

Trauma informed training/Classroom tips for engagement

You are a Kingdom Builder - it is our vision to see children enter a lifelong relationship with Jesus!

Healed in Relationship

Adverse childhood experiences harm the developing child and as we will discover, it often shows up through confusing or negative behaviors.

A child can learn to trust and receive love and correction. A caregiver can learn patience, how to adjust expectations and love unconditionally. We serve a transformational Savior who will create new paths, heal wounds, and bring new life.

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here! 2 Corinthians 5:17

Physical presence is simply not enough. Children, teens, and adults all need the emotional and relational presence of others. It's simply how God wired us as human beings.

How can you help?

- Adjust Expectations
 - Knowing what you now know about how early adverse childhood experiences impact a developing child, consider how you view a child from trauma. Do you need to manage your expectations of them?

According to the National Child Traumatic Stress Institute trauma may look like:

<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Hyperactivity or Hypervigilance● Increased medical problems● Problems with boundaries● Oppositional behavior● Self-destructive behavior● Difficulties with focusing or regulation● Sleep disturbances	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Social isolation● Poor motor skills● Flat affect or shut down state of being● Anger and/or aggression● Reenactment of past trauma experiences● Altered perception of reality● Withdrawn or distant
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- Shift Attitudes
 - View behavior as the language of unmet needs.
 - Not all defiant actions and attitudes are truly willful.
 - Regulating emotions and impulses are difficult for those with a history of trauma.
 - A quiet, crying, complaining, or controlling child may have sensory issues, become dehydrated quicker or process information slower.

When we shift our response in such a way, we are addressing the root and heart of the matter rather than reacting to a symptomatic behavior. Learning to view behavior as the language of unmet needs, we can better partner with parents and caregivers to explore what's really going on with the child or teen.

- Be Attentive

Children notice, more than you might realize, when adults are not present or paying attention. The reality is, **YOU matter in their stories.** Your presence and attentiveness as a safe and healthy adult or caregiver **is important and needed.**

Hurt by Grief and Loss – Healed by Yes

- Grief is the unique journey of processing, feeling, experiencing, fighting, and embracing a loss or losses.

How can you help?

- Tend to your own grief and loss.
 - Are there any emotions that you are uncomfortable with?
 - Are there any emotions that are more acceptable or easier for you to experience?
 - Ask yourself, "Why is that?"
 - Have you given your own losses time and space to be grieved?
 - Is your tendency to avoid the pain of facing your own losses impacting those around you?

- Encourage healthy forms of expressing grief and coping loss:

<p>Unhealthy expressions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Destructive behavior ● Hitting or hurting others/animals ● Running away ● Yelling, screaming, cursing ● Shutting self in room, closet, vehicle, etc. ● Excessive avoidance ● Dissociation ● Drugs, alcohol, or sexualized behavior 	<p>Healthy expressions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Crying/weeping ● Create ritual to honor grief/loss ● Allowing others to comfort them ● Journaling or writing letters ● Attending a support group ● Using words to safely express big emotions ● Attending counseling ● Praying & mediating ● Exercise
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Something to keep in mind: SAD often looks MAD. Ultimately, anger tends to be a secondary emotion with another emotion being at the core.

- Find Ways to Say Yes:

"No, you can't have the toys right now. It's snack time."

"Yes, we can get the toys back out after our snack time."

"No you can't leave the class and go to the water fountain by yourself."

"Yes, you can go to the water fountain after everyone finishes snacks."

"No, you can't take four pieces of pizza."

"Yes, you can have another slice of pizza after everyone has gotten theirs."

"No, you can't hang out with your friend right now."

"Yes, you can hang out with your friend when we all finish lunch."

Healed through Attachment

- Implement Attachment Rituals

The goal is not for Sunday School teachers or church helpers to form deep attachments to children but rather, support the attachments of infants/children/teens and their foster, adoptive parents or primary caregivers.

Recognize and support the primary caregiver by asking this question at drop-off in front of the child: **"Is it okay if I am the boss of your child during Sunday school class?"**

- Go Get Parent When Needed

Though it is certainly less convenient, ALWAYS be willing to get the parent if a child truly needs the emotional or relational support of their caregiver. You may have to do this for several weeks or months before the child no longer needs the parent to come back.

Healed in Relationship & Play

- Be **Self-Aware** and **Safe**
 - Connection Contributes to Felt Safety
 - Tone of Voice
 - Facial Expressions
 - Body Language
- Create **Routines & Transitions**
 - Consistency matters.
 - Consistent routines in ministry programming
 - Consistent volunteers
 - Time for Transitions
- Correct by **Using Play**
 - Playfulness increases chemistry of healing and reduces chemistry of fear.
- **Think Hopefully** & Build Resilience

"The single most common factor for children who develop resilience is at least one stable and committed relationship with a supportive parent, caregiver, or other adult."

Dr. Karyn Purvis

Healed by Needs Met

- Understanding Sensory Needs & Triggers
 - Be the Detective - Meet the Needs

In order to better understand the children and teens in our ministry, we must tune into their behaviors and tendencies.

- What is a trigger?
 - A trigger is a stress reaction.
 - Sight
 - Sound
 - Smell
 - Touch
 - Experience
- Triggers vs. Behavior Issue
 - The difference is the child's capacity to regulate their body and emotions and manage their actions.

How can you help?

- When Triggered...
 - Emphasize **safety**
 - **Help** him or her to **regulate again**
 - Focus on **your response**
- Emphasizing felt safety and helping a child or teen calm down should always be the first response to being triggered.
 - Take deep breaths
 - Be aware of physical demeanor, facial expression
 - Be aware of tone of voice
 - Soften EVERYTHING at that moment.
- Become a Helper: Help a Child Regulate
 - Calmly listen and when there is a chance, say phrases like:
 - "You're okay"
 - "You're safe"
 - "I want to help"
 - "Let's take a few deep breaths together"
 - "I want to meet your needs, let's figure this out together"

- Provide a Sensory-Rich Environment & Healthy Snack
- Be a Partner with Parents
 - Invite parents to share with Sunday School teachers and youth workers the sensory needs or possible triggering events for children.

Healed by Connection

- True connection doesn't happen with just good intentions.

Ways to Connect:






- **Connect** Physically **through Safe Touch**
 - Start by asking for permission
- Ways to engage in safe touch in your church ministry:
 - Creative and unique handshakes
 - Fist bumps
 - High fives
- **Connect** Emotionally **through Empathy**
 - Lead with empathy then problem-solve
- **Connect through Play**
 - Play brings JOY.
 - In play, a child or teen can learn:
 - I am valued and I matter.
 - My interests aren't stupid.
 - This adult feels safe and I may even be able to trust them.

How can I correct? How do I discipline, not punish?

- Behaviors are the language of unmet needs and they must be addressed.

What can you do about behavior?

- Remember WHO and WHOSE the child is.
- Ask: "What do you need?" or "How can I help?"
- Try to meet the needs that might be under the surface:

NEED		RESPONSE
Biological		Empower brain & body for success with a drink or a snack
Emotional		Offering good eye contact and possibly a hug
Cognitive		Repeating or reframing the instructions slowly
Prosocial		Giving space and time to take a breath and calm down
Social		Coaching why he or she cannot do that behavior

- Ask “What Emotion are you feeling right now?”
 - When we are able to name the emotion, it has less power over us.
 - Use an emotion chart and have kids identify how they are feeling.
- Offer a Re-do
 - Dr. Ross Greene says, “Children do well if they can.”

Giving a second chance can create a grace-filled, teaching moment.

- Always keep lines of communication open with parents and caregivers when it comes to correcting behaviors.
 - Work together on behalf of the child or teen!

How Can We Build Resilience?

A resilient child is able to adapt and adjust with difficulties. Children are not born with resilience; resilience is built in relationships!

How Can You Help?

- Don't do everything FOR a child but rather, do things WITH them.
- Help kids understand and accept their strengths and weaknesses.
- Empower them to ask for help.
- Model hopefulness and problem-solving.
- Express your belief in them.
- Help them set realistic goals.
- Share stories of resilient people.
- Identify their gifts and help them use them!

For further information and study, America's Children Belong offers a [free online trauma training course](#) for faith leaders.