



American Counseling Association

School Counselor Connection

Trauma-Informed Approaches for Counselors in Elementary Schools

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Due to the growing trend of school violence, school counselors must be knowledgeable about trauma's damaging impact on student well-being and academic success. Since trauma can have devastating effects on the developing brain, early intervention is crucial. It has been found that children who have experienced trauma are more likely to react to stressors with their "fight or flight" reptilian brain versus their more reasoning prefrontal cortex. Building relationships with students who have experienced adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), including trauma, is an important way to help children feel re-connected. School counselors play key roles as leaders, advocates and change agents in helping to facilitate an overall shift to a trauma-informed mindset in schools.

Some Resources/Helpful Links:

<https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/childabuseandneglect/acestudy/index.html>

<https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/preventing/preventionmonth/resources/ace/>

<https://www.integration.samhsa.gov/clinical-practice/trauma>

Trauma-Informed Best Practices

Collaboration with Teachers and School Staff:

- Help brainstorm creative ideas regarding building ongoing positive relationships & creating welcoming individual classroom and school environments, to include calm/safe spaces
- Provide education concerning the impact of trauma on the brain and learning
- Create awareness regarding the trauma response when students experience stressors
- Help provide strategies regarding supporting frustrated students, including de-escalation, feelings management & regulation, mindfulness, and relaxation techniques

Collaboration with Parents:

- Connect with parents during school-wide events, parent conferences, and daily activities to build positive relationships
- Provide education regarding the impact of trauma on the brain and student learning
- Facilitate a parent workshop/event to provide ideas and strategies to help them support their children, including discussions about feelings management & regulation, mindfulness and relaxation techniques
- Educate parents about their rights, as well as ways to connect with teachers and school staff regarding support for their children

Working with Students:

- Connect with and build relationships with students in creative ways, including being visible and available during arrival/dismissal, lunch/recess
- Connect with students during daily/weekly visits to the classroom
- Facilitate a lunch bunch fun group for counseling
- Work with students individually as needed
- Educate students about their feelings (how to manage & regulate them), trauma, their brain, mindfulness, relaxation techniques, self-awareness, and how to recognize their own triggers