all relax, knowing a break was just moments away. Two of my students shared how they were teaching social-emotional learning and skills

to their elementary students. The strategies they created in their classrooms with their mentors/cooperating teachers are below.

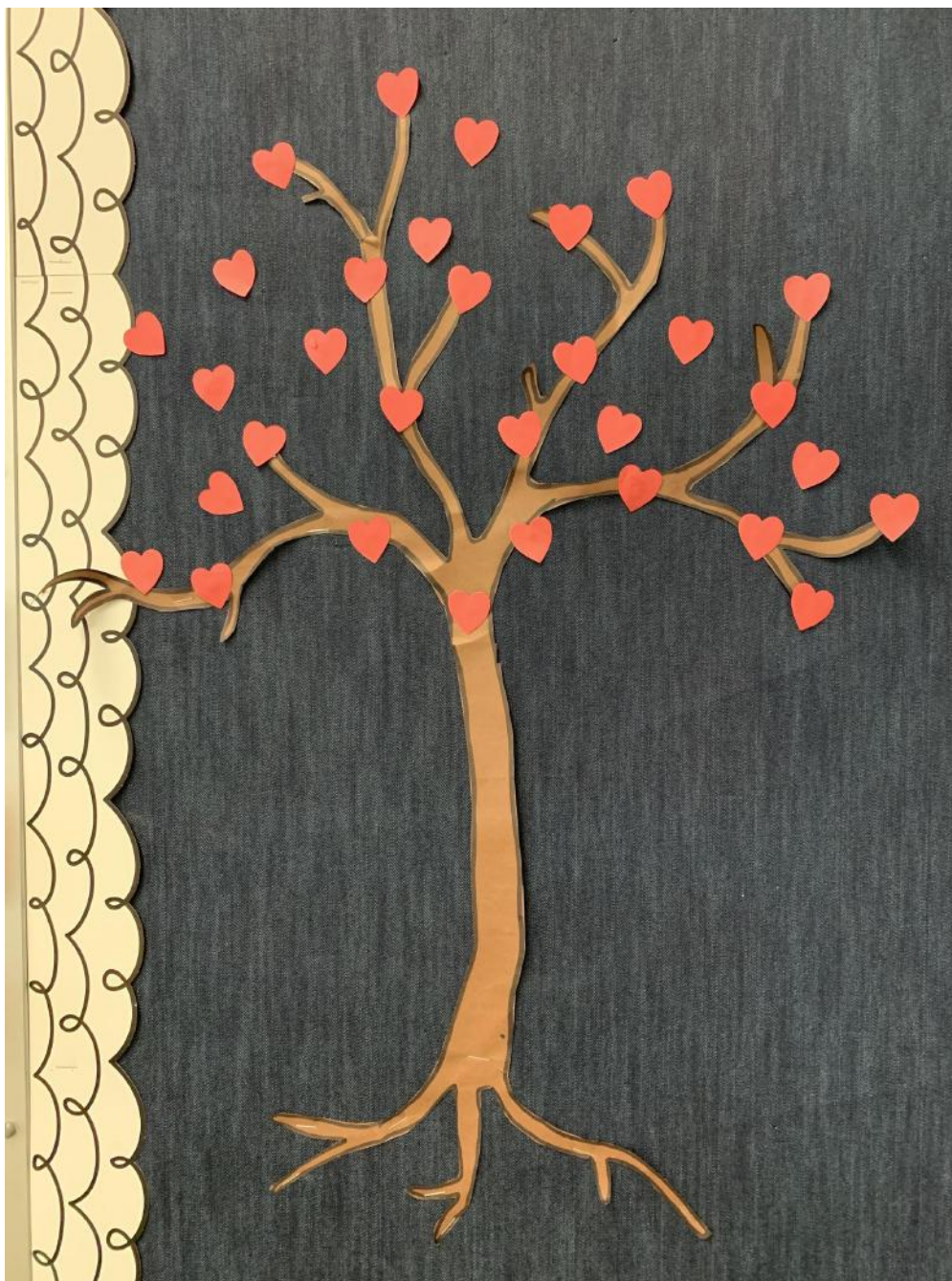


Photo courtesy of Heather, Cooperating Teacher to Clare

Kindness Tree Strategy

We begin with an example from an elementary classroom with first-grade students. In this class, the student teacher and her cooperating teacher noticed that the students were not being kind to their classmates in the ways they talked and interacted with them during the day. Developmentally, they saw their students as moving from an egocentric worldview to focusing on building relationships with others, including developing an awareness of the feelings and needs of individuals. They decided to create mini-lessons around kindness and create a kindness tree to support this development.

Clare, Student Teacher

In our kindergarten class, we began to notice an increase in the number of situations and language that wasn't kind. We decided we wanted to focus our social-emotional learning on teaching kindness. Our goal was to teach our children what it means to be kind and how to show kindness to others both in our classroom and on the playground. To accomplish this, we chose an activity called the Kindness Tree, from Dr. Becky Bailey's *Conscious Discipline*. We created a bulletin board and cut out a tree with many branches. We then created several mini-lessons to be taught over the course of the week. These lessons included definitions of kindness and examples of words and actions that were kind. We wanted to include a bit of science so we also showed a short child-friendly video of the effects that kindness has on the person who is being kind and the receiver of that kindness.

The first lesson was focused on defining kindness. We began by asking them a couple of questions: 1. What is kindness? 2. What can you do to show kindness? Last, students identified words that they could use to show kindness. Students were then asked to write down phrases that are kind that they would like to hear more of in the classroom. After the discussion, we identified one student each day to be our "kindness recorder." Their job was to notice their classmates doing something kind and record that on a checklist. We also did this with our own checklist. During the day, we recorded what types of kindness were observed. At the end of the day we shared how many times they were kind during the course of the day. We then put hearts onto the kindness tree, one for each act of kindness, providing a visual representation of the ways in which they had shown kindness to their classmates.



Photo courtesy of Doreen, Cooperating Teacher to Sky. This mat was purchased from Consciousdiscipline.com.

Problem-Solving Mat

This example demonstrates the significance of problem solving. How many times have we as teachers been frustrated by tattling? I know I often was frustrated by my students who expected me to jump in the middle of a situation, when I just wanted them to work it out! This is one way to teach students the value of relationships and how to repair them when something has happened to upset that relationship. And, it teaches them how to put language to what they are feeling and be empowered to address it.

Sky, Student Teacher

The problem-solving mat was implemented in November due to the number of kids who were tattling and the amount of teaching time we were losing because of it. The strategy was introduced to support social-emotional learning. Mini-lessons were created to discuss problem solving, a classroom culture of kindness, and the value of relationships with others.

The problem-solving mat has specific steps and sentence frames on it for the children to use in order to

solve their problems amongst themselves. The mat provides a safe space for them to work out their issues instead of bringing the teacher into them. How it works: When students encounter a situation that is upsetting or frustrating in some way, they ask the person who upset them to go to the problem-solving mat. Students stand on each end of the mat and work through a specific protocol where each has the opportunity to speak and be heard. The student who was upset (victim) shares what occurred that upset them, using sentence frames like “I don’t like it when ____” and “Next time _____.” The person who upset them listens and responds. When both feel that their issue has been resolved, they shake hands and return to the learning environment.

The problem-solving mat helps to make the children more self-aware of what kinds of things set them off to the point where they need to use the mat. It also teaches them how to self-manage because they invite the other student themselves and take care of their own problems. They become more socially aware of what kinds of things are appropriate and what are not, through what makes them want to take kids to the problem-solving mat or why they are being taken there. They are able to decide together how they will handle the problem. Giving them the social-emotional skills they need to get past tattling is important so that they can start using their own little brains to solve their problems instead of being dependent on an adult.

Chapter 9: Exercise 4

Application to Your Classroom

While these examples above came from an elementary classroom, it would be simple to create a middle school and a high school version of these activities. Let’s pause for a moment and reflect on your classroom. Think about:

1. What are the challenges in your classroom?
2. What social-emotional skills do you need to teach?
3. How can you plan for these throughout the year?
4. What kind of visual reminders could you create to reinforce them?
5. How will you *Coach* students when relationships are fractured?

Conceptual Application—Story from the Classroom

Doreen is an experienced elementary teacher who began working toward her certificate in TISP (George Fox University, 2019b). In our course on classroom management, we introduced Dr. Becky Bailey’s *Conscious Discipline*. This is her account of a recent interaction with a new student who has had difficulty with self-regulation and how she applied trauma-informed practices.

Kenny showed up three months into the school year; he marched alone into my room with matted hair and dirty

clothes. I smiled and said (as all teachers do for all new students), “I’m glad you’re here. Let me show you our classroom.” He scowled at me and replied, “You should know, I was a big bad behavior problem at my last school.” My chest tightened and my brain flew to all of the new information I had been learning. “Our classroom is a team, and we want you to feel safe here.”

He looked warily at me, but followed me to our carpet for our morning team meeting. He sat tightly against me as I introduced him. I told the class that it was very scary for Kenny to come to a new school and asked if anyone could give him some encouragement. Because we had practiced giving meaningful compliments and encouragement to classmates, several students stepped up and told Kenny that he was welcome and they were there to help him. If only that was all that was needed to help a student in trauma!

I assigned him a buddy and we transitioned to writing. The minute students began moving from our circle to carpet spots, he began crawling around and growling. When his buddy showed him his spot, he put his new eraser into his mouth, chewed it up and began spitting on people. “Whoa,” I said. “What do you need right now?” He stared straight at me and said, “I’m addicted to erasers and I need them to keep going.” He tossed out a few swear words, then bolted and dove right for a tight space between a bookcase and a cart.

My students were wide-eyed, and I felt shaky. All I could think was, “I haven’t ever had enough learning or practice to know how to do this.” I had had some training and some practice. I had classes and a two-day conference under my belt about how we should respond to these kinds of situations. But now I was on call and didn’t exactly feel ready.

Dr. Becky Bailey had made us practice, more than once, how to “mirror” actions of a child in a trauma situation. She explained that curious children will look when you announce how they are acting to them and then act it out yourself. Then, because of the wonders of how our brain works, when and if you can make solid eye contact, the brain will by nature receive a shot of the all-powerful serotonin and dopamine and make a “feel-good” connection. So, I knelt down, and to his protruding backside, I said, “Your face looks sad, like this, and your body is all curled up like this.” He immediately turned, and I locked eyes with him and told him he was safe in our classroom and we loved having him there. He stayed watching, silent, but looking out instead of curled up and hiding.

You may wonder what the other 26 students were doing? They were quietly working on writing (you know how kids get really quiet when something dramatic is occurring) and looking at me with very worried eyes. “Second-graders,” I said, “I think Kenny needs our well-wishing.”

Another strategy from *Conscious Discipline* to deflect stress is to cross arms over the chest, breathe deep, and extend the arms, saying, “I wish you well.” Whether it affected Kenny at this point, I am unsure, but the others let out a big breath, crossed their little arms, and got to work. I could feel the level of intensity deflate a bit. Kenny stayed tucked away all morning, but he watched what the class was doing, and I circled around periodically and told him over and over, “We are glad you are here. This is a safe place.”

The afternoon was rough. He circled around the room and swore and told us that he hated our town. Every chance that I could, I looked at him in the eyes and repeated, “We are glad you are here. You are safe in this room.” Yes, it felt contrived, repetitive, and unlike any other strategy I’d ever had to use, *but* he looked at me each time and I could see and feel that a connection was being built.

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This went on for a few weeks. Whenever I had enough patience and time, I told him we loved him and wanted him in our class. I also began telling him that every time he kicked, or spit, or yelled, or hit, those were actions that showed me he needed something, and I was going to help him find the words to tell me what he needed.

I began having him come in five minutes earlier than the other students so I could check in with him. One day, he walked in, threw his backpack across the room, and yelled. I knelt down and said, “What words can you tell me right now about what you need?” “I do not get to have any Christmas

presents! And I'm grounded until I'm 18 years old, and nothing was my fault!" he screamed. "That must be scary and make you very sad," I said. He collapsed against me and sobbed.

It was a turning point of sorts. There were still many incidents, but he began to trust me and we could talk about feelings, how to express needs, and which choices he could make that were healthy and helpful. After he had been in our classroom for three months, we were out at recess, and when I blew the whistle and kids lined up, Kenny came flying in and shoved two girls so he could be first in line. They were very angry and tried to tell him and me that it wasn't fair. He denied doing it, even after I told him I was standing there and saw it all. "Our class decided together that no one is allowed to cut in line. It's fair that you go to the end of the line."

He stomped and yelled, marched to the end of the line, entered the class, and threw himself into his tight corner and cried. After a few minutes, he came over and said, "I'm ready to work now." I hugged him and told him I had noticed how he took some deep breaths, calmed himself, and came back to work all on his own! "Remember when you first came and it was so hard to do all of those things?" I asked him. He smiled. "Yeah, I was *really* bad, but now I feel proud and I think you are proud of me, too."

Doreen is a fantastic teacher, and it has been such a joy to watch her grow and develop into a competent trauma-informed educator. Like all teachers, Doreen will have good days and days where she is unsure if she practices the trauma-informed skills as best she could. However, Doreen is entering her classroom each day with new skills, new competencies, that allow her to connect, coach, and commence academic and social development of all students in her classroom.

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A Look Forward

In this chapter we discussed self-regulation and how critical it is that we teach our students how to regulate their emotions. We also presented the importance of dissecting student behavior to uncover deeper needs so that we can create interventions to support our students. In Section III, we explore Phase III tasks to ensure that TISP is implemented and sustained in a manner supportive to the outcomes we envision are possible for each student regardless of the constraints that bind their academic and social-emotional engagement skills when they first enter our schools.

Resources for Further Reading

- *The Whole Brain Child: 12 Revolutionary Strategies to Nurture Your Child's Developing Mind*, by Daniel J. Siegel and Tina Payne Bryson.
- *Brainstorm: The Power and Purpose of the Teenage Brain*, by Daniel J. Siegel.
- *Better Than Carrots or Sticks: Restorative Practices for Positive Classroom Management*, by Dominique Smith, Douglas Fisher, and Nancy Frey.
- [CASEL Guide](#). Social-emotional learning standards offered by the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL).
- [Conscious Discipline](#). Classroom management program by Dr. Becky Bailey.

- [Education Lifeskills](#). Social-emotional middle school resources.
- [Embrace Civility](#). Bully prevention resources.
- [Huffington Post](#) article “Child Discipline: It’s Time to Rethink Reward Systems.”
- [Leader in Me Character Development](#). This organization focuses on the development of youth.
- [Restorative Justice Practice Guidelines for Schools](#). National Association of Community and Restorative Justice.
- [School-Connect High School](#). Social-emotional high school resources.
- [Toolbox–Dovetail Learning](#). Social-emotional K-6 resources.

SECTION III: SUSTAINING TRAUMA-INFORMED SCHOOL PRACTICES

This section addresses elements of TISP that originally may have seemed off on the horizon, but now require greater attention. Its primary focus is on Phase III of TISP, which emphasizes the iterative looping of *Connecting*, *Coaching*, and *Commencing*. It includes addressing elements of Strategic Plans ready for implementation, as well as an evaluation of our effectiveness in order to make necessary course corrections. The principles and strategies mirror the knowledge, skills, and dispositions contained in the TISP Tri-Phasic Model, as detailed in Chapter 6.

Chapter 10 addresses the Community element of the education system with the inclusion of parents as TISP partners. It identifies the rationale and guiding principles for providing TISP orientation and training opportunities for parents.

In Chapter 6, we directly addressed changes teacher and administrator preparation programs need to make in order to graduate educators with proven TISP competencies. Chapter 11 returns our focus to the Regulation and Support Systems element of system change needed to ensure TISP efficacy. Specifically, we recommend a reworking of teacher and administrator proficiencies as identified by professional associations and accrediting organizations.

Our concluding chapter addresses a three-legged stool central to sustaining TISP. The section on tracking and nurturing staff motivation and resources examines the interrelationship between staff motivation and access to resources for maintaining staff investment in TISP. The section on data collection and analysis examines TISP effectiveness not just in service to vested stakeholders, but also in support and encouragement to the educator. The third element concludes our work by revisiting perhaps one of the most important tasks of TISP as expressed in the *Person of the Educator*, as we examine preventing compassion fatigue and burnout. Our final words collate the ultimate goals of each of the *Person of the Educator* exercises you've encountered during your time working through this orientation to the TISP Tri-Phasic Model.

Chapter 10: Orienting and Supporting Parents as TISP Co-Facilitators



[Image: [Sai De Silva](#) | [Unsplash](#)]

“At the end of the day, the most overwhelming key to a child’s success is the involvement of parents.”
–Jane D. Hull

Desired Outcomes

This chapter and the accompanying recommended readings and activities are designed to further develop educator trauma-informed competencies as demonstrated by:

- An awareness of the role of a student's family in the successful implementation of TISP by including parents or guardians on various strategic planning committees and addressing their training and support needs in short, intermediate, and long-term goal processes
- Providing training and support to caretakers congruent with their role, and being mindful of enlisting licensed trauma-informed systems-trained mental health professionals to partner with TISP strategic planners
- Envisioning how to invite TISP-oriented parents into classroom settings as not merely classroom volunteers, but co-facilitators in providing safety and stabilization, reflecting the classroom as a secure base

Key Concepts

This chapter provides recommended guiding principles for licensed mental health professionals (LMHPs) facilitating TISP orientation programs for parents and guardians desiring to know more about TISP and/or desiring to volunteer as classroom or school aides. It is also intended to serve Strategic Planning Teams as goals are designed to include parents in TISP processes. It includes the following key concepts foundational to addressing the Community level of system change, namely parent and guardian involvement:

- The recognition of the educator's *scope of practice* while advocating to include parents as co-facilitators
- Enlisting licensed mental health providers trained in a *systems-based approach* to trauma-informed mental health services (such as marriage and family therapists or other systems-trained providers) familiar with TISP in order to ensure the provider's trauma-informed competencies and congruence with how the education setting is implementing its trauma-informed approach
- A holistic view of the nature of the problem contributing to student dysregulation and academic struggle that does not *pathologize or scapegoat* parents or guardians

In Section II, we addressed the tasks of the District Strategic Planning Team, including its responsibilities to include parents in the training process and to utilize community resources, in this case LMHPs, to assist with parent processes. In this chapter we address the District's responsibility to orient parents to TISP, in partnership with LMHPs who will help design the parent orientation process as well as facilitate parent trainings. The Educator does not hold responsibility to provide orientation and training for parents, but is asked to review this chapter to remain aware of the tasks of the larger system.

Throughout our process thus far, we have emphasized two key themes regarding students and their families:

1. Do not scapegoat parents as the source of the student's dysregulation, as to do so represents a misunderstanding of the complexity of the problem; and
2. For TISP to be successful, we must recognize that parents and guardians are partners with us in this process.

In this chapter we address how to include parents in TISP orientation and training processes. We are primarily addressing LMHPs who will partner with schools on Strategic Planning Teams to include parents. But we want educators to peek into the world of systems' therapists so you can better understand how they will prepare parents to serve as classroom aides or simply have curiosity about your TISP processes in the classroom. Just as educators are adjusting the lens through which we see our students, we begin with the lens that LMHPs embrace in our work with families.

What often separates a good movie or novel depicting human drama from a mere story is when our main heroes and villains are presented in their full complexity—those stories where no one person is pure evil or pure good. Such stories often start by capturing our empathy and outrage on behalf of a suffering or traumatized character, and we become fully engrossed in discharging our anger and disapproval at the villain. But, as we peek into the villain's life or internal thinking processes, we are moved to great empathy on their behalf as well, whether the story's events invite us to hold firm in our disgust at their behavior or the plot invites us to rethink right and wrong. The movie *The Cider House Rules* explores this very issue with each character presented in their complexity (Hallstrom & Gladstein, 1999). This aspect of our experience is also captured in the State domain of neural functioning (Figure 2.5).

So it is with the story of trauma-informed care as applied to the education environment. When the story first opened, we all felt great empathy and outrage on behalf of students, who we learned most often come from homes with significant stress and disruption regardless of the parents' education, race, or socioeconomic background. As we moved deeper into their stories and learned about ACE data, right on cue, many of us felt anger directed toward their families and envisioned an antidote of simply fixing the parents. We hope that this text is helping you see the fullness of what it means to be trauma-informed; there is great complexity, but there are also logical, practical signposts along the way to make sense of it all. And while we cannot deny that there is much collateral damage that is ultimately the reason we are writing this text—damage to students, to society, and more—there is also reason for great hope.

But for our sign posts—our conceptual framework—to make sense, we need to expand our own internal schemas. We cannot problem solve unless we can access schemas for categorizing and hierarchically arranging information in our brain. Piaget and Vygotsky explain in great detail how this cognitive process works. Much of

our adult continuing education is all about learning how our sorting and arranging processes constantly need to be informed by new or updated schemas. We can't forgo that internal mentalization; it simply needs system updates now and then.

And so it is with popular schemas regarding the nature of student academic and social functioning struggles. There is no doubt that TISP is upending traditional and postmodern notions of good pedagogy. But we are also attempting to do a little bit of course correction in regard to trauma-informed principles as applied to the school setting. A simple approach to what is ailing students today is often reflected in those narratives that give us basic cause-effect answers: "If there is trauma in a student's background, it is usually the parents' fault; that student will not be able to function and is doomed to lifelong struggle." End of story. Even if it were that simple, that answer, in and of itself, stands to cause further rupture between parents and their children, further perpetuating unmitigated stress and trauma, all but ensuring its toxic effects causing further harm to the next generation. We've invited a slight tweak to this equation designed to inspire safety, trust, and hope among all of us who have ever relationally hurt or failed another, yet desire to not cause others pain. That's just about all of us!

We have unpacked the complexity of trauma and the ways we can maximize resilience, even as we are fragile and easily harmed and scarred. And we have alluded to the dangers, as well as the half-truths, embedded in the concept of blaming or scapegoating parents as the source of the problem. Our students and parents are part of an epic story with much complexity! We all inherited a mess of some kind or another for which we are responsible. We didn't ask for it, but there it is. We carry the pain of our ancestors in our bones, or we were on the receiving end of neglect or abuse from our own families that left indelible marks on our psyches, and no one can work at responding to these pains and healing those injuries but us. We are all accountable for our choices, even if accountability starts with the simple statement "I can't stop myself—help!"

While blame is a natural response to watching someone actively hurting another person, in this case a child, there is a subtle difference between blame and holding one another accountable. We are attempting to deeply understand what it means to affirm each person's ability to be responsible and accountable without negating their personhood in all its complexity, so we can avoid lacing our interventions with shame and judgment.

In this chapter, we are going to unpack this concept a bit further as we focus on parents as co-facilitators of TISP. Our hope is to broaden our empathy to include parents as we prepare them to serve as resources in the classroom or merely satisfy their curiosity about TISP.

The Challenge Embedded in Our Agenda



Community System Element

One of our goals with parents is to dispel the myth that they, as parents, are 100% weak bad seeds, or inadequate adults beyond hope or the ability to change. “If I had better character, I would have made better choices; if I had better self-control, I would have resisted this bad habit; if I had more motivation, I would not be in this mess.” Such cause-and-effect thinking assumes that we fully understand what is driving our intense need states (thoughts, feelings, and sensations signaling deeper beliefs and needs that are so intense, we just want to fix them or forget about them as soon as possible). And it assumes that we have access to a wider range of internal and external resources needed to make health-promoting choices. The proverbial “snap out of it” doesn’t work when we can’t sort out the internal traffic jam or know how to access reliable help along the way. We all can make better choices, break bad or harmful habits, and unlock motivation (which is a chemical

soup, not something we can just decide to have on any given day). But the process of getting there, the process of seizing responsibility for our lives, means listening to our need for emotional and physical safety and connection first, and trusting this unlocks the door to a whole set of additional options we didn’t know existed.

I (Anna) love listening to exercise motivators, those persons who cheer (or cajole, order, or shame) you to get yourself to that gym and suffer through these grueling workouts that will lead you to nirvana. This is effective for people whose neurochemistry is working just well enough to inspire the initial trust that something good awaits them if they dare. And those who stick with it most often feel the whole world open up to them in that runner’s high that may kick in during or shortly after a workout. “Everybody should be doing this!” they exclaim.

Well, not everyone has that little kick of dopamine needed to inspire hope and then the pursuit of that activity. And not everyone gets the feel-good endorphins during or after a workout. The thought of such activities may create sludge in their brains and lead in their feet. They feel nothing but misery during and well after. The benefits are there, but much delayed—too much delayed for many, as the benefit of today’s discomfort shows up days later, and the cause-effect relationship loses its motivating potential.

A different tactic is needed for those of us who are unmotivated and paralyzed by a routine, health practice, or activity in pursuit of a goal. This dynamic shows up in the choices we make to meet intimacy or financial needs, to practice self-care in going to bed on time or saying no to too much screen time, to fulfilling social obligations such as holding our tongue and temper, to being kind to a coworker or a family member despite being exhausted, to resist taking our rage out on invisible persons on the internet or that driver next to you on the freeway. Every choice we make in response to the demands of every waking hour, whether it is our own internal needs or the expectations of the social world, is influenced by our neurochemistry as it then reverberates throughout our body. It messes with our sense of right and wrong, of entitlement verses self-advocacy, of empathy toward the need states of others, leading to all sorts of justifications for acting in ways that, at the end of the day, are hurtful to self and/or others.

We can act in life-giving ways in spite of this internal traffic. And it begins with insight and compassion, the best tools for playing chess with the way our stressed brains speak to us, messing with our thoughts, feelings, and perceived choices. If I want to maximize my health, prepare to get a job, keep a job, raise my children, break an addiction, I have to find a way to do x, y, and z despite the fact that I have sludge and lead holding me down or yanking my chain with impulsive quick fixes. And step one is to anchor myself, to connect, whether internally through mindfulness practices (or whatever term you choose), or through connection with safe, caring others. If I can relax into the discomfort with compassion and curiosity, I will be able to find the reserves I need to tolerate discomfort until I sort it out, finding little

breaks along the way, little spaces of joy and a lessening of the weight of the world in blue-sky moments. I will find the resources or ideas either from my own brainstorming processes or in the presence of others who can brainstorm along with me.

And that is what it comes down to: Our stressed brains feel discomfort that is disproportionate to the tasks before us, and we need to not just find the reserves to tolerate it, but find ways to empathically understand it while seeking solutions—the ultimate way to tame its intensity. Trauma-informed knowledge is explaining what that sludge and lead looks like on a biological level, and why solutions need to start with safety and stabilization as the primary tools in response, the themes and goals of *Connecting* and *Coaching*.

This is what TISP schools are helping students learn, and as we unpack this with parents, it is what we will be teaching them as well. You may never get a runner's high, and your child may always be bored to tears by social science class, but we can all learn how to listen to that discomfort, lean into it with compassion, and find a reason to tolerate the discomfort for a greater good or goal that inspires hope. Frustration tolerance and delayed gratification then have meaning and purpose that are important to us, and with practice—lots of practice and reinforcement through strong connections—the discomfort lessens and is easier to hold until, one day, it doesn't take so much effort to do the basics, opening up space for us to invest more in the things that matter most to us with greater ease. This is what we get to see with students: the building blocks of learning how to ride various internal and interpersonal challenges with greater confidence that they can do this, even if it means stumbling around at times.

As we talk about including parents, we need to remember that for those parents interested in learning more, this is the process we are inviting them into, the same process we highlight in the *Person of the Educator* work; we are all touched by these themes, as none of us escape the challenge of making sense of life when it throws us stressful and traumatic curveballs. Here, we are breaking this process down, examining a way to invite parents into this process according to their interest and window of tolerance. We are not looking for overwhelming interest, although that does happen. We are looking for a cadre of parents who long for greater connection and partnership with their children's school on behalf of their children, and perhaps their own inner desire to be more connected in their community, and ultimately grounded in their own lives. We will take each parent where they are; it's all good!

Designing TISP Parent Orientation and Training Programs

The following provides guiding principles for designing and implementing TISP parent orientation and training programs. The title and content of such programs are up to each facilitator to discern. Rather, this chapter intends to provide a conceptual guideline for school and mental health professionals collaborating to include parents in the school's TISP approach as well as prepare parent school aides.

Rationale

TISP proposes that all members of the school community should be included in the TISP orientation and training processes. This includes parents and guardians for four interrelated reasons:

School Programming Transparency. TISP asks schools to update their conceptualization and practices according to trauma-informed data regarding the nature of unmitigated stress and trauma and their impact on brain development and executive functioning central to learning. Parents and guardians are a part of the school community, and they have a right to not only understand the culture and ethos of their child's school, but to participate in TISP orientations, just as all other school community members are encouraged to do.

Home and School Partnership. TISP posits that attunement and mentoring are key to building the neural networks needed to learn the academic and social-behavioral tasks of the K-12 years. We also know that parents have the greatest

impact on a child's sense of well-being. The more parents understand and can practice TISP methods in the home, the greater chance a student has of benefiting from a TISP approach to learning.

Parental Right to Know the Science. Professionals, such as educators, participating in trauma-informed training are learning what all of us deserve and need to learn: We have increased scientific data explaining why so many of us suffer and struggle in response to our own unintegrated neural networks. For many, it is an accumulation of biological vulnerabilities we came into this world with, the wounds of unmitigated stress and trauma from our ancestors, combined with the suffering of our caretakers, contributing to our own encounters with adverse childhood experiences. This is the environment in which our own strengths and limits were born and nurtured, including the intensity of various internal need states, even as our responses to these needs are washed through our thoughts and beliefs about self and the world. Despite the complexity of these challenges, we have proven strategies for how we can responsibly act in response to our own histories and current states of dysregulation. And when we seize those tools, we can attune and mentor the next generation—our own children, our students—thereby stopping the generational transmission process. Whether a parent wants to volunteer in the classroom or not, they deserve to learn ways to protect their children.

The Need for TISP-Trained Parents in the Classroom. TISP in the classroom and broader school environment will not be successful unless schools are adequately staffed with adults occupying a variety of roles. Most specifically, teachers need TISP-trained parent volunteers to provide attunement and mentoring in the classroom. In many instances, the presence of additional adults in the classroom is due to class size. However, regardless of class size, students need access to more adults throughout the school day to personally attune to their challenges and respond in a caring, mentoring manner that facilitates a sense of safety and belonging.

Guiding Principles

Each school community committed to including parents in the TISP orientation and training process, and to nurturing parent-school partnerships, will accomplish these goals in their own manner, congruent with their context. However, there are a few guiding principles to incorporate to maximize parent engagement and support.

Use Licensed Mental Health Professionals. Imagine what might arise once a parent cohort understands that TISP is more than a school's approach to learning, but a global trauma-informed movement of adults committed to using advances in science and child development to stop a generational transmission process of unmitigated stress and trauma. Such a network of parents can be self-driven through a peer mentor model whereby parents who have undergone a training or workshop and have participated in parent network groups can then share in facilitation processes. Peer-run volunteer groups are the most powerful community resources inspiring insight, growth, and change. We see this in action everywhere from self-help groups to volunteer organizations.

However your Strategic Planning Team envisions parent participation processes, LMHPs should participate in the strategic planning processes on District and School levels, co-facilitate parent TISP orientation sessions, and lead parent trainings for two reasons. First, the nature of the material requires insight into how to unpack provocative material in a manner that inspires curiosity and hope. It cannot be presented through matter-of-fact information dissemination. And, as already stated, parents deserve the fullness of the message, not just sound bites that may lead to fear and shame. We learn best by encounter, by being both participant and observer, so we need to go slow and steady, as parents will have a personal encounter with this material.

The second reason to use LMHPs as trainers is related to the first. Parents will engage with the material, their own history with unmitigated stress and trauma, and their own adult struggles including questions regarding what they are unknowingly passing along to their children. MHPs are trained to help us hear the truth of our own stories to facilitate greater levels of ownership, leading to compassion for self and others and an openness to change. At a school-sponsored event, there is also the need to provide safety mechanisms in case a participant needs more follow-up care. An MHP will know how to identify these issues and link parents with the appropriate resources.

Orientations can be co-facilitated by LMHPs and school personnel, while parent TISP trainings require LMHP

facilitation. After a season of mentoring, many of these processes can be facilitated by peers as well. Once a cohort of parents self-identifies how they might want to continue nurturing their own trauma-informed skills, an MHP can serve as a co-facilitator or an on-call resource as needed, or as the go-to person to run the initial trainings.

Avoid Open Trainings. Once a district commits to orienting parents, it is logical to want to include parents in open school-sponsored TISP trainings. However, this is not advisable for two reasons. First, as a presenter unpacks the neurobiology of unmitigated stress and trauma, and the implications of ACE scores, parents who have had no advanced orientation to ACES or, more significantly, trauma-informed materials, may be overwhelmed and interpret TISP as a response to poor parenting. Sometimes this can be aggravated by how a presenter speaks of parents, but our defenses are usually activated when we hear someone explain how we might not be serving our children well. Without this material being presented in a fuller context with more attention paid to their receptivity and response, including parents could undermine the very goals prompting the invitation. They need a protected space to enter into the content with an attuned facilitator who can mentor them through the material at their own pace.

A second reason to avoid inviting parents to open trainings is that school personnel are also entering a learning process that includes an initial stage of discomfort. Many of us are frustrated that so many students are not able to display age-appropriate skills prerequisite to learning. As we unpack the heart- and brain-crushing blow to a child who is denied access to good-enough attachment, we are angry and, yes, resentful toward parents. Educators need an uncensored space to process these thoughts and emotions, and their own histories and current relationships are placed under the microscope as well.

There are two exceptions to this recommendation. First, many of the educators present in TISP trainings will be parents, and may have K-12 children attending the same districts in which they teach. But the school training environment is designed to attune to their responses. They work in a community of others participating in the same process. Ideally, space is provided for these educators to share how the material is challenging them as both educators and parents.

Another exception is those parents who are already well-known to the school through serving as classroom volunteers or in other roles. They may be familiar enough with trauma-informed literature to be excited about the school's process and eager to participate. Just be sure to provide these parents with the same type of school support as that offered to school employees.

Crafting a Parent Orientation and Training Plan

Nurturing parent interest in TISP orientation meetings or events is much like building interest among educators. You are likely to have parents who are all in from the start. They are aware of the literature and eager to network with other parents committed to breaking generational patterns, or at least support their child's school in whatever ways they can. Other parents may be quite unaware of the trauma-informed/ACE revolution, but once they read a short blurb about it and how schools are incorporating this material into their child's education, they too are all in.

Then there are parents who will know about ACES or have heard about trauma-informed tips for health and well-being, and they want nothing of it! They may display outright avoidance or anger, and claim they lack the time, need, or interest for such nonsense. Other parents may claim interest yet actually wish to avoid all contact with the subject matter.

Our intent is to attune to each parent's response, honoring their current level of interest, and keep our ears open to offering TISP orientation events in a manner meaningful to each parent. The key principles here are mindfulness of how promotional materials are presented and honoring constraints on parent availability.

Be Mindful of Promotional Materials. Promotional materials include the information you convey to parents about the nature and purpose of TISP, not just the invitation to an orientation meeting or training event. How might you describe TISP in a manner that raises interest but not defensive alarm; piques interest but not fear; and conveys that the school needs to partner with parents, not send parents to therapy or parenting classes?

Honor Parental Constraints. Parental constraints often occur along two themes: resistance to the topic and limitations in scheduling and availability. Resistance to the topic may be related to truly not wanting what is being offered. If it sounds like a parenting class when none was requested, it is unlikely many will want to participate. This is where the District and the LMHP need to be clear about the intent and goals of the activities offered. The rationale is all about including parents in the life of their child's school, whether simply to enable informed consent, or as preparation to volunteer in the school. And yes, a TISP-informed home does promote the efficacy of TISP. It is similar to only training some teachers that come in contact with a student versus training all teachers; success is much more likely if that student experiences consistency among adult caretakers at school and home.

The District and LMHP need to craft a larger plan designed to build parental interest, and options for parents who want to go deeper into their own TISP training out of curiosity or a desire to volunteer. These two options (an orientation and training) allow parents control over when, how, and why they dig into material that will ultimately invite them to apply TISP concepts to their own life and history, all as precursors to implementing changes in home-based attunement and mentoring parental practices.

Promoting Your Orientation. Once your larger plan is in place, you are likely to begin building interest by letting parents know about your school's transition to TISP. Parents are likely to positively respond to invitations to a TISP orientation meeting to better understand the changes occurring in their children's classrooms, perhaps tagged onto student-teacher meeting events, as one of the stops on the circuit of office visits. Such invitations are mindful of how to describe the school's approach, along with ways to access deeper information if desired. The title of such a program needs to be considered ahead of time, including the wise use of the words "trauma" and "trauma-informed." The invitation might include elements of the following:

- A statement regarding how our school(s) have learned a great deal regarding the impact of stress on the brain, impacting behavior and learning. This information comes from studies on trauma. This body of knowledge is often called trauma-informed.
- We have incorporated the discoveries from these studies and created learning communities focused on providing a sense of emotional and physical safety, of building community with students, staff, and parents. These are factors that help children focus and learn.
- This orientation session is designed to offer parents the same information we have been providing staff at your child's school, so you can understand what your child is experiencing at school.
- After this orientation, you might want more information about our new school community approach, how it works, and what staff members are learning and practicing. Or, you might want to serve as a trauma-informed (or whatever descriptor you might choose) class volunteer. If either of these are of interest to you, we will let you know about a parent network designed to provide deeper orientation and training.
- Our staff has found these orientations very informative and thought-provoking, since stress and trauma impact all of us—adults and students alike. So while you are learning about how stress impacts a child's health and ability to learn, at times it may feel like you are learning about your own brain and recalling your own history as a student. You are not alone! Your child's teachers are experiencing this same process.
- So, come join us for a one-hour orientation meeting on any one of the following dates. Here, you would offer multiple meetings designed to be most convenient for parents.

In the principles above, you see the concepts of "trauma" and "trauma-informed" being used in context, and descriptors of the program—a community characterized by safety and connection—being used rather than the term signifying the knowledge source informing the program. This is designed to avoid alarming a parent that this is a "mental health treatment" program while also speaking clearly and honestly. A dilemma in many professions is that our shorthand titles are originally designed to speed communication, but the essence of their meaning is soon lost. Judicious use of the word "trauma" invites us to never lose sight of what we are ultimately trying to convey.

The sample above also illustrates informed consent: We are doing this, and only this, and for this reason. Meanwhile, it allows parents to tuck in their memory that more is available, if interested. And, the ultimate informed consent is the

acknowledgement that this new program evokes thoughts and feelings. In speaking this truth (one of the elements to helping us all summon good coping resources), it also models two TISP community values: We are all participating in this learning process, and you are not alone. This begins to emphasize collaboration, partnership, and the message that we are all in the same boat in our susceptibility to the impact of generational and unmitigated stress and trauma.

In the above sample, flexible programming honors the time constraints on parents. This may be a District's biggest challenge, given that the days are gone when most adults had a common work schedule and most families are already stressed by overcommitment to various activities. While a simple orientation might only require an hour of a parent's time, scheduling parent training will be more difficult. A few ideas might help manage this constraint as it relates to parent trainings:

- Survey your parents and find common times and meeting locations that work for the majority of interested respondents. Plan to offer a variety of trainings to accommodate these variances.
- Offer a small series of three to four meetings, with the option to continue after a break. This allows parents to tolerate the added stress in their schedules for short periods of time.
- After the initial training in TISP, allow the parents to identify ways they might want to network with other parents who have gone through the training for mutual support or friendship.

Parent Orientation and First Training Session Agenda

Your school may choose to offer parents an orientation to their child's trauma-informed school, using language for "trauma-informed" suitable for your constituents, as highlighted here and in previous chapters. The goal is to enable informed consent to build trust and goodwill, and further develop partnerships with parents who may want to serve as volunteers especially as they become more interested in trauma-informed learning methods. Orientation sessions may be facilitated by school personnel while training sessions are facilitated by LMHPs.

To build trust and interest, parents first need to be informed about the learning methods at their child's school through a simple one-hour orientation, blurbs in school-parent communications, and other methods. For parents who wish to learn more or are interested in serving as classroom aides, they need access to a TISP training process, a place to understand the methodology behind the school's emphasis on *Connecting*, *Coaching*, and *Commencing*, and how they can play a significant role in assisting teachers with simple yet effective acts of care expressed through attunement and mentoring. Likewise, they can help classroom methods take hold by practicing some of the techniques used at school and adjusting them for use at home.

The following is intended not as a verbatim script, but as an outline for presenting an orientation to TISP for parents. Put the ideas in your own words to match the context of your students and parents. A TISP orientation session and first training session cover much of the same information; however, the training session includes more direct information about ACES, and is facilitated by a licensed LMHP. The outline below offers a sample progression of ideas for both an orientation and a first training session, due to their similar content.

- An introduction explaining the context inspiring the change in school programming: emerging data gaining the attention of schools around the world, as all of us—not just our district—know that our kids live in a very stressful world, and it has impacted their ability to learn and function in the school environment.
- Unpack with parents what we have learned about stress and learning in clear-cut, concise ways, using visuals or video clips. In a first training session, include space or an activity for parents to share their own observations about the relationship between stress and learning or being motivated.
 - In an *introductory orientation session*, explain that educators (teachers, administrators, all staff) have been overwhelmed by these advances in our understanding of the relationship between stress and development, but truly inspired by little things we can all do to help our students learn and help ourselves manage the

impact of stress as well. These sessions can be facilitated by school personnel.

- In a *first training session*, the LMHP would introduce the work of Felitti and Anda (1998), medical researchers and practitioners who noticed how stressed many adults were, regardless of education, where they lived, or the types of jobs they had. They wondered about the connection between our adult struggles and our childhood stress. By making it personal (*our* struggles and stress), you illustrate we are all in this boat. By going “generic” (*their* struggles and stress), you put some distance between these other, unknown adults and the parents present at this moment. Either choice could have wisdom for your group. The key is to think through the messages that might build safety and trust the most with your parents. I (Anna) have found it helpful to let people know that we are all cut from the same cloth, that what I might ask them to unpack and how I might be inviting them to respond holds true for me as well.
 - In the first or second session, describe the ACE study: simply, 10 questions designed to see how many types of stressful experiences an adult may have encountered in childhood. And then describe how the ACE researchers learned that persons who experienced stressful events in childhood reported more struggles in adulthood than persons who did not have as many stressful experiences.
 - But what we also know is that for many of us, stressful experiences teach us how to be resilient, when we have caring others to help us make sense of those stressful times. We just know more clearly now that stressful events do take a toll on our bodies and brain development.
- And while it is a little uncomfortable realizing that we are impacted by stress in ways we know and don’t know, educators have also learned that the antidote, the protective fix, is simple: When we help students feel loved and cared for, they can start to make sense of the fact that even though life has hard challenges, they matter and they have worth and potential. And when their stressed brains begin to feel safe and calm down, it allows their learning brains to kick into high gear.
- We know this is true for adults too. Even though we face many challenges in life, when we know that others see and care about us, we don’t feel so alone. This helps us access our inner strength and hope, and all the skills we’ve learned over the years, to cope with our hard challenges.
- This is what our teachers are learning—yes, they are going back to school! As they understand the impact of stress on the mind and body and that the best medicine is love and care, they are excited about what this means for their students if we change just a few things at school. Our teachers have always loved and cared for our students, but we are learning new and different ways to provide care that help protect their brains from stress so they can be successful in school.
- And, all of these new discoveries about how the brain works in response to stress are inviting them to make a few changes in their own lives so they are more protected from the impact of adult stress.
- Proceed to give examples of what the school and classrooms are doing to emphasize not just the care of teachers for students, but nurturing care and trust between classmates.
- In a one-hour orientation, invite feedback and questions. Then be sure to offer an avenue for them to learn more or to participate in a TISP training (using your school’s language for the relationship-focused learning community you are creating).
 - Be sure to provide the names and contact information for personnel at their children’s school, where they are invited at any time to visit with questions or to observe a school or classroom in action. A member of the school’s Strategic Planning Team is often a good contact source.
- In a first training session, invite feedback and questions; ask what might be inspiring or disconcerting. What is it like hearing that your teachers are learning about stress and the brain? What is inspiring them to learn about stress and the brain?
 - If time allows, or in the second meeting, invite them to take the ACE. There are methods to do this rather quickly and simply, so a parent can keep their own scores private. Enough time must remain so you can unpack scores. If not, then let your parents know that they can take the survey the next time you meet if anyone is interested.

- To unpack the scores, be mindful that you need a parent's trust before you overwhelm them with ACE score correlation data. So, until greater trust is built, simply explain that high scores are not uncommon, and health and relationship struggles are common regardless of how many childhood stressors we experienced. We just know that those of us who have lots of adult challenges also had some fairly tough stressors when we were kids.
- Here is where you introduce the neurobiology of stress that would be unpacked in greater detail in a second session. Parents need to hear some of the most validating news: We can't just simply tell ourselves to feel happy, or to not be angry, or to never make bad choices, or to know when to trust and when not to trust. Our physical bodies changed due to stress, and we carry all sorts of messages in our bodies that impact how we think and feel, what we want and need, how we perceive safety and danger. Explain how next time you meet, you will unpack some of these physiological challenges and how we are learning the key to taming some of these stress side effects.
- With each mini-lesson into the nature of unmitigated stress and trauma, remember to connect it to how children display these concepts in the classroom.

Parent Training Curriculum Development

The content of a parent training in TISP-based schools is not about the TISP competencies of the educator; it focuses on the science underlying trauma-informed data regarding what undermines and promotes healthy development, followed by practical steps to strengthen attachment skills at home. Each LMHP familiar with trauma-informed practices, family therapy, and parent education skill basics can develop a suitable curriculum. The following are key topics to build into your curriculum.

NEAR Agenda Model. A great resource that offers a glimpse into the content domains of a short TISP training program is the NEAR (Neurobiology-Epigenetics-ACES-Resources) model, a trauma-informed parent education curriculum used to orient home health care workers in trauma-informed practice (Region X ACES Planning Team, 2016). The model is based on two guiding values: Families have a right to know what research has verified regarding the ingredients for healthy development; and families have a right to know the devastating consequences of unmitigated stress and trauma so they can prevent harm to themselves and their children. The acronym is designed to simplify the parent education process, a deep-enough look at research findings without overwhelming parents or monopolizing too much of their time. The program also includes a simple method for sharing the information with parents focusing on Asking, Listening, and Accepting. A quote from Vincent Felitti expresses a discovery many of us make as we learn the power of active listening: "Slowly, I have come to see that Asking, and Listening, and Accepting are a profound form of *Doing*" (p. 17).



Figure 10.1: Bronfenbrenner's Ecosystem Model of Human Development: Factors Contributing to Stress, Trauma, and Resilience

and practices, and social systems reflecting what is privileged or marginalized around personal identity traits such as race, ethnicity, religion, gender identity, gender roles, national identity status, socioeconomic status, appearance, age, and ability. What makes these personal identifying traits a risk factor is directly related to Chronosystem legacies, Macrosystem blueprints, and Exosystem structures shaping public attitudes and behaviors. These issues are reflected in the ways we organize ourselves as a society; we see covert and overt values, attitudes, and beliefs expressed in our public institutions, our economic system, politics, even our architecture. These Exosystem factors not only reflect the invisible blueprint (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), but keep systems of power, a sense of what is good and desired, firmly in place, no matter their utility or influence over those conscripted to play a role or not even acknowledged as participants in the process.

When we struggle to feel safe, included, or worthy, we are taught first to ask, "What am I doing wrong?" or "How has another person done me wrong?" We are not often guided to look around at how we might be in a toxic stew chipping away at everyone's sense of self. This is what an ecosystemic view does: It helps us put words to a larger issue at play. By putting words to the crazy-making dynamics we experience or see on a daily basis, issues or events that others might be oblivious to, it provides the type of attunement we need to feel safe and anchored so we can move on to proactively respond in health-promoting ways.

Remember the Broader Picture. The above blueprint is a useful guideline even though LMHP parent facilitators need to be aware of developing additional content pieces as needed. Bronfenbrenner's (1979) model of factors shaping personal health and wellbeing is helpful. (see Figure 10.1). At this point in our history, we have many open ears responding to the pervasiveness of dysregulated Microsystem relationships, the picture that is emerging through Adverse Childhood Experiences data. Advances in neurobiology add to the chorus by illuminating not just psychological implications, but biological correlates, all comprising the impact on the individual. But systems therapists and social science theorists remind us to pull the lens out to see broader issues driving the pervasiveness of dysregulated behavior. And lest we think ACES are the only source of an adult or child's trauma, we know that this is not the full story. We saw this juxtaposition in Section I in the stories of Charlotte and Ben.

Most notable is the role of contextual factors influencing risk and resilience. This includes the acknowledgment of historical legacies, cultural attitudes

Most notable is the role of contextual factors influencing risk and resilience. This includes the acknowledgment of historical legacies, cultural attitudes and practices, and social systems reflecting what is privileged or marginalized around personal identity traits such as race, ethnicity, religion, gender identity, gender roles, national identity status, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, appearance, age, and ability. What makes these personal identifying traits a risk factor is directly related to Chronosystem legacies, Macrosystem blueprints, and Exosystem structures shaping public attitudes and behaviors.

By putting words to the crazy-making dynamics we experience or see on a daily basis, issues or events that others might be oblivious to, it provides the type of attunement we need to feel safe and anchored so we can move on to proactively respond in health-promoting ways.

Many of our students' parents suffer directly or indirectly due to Chrono-, Macro-, and Exosystem dynamics that do influence social-emotional functioning. In fact, researchers from a variety of disciplines surmise that Macrosystem factors have the single-most influence over our identity formation process (Alexander, 2012; Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swidler, & Tipton, 2007; Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Coates, 2015; DiAngelo, 2018; Woodley, 2019). From an attachment

perspective, this makes perfect sense, since these invisible attitudes and values creep into our psyche in a pervasive yet subtle way from the moment we are born. A mental health professional needs to see this broader picture of factors influencing our encounters with unmitigated stress and trauma in order to attune to parents suffering not so much from ACES, but a larger toxic process.

A facilitator will also want to identify resilience traits often born in the face of stress and adversity. A significant part of the curriculum should also include basic attunement skills parents are invited to strengthen to mirror the strategies used at school.

Unpacking ACES—Should We or Should We Not? Whether you adopt the NEAR model as an outline or create your own, inevitably a significant aid for people to fully grasp the impact of unmitigated stress and trauma on biopsychosocial health throughout the lifespan is a review of the ACE survey. The mental health profession is built on the understanding that most families we work with are manifesting the impact of both generational trauma and here-and-now (adverse) experiences that are causing physical, emotional, and social harm to all family members, especially children. And, as detailed above, we know these dysregulated relational behaviors are influenced by larger social forces.

What is new is discovering the percentage of families experiencing profound disruptions to providing safe and stable attachment bases for children, the general public's increased awareness of this phenomenon, data verifying its costs to individuals and communities, and the ethical obligation we face to share this information with all adults. In addition, ACE data is merging with advances in epigenetics—the field of science that explores biophysical changes that occur due to unmitigated stress and trauma and are passed on to future generations (DeSocio, 2018; Ptak & Petronis, 2010). We are now gaining rapid and startling knowledge into how the damaging side effects of trauma attach to our genes, basically programming how our genes will act. These alterations are often passed down. Your students might have low ACE scores, but still be suffering from the side effects of inherited trauma in a compromised immune system, physical struggles, or neurological difficulties ranging from cognitive functioning to a propensity for chronic anxiety, depression, or other mental health struggles. We truly do carry the memories of our ancestors in our bones. (See the Resources for Further Reading at the end of this chapter for more information.)

This complexity is most salient as we are appalled at the relational distress many of our students experience at home. It can be difficult to summon respect and empathy, even though many of us have struggled in our family relationships as well. In this chapter, we are giving you a glimpse into the mindset of systems therapists who see these struggling families with great empathy even as they too are feeling the urgency on behalf of children.

What the ACE data has inspired is a renewed effort to intervene in families. Health care providers of varying professions are now being overtly asked to talk with families about ACES. Even trauma-informed educators (us included!) are being asked to loop parents in on ACE-inspired changes to their child's school approach. Here, we invite all school personnel to proceed with caution.

When someone tells us that the way we are sailing along in life is hurtful, in fact inspiring lifelong pain, a logical reaction is to feel shame. We might respond to it in a variety of ways that mask the reaction, but it is as if some spotlight now shines on us and all of our flaws and inadequacies are seen, including the toxic effect we've had on those we love most. It's overwhelming. But just as educators are in the business of coaching students to learn from mistakes, to not implode with shame each time they are corrected or redirected, a similar process unfolds with each of us when we are confronted with aspects of our relational or personal functioning that need to change for our own health and the health of our children.

As your TISP-transitioning school seeks to contract with licensed mental health providers to sponsor parent training

in TISP, interview these providers and ask how they will share the historical origins inspiring TISP, and how they would describe to parents the correlation of ACES with a student's academic functioning. Listen for an awareness of truth-telling but within the whole truth, of inclusive language rather than “us non-ACE-producing adults” versus “those high-ACE-producing parents.”

As your school or district decides to gently ease into building interest among parents, we recommend that in a one-hour orientation to your TISP schools, unpacking ACES is not appropriate. More time needs to be given to that study in particular, and in one hour you want to present their child's emerging school environment as a welcoming place for their child and them as the parent. However, it is very appropriate to explain the findings of ACE in a non-threatening manner.

Above, we identified a process for unpacking the ACE survey and the correlation between scores and lifespan struggles that would comprise one of the first TISP training sessions for parents who want to go deeper. Most of the information covered in that first training session would be a repeat of the one-hour parent orientation session. And again, our main goal is to invite parents into the topic, not overwhelm them with fear and shame, or provide provocative information with no opportunity to ask questions or process their reactions.

Nurturing Parental Trust. The last principle to incorporate into our work with parents is the idea of holding gently the vulnerabilities and hopes of parents when they need our help with their children. We'd like to share a few thoughts from one of Anna's students. Jennifer chose to become a systems-based therapist due to her own experience as an adoptive parent. She gravitated toward attachment-based family therapy intervention models, and then decided to complete a trauma-informed research project exploring a hunch. She is intimately acquainted with the exhaustion of parenting and the microscope that she is placed under each time she works with the education, medical, and mental health systems on behalf of her family. She can easily discern if they assume she is somehow causing the problem or contributing to making it worse. Meanwhile, in her clinical practice, Jennifer works with many parents who have experienced their own unmitigated stress and trauma, and are also parenting high-needs children with complex struggles. Her hunch was, if we help parents nurture their own connections, their own attachment relationships, might that result in an internal sense of safety, inspiring hope and greater coping skills? After all, there is no magic bullet out there that is going to make life less stressful in this moment. Might we increase resilience if we help parents spend less time trying to figure out how to do it faster or better, and first nurture their own need to feel safe, loved, and valued?

Sound familiar? This is the same approach we are taking with our students: nurturing connection and then trusting we will have a firmer foundation to tolerate the day's challenges and find the resources to cope.

In the course of Jennifer's research, we'd often discuss what various professionals can do to ease the pressure, to lessen the shame and blame, whether real or imagined, that parents and guardians often feel when they are caring for children with complex struggles. Her advice is simple and practical.

Four Tips for Communicating with a Student's Parent or Guardian

1. Parents, regardless of their role in their child's behavior, are coming to you, whether you are their teacher, administrator, or school counselor, feeling judged and ashamed. They may appear to be defensive, blaming, or simply exhausted. But understanding their underlying shame and finding empathy for them will go a long way in creating a respectful and collaborative relationship.
2. Parents are the experts on their child— even when they may not feel or appear that way to others. Be curious about what does and does not work at home. Many parents have excellent ideas, but may not know how to explain them in the best way.

3. Listen first, and reflect what you are hearing rather than assuming you know how they feel. When you let parents know you hear them, they will be much more likely to join the team in a more meaningful way. Many parents may not have an emotional vocabulary, especially in regard to their feelings toward parenting a child with high needs. By reflecting what you hear, you are giving them a chance to understand themselves as well.
4. Many teachers already highlight strengths of the student in meetings with parents, but it is important that you do so in a way that helps the parent understand you really are trying to *get to know their child in a meaningful way*. Letting parents know you really see their child, good and bad, will help them respect you more.

—Jennifer Pond, Marriage and Family Therapist Intern

Parents as TISP Partners: Final Thoughts

Teachers need more adults in the classroom. Gone are the days when children were programmed to sit in tidy neat rows of desks, folding their hands when not at work, and sitting straight up quietly at attention. My (Anna's) primary school class pictures remind me of how large our classes were—40, 50, or more students—and each of us knew that strict consequences awaited if we didn't keep our hands to ourselves, spoke out of turn, or didn't complete our nightly homework. Those expectations worked to create quiet, compliant students. We still hear pockets of community members who think we should return to those swift and clear law-and-order days. But that orderly-looking classroom came at a great cost to many of its students, pairing learning with fear and shame. Its side effects went hidden for many of us. Luckily, enough has changed in our culture that those types of practices are no longer tolerated by educators, students, and their families.

Including parents in TISP orientation and training processes seems like a daunting task; we can't imagine some of our most vulnerable parents ever choosing to participate. TISP trusts that deeper, lifelong learning, or tackling an emotionally challenging subject, is of interest to most of us when it occurs within an environment of *Connecting* and *Coaching*. And to provide this type of attention to each student, most often we need more than one adult in the classroom. Teaching is exhausting work, and it is impossible when you have a dozen or more students needing you to provide that sense of attunement so crucial to their learning process. We need parent partners not just to help with tasks, but to help each student feel connected, seen, and valued.

Orienting parents to TISP is also a strengths-based strategy for helping parents understand the health crisis schools are responding to by embracing TISP. As parents learn more about the generational legacy of unmitigated stress and trauma, their own sense of hope is activated by knowing there is a way to be proactive and involved with all of us trying to do the same. We are assuming that changes will happen not only at home, but in community hope and cohesion as well.

To help parents understand the full nature of the problem, they deserve to see a wide-angle view of how it impacts all of us and is bigger than any one person or family. In response, they also deserve to see the beauty in the microscopic, closeup view found in the healing influence of attuned relationship. Parent involvement in classrooms is the solution in action.

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Exercises

Chapter 10: Exercise 1

Create TISP Orientation Activities

Context

Imagine you are part of a district committed to building parent/guardian support and interest in your school's trauma-informed culture and practices. You have partnered with a trauma-informed licensed mental health practitioner trained in systems-based family services, and you have the broader commitment of your education system to nurture parental buy-in.

The first phase is sharing information about your trauma-informed school approach and nurturing further interest. This is the *orientation* phase; it is not one event, but a series of communications over time. Three of the most common forms of school-parent communication are e-newsletters or announcements on your school's website; paper announcements sent home with students; and parent-teacher open house meetings each term, which may span a few days during a given term to accommodate parent schedules.

Instructions

1. It is not always wise to call a school's approach "trauma-informed" or "trauma-sensitive" due to the confusing message it may convey to those unfamiliar with the literature. Research or professional terms do not always sit well with recipients of, in this case, a trauma-informed approach. What might you want to call your trauma-informed district, school, or classroom? This would become the descriptor used in your parent communications.
2. Construct the narrative for each of the following communication items:

- General TISP Introduction: E-newsletter blurb or take-home note: The narrative announcing and describing the school or classroom TI approach.
 - TISP Orientation Meeting: Construct an announcement or e-brochure promoting a short orientation meeting for parents that will describe in greater detail your school's trauma-informed culture.
3. Create an agenda for a one-hour parent orientation meeting.
 - Identify roughly how much time might be spent on each element.
 - Assemble the content for each element as is congruent with your class assignments or the readiness of your current school or district to implement this activity.
 4. Share your responses to this exercise with others working with you. How might their examples strengthen your own ideas?

Chapter 10: Exercise 2

Develop a TISP Parent Training Program

Context

Imagine that you have a small group of parents interested in knowing more about your school's trauma-informed programming. Some want to become or are already working as classroom aides, and others are just curious. For this scenario, let's imagine the group can easily find a common meeting time.

As in the above scenario, imagine you are working with a trauma-informed systems therapist. If you are an educator, having a general idea of the content to be covered is good practice seeing in action with adults what you are putting into practice with students. It also helps you be sure that the MHP covers material you need them to address, as this is the birth of an idea you hope can spread to other parents, effecting change in the home.

Also imagine that you are calling it a "training" because it will be in service to parents who want to work as classroom aides, and for the curious who want to go through some of the same materials (concepts) as their child's teacher. This avoids creating or promoting it as a parenting training or group therapy process, both of which are presumptuous, implying that the parents are the problem. With this caution in mind, what other terms or descriptors might you use, if "training" sounds too difficult or formal? Once TISP parent involvement takes hold, the parents themselves may wish to rename the process to fit their vision of how to grow a TISP parent network.

If you are an MHP, imagine that you are co-constructing your training agenda with educators serving the

students of the parents in your training. As more parents participate in the training, imagine that these parents become part of the planning team as well.

Instructions

1. Create a general topic list while deciding how many sessions an introductory TISP training might take. Adjust your topic list or depth of each topic to accommodate parent time demands, giving plenty of space for parent interaction in each session.
2. Identify a theme for each meeting, arranging the themes in a developmental, scaffolded sequence that makes conceptual sense and is mindful of the process parents may go through as they digest the material.
3. Identify the agenda for each themed meeting.
4. Identify tools or methods of engagement you might use to keep the sessions interactive and training-focused rather than a group therapy or parent training workshop in disguise.
 - What local physicians or researchers might you bring in to describe epigenetics or ACE data? How might you screen their approaches to be sure they do not lecture the participants to change, but share scientific data in a approachable way that is informative?
 - What school staff, from a variety of roles, might you invite to your meetings to share their learning process and the “aha” moments they have observed with students?
 - As more parents complete TISP training, how might you include parents as co-facilitators?
 - What visuals (videos, pictures, etc.) might you want to track down to illustrate various concepts?
5. Once the shell of your program is created, share your ideas with others working through this material to generate more ideas.

Resources for Further Reading

- [ACES Infographics](#).
- [ACES Connection Resources Center](#).
- ACES: [ACE Study video](#). Three-minute trailer by Academy on Violence and Abuse.
- ACES: “[Video: Toxic Stress Derails Healthy Development](#)” by Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University.
- ACES: “[Video: How Childhood Trauma Affects Health Across a Lifetime](#),” TED Talk by Dr. Nadine Burke Harris.
- [NEAR](#) is an acronym to denote the roles neuroscience, epigenetics, ACES, and resilience play in our vulnerabilities to unmitigated stress and trauma. This website offers resources to home health care workers to discuss ACES with families.
- Epigenetics: “[Grandma’s Experiences Leave Epigenetic Mark on Our Genes](#),” Discover article by Dan Hurley.
- Epigenetics: “[Holding Infants—or Not—Leaves Traces on Their Genes](#),” University of British Columbia Faculty of Medicine.
- Epigenetics: <https://learn.genetics.utah.edu/content/epigenetics/rats/>.
- Epigenetics: <https://bigthink.com/videos/epigenetics-explained>.
- Epigenetics: [WhatIsEpigenetics.com](#). News site covering epigenetics.
- Epigenetics: “[Epigenetics](#)” by [Learn.Genetics](#). Explainers and backgrounders about epigenetics.

- Neurodevelopment: [Brain Story Certification Course](#) by Alberta Family Wellness Initiative.
- Neurodevelopment: <https://developingchild.harvard.edu/science/key-concepts/>.
- Neurodevelopment: “[Brains: Journey to Resilience](#)” by The Palix Foundation.
- Neurodevelopment: “[First Impressions: Exposure to Violence and a Child's Developing Brain](#)”.

Chapter 11: Applying Trauma-Informed School Practices to Educator Competencies



[Image: [Delece Cook](#) | [Unsplash](#)]

"The secret of change is to focus all of your energy, not on fighting the old, but on building the new."
—Socrates

Desired Outcomes

This chapter and the accompanying recommended readings and activities are designed to further develop educator trauma-informed competencies as demonstrated by:

- Understanding the importance of revising teacher preparation and educator and administrative credentialing standards in response to today's student challenges
- Envisioning how current InTASC standards can incorporate the Trauma-Informed School Practices Tri-Phasic Model dispositions into their structure
- Advocating for change within academic institutions, legislative bodies, and professional accrediting organizations congruent with the knowledge, skills, and dispositions required for effective trauma-informed school practice

Key Concepts

This chapter contains a proposed revision to Interstate Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (InTASC) standards. Our goal is to initiate a conversation and inspire educators in all aspects of professional practice to advocate for systemic change in the way educators are prepared for practice. Key concepts detailed include the following:

- The role of InTASC in teacher and administrator credentialing processes
- The rationale for proposing a refresh of InTASC according to the Trauma-Informed School Practices Tri-Phasic Model as detailed in Chapter 6
- The role of advocacy on behalf of the education profession and the needs of students

Chapter Overview

The final section of this text identifies additional systemic factors requiring change in order for educators to serve the needs of today's students. This chapter specifically addresses the need to revise and update educator preparation and practice standards. This system element comprises three domains: (a) practice law as detailed in national and state legislation regarding educator competencies, student outcomes, and other issues related to education systems; (b) educator professional associations, including accreditation organizations; and (c)

higher education programs training educators, including preservice teachers, administrators, and those seeking specialty credentials.

A trauma-informed educational approach represents the introduction of a multidisciplinary body of knowledge, skills, and dispositions not traditionally featured in current teacher and administrative credentialing programs. This creates a problematic domino effect, in that recently graduated educators are ill-equipped to understand and respond to the learning needs of students, and trauma-informed schools are unable to hire qualified staff. To solve this problem, educators, mental health professionals, and public school advocates within legislatures, professional organizations, and higher education need to work together to encourage the profession to incorporate TISP competencies.

In Chapter 6, we outlined the Trauma-Informed School Practices Tri-Phasic Model specifically detailing trauma-informed content domains and the knowledge, skills, and dispositions needed at all phases of trauma-informed educator practice. This document is suitable for use by higher education teacher and administrator preparation programs seeking to hire faculty trained to implement trauma-informed coursework into their existing curriculums. The document also serves as a guide for K-12 educational settings implementing trauma-informed practices.

In this chapter, to begin a conversation regarding how to address needed changes within accrediting associations, we explore what a revised InTASC standards document might look like. This proposed document, along with the TISP Tri-Phasic Model, invites you to advocate for change on all levels of teacher and administrator standards of practice, from professional accreditation standards, to practice law, to educational training programs.

Refreshing InTASC Standards: The Pre-Contemplation Stage



Regulation and Support System Elements

Recently, I (Brenda) was asked to speak to a group of preservice teachers in their second semester of student teaching. During introductions, two students stated they worked in “trauma-informed schools” and one said she had a cooperating teacher who was a “trauma-informed” teacher. I was curious to learn more. How did they know they were working in a trauma-informed school? How did they or their school define trauma-informed? What made this teacher trauma-informed? How does one know when they have developed trauma-informed competencies?

Accredited teacher preparation programs follow specific standards for what teachers must know and be able to do; many of these programs have used the Interstate Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (InTASC) standards as their guide. The InTASC standards include performances, essential knowledge, and critical dispositions teachers need in order to be successful in the profession (Council of Chief Operating State School

Officers Interstate Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium, 2013). These standards were originally created in 1992

for beginning teachers. In 2010, they were updated to include professional practice standards for different stages of the educator's development (Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010, p. 1).

When I first began teaching, I had no training in how to encourage or manage trauma-affected students. Frankly, I don't remember being aware of my students who may have been suffering from unmitigated stress and trauma. Teachers know this has changed drastically. Do we like it, believe it, or want to deal with it? These are questions that have become secondary to me. Overriding them now are these questions: How do I manage my classroom, help my students, *and* teach? When a new and difficult student entered my class, my thoughts were, "This kind of managing should not be my job. I just want to teach." –Doreen, Elementary School Teacher.

In Table 11.1, we list the current standards, followed by our recommended trauma-informed dispositions. For your convenience, the trauma-informed educator dispositions from the TISP Tri-Phasic Model (Chapter 6) are listed in Appendix D.

Table 11.1: InTASC Model Core Teaching Standards with Trauma-Informed School Practices Dispositions

Standard 1: Learner Development

The teacher understands how learners grow and develop, recognizing that patterns of learning and development vary individually within and across the cognitive, linguistic, social, emotional, and physical areas, and designs and implements developmentally appropriate and challenging learning experiences.

Performances

- 1(a) The teacher regularly assesses individual and group performance in order to design and modify instruction to meet learners' needs in each area of development (cognitive, linguistic, social, emotional, and physical) and scaffolds the next level of development.
- 1(b) The teacher creates developmentally appropriate instruction that takes into account individual learners' strengths, interests, and needs and that enables each learner to advance and accelerate his/her learning.
- 1(c) The teacher collaborates with families, communities, colleagues, and other professionals to promote learner growth and development.

Essential Knowledge

1(d) The teacher understands how learning occurs—how learners construct knowledge, acquire skills, and develop disciplined thinking processes—and knows how to use instructional strategies that promote student learning.

1(e) The teacher understands that each learner’s cognitive, linguistic, social, emotional, and physical development influences learning and knows how to make instructional decisions that build on learners’ strengths and needs.

1(f) The teacher identifies readiness for learning, and understands how development in any one area may affect performance in others.

1(g) The teacher understands the role of language and culture in learning and knows how to modify instruction to be relevant, accessible, and challenging.

Critical Dispositions

1(h) The teacher respects learners’ differing strengths and needs and is committed to using this information to further each learner’s development.

1(i) The teacher is committed to using learners’ strengths as a basis for growth, and their misconceptions as opportunities for learning.

1(j) The teacher takes responsibility for promoting learners’ growth and development.

1(k) The teacher values the input and contributions of families, colleagues, and other professionals in understanding and supporting each learner’s development.

Trauma-Informed Dispositions

Disposition 6: Trauma-informed educators understand the primacy of attachment theory, and its emphasis on attunement, to the neural development of both students and adults throughout the lifespan.

Disposition 9: Trauma-informed educators understand the primacy of attachment theory, and its emphasis on mentoring, to the neural development of both students and adults throughout the lifespan.

Disposition 10: Trauma-informed educators understand that student behavior, in part, is often a reflection of unintegrated neural networks due to past and/or current unmitigated stress and trauma, and require the student to first establish a sense of safety and stability prior to commencing with here-and-now developmental expectations.

Disposition 11: Trauma-informed educators understand that persons all along the lifespan are influenced by past experiences shaping perceptions and emotional responses. It is a lifelong task to

understand this connection while learning to self-regulate in the face of intense emotional responses to current events.

Disposition 12: Trauma-informed educators are aware that students process unmitigated stress and trauma in both direct and indirect ways as they engage in all aspects of the trauma-informed educational environment, and are able to offer an attuned and mentoring response.

Disposition 16: Trauma-informed educators understand the nature of a student's academic and social-emotional functioning in the classroom, and how best to meet the individual needs of each student, whether in a traditional classroom or with additional assistance.

Standard 2: Learning Differences

The teacher uses understanding of individual differences and diverse cultures and communities to ensure inclusive learning environments that enable each learner to meet high standards.

Performances

2(a) The teacher designs, adapts, and delivers instruction to address each student's diverse learning strengths and needs and creates opportunities for students to demonstrate their learning in different ways.

2(b) The teacher makes appropriate and timely provisions (e.g., pacing for individual rates of growth, task demands, communication, assessment, and response modes) for individual students with particular learning differences or needs.

2(c) The teacher designs instruction to build on learners' prior knowledge and experiences, allowing learners to accelerate as they demonstrate their understandings.

2(d) The teacher brings multiple perspectives to the discussion of content, including attention to learners' personal, family, and community experiences and cultural norms.

2(e) The teacher incorporates tools of language development into planning and instruction, including strategies for making content accessible to English language learners and for evaluating and supporting their development of English proficiency.

2(f) The teacher accesses resources, supports, and specialized assistance and services to meet particular learning differences or needs.

Essential Knowledge

2(g) The teacher understands and identifies differences in approaches to learning and performance and knows how to design instruction that uses each learner's strengths to promote growth.

2(h) The teacher understands students with exceptional needs, including those associated with disabilities and giftedness, and knows how to use strategies and resources to address these needs.

2(i) The teacher knows about second language acquisition processes and knows how to incorporate instructional strategies and resources to support language acquisition.

2(j) The teacher understands that learners bring assets for learning based on their individual experiences, abilities, talents, prior learning, and peer and social group interactions, as well as language, culture, family, and community values.

2(k) The teacher knows how to access information about the values of diverse cultures and communities and how to incorporate learners' experiences, cultures, and community resources into instruction.

Critical Dispositions

2(l) The teacher believes that all learners can achieve at high levels and persists in helping each learner reach his/her full potential.

2(m) The teacher respects learners as individuals with differing personal and family backgrounds and various skills, abilities, perspectives, talents, and interests.

2(n) The teacher makes learners feel valued and helps them learn to value each other.

2(o) The teacher values diverse languages and dialects and seeks to integrate them into his/her instructional practice to engage students in learning.

Trauma-Informed Dispositions

Disposition 1: Trauma-informed educators create environments that promote the neural integration of their members (students and educators) in order to maximize students' academic and social success at each developmental stage.

Disposition 2: Trauma-informed educators commit to learning the knowledge, skills, and dispositions required to implement trauma-informed practices according to their role and context in order to promote safe and effective learning communities.

Disposition 3: Trauma-informed educators are committed to embedding trauma-informed rituals and practices within the daily, weekly, and seasonal routines of a school and classroom providing a sense of repetition that deepens internal safety and stabilization. Repetition also emphasizes that basic TISP building blocks are continual and constant, not merely a phase that is completed in order to move to the next phase.

Disposition 4: Trauma-informed educators are aware of socio-cultural factors that increase student risk or resilience, and are committed to creating an educational environment that is welcoming, safe, and inclusive of all persons.

Disposition 5: Trauma-informed educators are committed to a consistent ethic of care whereby the relational values offered to students are extended to self and one another.

Disposition 10: Trauma-informed educators understand that student behavior, in part, is often a reflection of unintegrated neural networks due to past and/or current unmitigated stress and

trauma, and require the student to first establish a sense of safety and stability prior to commencing with here-and-now developmental expectations.

Disposition 11: Trauma-informed educators understand that persons all along the lifespan are influenced by past experiences shaping perceptions and emotional responses. It is a lifelong task to understand this connection while learning to self-regulate in the face of intense emotional responses to current events.

Disposition 12: Trauma-informed educators are aware that students process unmitigated stress and trauma in both direct and indirect ways as they engage in all aspects of the trauma-informed educational environment, and are able to offer an attuned and mentoring response.

Disposition 13: Trauma-informed educators are skilled in attuning to grief and mourning responses that often accompany academic engagement as neural networks integrate, which allow for deeper connection to memory and its meaning to occur.

Disposition 15: Trauma-informed educators understand how to weave *Connecting* and *Coaching* practices into academic lesson plans, as the learning process, both the process of learning and the content to master, is also crucial to the integration of neural networks impacted by unmitigated stress and trauma.

Disposition 16: Trauma-informed educators understand the nature of a student's academic and social-emotional functioning in the classroom, and how best to meet the individual needs of each student, whether in a traditional classroom or with additional assistance.

Disposition 17: Trauma-informed educators advocate on local, state, and national levels for greater understanding of the neurobiological impacts on a student when either (a) the student cannot self-regulate or (b) the student is repeatedly exposed to peers unable to self-regulate, leading to frequent episodes of classroom disruption. This constant state of dysregulation and exposure to peers in such states cause more stress and trauma for all students.

Standard 3: Learning Environments

The teacher works with others to create environments that support individual and collaborative learning, and that encourage positive social interaction, active engagement in learning, and self-motivation.

Performances

3(a) The teacher collaborates with learners, families, and colleagues to build a safe, positive learning climate of openness, mutual respect, support, and inquiry.

3(b) The teacher develops learning experiences that engage learners in collaborative and self-directed learning and that extend learner interaction with ideas and people locally and globally.

3(c) The teacher collaborates with learners and colleagues to develop shared values and expectations for respectful interactions, rigorous academic discussions, and individual and group responsibility for quality work.

3(d) The teacher manages the learning environment to actively and equitably engage learners by organizing, allocating, and coordinating the resources of time, space, and learners' attention.

3(e) The teacher uses a variety of methods to engage learners in evaluating the learning environment and collaborates with learners to make appropriate adjustments.

3(f) The teacher communicates verbally and nonverbally in ways that demonstrate respect for and responsiveness to the cultural backgrounds and differing perspectives learners bring to the learning environment.

3(g) The teacher promotes responsible learner use of interactive technologies to extend the possibilities for learning locally and globally.

3(h) The teacher intentionally builds learner capacity to collaborate in face-to-face and virtual environments through applying effective interpersonal communication skills.

Essential Knowledge

3(i) The teacher understands the relationship between motivation and engagement and knows how to design learning experiences using strategies that build learner self-direction and ownership of learning.

3(j) The teacher knows how to help learners work productively and cooperatively with each other to achieve learning goals.

3(k) The teacher knows how to collaborate with learners to establish and monitor elements of a safe and productive learning environment including norms, expectations, routines, and organizational structures.

3(l) The teacher understands how learner diversity can affect communication and knows how to communicate effectively in differing environments.

3(m) The teacher knows how to use technologies and how to guide learners to apply them in appropriate, safe, and effective ways.

Critical Dispositions

3(n) The teacher is committed to working with learners, colleagues, families, and communities to establish positive and supportive learning environments.

3(o) The teacher values the role of learners in promoting each other's learning and recognizes the importance of peer relationships in establishing a climate of learning.

3(p) The teacher is committed to supporting learners as they participate in decision-making, engage in exploration and invention, work collaboratively and independently, and engage in purposeful learning.

3(q) The teacher seeks to foster respectful communication among all members of the learning community.

3(r) The teacher is a thoughtful and responsive listener and observer.

Trauma-Informed Dispositions

Disposition 1: Trauma-informed educators create environments that promote the neural integration of their members (students and educators) in order to maximize students' academic and social success at each developmental stage.

Disposition 2: Trauma-informed educators commit to learning the knowledge, skills, and dispositions required to implement trauma-informed practices according to their role and context in order to promote safe and effective learning communities.

Disposition 3: Trauma-informed educators are committed to embedding trauma-informed rituals and practices within the daily, weekly, and seasonal routines of a school and classroom providing a sense of repetition that deepens internal safety and stabilization. Repetition also emphasizes that basic TISP building blocks are continual and constant, not merely a phase that is completed in order to move to the next phase.

Disposition 4: Trauma-informed educators are aware of socio-cultural factors that increase student risk or resilience, and are committed to creating an educational environment that is welcoming, safe, and inclusive of all persons.

Disposition 5: Trauma-informed educators are committed to a consistent ethic of care whereby the relational values offered to students are extended to self and one another

Disposition 6: Trauma-informed educators understand the primacy of attachment theory, and its emphasis on attunement, to the neural development of both students and adults throughout the lifespan.

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Disposition 15: Trauma-informed educators understand how to weave *Connecting* and *Coaching* practices into academic lesson plans, as the learning process, both the process of learning and the content to master, is also crucial to the integration of neural networks impacted by unmitigated stress and trauma.

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Disposition 17: Trauma-informed educators advocate on local, state, and national levels for greater

understanding of the neurobiological impacts on a student when either (a) the student cannot self-regulate or (b) the student is repeatedly exposed to peers unable to self-regulate leading to frequent episodes of classroom disruption. This constant state of dysregulation and exposure to peers in such states cause more stress and trauma for all students.

Standard 4: Content Knowledge

The teacher understands the central concepts, tools of inquiry, and structures of the discipline(s) he or she teaches and creates learning experiences that make these aspects of the discipline accessible and meaningful for learners to assure mastery of the content.

Performances

4(a) The teacher effectively uses multiple representations and explanations that capture key ideas in the discipline, guide learners through learning progressions, and promote each learner's achievement of content standards.

4(b) The teacher engages students in learning experiences in the discipline(s) that encourage learners to understand, question, and analyze ideas from diverse perspectives so that they master the content.

4(c) The teacher engages learners in applying methods of inquiry and standards of evidence used in the discipline.

4(d) The teacher stimulates learner reflection on prior content knowledge, links new concepts to familiar concepts, and makes connections to learners' experiences.

4(e) The teacher recognizes learner misconceptions in a discipline that interfere with learning, and creates experiences to build accurate conceptual understanding.

4(f) The teacher evaluates and modifies instructional resources and curriculum materials for their comprehensiveness, accuracy for representing particular concepts in the discipline, and appropriateness for his/her learners.

4(g) The teacher uses supplementary resources and technologies effectively to ensure accessibility and relevance for all learners.

4(h) The teacher creates opportunities for students to learn, practice, and master academic language in their content.

4(i) The teacher accesses school and/or district-based resources to evaluate the learner's content knowledge in their primary language.

Essential Knowledge

4(j) The teacher understands major concepts, assumptions, debates, processes of inquiry, and ways of knowing that are central to the discipline(s) s/he teaches.

4(k) The teacher understands common misconceptions in learning the discipline and how to guide learners to accurate conceptual understanding.

4(l) The teacher knows and uses the academic language of the discipline and knows how to make it accessible to learners.

4(m) The teacher knows how to integrate culturally relevant content to build on learners' background knowledge.

4(n) The teacher has a deep knowledge of student content standards and learning progressions in the discipline(s) s/he teaches.

Critical Dispositions

4(o) The teacher realizes that content knowledge is not a fixed body of facts but is complex, culturally situated, and ever evolving. S/he keeps abreast of new ideas and understandings in the field.

4(p) The teacher appreciates multiple perspectives within the discipline and facilitates learners' critical analysis of these perspectives.

4(q) The teacher recognizes the potential of bias in his/her representation of the discipline and seeks to appropriately address problems of bias.

4(r) The teacher is committed to work toward each learner's mastery of disciplinary content and skills.

Trauma-Informed Dispositions

Disposition 6: Trauma-informed educators understand the primacy of attachment theory, and its emphasis on attunement, to the neural development of both students and adults throughout the lifespan.

Disposition 15: Trauma-informed educators understand how to weave *Connecting* and *Coaching* practices into academic lesson plans, as the learning process, both the process of learning and the content to master, is also crucial to the integration of neural networks impacted by unmitigated stress and trauma.

Standard 5: Application of Content

The teacher understands how to connect concepts and use differing perspectives to engage learners in critical thinking creativity, and collaborative problem solving related to authentic local and global issues.

Performances

5(a) The teacher develops and implements projects that guide learners in analyzing the complexities of an issue or question using perspectives from varied disciplines and cross-disciplinary skills (e.g., a water quality study that draws upon biology and chemistry to look at factual information and social studies to examine policy implications).

5(b) The teacher engages learners in applying content knowledge to real world problems through the lens of interdisciplinary themes (e.g., financial literacy, environmental literacy).

5(c) The teacher facilitates learners' use of current tools and resources to maximize content learning in varied contexts.

5(d) The teacher engages learners in questioning and challenging assumptions and approaches in order to foster innovation and problem solving in local and global contexts.

5(e) The teacher develops learners' communication skills in disciplinary and interdisciplinary contexts by creating meaningful opportunities to employ a variety of forms of communication that address varied audiences and purposes.

5(f) The teacher engages learners in generating and evaluating new ideas and novel approaches, seeking inventive solutions to problems, and developing original work.

5(g) The teacher facilitates learners' ability to develop diverse social and cultural perspectives that expand their understanding of local and global issues and create novel approaches to solving problems.

5(h) The teacher develops and implements supports for learner literacy development across content areas.

Essential Knowledge

5(i) The teacher understands the ways of knowing in his/her discipline how it relates to other disciplinary approaches to inquiry and the strengths and limitations of each approach in addressing problems, issues, and concerns.

5(j) The teacher understands how current interdisciplinary themes (e.g., civic literacy, health literacy, global awareness) connect to the core subjects and knows how to weave those themes into meaningful learning experiences.

5(k) The teacher understands the demands of accessing and managing information as well as how to evaluate issues of ethics and quality related to information and its use.

5(l) The teacher understands how to use digital and interactive technologies for efficiently and effectively achieving specific learning goals.

5(m) The teacher understands critical thinking processes and knows how to help learners develop high-level questioning skills to promote their independent learning.

5(n) The teacher understands communication modes and skills as vehicles for learning (e.g.,

information gathering and processing) across disciplines as well as vehicles for expressing learning.

5(o) The teacher understands creative thinking processes and how to engage learners in producing original work.

5(p) The teacher knows where and how to access resources to build global awareness and understanding, and how to integrate them into the curriculum.

Critical Dispositions

5(q) The teacher knows where and how to access resources to build global awareness and understanding, and how to integrate them into the curriculum.

5(r) The teacher values knowledge outside his/her own content area and how such knowledge enhances student learning.

5(s) The teacher values flexible learning environments that encourage learner exploration, discovery, and expression across content areas.

Trauma-Informed Dispositions

Disposition 2: Trauma-informed educators commit to learning the knowledge, skills, and dispositions required to implement trauma-informed practices according to their role and context in order to promote safe and effective learning communities.

Standard 6: Assessment

The teacher understands and uses multiple methods of assessment to engage learners in their own growth, to monitor learner progress, and to guide the teacher's and learner's decision making.

Performances

6(a) The teacher balances the use of formative and summative assessment as appropriate to support, verify, and document learning.

6(b) The teacher designs assessments that match learning objectives with assessment methods and minimizes sources of bias that can distort assessment results.

6(c) The teacher works independently and collaboratively to examine test and other performance data to understand each learner's progress and to guide planning.

6(d) The teacher engages learners in understanding and identifying quality work and provides them with effective descriptive feedback to guide their progress toward that work.

6(e) The teacher engages learners in multiple ways of demonstrating knowledge and skill as part of the assessment process.

6(f) The teacher models and structures processes that guide learners in examining their own thinking and learning as well as the performance of others.

6(g) The teacher effectively uses multiple and appropriate types of assessment data to identify each student's learning needs and to develop differentiated learning experiences.

6(h) The teacher prepares all learners for the demands of particular assessment formats and makes appropriate accommodations in assessments or testing conditions, especially for learners with disabilities and language learning needs.

6(i) The teacher continually seeks appropriate ways to employ technology to support assessment practice both to engage learners more fully and to assess and address learner needs.

Essential Knowledge

6(j) The teacher understands the differences between formative and summative applications of assessment and knows how and when to use each.

6(k) The teacher understands the range of types and multiple purposes of assessment and how to design, adapt, or select appropriate assessments to address specific learning goals and individual differences, and to minimize sources of bias.

6(l) The teacher knows how to analyze assessment data to understand patterns and gaps in learning, to guide planning and instruction, and to provide meaningful feedback to all learners.

6(m) The teacher knows when and how to engage learners in analyzing their own assessment results and in helping to set goals for their own learning.

6(n) The teacher understands the positive impact of effective descriptive feedback for learners and knows a variety of strategies for communicating this feedback.

6(o) The teacher knows when and how to evaluate and report learner progress against standards.

6(p) The teacher understands how to prepare learners for assessments and how to make accommodations in assessments and testing conditions, especially for learners with disabilities and language learning needs.

Critical Dispositions

6(q) The teacher is committed to engaging learners actively in assessment processes and to developing each learner's capacity to review and communicate about their own progress and learning.

6(r) The teacher takes responsibility for aligning instruction and assessment with learning goals.

6(s) The teacher is committed to providing timely and effective descriptive feedback to learners on their progress.

6(t) The teacher is committed to using multiple types of assessment processes to support, verify, and document learning.

6(u) The teacher is committed to making accommodations in assessments and testing conditions, especially for learners with disabilities and language learning needs.

6(v) The teacher is committed to the ethical use of various assessments and assessment data to identify learner strengths and needs to promote learner growth.

Trauma-Informed Dispositions

Disposition 2: Trauma-informed educators commit to learning the knowledge, skills, and dispositions required to implement trauma-informed practices according to their role and context in order to promote safe and effective learning communities.

Disposition 12: Trauma-informed educators are aware that students process unmitigated stress and trauma in both direct and indirect ways as they engage in all aspects of the trauma-informed educational environment, and are able to offer an attuned and mentoring response.

Disposition 15: Trauma-informed educators understand how to weave *Connecting* and *Coaching* practices into academic lesson plans, as the learning process, both the process of learning and the content to master, is also crucial to the integration of neural networks impacted by unmitigated stress and trauma.

Standard 7: Planning for Instruction

The teacher plans instruction that supports every student in meeting rigorous learning goals by drawing upon knowledge of content areas, curriculum, cross-disciplinary skills, and pedagogy, as well as knowledge of learners and the community context.

Performances

7(a) The teacher individually and collaboratively selects and creates learning experiences that are appropriate for curriculum goals and content standards, and are relevant to learners.

7(b) The teacher plans how to achieve each student's learning goals, choosing appropriate strategies and accommodations, resources, and materials to differentiate instruction for individuals and groups of learners.

7(c) The teacher develops appropriate sequencing of learning experiences and provides multiple ways to demonstrate knowledge and skill.

7(d) The teacher plans for instruction based on formative and summative assessment data, prior learning knowledge, and learner interest.

7(e) The teacher plans collaboratively with professionals who have specialized expertise (e.g., special educators, related service providers, language learning specialists, librarians, media specialists) to design and jointly deliver as appropriate effective learning experiences to meet unique learning needs.

7(f) The teacher evaluates plans in relation to short- and long-range goals and systematically adjusts plans to meet each student's learning needs and enhance learning.

Essential Knowledge

7(g) The teacher understands content and content standards and how these are organized in the curriculum.

7(h) The teacher understands how integrating cross-disciplinary skills in instruction engages learners purposefully in applying content knowledge.

7(i) The teacher understands learning theory, human development, cultural diversity, and individual differences and how these impact ongoing planning.

7(j) The teacher understands the strengths and needs of individual learners and how to plan instruction that is responsive to these strengths and needs.

7(k) The teacher knows a range of evidence-based instructional strategies, resources, and technological tools and how to use them effectively to plan instruction that meets diverse learning needs.

7(l) The teacher knows when and how to adjust plans based on assessment information and learner responses.

7(m) The teacher knows when and how to assess resources and collaborate with others to support student learning (e.g., special educators, related service providers, language learner specialists, librarians, media specialists, community organizations).

Critical Dispositions

7(n) The teacher respects learners' diverse strengths and needs and is committed to using this information to plan effective instruction.

7(o) The teacher values planning as a collegial activity that takes into consideration the input of learners, colleagues, families, and the larger community.

7(p) The teacher takes professional responsibility to use short- and long-term planning as a means of assuring student learning.

7(q) The teacher believes that plans must always be open to adjustment and revision based on learner needs and changing circumstances.

Trauma-Informed Dispositions

Disposition 3: Trauma-informed educators are committed to embedding trauma-informed rituals and practices within the daily, weekly, and seasonal routines of a school and classroom providing a sense of repetition that deepens internal safety and stabilization. Repetition also emphasizes that

basic TISP building blocks are continual and constant, not merely a phase that is completed in order to move to the next phase.

Disposition 6: Trauma-informed educators understand the primacy of attachment theory, and its emphasis on attunement, to the neural development of students and adults throughout the lifespan.

Disposition 9: Trauma-informed educators understand the primacy of attachment theory, and its emphasis on mentoring, to the neural development of students and adults throughout the lifespan.

Disposition 10: Trauma-informed educators understand that student behavior, in part, is often a reflection of unintegrated neural networks due to past and/or current unmitigated stress and trauma, and require the student to first establish a sense of safety and stability prior to commencing with here-and-now developmental expectations.

Disposition 11: Trauma-informed educators understand that persons all along the lifespan are influenced by past experiences shaping perceptions and emotional responses. It is a lifelong task to understand this connection while learning to self-regulate in the face of intense emotional responses to current events.

Disposition 12: Trauma-informed educators are aware that students process unmitigated stress and trauma in both direct and indirect ways as they engage in all aspects of the trauma-informed educational environment, and are able to offer an attuned and mentoring response.

Disposition 15: Trauma-informed educators understand how to weave *Connecting* and *Coaching* practices into academic lesson plans, as the learning process, both the process of learning and the content to master, is also crucial to the integration of neural networks impacted by unmitigated stress and trauma.

Standard 8: Instructional Strategies

The teacher understands and uses a variety of instructional strategies to encourage learners to develop deep understanding of content areas and their connections, and to build skills to apply knowledge in meaningful ways.

Performances

8(a) The teacher uses appropriate strategies and resources to adapt instruction to the needs of individual and groups of learners.

8(b) The teacher continuously monitors student learning, engages learners in assessing their progress, and adjusts instruction in response to student learning needs.

8(c) The teacher collaborates with learners to design and implement relevant learning experiences, identify their strengths, and access family and community resources to develop their areas of interest.

8(d) The teacher varies his/her role in the instructional process (e.g., instructor, facilitator, coach, audience) in relation to the content and purposes of instruction and the needs of learners.

8(e) The teacher provides multiple models and representations of concepts and skills with opportunities for learners to demonstrate their knowledge through a variety of products and performances.

8(f) The teacher engages all learners in developing higher-order questioning skills and metacognitive processes.

8(g) The teacher engages learners in using a range of learning skills and technology tools to access, interpret, evaluate, and apply information.

8(h) The teacher uses a variety of instructional strategies to support and expand learners' communication through speaking, listening, reading, writing, and other models.

8(i) The teacher asks questions to stimulate discussion that serves different purposes (e.g., probing for learner understanding, helping learners articulate their ideas and thinking processes, stimulating curiosity, and helping learners to question).

Essential Knowledge

8(j) The teacher understands the cognitive processes associated with various kinds of learning (e.g., critical and creative thinking, problem framing and problem solving, invention, memorization and recall) and how these processes can be stimulated.

8(k) The teacher knows how to apply a range of developmentally culturally, and linguistically appropriate instructional strategies to achieve learning goals.

8(l) The teacher knows when and how to use appropriate strategies to differentiate instruction and engage all learners in complex thinking and meaningful tasks.

8(m) The teacher understands how multiple forms of communication (oral, written, nonverbal, digital, visual) convey ideas, foster self-expression, and build relationships.

8(n) The teacher knows how to use a wide variety of resources, including human and technological, to engage students in learning.

8(o) The teacher understands how content and skill development can be supported by media and technology and knows how to evaluate these resources for quality, accuracy, and effectiveness.

Critical Dispositions

8(p) The teacher is committed to deepening awareness and understanding the strengths and needs of diverse learners when planning and adjusting instruction.

8(q) The teacher values the variety of ways people communicate and encourages learners to develop and use multiple forms of communication.

8(r) The teacher is committed to exploring how the use of new and emerging technologies can support and promote student learning.

8(s) The teacher values flexibility and reciprocity in the teaching process as necessary for adapting instruction to learner responses, ideas, and needs.

Trauma-Informed Dispositions

Disposition 3: Trauma-informed educators are committed to embedding trauma-informed rituals and practices within the daily, weekly, and seasonal routines of a school and classroom providing a sense of repetition that deepens internal safety and stabilization. Repetition also emphasizes that basic TISP building blocks are continual and constant, not merely a phase that is completed in order to move to the next phase.

Disposition 9: Trauma-informed educators understand the primacy of attachment theory, and its emphasis on mentoring, to the neural development of students and adults throughout the lifespan.

Disposition 10: Trauma-informed educators understand that student behavior, in part, is often a reflection of unintegrated neural networks due to past and/or current unmitigated stress and trauma, and require the student to first establish a sense of safety and stability prior to commencing with here-and-now developmental expectations.

Disposition 11: Trauma-informed educators understand that persons all along the lifespan are influenced by past experiences shaping perceptions and emotional responses. It is a lifelong task to understand this connection while learning to self-regulate in the face of intense emotional responses to current events.

Disposition 15: Trauma-informed educators understand how to weave *Connecting* and *Coaching* practices into academic lesson plans, as the learning process, both the process of learning and the content to master, is also crucial to the integration of neural networks impacted by unmitigated stress and trauma.

Standard 9: Content Knowledge

The teacher engages in ongoing professional learning and uses evidence to continually evaluate his/her practice, particularly the effects of his/her choices and actions on others (learners, families, other professionals, and the community), and adapts practice to meet the needs of each learner.

Performances

9(a) The teacher engages in ongoing learning opportunities to develop knowledge and skills in order to provide all learners with engaging curriculum and learning experiences based on local and state standards.

9(b) The teacher engages in meaningful and appropriate professional learning experiences aligned with his/her own needs and the needs of the learners, school, and system.

9(c) Independently and in collaboration with colleagues, the teacher uses a variety of data (e.g., systematic observation, information about learners, research) to evaluate the outcomes of teaching and learning and to adapt planning and practice.

9(d) The teacher actively seeks professional, community, and technological resources, within and outside the school, as supports for analysis, reflection, and problem-solving.

9(e) The teacher reflects on his/her personal biases and accesses resources to deepen his/her own understanding of cultural, ethnic, gender, and learning differences to build stronger relationships and create more relevant learning experiences.

9(f) The teacher advocates, models, and teaches safe, legal, and ethical use of information and technology including appropriate documentation of sources and respect for others in the use of social media.

Essential Knowledge

9(g) The teacher understands and knows how to use a variety of self-assessment and problem-solving strategies to analyze and reflect on his/her practice and to plan for adaptations/adjustments.

9(h) The teacher knows how to use learner data to analyze practice and differentiate instruction accordingly.

9(i) The teacher understands how personal identity, worldview, and prior experience affect perceptions and expectations, and recognizes how they may bias behaviors and interactions with others

9(j) The teacher understands laws related to learners' rights and teacher responsibilities (e.g., for educational equity, appropriate education for learners with disabilities, confidentiality, privacy, appropriate treatment of learners, reporting in situations related to possible child abuse).

9(k) The teacher knows how to build and implement a plan for professional growth directly aligned with his/her needs as a growing professional using feedback from teacher evaluations and observations, data on learner performance, and school-and system-wide priorities.

Critical Dispositions

9(l) The teacher takes responsibility for student learning and uses ongoing analysis and reflection to improve planning and practice.

9(m) The teacher is committed to deepening understanding of his/her own frames of reference (e.g., culture, gender, language, abilities, ways of knowing), the potential biases in these frames, and their impact on expectations for and relationships with learners and their families.

9(n) The teacher sees him/herself as a learner, continuously seeking opportunities to draw upon current education policy and research as sources of analysis and reflection to improve practice.

9(o) The teacher understands the expectations of the profession including codes of ethics, professional standards of practice, and relevant law and policy.

Trauma-Informed Dispositions

Disposition 2: Trauma-informed educators commit to learning the knowledge, skills, and dispositions required to implement trauma-informed practices according to their role and context in order to promote safe and effective learning communities.

Standard 10: Leadership and Collaboration

The teacher seeks appropriate leadership roles and opportunities to take responsibility for student learning, to collaborate with learners, families, colleagues, other school professionals, and community members to ensure learner growth, and to advance the profession.

Performances

10(a) The teacher takes an active role on the instructional team, giving and receiving feedback on practice, examining learner work, analyzing data from multiple sources, and sharing responsibility for decision making and accountability for each student's learning.

10(b) The teacher works with other school professionals to plan and jointly facilitate learning on how to meet diverse needs of learners.

10(c) The teacher engages collaboratively in the school-wide effort to build a shared vision and supportive culture, identify common goals, and monitor and evaluate progress toward those goals.

10(d) The teacher works collaboratively with learners and their families to establish mutual expectations and ongoing communication to support learner development and achievement.

10(e) Working with school colleagues, the teacher builds ongoing connections with community resources to enhance student learning and well-being.

10(f) The teacher engages in professional learning, contributes to the knowledge and skill of others, and works collaboratively to advance professional practice.

10(g) The teacher uses technological tools and a variety of communication strategies to build local and global learning communities that engage learners, families, and colleagues.

10(h) The teacher uses and generates meaningful research on education issues and policies.

10(i) The teacher seeks appropriate opportunities to model effective practice for colleagues, to lead professional learning activities, and to serve in other leadership roles.

10(j) The teacher advocates to meet the needs of learners, to strengthen the learning environment, and to enact system change.

10(k) The teacher takes on leadership roles at the school, district, state, and/or national level and advocates for learners, the school, the community, and the profession.

Essential Knowledge

10(l) The teacher understands schools as organizations within a historical, cultural, political, and social context and knows how to work with others across the system to support learners.

10(m) The teacher understands that alignment of family, school, and community spheres of influence enhances student learning and that discontinuity in these spheres of influence interferes with learning.

10(n) The teacher knows how to work with other adults and has developed skills in collaborative interaction appropriate for both face-to-face and virtual contexts.

10(o) The teacher knows how to contribute to a common culture that supports high expectations for student learning.

Critical Dispositions

10(p) The teacher actively shares responsibility for shaping and supporting the mission of his/her school as one of advocacy for learners and accountability for their success.

10(q) The teacher respects families' beliefs, norms, and expectations and seeks to work collaboratively with learners and families in setting and meeting challenging goals.

10(r) The teacher takes initiative to grow and develop with colleagues through interactions that enhance practice and support student learning.

10(s) The teacher takes responsibility for contributing to and advancing the profession.

10(t) The teacher embraces the challenge of continuous improvement and change.

Trauma-Informed Dispositions

Disposition 2: Trauma-informed educators commit to learning the knowledge, skills, and dispositions required to implement trauma-informed practices according to their role and context in order to promote safe and effective learning communities.

Disposition 8: Trauma-informed educators recognize that the success of trauma-informed practices requires involvement and support from all levels of the school system: administration, school, staff, classroom (including students), and community (school board and caretakers).

There is a similar set of standards for building- and district-level administrators, titled the National Educational Leadership Preparation (NELP) standards; these are listed in Table 11.2. For brevity, we chose to focus on building-level administrators only, as these and the District Strategic Planning Team tasks highlighted in Chapter 7 illuminate parallel district-level standards. We specifically chose to highlight administrative standards since trauma-informed leadership is paramount to successfully transforming District and School practices. Like the InTASC standards, the NELP standards

do not specifically identify the impact of unmitigated stress and trauma on a student's readiness to learn. As with the InTASC standards, we recommend the inclusion of trauma-informed dispositions in administrator standards and preparation programs.

Table 11.2: NELP Standards with Trauma-Informed School Practices Dispositions

Standard 1: Mission, Vision, and Improvement

Candidates who successfully complete a building-level educational leadership preparation program understand and demonstrate the capacity to promote the current and future success and well-being of each student and adult by applying the knowledge, skills, and commitments necessary to collaboratively lead, design, and implement a school mission, vision, and process for continuous improvement that reflects a core set of values and priorities.

Trauma-Informed Dispositions

Disposition 17: Trauma-Informed educators advocate on local, state, and national levels for greater understanding of the neurobiological impacts on a student when either (a) the student cannot self-regulate or (b) the student is repeatedly exposed to peers unable to self-regulate, leading to frequent episodes of classroom disruption. This constant state of dysregulation and exposure to peers in such states cause more stress and trauma for all students.

Standard 2: Ethics and Professional Norms

Candidates who successfully complete a building-level educational leadership preparation program understand and demonstrate the capacity to promote the current and future success and well-being of each student and adult by applying the knowledge, skills, and commitments necessary to understand and demonstrate the capacity to advocate for ethical decisions and cultivate and enact professional norms.

Trauma-Informed Dispositions

Disposition 5: Trauma-informed educators are committed to a consistent ethic of care whereby the relational values offered to students are extended to self and one another

Disposition 7: Trauma-informed educators are committed to attending to *Person of the Educator* wellness practices in recognition of their vulnerability to secondary trauma and compassion fatigue. This includes a commitment to understanding their own relational and developmental history influencing their own neural integration, foundational to strengthening resilience and well-being.

Disposition 8: Trauma-informed educators recognize that the success of trauma-informed practices requires involvement and support from all levels of the school system: administration, school, staff, classroom (including students), and community (school board and caretakers).

Disposition 17: Trauma-informed educators advocate on local, state, and national levels for greater understanding of the neurobiological impacts on a student when either (a) the student cannot self-regulate or (b) the student is repeatedly exposed to peers unable to self-regulate, leading to frequent episodes of classroom disruption. This constant state of dysregulation and exposure to peers in such states cause more stress and trauma for all students.

Standard 3: Equity, Inclusiveness, and Cultural Responsiveness

Candidates who successfully complete a building-level educational leadership preparation program understand and demonstrate the capacity to promote the current and future success and well-being of each student and adult by applying the knowledge, skills, and commitments necessary to develop and maintain a supportive, equitable, culturally responsive, and inclusive school culture.

Trauma-Informed Dispositions

Disposition 1: Trauma-informed educators create environments that promote the neural integration of their members (students and educators) in order to maximize students' academic and social success at each developmental stage.

Disposition 2: Trauma-informed educators commit to learning the knowledge, skills, and dispositions required to implement trauma-informed practices according to their role and context in order to promote safe and effective learning communities.

Disposition 3: Trauma-informed educators are committed to embedding trauma-informed rituals and practices within the daily, weekly, and seasonal routines of a school and classroom, providing a sense of repetition that deepens internal safety and stabilization. Repetition also emphasizes that basic TISP building blocks are continual and constant, not merely a phase that is completed in order to move to the next phase.

Disposition 4: Trauma-informed educators are aware of socio-cultural factors that increase student risk or resilience, and are committed to creating an educational environment that is welcoming, safe, and inclusive of all persons.

Disposition 5: Trauma-informed educators are committed to a consistent ethic of care whereby the relational values offered to students are extended to self and one another.

Disposition 6: Trauma-informed educators understand the primacy of attachment theory, and its emphasis on attunement, to the neural development of students and adults throughout the lifespan.

Disposition 7: Trauma-informed educators are committed to attending to *Person of the Educator* wellness practices in recognition of their vulnerability to secondary trauma and compassion fatigue. This includes a commitment to understanding their own relational and developmental history influencing their own neural integration, foundational to strengthening resilience and well-being.

Disposition 8: Trauma-informed educators recognize that the success of trauma-informed practices requires involvement and support from all levels of the school system: administration, school, staff, classroom (including students), and community (school board and caretakers).

Disposition 10: Trauma-informed educators understand that student behavior, in part, is often a reflection of unintegrated neural networks due to past and/or current unmitigated stress and trauma, and require the student to first establish a sense of safety and stability prior to commencing with here-and-now developmental expectations.

Disposition 11: Trauma-informed educators understand that persons all along the lifespan are influenced by past experiences shaping perceptions and emotional responses. It is a lifelong task to understand this connection while learning to self-regulate in the face of intense emotional responses to current events.

Disposition 12: Trauma-informed educators are aware that students process unmitigated stress and trauma in both direct and indirect ways as they engage in all aspects of the trauma-informed educational environment, and are able to offer an attuned and mentoring response.

Disposition 13: Trauma-informed educators are skilled in attuning to grief and mourning responses that often accompany academic engagement as neural networks integrate, which allow for deeper connection to memory and its meaning to occur.

Disposition 14: Trauma-informed education systems include licensed mental health professionals available for students requesting or needing access to professional trauma-informed recovery services.

Disposition 15: Trauma-informed educators understand how to weave *Connecting* and *Coaching* practices into academic lesson plans, as the learning process, both the process of learning and the content to master, is also crucial to the integration of neural networks impacted by unmitigated stress and trauma.

Disposition 16: Trauma-informed educators understand the nature of a student's academic and social-emotional functioning in the classroom, and how best to meet the individual needs of each student, whether in a traditional classroom or with additional assistance.

Disposition 17: Trauma-informed educators advocate on local, state, and national levels for greater understanding of the neurobiological impacts on a student when either (a) the student cannot self-regulate or (b) the student is repeatedly exposed to peers unable to self-regulate leading to frequent episodes of classroom disruption. This constant state of dysregulation and exposure to peers in such states cause more stress and trauma for all students.

Standard 4: Learning and Instruction

Candidates who successfully complete a building-level educational leadership preparation program understand and demonstrate the capacity to promote the current and future success and wellbeing of each student and adult by applying the knowledge, skills, and commitments necessary to evaluate, develop, and implement coherent systems of curriculum, instruction, supports, and assessment.

Trauma-Informed Dispositions

Disposition 1: Trauma-informed educators create environments that promote the neural integration of their members (students and educators) in order to maximize students' academic and social success at each developmental stage.

Disposition 2: Trauma-informed educators commit to learning the knowledge, skills, and dispositions required to implement trauma-informed practices according to their role and context in order to promote safe and effective learning communities.

Disposition 3: Trauma-informed educators are committed to embedding trauma-informed rituals and practices within the daily, weekly, and seasonal routines of a school and classroom providing a sense of repetition that deepens internal safety and stabilization. Repetition also emphasizes that basic TISP building blocks are continual and constant, not merely a phase that is completed in order to move to the next phase.

Disposition 4: Trauma-informed educators are aware of socio-cultural factors that increase student risk or resilience, and are committed to creating an educational environment that is welcoming, safe, and inclusive of all persons.

Disposition 5: Trauma-informed educators are committed to a consistent ethic of care whereby the relational values offered to students are extended to self and one another

Disposition 8: Trauma-informed educators recognize that the success of trauma-informed practices requires involvement and support from all levels of the school system: administration, school, staff, classroom (including students), and community (school board and caretakers).

Disposition 10: Trauma-informed educators understand that student behavior, in part, is often a reflection of unintegrated neural networks due to past and/or current unmitigated stress and trauma, and require the student to first establish a sense of safety and stability prior to commencing with here-and-now developmental expectations.

Disposition 11: Trauma-informed educators understand that persons all along the lifespan are influenced by past experiences shaping perceptions and emotional responses. It is a lifelong task to understand this connection while learning to self-regulate in the face of intense emotional responses to current events.

Disposition 12: Trauma-informed educators are aware that students process unmitigated stress and trauma in both direct and indirect ways as they engage in all aspects of the trauma-informed educational environment, and are able to offer an attuned and mentoring response.

Disposition 14: Trauma-informed education systems include licensed mental health professionals available for students requesting or needing access to professional trauma-informed recovery services.

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Disposition 17: Trauma-informed educators advocate on local, state, and national levels for greater understanding of the neurobiological impacts on a student when either (a) the student cannot self-regulate or (b) the student is repeatedly exposed to peers unable to self-regulate leading to frequent episodes of classroom disruption. This constant state of dysregulation and exposure to peers in such states cause more stress and trauma for all students.

Standard 5: Community and External Leadership

Candidates who successfully complete a building-level educational leadership preparation program understand and demonstrate the capacity to promote the current and future success and well-being of each student and adult by applying the knowledge, skills, and commitments necessary to engage families, community, and school personnel in order to strengthen student learning, support school improvement, and advocate for the needs of their school and community.

Trauma-Informed Dispositions

Disposition 5: Trauma-informed educators are committed to a consistent ethic of care whereby the relational values offered to students are extended to self and one another

Disposition 8: Trauma-informed educators recognize that the success of trauma-informed practices requires involvement and support from all levels of the school system: administration, school, staff, classroom (including students), and community (school board and caretakers).

Disposition 14: Trauma-informed education systems include licensed mental health professionals available for students requesting or needing access to professional trauma-informed recovery services.

Disposition 17: Trauma-informed educators advocate on local, state, and national levels for greater understanding of the neurobiological impacts on a student when either (a) the student cannot self-regulate or (b) the student is repeatedly exposed to peers unable to self-regulate leading to frequent episodes of classroom disruption. This constant state of dysregulation and exposure to peers in such states cause more stress and trauma for all students.

Standard 6: Operations and Management

Candidates who successfully complete a building-level educational leadership preparation program understand and demonstrate the capacity to promote the correct and future success and well-being of each student and adult by applying the knowledge, skills and commitments necessary to improve management,

communication, technology, school-level governance, and operation systems to develop and improve data-informed and equitable school resource plans and to apply laws, policies, and regulations.

Trauma-Informed Dispositions

Disposition 17: Trauma-informed educators advocate on local, state, and national levels for greater understanding of the neurobiological impacts on a student when either (a) the student cannot self-regulate or (b) the student is repeatedly exposed to peers unable to self-regulate leading to frequent episodes of classroom disruption. This constant state of dysregulation and exposure to peers in such states cause more stress and trauma for all students.

Standard 7: Building Professional Capacity

Candidates who successfully complete a building-level educational leadership preparation program understand and demonstrate the capacity to promote the current and future success and well-being of each student and adult by applying the knowledge, skills, and commitments necessary to build the school's professional capacity, engage staff in the development of a collaborative professional culture, and improve systems of staff supervision, evaluation, support, and professional learning.

Trauma-Informed Dispositions

Disposition 2: Trauma-informed educators commit to learning the knowledge, skills, and dispositions required to implement trauma-informed practices according to their role and context in order to promote safe and effective learning communities.

Disposition 3: Trauma-informed educators are committed to embedding trauma-informed rituals and practices within the daily, weekly, and seasonal routines of a school and classroom providing a sense of repetition that deepens internal safety and stabilization. Repetition also emphasizes that basic TISP building blocks are continual and constant, not merely a phase that is completed in order to move to the next phase.

Disposition 4: Trauma-informed educators are aware of socio-cultural factors that increase student risk or resilience, and are committed to creating an educational environment that is welcoming, safe, and inclusive of all persons.

Disposition 8: Trauma-informed educators recognize that the success of trauma-informed practices requires involvement and support from all levels of the school system: administration, school, staff, classroom (including students), and community (school board and caretakers).

Disposition 14: Trauma-informed education systems include licensed mental health professionals available for students requesting or needing access to professional trauma-informed recovery services.

Advocating for Change

While Districts, Schools, and Educators need training in trauma-informed practice, we propose that ultimately training must take place in teacher and administrative preparation programs, taught by higher education faculty with proven competencies in trauma-informed content and practice domains. Training educators during a preparation program would not only be most cost-effective, but it would allow schools to hire educators trained and ready to meet the needs of all learners.

We are not alone in recognizing the significance of preparing educators in trauma-informed practices. While many U.S. states, as we discuss below, have enacted legislation requiring schools to incorporate trauma-informed practices, movement is also occurring on the national level. For example, in 2017, U.S. Congressman Rodney Davis from Illinois introduced H.R. 1757, the Trauma-Informed Care for Children and Families Act. The bill included multiple strategies to address the impact of trauma and the support families need in response. One of these strategies was requiring higher education programs to expose preservice teachers to trauma-informed curricula in an effort to ensure that all teachers enter the classroom with the ability to recognize and support students impacted by unmitigated stress and trauma. While several aspects of this bill were passed, the higher education trauma-informed training for teachers did not move forward. However, U.S. Senator Durbin from Illinois and Representative Davis are working on reintroducing this, which is encouraging to hear!

While this bill could support all students by requiring trauma-informed education in their preparation programs, it is critical to acknowledge that not all educator preparation programs have faculty who are capable of providing adequate training in this content domain. Additionally, as noted earlier, while mental health providers are expected to be skilled in treating persons impacted by trauma, not all are trained in recent advances in the knowledge and skills comprising the trauma-informed specialty. Therefore, in order for us to train educators capable of implementing trauma-informed practices in schools and classrooms, more higher education faculty (in the fields of education and mental health) would need to develop trauma-informed competencies as they apply to educational settings, and then collaborate together to train the next generation of educators capable of trauma-informed practice.

In addition to the legislation mentioned, we wanted to point out other significant work being done in several states. As of 2019, 12 states (California, Illinois, Indiana, Massachusetts, Ohio, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Utah, Vermont, and Washington) and the District of Columbia have either initiated or passed legislation to support their citizens impacted by trauma. The scope of these bills ranges from trauma-informed care for communities to specific training for in-service teachers on trauma-informed practices. Our own state of Oregon passed a bill focused on reducing absenteeism by providing trauma-informed training in a pilot model. The goal was to advance educator knowledge regarding the impact of unmitigated stress and trauma in an effort to reduce the dropout rate by encouraging school attendance.

Chapter 11: Exercise

Exercise: Conceptual Application—Questions to Ponder

Details of a competency, whether listed according to specific knowledge, skills, and dispositions such as in the Trauma-Informed School Practices Tri-Phasic Model detailed in Chapter 6, or thematically summarized as proposed here within current InTASC standards, are content-dense materials. The TISP Tri-Phasic Model identifies how trauma-informed educator practice is a scaffolded and iterative three-phase education approach, embedded with its own content domains and practice standards; it is a paradigm shift revealed in school culture, not just classroom management strategies. It guides higher education teacher preparation

programs in crafting specific elements of trauma-informed coursework, and educational settings when transitioning districts and schools to a trauma-informed model. The InTASC proposed standards in Table 11.1 summarize the dispositions of the TISP specialty as they might appear in accreditation documents.

Take a moment to reread Table 11.1 as well as the TISP Tri-Phasic Model in Chapter 6, and reflect on the following questions:

1. Consider the trauma-informed dispositions listed in the TISP Tri-Phasic Model and woven into the InTASC proposed standards. We have also listed these dispositions in Appendix D. These dispositions represent key outcomes acquired as a result of mastering the content domains of trauma-informed practice.
 - Identify dispositions you see as a fit for trauma-informed educator practice.
 - Likewise, identify dispositions that you question its fit for TISP.
 - Identify dispositions not listed.
 - Identify dispositions you would recommend adding.
2. As you review the InTASC proposed standards, do you agree with the placement of dispositions for each standard? This cross-checking process may also help you identify revisions to the list or wording of various dispositions.
3. Each person reading this text is in a unique role. Some of you may be in teacher or administrator credentialing programs; some may be preparing for mental health practice within school settings; others may be engaged in various stages of trauma-informed educator practice as credentialed or unclassified educators; some may not be working with students directly, but assume administrative roles. Others may be higher education professionals preparing education and mental health professionals, or legislators or lobbyists serving the public education needs of your community. Based on your current professional identity, role, and context, ponder the following questions:
 - What does professional advocacy mean to you, and how do you see the education profession expecting or needing its members to be advocates for the profession as a whole, for its members, and for the students we serve?
 - What types of advocacy are your strengths and preferences?
 - This text illustrates that trauma-informed educator practice is more than merely adopting new classroom strategies: it requires the entire educational system to update its preparation and practice standards. What type or level of advocacy do you think is currently needed for the education profession to update its current preparation and practice standards in response?
 - What type of advocacy might you engage in, and whom might you network with for support and camaraderie?

A Look Forward

Our concluding chapter addresses data-gathering needs, with an emphasis on evaluating staff and student engagement with trauma-informed education environments. We close our time together with a look at specific ways you can respond to the personal stress and challenges of serving students often overwhelmed by the stress and uncertainty in their own lives.

Resources for Further Reading

- [American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education](#). This website provides resources for teacher education programs, and focuses primarily on policy.
- [Association of Teacher Educators](#). This website provides resources for teacher preparation.
- [InTASC Standards](#). This website provides the specific standards cited in this chapter.
- [National Policy Board for Educational Administration](#). This website specifically focuses on the preparation of administrators.
- [National Education Association](#). This site supports educators and provides national updates.

Chapter 12: Nurturing Effective and Sustainable Trauma-Informed School Practices



[Image: [João Silas](#)|[Unsplash](#)]

“It is a capital mistake to theorize before one has data.” –Sherlock Holmes

Desired Outcomes

We conclude our examination of developing TISP competencies by tending to key themes ensuring its efficacy and sustainability. This chapter and the accompanying recommended readings and activities are designed to further develop educator trauma-informed competencies as demonstrated by:

- An awareness of internal and external factors that contribute to an educator's commitment to TISP practice, along with the ability to identify strategies to strengthen sustained engagement in the TISP transition process
- The ability to identify the importance of gathering outcome data assessing the cumulative impact of trauma-informed practices
- A recognition that *Person of the Educator* knowledge, skills, and dispositions represent a commitment to the health and well-being of coworkers given the risks of compassion fatigue and burnout associated with the education profession

Key Concepts

We began our text with an acknowledgement that without proper training and support, TISP can easily become a fad or be viewed as impractical. But the severity of need and the trauma-informed literature are compelling us to act. Here we address Phase III *Commencing* activities to ensure that we continue in our TI transition processes. This chapter includes the following key concepts foundational to sustaining TISP practices:

- The interconnections between educators' perceived need and urgency, attitudes and dispositions, trauma-informed knowledge, and larger system support in predicting and monitoring TISP interest and sustained application
- The importance of gathering data tracking student engagement and learning in a trauma-informed school setting
- The risks and prevention of compassion fatigue as part of *Person of the Educator* concerns

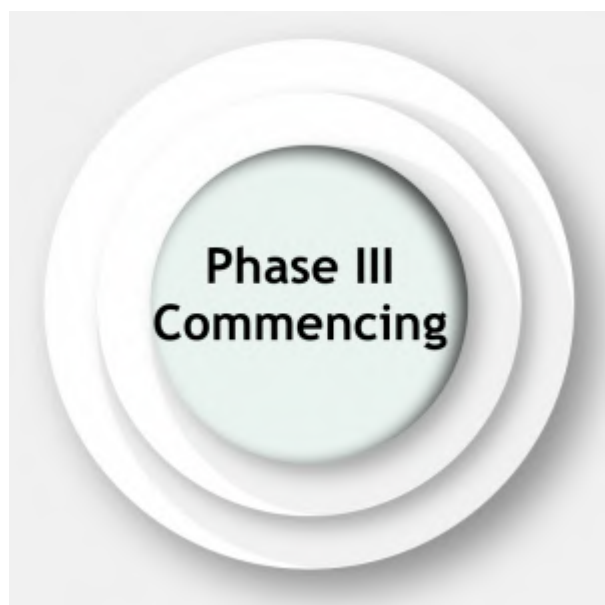
Chapter Overview

In Section II we identified that our strategic plans have immediate, short-range, and long-range agenda

items. Sustaining TISP requires awareness of factors contributing to its long-term success as well as specific action items, and our initial glimpse of the long-term agenda items (congruent with TISP Tri-Phasic Model Phase III tasks) allowed us to lay the groundwork for tending to sustainability concerns. Now is the time to place these agenda items on the front burner.

We begin by revisiting the survey you took in the beginning of this text and identifying its elements that provide insight into vulnerabilities threatening sustained commitment to transforming schools throughout a district. We then address the role of data gathering, not just in support of key stakeholders who require evidence of our success, but to affirm for educators that our efforts are creating safety and stability prerequisite to student learning. We conclude our work with an awareness that educator burnout and compassion fatigue are professional risk factors that are both logical, given the severity of need in today's schools, and preventable.

Tracking and Nurturing Staff Motivation and Resources



Phase III: Commencing

In the Preface of this text, you were invited to take a survey exploring your perceptions and concerns regarding the challenges of educating today's students and the feasibility of changing school practices to a trauma-informed model. We invite you to pause now and retake this survey using this same link ([TISP Implementation Predictors Survey](#)).

In Section I, we examined key aspects of resilience as we introduced Antonovsky's concept of the sense of coherence, that aspect of our core identity comprised of how we make sense of the world and how the world does or should work. This influences our sense of competence in figuring out how to act with intentionality to maximize the likelihood of successful coping. Whenever a system or an individual is asked to reorient their core understanding regarding how something works, it challenges their SOC creating varying amounts of dissonance and discomfort. Too little dissonance and we can ignore the discomfort as a passing trend. Too much dissonance and we will engage in a fight, flight, or freeze response. This is similar to

Vygotsky's window of tolerance (Kraus, 2009; Mooney, 2013; Wikipedia Contributors, 2018).

The explosion of insight into the mechanisms of unmitigated stress and trauma and the physiological, emotional, and social consequences to human development and functioning over the lifespan is such a challenge. It is requiring the profession of education to reorient itself from the ground up, including teacher and administrator content domains spanning classroom management strategies, pedagogy and related techniques, child development theories, leadership training, and supervision and mentoring processes. It is inviting change in how we view and work with each other, regardless of our role, and it is requiring change in the way we interact with our students. TISP is a big rock that has dropped into a very still pond, and the waves of dissonance are likely to create a stress response.

Zooming Our Lens Out for the Larger Context

Part of what has motivated us to create the TISP Tri-Phasic Model and to write this textbook is knowing that students and educators are suffering due to larger social forces eroding individual and community health and well-being, further affecting students' readiness to learn. ACE scores are just the end product or the tip of the iceberg, in the same way as any indicator of an impending breakdown or disaster. We view trauma-informed advances as providing a window into how we can respond in our own small way to effect big change in the lives of the people we serve, regardless of our professional role.

But we see no way around this shift causing significant dissonance. We have watched a variety of dedicated trauma-informed educators make great strides in ushering schools through the trauma-informed change process, and we have also watched a significant number of schools and educators experience frustration or disbelief in the viability or wisdom of changing an entire system. It is all too common for classroom teachers to be sent to a seminar providing a list of strategies, and then for administrators to expect those strategies to be implemented the next day, with the expectation that great results will suddenly appear. In some of these scenarios, there is little awareness that perhaps the administrator needs to set up changes first, in support of classroom teachers who are being asked to re-evaluate their classroom practices from top to bottom. We have watched and experienced classroom teachers seeing this as yet another trend and bowing out of any such trainings; we have watched both new and experienced teachers resonate with the initial ethos and attend the speed trainings, only to ride a roller coaster of hope, frustration, and disillusionment. The dashed hope sometimes arises from a lack of clear or grounded trauma-informed training; the educator is given a set of techniques without a conceptual foundation, and those techniques wear out their welcome and no longer work. In other instances, it is the School or District system's lack of understanding that a trauma-informed classroom has a very tenuous existence when the entire system is not engaged in the change process.

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The change process is further compounded by the fact that the Regulatory and Support Systems (accrediting and professional organizations, higher education training programs, and legal statutes governing the profession) responsible for maintaining professional educator standards have not yet required changes to training curriculums to adequately identify and facilitate TISP competencies in their graduates. Despite trauma-informed competencies arising from within the social and behavioral science professions, much work remains in changing mental health graduate training programs to require trauma-informed competencies (beyond psychotherapeutic practices common to everyday practice) as well.

We mention these challenges again, as we did in Section II, because the process of creating system change is complex and takes time. For every frustration, we see further movement ahead. None of the challenges we listed thus far are unexpected or even avoidable in the early stages of a paradigm change. Our aim is to clearly name these complex issues and target responses to help facilitate the next steps of the change process. We also want to validate your frustration and affirm that you, your school, and your district are not doing anything “wrong”; they are not to blame; you are not to blame. This is a new process; changing the direction of the Titanic is not going to occur without scrapes, bumps, and bruises. We want to prevent the education equivalent of a sinking ship by zooming out to see the big picture and then zooming in on our own pieces that we can control.

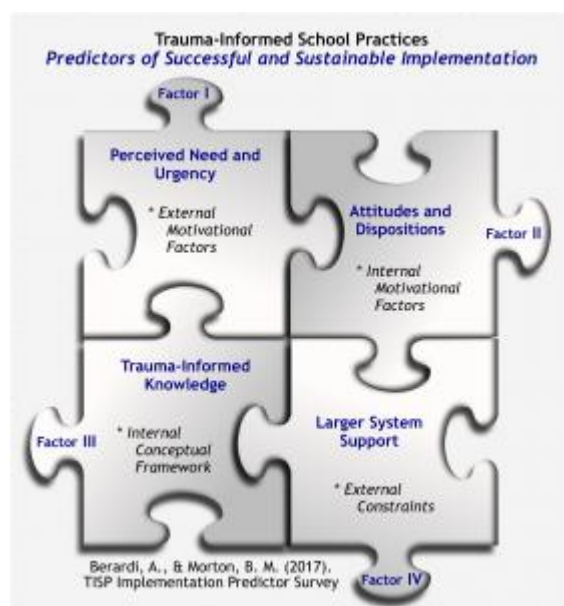
What you can control is congruent with your current role. If you are in a teacher or administrator preparation program, you can commit to mastering TISP competencies that you then bring to Districts who have made the transition or desire to do so. If you are currently an educator, of course TISP will change your mindset and give you ideas regarding how you can change your daily routines. But you may also have a larger field of influence than you think. We are inviting all educators, whether still in training or working in the profession, to see both the larger picture and your own

backyard; it is not either/or but both/and, and you have the capacity to inspire system change. We hope that seeing the larger picture—it does get messy, it's unpredictable, and it takes time to climb this mountain—actually inspires you to relax, think strategically, and take it step by step.

Elements of Successful and Sustainable TISP Implementation

The Predictors of Successful and Sustainable TISP Implementation survey is designed to act as a tracking device to monitor the pulses of us mountaineers. The survey, used as a pre- and post-assessment device, is designed to observe District, School, and Educator processes, and to predict the likelihood of educational settings building sustainable trauma-informed cultures, given the complexity of this challenge as just highlighted. The survey identifies four elements of successful implementation and sustaining of TISP, summarized in Figure 12.1.

Figure 12.1 Predictors of Successful and Sustainable TISP Implementation



[Image by A. Berardi]

These four elements are proposed predictors of a successful and sustainable transition to TISP. The interlocking puzzle pieces in Figure 12.1 indicate that each element influences and is influenced by the other elements.

Perceived Need and Urgency is perhaps the most significant contributor to motivating us to change. While it expresses a subjective sense of discomfort, it is based on external realities. We know that America's public education system is under assault. The more that classrooms are in crisis, the more parents with access pull their kids out of those schools, and the less the general public feels committed to investing in the next generation of citizens. To legitimize taking away funds, we blame schools for being inadequate stewards of taxpayer dollars. Most specifically, we blame classroom teachers, the front-line responders to this fast-moving train wreck.

TISP does not solve this recursive compounded problem of public sentiment and the defunding of education. It does hypothesize that the root of system failure is not high ACE scores and dysregulated

students, but the cumulative effects of unmitigated stress and trauma leading to individual and community dysregulation. As we have stated, our students' and their parents' difficulties are a mirror of shifts in cultural attitudes and relational behaviors happening on a larger societal level; student self-regulation challenges are logical given the seen and unseen chaos of our larger communities.

We have known that many worldview and behavioral trends are not beneficial to creating and sustaining safe and productive communities. But we could avoid responding due to the impact of these realities not interfering with us "too much."

For many educators and parents, we are no longer acclimated and oblivious to the discomfort.

As we have stated, our students' and their parents' difficulties are a mirror of shifts in cultural attitudes and relational behaviors happening on a larger societal level; student self-regulation challenges are logical given the seen and unseen chaos of our larger communities.

We have reached a tipping point; the subjective levels of distress experienced by educators and students are painfully high and many districts are willing to do whatever it takes, the sentiment that fueled Geoffrey Canada's work with the Harlem Children's Zone (Tough, 2009). Your awareness of the level of distress many students experience, and how its cumulative and progressive impact on their neurological development impairs academic and social functioning, has

armed you with concrete evidence of the hunches many of you have had all along.

After you take the post-survey, compare your results on Perceived Need and Urgency. We expect that for many already in the profession, your level of need and urgency was likely high at the outset, maybe changing a little in intensity. In fact, your already high level of awareness of a critical problem for many students today was likely a prompt to work through this material.

Educator Attitudes and Dispositions reflect a person's internal motivation and willingness to change in response to trauma-informed insight. For some, the logic of a need is motivation enough. For others, the higher level of felt distress (urgency) summons a willingness to move mountains. This is the energy we see in school districts with high levels of distress, and it is the energy we see once educators begin absorbing the trauma-informed literature. However, if an educator is not willing or open to change, it can thwart an entire system's effort, especially if that person exerts influence over others and a groupthink begins to take hold.

There are a myriad of factors that contribute to low motivation to change, even if the desired change makes sense. Perhaps most pronounced and valid is resisting change because what we are currently doing is working for us. Nothing creates resentment more than being pressured into change because it suits the agenda of those above you, especially when the wisdom is flawed from your vantage point. A second logical reason is lack of time and energy. For educators in all roles, the demands of the school environment are stressful; it is a job that is never done. For classroom teachers, it is a job with few boundaries around the work: you work most evenings and weekends, and spend your six to eight weeks of summer break picking up a second job and/or preparing for the next academic year. Unless they are teachers or live with one, few people understand the intensity of the school day and the added time demands outside of school hours. Add to this the emotional exhaustion and its cumulative effect, and many teachers cannot summon the time or mental energy to engage in the TISP learning process.

As highlighted in our review of burnout below, another factor undermining educator internal motivation may be resentment, if it feels as if your work environment has not treated you justly or been a wise steward of your district or school, in any combination or manifestation of leadership needed to build and maintain trust. Human systems, whether a family or a school district, are messy, imperfect communities that go through seasons of chaos and relative stability. The culture of your district, the invisible blueprint that we spoke of earlier that enables attitudes and patterns of behaviors to persist even as personnel change, is difficult to name or deal with at times; you are not imagining these things. And it does rip away at our motivation.

A final factor undermining motivation is our own burnout, a relative of compassion fatigue, which is primarily caused by repeated response to the trauma of others, a risk factor for educators we address further in this chapter. Burnout occurs for any number of reasons, including the following:

- We long for greater freedom in our daily lives; work, even work we enjoy, is something merely tolerated until we can retire.
- As stated above, we have felt used or taken advantage of, either relationally or economically in the work environment.
- We truly are in a profession that is a misfit for our talents and interests.
- The intensity of our work, including an unrealistic job description, exhausts our physical and emotional reserves.
- We are not taking frequent enough breaks from our work throughout the day, week, and seasons.

We imagine that you can add to this list and see a combination of issues contributing to your own moments or seasons of burnout.

Burnout is a significant factor impairing our health and well-being. In May 2019, the World Health Organization updated its classification of burnout in the 11th Revision of the International Classification of Diseases (ICD-11), listing it as an occupational phenomenon (not a health condition). WHO (2019) defines burnout as follows:

- Burnout is a syndrome resulting from chronic workplace stress that has not been successfully managed. It is characterized by three dimensions:
 - feelings of energy depletion or exhaustion;
 - increased mental distance from one's job, or feelings of negativism or cynicism related to one's job; and
 - reduced professional efficacy.
- Burnout refers specifically to phenomena in the occupational context and should not be applied to describe experiences in other areas of life.

Notice that burnout does not impact other areas of our life when our work environment is the source of stress and other contributing factors are not impairing our health. The most significant sign of burnout is lack of work motivation, experienced as low physical energy and poor morale even in the face of positive change. We can't "will" the interest or energy, as there is none to be had; our tanks are empty. The solutions to burnout are highly relative, depending on you and the factors contributing to it. The strategies we offer in response to compassion fatigue serve us well in responding to burnout; but ultimately, we must assess its meaning and make adjustments as we are able. In light of the fact that much burnout is due to poor working conditions, whether unrealistic job descriptions or toxic work cultures, WHO provides workplace guidelines to address issues that are often beyond the individual person's ability to influence (WHO, 2019).

In your survey results, what are your Attitude and Disposition scores telling you? Do you see a connection between these scores and your Larger System Support scores? It is likely that most educators have fewer positive feelings about their jobs during high-stress seasons of the academic year, including that long stretch of time in the spring before school ends for the summer.

Regardless of precipitating factors influencing your initial motivation score, many educators see a bump in their Educator Attitudes and Disposition scores because they see TISP as a ray of hope in a fairly bleak landscape. This is growth-producing energy we want to harness and protect, not exploit, as is captured in the two remaining factors.

Educators displaying a low sense of urgency and high burnout are likely to be highly resistant to anything related to TISP; they may resent the push and negate its importance or their need to learn this new content domain. Here, we get to practice our *Person of the Educator* skills, responding with a consistent ethic of care as we apply TISP relational values in our relationships with each other. We saw Rachel model this in her reflection in Chapter 7. Here, we recognize the logic of this response, responding with empathy and respect (attunement) even as the system continues to move forward without shaming or shutting them out (mutuality).

Trauma-Informed Knowledge provides an internal conceptual framework that gives educators the language to describe what they already know, and to be able to trust that what they are experiencing requires new knowledge bases and skill sets. It intensifies Perceived Need and Urgency and increases Educator Attitudes and Dispositions. Compare your scores on Factors I, II, and III: As you are completing this course of study, if your knowledge base score has increased (Factor III), do you also see an increase in your Factor I and II scores? Successful and sustainable implementation of TISP does not require everyone to immediately be on board with a 100% level of commitment; energy grows over time, and exposure to the trauma-informed literature is a contributor to nurturing insight and commitment.

Regardless of precipitating factors influencing your initial motivation score, many educators see a bump in their Educator Attitudes and Disposition scores because they see TISP as a ray of hope in a fairly bleak landscape. This is growth-producing energy we want to harness and protect, not exploit, as is captured in the two remaining factors.

It also becomes a primary tool for navigating moment-to-moment application of TISP, as strategies need to change on a dime, congruent with what a particular student or group of students is telling you through their verbal and nonverbal behaviors.

Larger System Support highlights the external constraints that make this work so tenuous and risky. This fourth factor can kill emerging motivation to change or allow its roots to deepen and strengthen over time. An Educator sold on TISP is stranded if the School's administration is merely agreeable rather than an active participant and leader. A District will spin its wheels and waste good grant money and time if Educators are forced to participate without prior nurturing of interest. And Educators needing access to quality training may be led to believe something is trauma-informed when it is not, or is not truthfully presented. This factor alone can sink the ship at any point in time, and is why our Strategic Planning Teams need to be envisioned as multi-armed agencies whose work is measured (titrated) and sequenced over time.

What constraints did your initial survey results reveal, and what changes are you noticing on your post-survey? For some, this text may have sharpened your view of the potential barriers. Or your colleagues' participation in this process may be giving you signs of hope that the external systems may be more reliable or accessible than you previously thought. And then there is your subjective sense of distress regarding the systemic limits of your setting. Envisioning these barriers as common, and knowing you have a team of trauma-informed educators, does affirm that a way around these constraints can most often be found.

Our fear is that TISP has all the earmarks of merely being experienced as a fad due to the typical confusion that inaugurates most shifts in established systems—a sense of quick training, immediate implementation, the expectation of great results that produces initial excitement and then crashes. We saw trauma-informed language being affixed to everything, from universities claiming trauma-informed educator coursework to pre-existing school discipline packages suddenly claiming to be trauma-informed. All of these observations are congruent with how systems proceed through change. Have you ever watched a disturbed ant colony? The frenzy of activity looks like mayhem. This is similar to what happens in our adolescent students' brains— they are under major construction, and those neural circuits and the chemicals traveling along those pathways function as if in sheer chaos. But eventually the ant colonies and our neural transmitters sort themselves out if the conditions are optimized. And that is what we are seeking to do: provide a road map in the midst of natural and expected chaos to help steer the transition process into a calmer state of existence.

We urge you to use these four factors as a simple way to nurture interest and sustained efforts, especially as the survey will unearth educator motivation along with larger system constraints that could undermine our best hopes and intentions. This survey will be referred to again as we identify a full-range TISP evaluation process.

Re-Examining Our Research Questions: Data Collection and Analysis

Standard Outcome-Based Assessment Expectations

Assessing the efficacy of TISP is important to our work for all the typical reasons. First, Districts are being asked to invest time and financial resources into training and implementation processes. Vested stakeholders—such as grant and government funding sources, taxpayers, and each student's parents—have a right to know if TI education methods are producing the desired results. Such data is crucial when seeking additional grant opportunities, often funding sources crucial to initial TISP implementation support. In addition, whenever we are building a new structure, much is unknown until we test out new skills and processes; course corrections are commonly needed along the way.

The most basic outcome measures seek improvement along the following indicators. The list also includes what we hypothesize to be the role of TISP contributing to these improvements:

- *Increased daily student attendance rates.* This would indicate an increased sense of belonging (*Connecting*)

inspiring traditionally disenfranchised students to prefer school attendance.

- *Increased academic success evidenced in grades and graduation rates.* This would indicate that *Coaching* strategies helped academically struggling students increase access to executive functioning. Academic indicators may also show improvements because TISP *Connecting* and *Coaching* strategies increase the overall calmness of the classroom, minimizing episodes of class disruption.
- *Decreased office referral and in-school detention/discipline rates.* TISP hypothesizes that many episodes of student dysregulated behavior reflect internal need states a student does not understand, let alone know how to manage. *Coaching* processes, built upon a foundation of trust, help increase a student's level of insight while also increasing self-regulation skills.
- *Decreased expulsion rates.* Students who commit an offense resulting in expulsion are often well known to school personnel long before the event precipitating school removal. The same processes decreasing in-school discipline rates apply here; we would have already reached out to these students, and in so doing, helped circumvent a behavioral spiral. In addition, TISP emphasizes the need to not force students into environments that are beyond their capacity to handle, even with the aid of educational assistants. We have an ethical responsibility to protect that student from repeated episodes of stress-induced dysregulation, as well as protect the emotional well-being of peers whose classroom experiences are often interrupted by students who cannot adequately respond to *Coaching* processes. As Districts examine their screening processes and classroom assistance options for students requiring greater assistance, classroom settings matching a student's need would need to be more accessible. We understand that access to adequate resources is crucial, and not always possible. But TISP advocates that we never walk away from speaking up about the needs of students to be protected. In this case, all students suffer when we do not provide appropriate classroom settings for students who are in chronic states of dysregulation indicating they are in need of more skilled services.

This data is also useful to Schools and Educators as they evaluate their methods of implementing TISP. Less than desired outcomes invite Strategic Planning Teams and Educators to re-examine their Action Plans for gaps in their District, School, Educator, and Classroom implementation strategies. A common assessment process is examining discipline policies, specifically the direct and meta messages we are conveying in our methods. Likewise, examining the need for additional classroom assistance, or examining how teachers can better coordinate their *Connecting* and *Coaching* practices with students they share in common, also invites re-evaluation.

Typical data points, as listed above, will invite us to examine not just what we are doing, but how we are reasoning out our choices. Sometimes the needed changes are beyond our capacity, while in other instances, the wisest course of action is easily accessible. The next section walks educators through a process of evaluating TISP implementation progress to aid in our assessment of the level of influence of TISP on overall District and School outcomes.

TISP-Specific Assessment Needs

The nature of TISP asks educators to assess the efficacy of our efforts according to its basic premises. For example, each phase of the TISP Tri-Phasic Model invites us to design ways to assess student engagement with our processes. This is both to make course corrections and to affirm that your efforts are producing desired outcomes.

The method in which we collect TISP efficacy data differs from standard measures as well, which are primarily a School or District task. Assessing the day-to-day success of TISP varies according to one's role. The primary challenge here is for classroom teachers, as it is difficult to discern data-gathering methods that are quick and effective given the limits of time and the volume of students under their care. But persons in all roles will benefit from engaging in this same process of assessing student engagement in TISP processes.

The following details a process to assess the veracity of TISP implementation efforts. It begins with an assessment of School and Educator TISP engagement and practice, followed by strategies for identifying signs of student engagement

in TISP activities. The TISP evaluation process is not directly focused on learning outcomes, as the basic premise is that engagement in TISP Schools and Classrooms enables a student to access executive functioning required for academic engagement. The data you collect here is designed to help monitor accurate application over a long enough time across multiple grade levels; the results can then be compared to standard school outcome measures, including academic progress.

Assessing TISP Stage of Development. Reliable and valid TISP evaluation requires a School and its Educators to first develop TISP competencies and implement changes in the culture of the school, evidenced in daily routines, rituals, and practices throughout the school system. Assessing the stage of development includes examining the following:

- Accurate application in ethos and practice
- Implementation of TISP in multiple systems within the school
- Implementation of TISP in multiple successive grades

When evaluating the effectiveness of TISP in helping schools achieve desired outcomes for students, you need a realistic picture regarding pockets of the school day and the school progression process where students are or are not experiencing consistency in TISP ethos and practice. The gaps in TISP implementation are helpful clues to understanding less than desired TISP-related student engagement data, as well as marginal changes in overall district and school outcome data. Assessing the developmental stage of TISP implementation also helps you distinguish expected developmental processes yet to unfold from areas where adjustments need to be made in current implementation strategies and practices.

At the conclusion of this section, we provide a detailed exercise in which we invite you to assess your stage of TISP development at the District, School, and Educator levels. Collaborate on the exercise with others working through this textbook, or with coworkers also implementing TISP.

Assessing Student TISP Engagement

In Chapter 7, we invited you to place on your radar the importance of capturing data regarding student engagement with TISP culture and practices. It included watching for the following behavioral indicators:

1. Student attitudes displayed in classroom atmosphere
2. Behavioral challenges in frequency and intensity
3. Student response to your interventions when having behavioral challenges
4. Student use of self-regulation resources and techniques
5. Your sense of efficacy when dealing with challenging encounters
6. Student engagement in the rituals and other learning moments
7. Student feedback on how they felt heard or tended to during a difficult encounter

Basically, we are seeking to identify how a student is responding to our efforts to promote an emotionally and physically safe environment where they are seen and valued, and have their own acts of care and concern valued as well. (Yes, when we give another person the gift of kindness, it promotes feelings of safety, well-being, purpose, and worth, reinforcing that we matter and can make a difference.)

Next, we are looking for signs that a student is incorporating the lessons they are learning about how the brain functions; how to tune into the thoughts, feelings, and sensations rippling through their bodies; and how to calm their circuitry long enough to respond to these inner need states with more clarity and intentionality. This is a lifelong course of study and practice, but we are building these skills one moment, one activity, one season at a time. What might be

signs that the student is absorbing your social-emotional tutorials and practice strategies? Are they using the skills, and what is the impact?

And finally, we are looking to see how these individual responses are reverberating throughout the group, and what kind of community energy is emerging. Empathy is recursive: the more we receive care from others, the more we can understand our own internal processes, and the more we can then show that same level of empathy for others. Empathy and responsibility go together. Initially, we act responsibly because we are told to do so, and we may fear some negative consequence or the loss of a positive reward if we do not comply. These are the characteristics of the law-and-order stage of moral development (Kraus, 2009; Wikipedia Contributors, 2018). But responsible action ultimately requires insight and compassion toward self and others, so when we are expected to put aside our own needs in the moment, we understand why and have the inner confidence that we are anchored and internally “OK” as we respond to the relational demands of the environment. This is a Phase III task in which we nurture community relationships reflecting the cumulative and transformative effects of *Connecting* and *Coaching* growth processes.

You are likely already observing signs of student engagement with TISP. As you collate your observations, here are a few preliminary considerations to help give shape to your data collecting processes:

- What do you want to know, and how might you design a simple method of charting your observations?
- What students are most challenged by the academic environment, and how might you and other classroom teachers or school staff brainstorm together on methods of tracking the engagement of these students in a more detailed manner?
- How might you invite students to give direct feedback? Students are partners with you in this process; the more they know why the class engages in these activities and can help create these processes, the more invested they become in participating, benefiting, and evaluating the impact.
- Once you identify a variety of methods suitable to your TISP engagement and learning goals, how might you design checklists, surveys, and other data collecting methods that are co-created by your peers who may also be able to use these same tools? This begins allowing your school to collect hard data for presentation to your administrators, school board, and professional educator conferences and publications.

Next, identify the purpose and goals of each phase of TISP implementation. For a review of trauma-informed tri-phasic concepts and response rationale, revisit Chapter 5. Then re-examine each phase of the TISP Tri-Phasic Model, as detailed in Chapter 6, to assist in this process.

- Phase I: *Connecting*: Are students enjoying the rituals and routines you implemented to create a sense of emotional connectedness and safety? How might you document direct signs of student engagement? How might you document signs of discomfort, boredom, or disinterest? For those uninterested or not engaged, what might be your hunch as to why? What are you noticing in the student when you practice more overt attunement, focusing on hearing their experience first before rushing to a solution?
- Phase II: *Coaching*: Here you are looking for signs that students are eager to learn about their inner need states and respond with situation-appropriate strategies (whether in a classroom or a cafeteria setting). Are students using the self-assessment and regulation tools you have taught and provided? If they are not using the tools, are you asking too much too soon, or without proper instruction and structure? Or, are they ready to engage more deeply and bored with the current offerings?
- Phase III: *Commencing*: Here you are looking for signs that your students are self-initiating the use of skills taught, and easily work with you when they have moments of intense dysregulation. Remember, while our goal is to reduce episodes of dysregulation, your students need to encounter intense inner need states in order to practice skills. A student who has become angry and disruptive but then allows you to connect and coach them into a more relaxed state is showing progress. How might you document such instances? This phase is also asking you to assess when a student is not capable of scaffolding additional skills needed to increase their abilities to self-regulate.

Deepening TISP Perceptual and Conceptual Skills Through Group Observations

When we provide TISP peer observations and coaching, each educator presents a case study of an element of TISP that is not working as hoped or is difficult to implement, along with a video clip of the situation under review. During one such TISP coaching session, two classroom teachers from different schools presented a similar difficulty, chronicling less than successful results with a particular social-emotional self-regulation strategy. As the peer consult process unfolded, each teacher discerned two totally different sources of the intervention strategy's ineffectiveness.

One teacher was able to identify their student's need for more novelty, changing up the activity now and then. They were operating under the principle that predictability—often meaning sameness—helped produce safety and engagement. What the teacher did not expect was to see signs of growth in their students at such a rapid pace, and the corresponding need for change. The discovery added an exciting depth to the teacher's conceptual framework, learning how to identify student growth and the need for the next level of skills in social-emotional learning processes to further increase neural network integration.

The other educator observed student willingness to engage, but the needs of some students with more limits in their capacity to self-regulate indicated that the teacher needed more adult assistance in the classroom. The teacher was reluctant to trust their assessment of such need, instead assuming that they were not implementing TISP strategies in a good-enough manner. The peer coaching and consultation process, a form of self-assessment, helped each member of the group deepen their TISP skills and make unique course corrections based on the application of TISP concepts.

Assessing Student Engagement with TISP Practices

As you begin to implement TISP into your practice and classroom, it is important to regularly assess those changes to see if they are working in the way you hoped. In Chapter 9, we shared the Problem-Solving Mat strategy that Sky and her cooperating teacher implemented in the classroom. They assessed this strategy and learned they needed to make a couple of tweaks. Here is what they found:

We watched our students use the mat and assumed that things were working well, but we wanted to get input from the students. We decided to create a questionnaire for the children about the problem-solving mat. It had two sentence frames where the kids had to choose “The problem-solving mat works for me because . . .” or “The problem-solving mat does NOT work for me because . . .”

They then had to circle their feeling responses when using the mat:

- Happy because they solved the problem on their own;
- Content because their problem was fixed;
- Angry because their problem was not solved and they were still angry; or
- Frustrated because they still had a problem.

Then the last question was “What is something that we can do to make the problem-solving mat better?”

All 27 students filled out this questionnaire; 23 students said they were happy with how the problem-solving mat was going. For the four that did not feel like their problems were being solved, we realized these students were bringing problems much too large to the problem-solving mat or were not using the mat exercise appropriately.

This gave us good information on how to help those students. Some of their concerns and suggestions included:

- We should require that a student helper is available every time the mat is used;
- Everyone should be trained on how to be a helper;
- We should add a step to our instructions that includes saying “I heard you say . . .” after the student states their problem.

We then made those changes. A few weeks later, we checked in again with our students. We found that 26 of the 27 students said they were feeling good about the problem-solving mat and thought it is working well. The one child who still struggled with the mat exercise was new to the class and did not yet feel comfortable asking other kids to the mat when he had an issue.

Since introducing the problem-solving mat, we have noticed a dramatic change in the number of students who tattle on each other. The children are learning that communication is key to building a classroom community, and they are able to actively learn how to communicate about their issues and solve them. –Sky, Student Teacher

You will see signs of TISP student engagement every day; it is just a matter of designing a method to document those observations. Whether you use an Action Research outline, checklists, peer supervision and consult processes, a daily journal, or sticky notes stuffed in a drawer, use your emerging perceptual and conceptual skills to make sense of what you are seeing and how students are engaging with you and their peers. Sometimes your observations will tell you something is missing. But many times a student’s response will melt your heart; chart it and allow yourself to celebrate the resilience of the human spirit when provided just a little bit of safety and stabilization. Other times your results will tell you that your students are responding just as you hoped and are now ready for something deeper, something more. Chart it, use your TISP competencies to go that next mile, and enjoy the ride!

Assessing Stage of TISP Development

The desired outcomes of TISP are to increase student engagement and learning in academic and social competencies; TISP is deemed effective by these measures. But to properly discern the effect TISP has on these desired outcomes, its stage of development must be determined. We identify its development by examining the *strength* of TISP implementation, determined by assessing its *accuracy* (true to TISP knowledge, skills, and dispositions), and *breadth of implementation* within the school the student is attending (not just in a particular classroom), and in previous and successive grades.

A school or classroom may state that it is applying TISP when in fact school personnel are not familiar with TISP foundational principles. TISP practices may be inconsistently applied, yet this inconsistency might be logical given its stage of development within a school or district. In both of these instances, we cannot make strong assumptions regarding how TISP practices are affecting attendance rates, academic functioning, or discipline statistics until we have TISP accurately and firmly in practice.

Elements of the TISP stage of development are discerned using the following levels of assessment:

- Stage of development for Districts, Schools, and Educators
- Attitudes and dispositions of administrators and staff
- Student engagement with TISP school and classroom practices

All levels of assessment offer formative (each system element's grasping what it needs to move onto the next phase) and summative (signs of reaching the final desired outcomes) data useful for identifying next steps in the strengthening and efficacy of TISP. The profile that emerges from this review of TISP stage of development allows the educator to openly and realistically assess TISP maturity, strengths, gaps in services, and other areas of concern. This information is then used in the interpretation of overall outcome measures gathered and analyzed by district personnel.

Assessing Stage of Development

If your school or district is actively engaged in transitioning to TISP, using the stage categories below, confer with your colleagues to begin gathering data useful to charting TISP stage of implementation. Remember, transition processes are unstable and unpredictable. Less than desired outcomes during the early and middle stages of implementation may reflect various gaps in service that are waiting their turn for development. Despite less than optimum results, gains will be observed. In addition, as the educator understands foundational trauma-informed concepts, and continues to participate in their own TISP training and supervision, collecting TISP data throughout the process will easily identify needed course corrections that make conceptual sense to staff and administrators.

Early in this section, we identified strategies for assessing student engagement with TISP school and

classroom practices. Attitudes and dispositions of administrators and staff are assessed in the Predictors of Successful and Sustainable TISP Implementation survey. This exercise is designed to merely assess the stage of TISP implementation. At the end of this exercise, you will be able to complete a TISP assessment process and juxtapose the findings against your school or district's outcome data relative to your inquiry.

Identify Overall Stage of Development. Begin your assessment by identifying overall stages of TISP development for your district, your school, and yourself. You will use these same categories to assess the specific elements of each education system (District, School, and Educator) in the next step. Student TISP engagement (Classrooms) is evaluated separately, as described earlier in this chapter.

As an educator gains TISP competencies, their application becomes more nuanced and effective. Likewise, TISP needs to be consistently and continually applied in a school and its classrooms, giving students ample time to absorb its effects, as they are learning to trust the environment, absorb new community and self-regulation habits, and practice them. It is similar to expecting a nutritional or health practice to have the desired effect immediately, versus understanding that habitual exposure to a new routine builds new infrastructures over time that manifest in full recovery some time down the road. Also, note that the categories do not speak to the internal mindsets of various educators; these can be hypothesized by utilizing the Predictors of Successful and Sustainable TISP Implementation survey.

Below are six stages of TISP engagement and practice reflecting overall TISP interest, commitment, or sustained action. Rough time periods to accomplish implementation tasks are offered as a guideline, not an absolute. Place a "D" next to the stage reflecting your assessment of your District's engagement with TISP; place an "S" next to the stage reflecting your School's implementation; and place an "E" next to the stage reflecting your personal (Educator) level of activity engaging with TISP.

1. *Precontemplation Stage:* My district, school, or I have not yet expressed interest in TISP.
2. *Contemplation Stage:* My district, school, or I am actively discussing implementing TISP.
3. *Early Stage Commitment:* My district, school, or I have committed initial resources to training administrators and staff (whether a small cohort or a large group) in TISP and its application with students; often occurs within 0-12 months.
4. *Initial Application Stage:* My district, school, or I am actively engaged in implementing TISP in schools and classrooms; often occurs within 0 months-2 years.
5. *Intermediate Application Stage:* My district, school, or I am deep into the TISP implementation process, no longer novices but not yet widely used. Elements of a school are still in the process of training staff and/or adjusting various subsystems serving students; often occurs within 2-3 years.
6. *Longer-Term Application Stage:* My district, school, or I have made significant gains orienting staff and adjusting school and classroom rituals, routines, and practices. Systems within schools have been reevaluated, and necessary adjustments have been made; all staff has access to initial training as well as access to resources for advanced training; often occurs within 2-5 years.

Identify Specific TISP Engagement and Practices. Using the six-stage identification system introduced above, assess the stage of TISP development for each specific item where requested. Place the stage number to the left of each item.

- Identify stage of District engagement:
 - District Strategic Planning Team: Is it in place and active?
 - District Engagement with TISP Foundational Knowledge: Are district-level administrators engaging in learning trauma-informed content domains and their application to school environments?

- Identify stage of School engagement:
 - School Strategic Planning Team: Is it in place and active?
 - School Engagement with TISP Foundational Knowledge: Are school-level administrators engaging in learning trauma-informed content domains and their application to school environments?
 - TISP Basic Phase I and Phase II Skill-Development Training: Are school administrators participating in skill-development training, including direct observation of TISP rituals, routines, and practices within the school and classroom setting?
 - TISP-Focused Group Coaching and Supervision: Are school administrators participating in TISP coaching and supervision processes to monitor their application of TISP and to deepen their student assessment skills? This process invites administrators to secure a TISP-trained coach, trainer, or supervisor who facilitates group supervision processes whereby administrators (along with their staff) present details of their application methods. Focus in on applying conceptual skills to evaluate efficacy of an activity or method as well as discerning student readiness for next stages of *Coaching* and *Commencing* activities.
 - TISP Advanced Phase II Skill-Development Training: Do administrators and staff have access to, and participate in, advanced social-emotional (neural integration) skill development?
- Identify stage of Educator engagement:
 - Educator Action Plan: Is it in place and active?
 - Educator Engagement with TISP Foundational Knowledge: Are you as an Educator engaged in learning trauma-informed content domains and their application to school environments?
 - Are peers serving the same students also learning and applying TISP?
 - Are teacher cohorts collaborating in observations and methods?
 - Are your students gaining access to TISP in previous grades within your district? In other words, how familiar might your students be with a trauma-informed school environment prior to entering your classroom?
 - If your students have experienced a trauma-informed environment prior to their current grade level, did the District provide a way for the Schools to arrange for consultation between the grade levels as part of the process of ensuring continuity?
 - TISP Basic Phase I and Phase II Skill-Development Training: Are Educators participating in skill-development training including direct observation of TISP rituals, routines, and practices within TISP schools and classrooms, accompanied by specific examples of strategies as initial toolbox ideas?
 - TISP-Focused Group Coaching and Supervision: Are Educators participating in TISP coaching and supervision processes to monitor their application of TISP and to deepen their TISP assessment skills? This process invites educators to secure a TISP-trained coach, trainer, or supervisor who facilitates group supervision processes whereby educators (along with administrators) present details of their application methods. Focus in on applying conceptual skills to evaluate efficacy of an activity or method as well as discerning student readiness for next stages of *Coaching* and *Commencing* activities.
 - TISP Advanced Phase II Skill-Development Training: Do classroom teachers and other staff and administrators have access to, and participate in, advanced social-emotional (neural integration) skill development?

Summarize and Incorporate Two Additional Data Sets

- Data gathered from the Predictors of Successful and Sustainable TISP Implementation survey: Use survey results to further your insight when comparing all assessment results. These results also specifically assess educator attitude and dispositions toward the use of TISP.
- Data gathered from assessing student engagement with TISP routines, rituals, and practices.

Hopefully you have been conferring with classmates or colleagues in the completion of this exercise. At the conclusion of your review, discuss your findings by reflecting on the following questions:

1. What data was the most difficult to gather? What method(s) did you design?
2. What surprised you the most?
3. What was most encouraging?
4. What was most disappointing?
5. Create a list of 10 action items you, your school, or your district (not 10 per system level, just 10 total) would be advised to consider in light of your results. Identify one top-priority item for each system level. Using your TISP conceptual skills, discuss your reasoning for your top-priority items.
6. If you are a practicing educator and applied this exercise to your school or district, based on this assessment process, do you think TISP is accurately and adequately implemented to such a degree that you can begin determining its influence on desired student outcomes?

Person of the Educator: Preventing Compassion Fatigue and Burnout



[Image: [Allie Smith](#) | [Unsplash](#)]

An Administrator's Insight on Teacher Retention

Many districts are struggling to recruit and retain teachers right now. Although being a teacher is incredibly rewarding, it is also demanding and stressful. Unfortunately, many young, talented teachers choose to leave the profession due to the daily stress of teaching highly challenging students, most of whom have been (and continue to be) impacted by trauma. Equipping staff with effective TISP strategies, establishing a caring, consistent school culture, and combining resources with community partners are great ways to support teachers and help them be able to focus on instruction.

–Bruce, District Office Administrator

The Realities of Burnout and Compassion Fatigue

Throughout this text, we have provided opportunities for you to tend to the *Person of the Educator* by engaging in reflections and exercises. Our goal was to remind all of us that trauma-informed practice requires a consistent ethic of care, expressed in the way we relate to each other in the workplace, that honors educators as professionals. This requires us to acknowledge that we are vulnerable not just to the impact of our own unmitigated stress and trauma, but to secondary trauma as a result of working with the pain and resulting chaos of our students who bring their unmitigated stress and trauma to us each day, beseeching us for help.

We end our time together by taking a quick dive into the personal risks of being an educator as a reminder that trauma-informed awareness and practice is not just something we implement in our schools, but deserves to permeate all of who we are. This specialty is all about providing insight and concrete ideas on how to care for self and others regardless of the social and relational forces that seek to undermine our quality of life.

Burnout: Compassion Fatigue's Twin

Earlier in this chapter, we identified some of the traits of burnout, including its many causes. Below we will explore compassion fatigue, along with ways to respond. The primary difference between the two is very slight. Imagine you are climbing a mountain, as we are doing when transferring our school practices to a TISP model. We can lose motivation and become truly exhausted with the process. This is not because we are battered and bruised by the dangers, or saddened by things along the way; it is because we are simply exhausted, and we need a break or a change of scenery. This is burnout. We need renewal in one form or another. Compassion fatigue and burnout often co-occur, but not all thoughts, feelings, and sensations of burnout are compassion fatigue. Compassion fatigue is primarily activated when our empathy circuits are in constant attunement with the pain and suffering of others we serve; it may require a similar self-care response, but it is qualitatively different than burnout, as we will unpack below. To that end, as you are engaging in your own self-assessment, we want to acknowledge this difference.

Identifying and Responding to Compassion Fatigue

When we began initially exploring trauma in educational settings, we found a need to learn each other's languages. Specifically, the mental health field has conceptual language and names for things not historically used in education. On one particular occasion a few years ago, I (Brenda) was sitting in Anna's office and shared that teachers were exhausted and emotionally drained, and many were leaving the profession. As I described for her what I meant by this, Anna immediately identified this as compassion fatigue. Thankfully, over the last few years, this language has begun to seep into the education field.

What I described mirrored what Figley (1995) reported. He found that therapists and other professionals talked about "episodes of sadness and depression, sleeplessness, general anxiety, and other forms of suffering that they eventually link to trauma work" (Figley, 1995, p. 2). He went on to point out that "professionals who listen to clients' stories of fear,

pain, and suffering may feel similar fear, pain, and suffering because they care. Sometimes we feel we are losing our sense of self to the clients we serve” (p. 1). When we are exposed to others’ unmitigated stress and trauma, it can be an activating event for us, causing us to recall our own painful memories.

In 2012, Borntrager et al. designed a study to explore compassion fatigue in the education profession. This was the first study to consider secondary traumatic stress in the lives of teachers. They found that public school teachers and other educational professionals may very well be exposed to what they described as “extraordinary levels of direct and secondary trauma” (p. 48). They also found that few supports existed within the school network, which could result in an overtaxing of personal support networks.

Teachers’ plates are beyond full.

There are always papers to grade, lessons to write, and pressure to get our students successfully through standardized exams; the list goes on and on. Many teachers describe feeling guilty when they take a night off mid-week or enjoy a weekend, believing that their time should have been spent planning or grading. Nevertheless, this is a mindset that must shift. We absolutely cannot care for others when we have nothing more to give! And, if we are being honest, we would also admit that when we are exhausted, our teaching is less than our best. Let’s begin to change that mindset.

First, we encourage you to assess your compassion satisfaction, fatigue, and burnout in the 30-question survey linked in the exercise below.

There are always papers to grade, lessons to write, and pressure to get our students successfully through standardized exams; the list goes on and on. Many teachers describe feeling guilty when they take a night off mid-week or enjoy a weekend, believing that their time should have been spent planning or grading. Nevertheless, this is a mindset that must shift. We absolutely cannot care for others when we have nothing more to give!

Chapter 12: Exercise 2

Assessing Your Compassion Satisfaction, Fatigue, and Burnout

The Professional Quality of Life Scale (ProQOL R-IV) is a 30-question survey that allows you to self-assess the impact of unmitigated stress and trauma on your life. You can access the ProQOL R-IV at <http://www.proqol.org>. Once you have completed the self-assessment and scoring, take a moment to record your scores:

Compassion Satisfaction Score _____

Compassion Fatigue Score _____

Burnout Score _____

You may find that your scores fluctuate depending on the time of year you choose to take the self-assessment. As teachers, we tend to have lower scores in the fall, versus at the end of spring.

Now that you have completed the survey, are you surprised by your compassion fatigue score? Whether your score is sounding alarm bells that changes are desperately needed, or your score shows you are doing OK at the moment, a self-

care plan will support you throughout the year. There is no time like the present to commit to making changes. You are worth scheduling self-care! Your students, school community, and friends and family will thank you.

I (Brenda) have a group of friends that I regularly write with. We meet weekly, away from our university campus, where we can enjoy coffee together, catch up, reaffirm our writing and research goals, ask for support, and then write. It is a simple formula that has carried us through three years. There have been weeks when one of us has felt too busy to enjoy the luxury of writing; after all, we had papers to grade and students who were scheduled to meet with us! However, we kept those dates and never regretted a moment. In fact, we usually end our sessions with hugs and words of gratitude. Meeting regularly and writing are on the self-care plan for all three of us. What should be on your self-care plan?

A self-care plan is both preventative and your “go-to” in the midst of a crisis. We encourage you to complete the exercise below and create your own self-care plan.

Chapter 12: Exercise 3

Self-Care Plan

A quick Google or Pinterest search will yield a number of websites dedicated to developing a self-care plan. Whether you create your own layout in a bullet journal or desire pre-made worksheets you can download, you will find endless processes and categories. For now, let's focus on five topic areas. Grab a piece of paper and let's begin.

Make a list of things, experiences, or situations that give you joy and leave you feeling recharged or rested for each of the following categories:

1. Work
2. Relationships
3. Emotional well-being
4. Physical well-being
5. Spiritual well-being

Now that you have a list, begin to think about things that could keep you from enjoying that activity or experience. What do you need to do to keep those things from impeding your ability to carry out your plan? What support do you need from others to stick to your plan?

Begin to schedule items from your list into your calendar. Perhaps pick one activity and plan to engage in that activity each week or every other week. Or, choose one activity or experience each month and stick to it.

Once you create your self-care plan, we encourage you to regularly assess how it is working for you. One way is to retake the ProQOL R-IV assessment periodically to see where you score. Another is to self-assess your own mental and physical health. Are you noticing a change?

What might you do if you develop a wonderful plan, even act on a few of its elements, and still notice no change in your subjective sense of compassion fatigue or burnout? It is common for us to decide to “just do it,” only to find we don't engage in the plan, or it doesn't create the shift we were hoping for. Here is a moment to practice with yourself exactly what you are or will be practicing with your students: Trust that there is a reason worth discovering that is

leading to your avoidance. Compassion fatigue and burnout affect each of us in unique ways. For some, a detailed plan works; for others, being with close trusted others is comforting, leading to a kickstart in our motivation. And for many, just giving our brains and bodies a change of view helps access our desired goals and reservoirs of well-being, which then helps us metabolize an inspiring read or galvanize energy to move on an action plan. Listen to your resistance. Whether it is helping you identify a deeply held perspective, as we discussed in Chapter 2, or giving you greater depth of understanding regarding the source of the problem and the need for another solution, it is all good!

A Final Thought

It is fitting that we close our text with a look into the realities of burnout and compassion fatigue, as we acknowledge once again that unmitigated stress and trauma stem from complex ecosystemic forces. We are reminded that the struggles of our students are a sign of something gone awry in our relational patterns that has affected our students' parents, and likely their ancestors as well. Unmitigated stress and trauma change our biology; they affect our thoughts, feelings, and actions. The ways we interact in the world not only reflect what we and our ancestors experienced, but are mirrored in cultural values and trends, so much so that we think good things are bad and bad things are good. Bronfenbrenner's diagram (Figure 10.1) depicts the nested, interrelated set of systemic forces that shape our identities and our emotional health. It remains a powerful reminder to not be so quick to blame parents, to zoom out so we can acknowledge the bigger picture, and then zoom back in to identify the power we do have to heal and increase resilience in spite of larger social obstacles.

We have stressed how we are no different from our students and their families; we are all impacted by the slings and arrows of life, whether from relational injuries that have occurred in our own families or broader cultural forces that undermine our sense of self, safety, and belonging. We have also emphasized the universal-access nature of TISP; what a trauma-informed environment offers is what all of us need to nurture a firm integrated sense of self so we can muster the courage to engage in the challenges of life, managing our own responsibilities within communities of care who help along the way. What we offer our students, we need as well. We challenge our students to strengthen their internal neural networks, and we, likewise, are engaged in that process throughout our lifespan.

Given that you too are impacted by unmitigated stress and trauma, be sure to place on that self-care action plan a method of acknowledging and holding with compassion your own life history. These are trails that lead to deeply held perspectives that influence maybe what you choose to do, but certainly the mindset you use in doing what you do, primary contributors to burnout and compassion fatigue. Basically, it is our own internal neural networks knocking on our door saying, "Please read what's up and take me to the next level of integrated neural network functioning!"

Whether this means processing with a friend or a therapist, know that any route you choose is exciting. A topic both of us have visited on occasion is the way psychotherapists view therapy. For many, counseling/therapy is a professional treatment service we access when something in our life is not going well and we need help sorting it out. For others, not just therapists, it is as nurturing as getting a massage or a pedicure, and as exciting as setting out on a traveling adventure. It is the ultimate in deep learning and personal challenge, leading to a greater sense of inner peace and life energy. While owning my own bias, I (Anna) invite you to expand your understanding of therapy as a self-care option, not just a tool to access in times of great distress.

However you embark on applying TISP to your own professional and personal growth, we hope that you leave our time together with conceptual language to make sense of what you have likely known for a long time. We hope that despite the sadness or heaviness these realities create—especially if your empathic attunement neurons are working—you are comforted in knowing that others see this too, and perhaps the best way to muster hope is to be a part of the solution. As you work to strengthen your own application of TISP in whatever role you occupy within the school system, rest assured that you are not alone, and that what you do matters and is what is needed most. We do not have any control over whether a student can respond as we hope, but never underestimate that you are touching deep neural networks when you attune and respond to your students. You may not see the impact today or this year, but you are planting

seeds of hope as students learn they are seen, cared about, and able to bring their own unique goodness and beauty to our lives and our communities.

Resources for Further Reading

- *The Compassion Fatigue Workbook: Creative Tools for Transforming Compassion Fatigue and Vicarious Traumatization*, by Francoise Mathieu.
- *Onward: Cultivating Emotional Resilience in Educators*, by Elena Aguilar.
- *Trauma Stewardship: An Everyday Guide to Caring for Self While Caring for Others*, by Laura van Dernoot Lipsky with Connie Burk.
- [Mindful.org](https://www.mindful.org). This organization provides information and suggestions for developing your own mindful practice.

Appendix

Appendix A

Developmental Worksheets

The following three worksheets familiarize educators with developmental concepts related to lifecycle challenges that are both expected and related to unmitigated stress and trauma. These activities are designed to deepen the educator's

- familiarity with trauma-informed constructs, grounded in the integration of attachment theory and neurodevelopment;
- insight into the professional importance of tending to *Person of the Educator* self-growth processes; and
- ability to understand the processes of neural network development as they apply to student academic and social-behavioral challenges.

Preface

Each worksheet asks you to reflect on either your family's relationship style or your own lifespan experiences. To prepare for these reflections, take a few moments and write out a brief description of your family, jotting down thoughts on the following topics:

- *Your Family's Structure*: Where did you grow up, and who raised you? What did your caretakers do for a living? How many siblings or other family members lived with you during your K-12 school years? What was your family's cultural and socioeconomic context? This overview begins to jog your memory of family contextual factors that influenced family relationships.
- *Your Caretakers' Family Background*: For each of your primary caretakers, recall their family context as you did above for your family of origin experience. This overview helps you recall the experiences that shaped your caretakers' adult relational style.
- *Your Family History*: Figure 3.1 shows the ACE Survey. Read through the questions and note your score. What other relationship qualities describe your family that are not captured by the survey? This might include identifying strengths and challenges of significance to you.

Now you are ready to begin.

Worksheet A-1: Your Caretakers' Attachment Style

Instructions:

1. Review the basics of attachment theory in Figures 2.2, 2.3, and 2.4.
 - For a more detailed description of adult and child attachment styles (Figure 2.4), read through some of the resources listed at the end of Chapter 2, search Wikipedia, or do an internet search for additional resources describing some of the nuances of these styles.
 - Siegel's *The Developing Mind* (2012) provides a rich review of attachment theory, including expanded

descriptions of Main and Ainsworth style categories.

2. Focusing on the description of Main's adult attachment style, describe each of your caretakers' style of providing attunement and mentoring.
 - Focus on their responses to you in general, but mostly in times of busyness or distress.
 - How did your caretakers manage emotional closeness and expressiveness?
 - How did they respond to you when you misbehaved or did not do as they wished?
 - Do these qualities match any of the attachment style descriptors?
 - Our attachment style is often a mix of these basic descriptors, and changes when we are under stress. Don't be surprised if you see parent characteristics across multiple adult attachment styles.
3. Next, review the descriptors of Ainsworth's childhood attachment styles.
 - Your childhood attachment style characteristics will reflect how you learned to relate to your caretaker's style of managing needs for emotional closeness and distance, along with their ability to attune to your needs and respond in a way that felt safe, supportive, and mentoring.
 - To learn more about the distinctives of each style, use the resources referenced above.
4. And lastly, ponder characteristics of your current adult attachment style. It tends to look different in various types of relationships and depending on current pressures.
 - In general, in adult mutual friendships and intimate relationships, how do you see yourself regulating your need for closeness and distance, sharing or holding back on your inner thoughts and feelings, and tracking the inner experiences of relational others?
 - With your children, dependent adults, or even pets, what is your style of tracking and responding to others' needs, of being able to decenter your needs to remain in the parent or caretaking role?
 - In mutual and caretaking relationships, what is easy or difficult?
5. Hold on to these reflections as you chart your encounters with various developmental themes in the next worksheet.

Worksheet A-2: Psychosocial Developmental Review

Erikson views each stage's challenges as themes we wrestle with across the lifespan, even though we have a critical time period when a particular theme might be most central or crucial given a particular psychosocial demand. The struggle and strength highlighted as central to each challenge are not an either/or, but a both/and experience we each have as relational, higher-ordered thinking human beings. The goal is not to avoid or never experience the negative side of each challenge; that would contribute to stagnation and lack of growth. Rather, it is to have the inner reserves to make sense of it and respond in life-affirming ways, as well as to live our day-to-day lives resting more in the positive outcomes of each stage.

Instructions:

For each of the eight original stages as listed below and discussed in Chapter 2, reflect on the following questions. If helpful, reacquaint yourself with the nuances of each stage's challenge by referring back to a favorite human growth textbook or searching for internet resources summarizing Erikson's stages.

1. Describe your earliest encounters with the central themes and challenges of each stage. Don't worry about

whether your experience corresponds to its critical time period. For example, many of us face regret and the reality of our mortality long before we reach the latter years of our lives.

2. Describe your current encounters with the central themes and challenges of each stage. For some themes, you will be well acquainted with your ongoing encounter with the challenges and your growth; for others, you may only have had a few iterations with the themes or not many at all. It's all good!
 3. After you have reflected on each stage, do certain themes arise? What is new, inspiring, or alarming?
 4. Use your own ongoing encounters with developmental (wisdom-making) challenges to deepen your awareness of the challenges faced by each of your students. Also, use this renewed encounter with developmental processes to feed your thinking when designing scaffolded social-emotional learning experiences with your students.
-

Stage (*Life Cycle*) Infancy **Age** (*Relative*) 0-12 months

Crisis (*Challenge*) Trust v. Mistrust

Outcome: Ego Quality (A *Strength*) **Hope**: Enduring belief despite dark urges and rages (fear). I can trust despite risk.

Outcome: Core Pathology (A *Vulnerability*) **Withdrawal**: Social and emotional detachment.

Your Earliest Encounter Reflections:

Your Current Encounter Reflections:

Stage (*Life Cycle*) Toddler **Age** (*Relative*) 1-3 years

Crisis (*Challenge*) Autonomy v. Shame and Doubt

Outcome: Ego Quality (A *Strength*) **Will**: Increased judgement and decision in drive application despite shame and doubt. Engage rather than avoid.

Outcome: Core Pathology (A *Vulnerability*) **Compulsion**: Any behavior we repeat on impulse or to resist impulse to distract against shame & doubt.

Your Earliest Encounter Reflections:

Your Current Encounter Reflections:

Stage (*Life Cycle*) Early Childhood **Age** (*Relative*) 3–6 years

Crisis (*Challenge*) Initiative v. Guilt

Outcome: Ego Quality (A *Strength*) **Purpose**: Courage to envision and pursue goals despite guilt, fear, self-sabotage impulses.

Outcome: Core Pathology (A *Vulnerability*) **Inhibition**: Psychological restraint (i.e., ignoring, denying) against freedom of thought, expression, activity.

Your Earliest Encounter Reflections:

Your Current Encounter Reflections:

Stage (*Life Cycle*) School Age **Age** (*Relative*) 6–12 years

Crisis (*Challenge*) Industry v. Inferiority

Outcome: Ego Quality (A *Strength*) **Competence**: Free use of skill and intellect unimpaired by infantile inferiority (deep sense of inferiority, fear of judgement, failure).

Outcome: Core Pathology (A *Vulnerability*) **Inertia**: Paralysis of action, thought; prevents work; lack of confidence that it is OK to succeed or fail.

Your Earliest Encounter Reflections:

Your Current Encounter Reflections:

Stage (*Life Cycle*) Adolescent **Age** (*Relative*) 12–18 years

Crisis (*Challenge*) Identity v. Role Confusion

Outcome: Ego Quality (A *Strength*) **Fidelity**: Sustain loyalties (trustworthiness) freely given despite inevitable value system contradictions. Community is not about sameness.

Outcome: Core Pathology (A *Vulnerability*) **Isolation**: Lack of connections; withdraw.

Your Earliest Encounter Reflections:

Your Current Encounter Reflections:

Stage (*Life Cycle*) Young Adult **Age** (*Relative*) 18-34 years

Crisis (*Challenge*) Intimacy v. Isolation

Outcome: Ego Quality (A Strength) **Love**: Mutual devotion subduing antagonisms of divided function. "I love you even though you are SO different than me."

Outcome: Core Pathology (A Vulnerability) **Exclusivity**: Elitist shutting out of others we do not accept or who do not conform to our standards.

Your Earliest Encounter Reflections:

Your Current Encounter Reflections:

Stage (*Life Cycle*) Maturity **Age** (*Relative*) 35-55 years

Crisis (*Challenge*) Generativity v. Self-Absorption

Outcome: Ego Quality (A Strength) **Care**: Widening concern for what generated by love, necessity, or accident.

Outcome: Core Pathology (A Vulnerability) **Rejectivity**: Unwilling to include certain others in one's generative concern.

Your Earliest Encounter Reflections:

Your Current Encounter Reflections:

Stage (*Life Cycle*) Old Age **Age** (*Relative*) 55 years and older

Crisis (*Challenge*) Integrity v. Despair and Disgust

Outcome: Ego Quality (A *Strength*) **Wisdom**: *Detached* (it's not about me and what I want), active concern (*care*) in face of death (temporality of all things).

Outcome: Core Pathology (A *Vulnerability*) **Indifference**: No care; withdraw and inertia. Bitterness: Scorn for self and other.

Your Earliest Encounter Reflections:

Your Current Encounter Reflections:

Worksheet A-3: Your Domains of Neural Integration

Take in all that you have observed about your own functioning as you worked through the questions in Chapter 2, examined Figure 2.5, and read through the remainder of this text. Note a few summary thoughts regarding how well and where you struggle with each domain, remembering that each of these elements contributes to integrated, whole functioning, often referred to as *mindfulness*. Identify an experience that may have been a catalyst for growth in each domain, as well as a goal you might have for continued growth. Use your reflections as part of your *Person of the Educator* and Compassion Fatigue Self-Care Plan discussed in Chapter 12. Neural integration is the nuts and bolts of what wisdom-making might look like—something we nurture our entire lives; we are all on a journey with each domain. Where are you?

Consciousness:
Vertical:
Horizontal:
Memory:
State:
Narrative:
Interpersonal:
Temporal:
Transpirational:

Appendix B

Assessing Risk, Resilience, and States of Neural Integration

Worksheet B-1: Identifying Risk and Resilience

In Chapter 3, we discussed Stress and Coping theory, a metaframe for identifying factors that contribute to our capacity to be resilient or at risk when under stress or recovering from a traumatic event. Using the examples provided in Chapter 3, identify a current or previous student of concern, and apply the constructs of the metatheory as indicated in each of the four boxes. Refer to Chapter 3 for concept descriptions and the example we discussed of Charlotte and Ben.

Instructions:

1. *Student of Concern*: Describe the life history, academic, or social-emotional struggles you observed that contributed to your concern. Remember to use pseudonyms, and obscure all identifying data.
2. *Describe Observations*: To the best of your recollection, describe identifying features or behavioral indicators for each of the four elements below.
3. Use this information at the conclusion of working through Worksheet B-2 to aid in the design of scaffolded social-emotional skill building, as discussed in Section II of this text.

Stressor Descriptions

A = Event

-
-
- Internal; and
 - External

B = Resources

C = Perspectives

$(A)+(B)+(C) = (X)$

X = Signs of Coping and Distress

Worksheet B-2: Domains of Neural Integration Assessment and Planning

Instructions:

Refer to your reflections in Worksheet A-3 and Figure 2.5 for a description of each domain.

- 1. In column 2, “Observed Strengths,” identify how your student is displaying strengths and abilities in this domain.
- 2. In column 3, “Observed Struggles,” identify limits or difficulties in this domain.
- 3. In column 4, identify skill-building social-emotional learning activities to increase student awareness of, and abilities in, this domain.
- 4. Refer to this worksheet again in Section II as you develop a Classroom Action Plan for TISP Phase II activities.

Domains of Neural Integration	Observed Strengths	Observed Struggles	Activities to Teach About the Domain and Strength
Consciousness:			
Vertical:			
Horizontal:			
Memory:			
State:			
Narrative:			
Interpersonal:			
Temporal:			
Transpirational:			

Appendix C

Trauma-Informed School Practices (TISP) Certification Program

For full details, visit the [Trauma-Informed School Initiative \(TSI\) at the Trauma Response Institute](#)

Trauma-Informed School Initiative (TSI)

Information

What is the TSI?

The TSI is a collaborative initiative with George Fox University's School of Education and Trauma Response Institute and school districts seeking to implement best practices in trauma-informed school methods.

Mission: Our mission is to collaborate with districts desiring to implement trauma-informed school methods to facilitate developmental processes central to student learning and well-being.

Link for more info:

<https://www.georgefox.edu/counseling-programs/clinics/tri/Trauma-Informed%20School%20Initiative/index.html>

TISP 500: Introduction to Trauma & Trauma-Informed Care

(TISP Phase I)

Children and the nature of trauma

- Lifespan impact: ACES data

- Neurobiology of trauma

- Impact on cognitive and social development

- Impact in the classroom and across the lifespan

- Overview of best practices

- Review of the literature

Course Outcome: As the educator understands the bio-psycho-social impact of unmitigated stress and trauma, the importance of neural network integration to facilitate learning is now understood.

TISP 501: Trauma-Informed School Practices

(TISP Phase I)

Neural network regulation and school engagement

- Attachment theory and child development

- Trauma-Informed School Practices Tri-Phasic Model as best practice response

- Focus on school attachment practices for educators, both certified and classified, and administration

- Craft short-range implementation action plan

Course Outcome: As the educator assesses current effective TI school programming and best practices to support neural network integration, work will begin on designing Trauma-Informed School Practices suitable for your district, school, and/or classroom.

TISP 502: TISP Implementation Strategic Planning

(TISP Phase I)

Assess system readiness for TISP

- Develop District and School Strategic Planning Teams

- Develop Educator Action Plans

- Prepare and practice role-plays for Phase I Classroom Implementation

Course Outcome: The Educator will complete a comprehensive assessment of TISP readiness within their district, school, and classroom, develop a timeline, and increase skills for Phase I implementation.

TISP 503: Trauma-Informed SEL and Classroom Management

(TISP Phase II)

Identify goals of social-emotional skills building as part of *Coaching* to facilitate neural integration

- Use perceptual and conceptual skills to design scaffolded SEL skills as student responds to TISP

- Evaluate the conceptual and practice elements of your school's student management culture and processes

- Articulate your TISP classroom management system, and how the culture of the classroom mirrors your methods and desired outcomes

- Identify how to use authority and compassion

- Honor student voices to promote personal responsibility

Course Outcome: Applying trauma-informed knowledge, the educator will re-envision and design classroom practices, strategies, management, and routines congruent with Phase II of the TISP Tri-Phasic Model.

TISP 504: Developing *Person of the Educator* Competencies: Self-Care Survival Guide

(TISP Phase I, II, III)

Guided self-assessment to identify and reduce personal triggers

Model the whole-system approach: treat self and coworkers as you treat and teach students; a consistent relational ethic as the antidote to trauma injury

Create a self-care plan as a part of the TISP implementation plan

Course Outcome: By applying TISP *Person of the Educator* principles, the Educator will be able to identify a professional ethic of care for self and coworkers designed to support staff, nurture well-being, and prevent compassion fatigue and burnout.

TISP 505: Trauma-Informed School Practices Coaching I

(TISP Phase I, II)

Ongoing for 1 academic term

Prerequisites: TISP 500 and 501

Can co-occur with TISP 502 and 503

Assess completeness and progress of plan initially mapped out in TISP 501

Based on implementation timeline and needs, design strategies in response

Identify assessment processes as part of design in preparation for TISP 507

Course Outcome: The educator will develop initial perceptual, conceptual, and executive TISP skills by participating in a group supervision/coaching process whereby one's work, detailed in a video clip and written case study, is presented.

TISP 506: Trauma-Informed School Practices Coaching II

(TISP Phase II, III)

Ongoing for 1 academic term

Must co-occur with TISP 503

Prerequisites: TISP 500, 501, 505

Participate in face-to-face and online synchronous peer consultation

Case consult; problem-solve; role-play

Summarize progress through case studies and presentations

Course Outcome: The educator will deepen perceptual, conceptual, and executive TISP skills by participating in a group supervision/coaching process whereby one's work, detailed in a video clip and written case study, is presented. The primary focus will be on scaffolding social-emotional and TISP behavioral management skills.

TISP 507: Data Gathering and Analysis

(TISP Phase III)

Consult for 1 academic year

Advised to co-occur with TISP 504, or with TISP 505 and 506.

Identify stages of assessing TISP efficacy, beginning with assessing TISP accuracy and stage of development

Implement and monitor data-gathering procedures

Analyze incoming data to ID immediate needs and desired course corrections

Engage in short- and long-term planning based on results

Collate and present results

Course Outcome: The Educator will be able to identify TISP efficacy and needed improvements, and share lessons learned with professional educator communities.

Appendix D

Trauma-Informed Tri-Phasic Model Dispositions

Disposition 1: Trauma-informed educators create environments that promote the neural integration of their members (students and educators) in order to maximize students' academic and social success at each developmental stage.

Disposition 2: Trauma-informed educators commit to learning the knowledge, skills, and dispositions required to implement trauma-informed practices according to their role and context in order to promote safe and effective learning communities.

Disposition 3: Trauma-informed educators are committed to embedding trauma-informed rituals and practices within the daily, weekly, and seasonal routines of a school and classroom, providing a sense of repetition that deepens internal safety and stabilization. Repetition also emphasizes that basic TISP building blocks are continual and constant, not merely a phase that is completed in order to move to the next phase.

Disposition 4: Trauma-informed educators are aware of socio-cultural factors that increase student risk or resilience, and they are committed to creating an educational environment that is welcoming, safe, and inclusive of all persons.

Disposition 5: Trauma-informed educators are committed to a consistent ethic of care whereby the relational values offered to students are extended to self and one another.

Disposition 6: Trauma-informed educators understand the primacy of attachment theory, and its emphasis on attunement, to the neural development of students and adults throughout the lifespan.

Disposition 7: Trauma-informed educators are committed to attending to *Person of the Educator* wellness practices in recognition of their vulnerability to secondary trauma. This includes a commitment to understanding their own relational and developmental history influencing their own neural integration, foundational to strengthening resilience and well-being.

Disposition 8: Trauma-informed educators recognize that the success of trauma-informed practices requires involvement and support from all levels of the school system: administration, school, staff, classroom (including students), and community (school board and caretakers).

Disposition 9: Trauma-informed educators understand the primacy of attachment theory, and its emphasis on mentoring, to the neural development of students and adults throughout the lifespan.

Disposition 10: Trauma-informed educators understand that student behavior, in part, is often a reflection of unintegrated neural networks due to past and/or current unmitigated stress and trauma, and require the student to first establish a sense of safety and stability prior to commencing with here-and-now developmental expectations.

Disposition 11: Trauma-informed educators understand that persons all along the lifespan are influenced by past experiences shaping perceptions and emotional responses. It is a lifelong task to understand this connection while learning to self-regulate in the face of intense emotional responses to current events.

Disposition 12: Trauma-informed educators are aware that students process unmitigated stress and trauma in both direct and indirect ways as they engage in all aspects of the trauma-informed educational environment, and are able to offer an attuned and mentoring response.

Disposition 13: Trauma-informed educators are skilled in attuning to grief and mourning responses that often accompany academic engagement as neural networks integrate, which allow for deeper connection to memory and its meaning to occur.

Disposition 14: Trauma-informed education systems include licensed mental health professionals available for students requesting or needing access to professional trauma-informed recovery services.

Disposition 15: Trauma-informed educators understand how to weave *Connecting* and *Coaching* practices into academic lesson plans, as the learning process, both the process of learning and the content to master, is also crucial to the integration of neural networks impacted by unmitigated stress and trauma.

Disposition 16: Trauma-informed educators understand the nature of a student's academic and social-emotional functioning in the classroom, and how best to meet the individual needs of each student, whether in a traditional classroom or with additional assistance.

Disposition 17: Trauma-informed educators advocate on local, state, and national levels for greater understanding of the neurobiological impacts on a student when either (a) the student cannot self-regulate or (b) the student is repeatedly exposed to peers unable to self-regulate, leading to frequent episodes of classroom disruption. This constant state of dysregulation and exposure to peers in such states cause more stress and trauma for all students.

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