

Understanding Trauma

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ABUSE



Physical



Emotional



Sexual

NEGLECT



Physical



Emotional

HOUSEHOLD DYSFUNCTION



Mental Illness



Incarcerated Relative



Mother treated violently



Substance Abuse



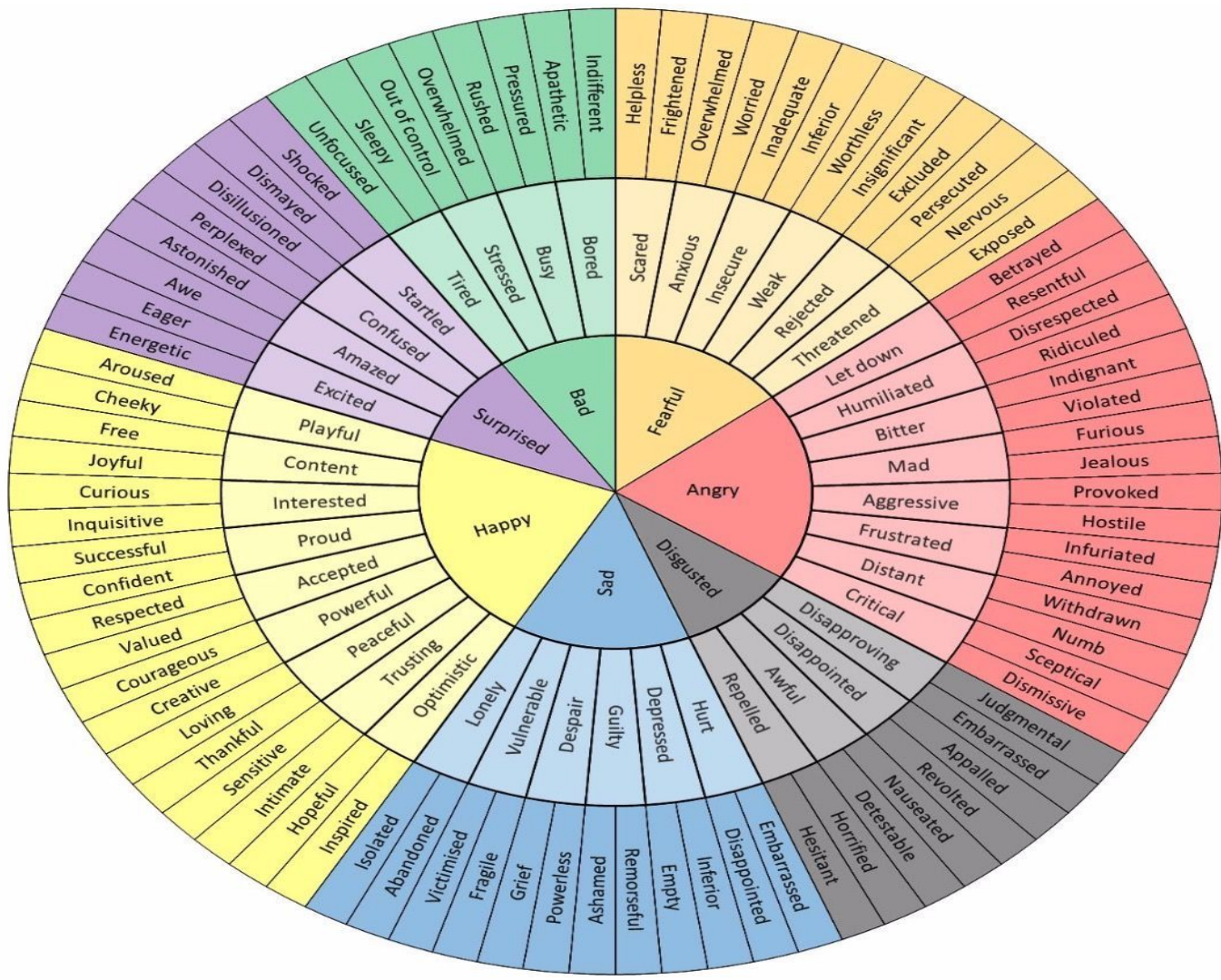
Divorce

Brain Areas and Functions

Brain Structure	Function
Brain Stem (Basic Housekeeping)	Non-conscious physiological functions (e.g., breathing, digestion, arousal, sleep/wake, hunger/satiation, chemical balance)
Cerebellum	Muscle movement/coordination
Hippocampus	Memory center, retrieval of verbal/emotional memory
Amygdala	Emotions, aggressive behaviors, fight/flight or freeze
Prefrontal Cortex	Executive Functions, planning and anticipation, sense of time and context, inhibition of inappropriate actions, empathic understanding

Education, Emotions and the Brain

- Students who show the most impulsive and aggressive behavior have the least access to verbalizing and discussing their emotions
- Attending patiently to student's emotions and their effects as a central part of classroom processes will lead to improved personal and academic outcomes
- Of particular importance is the manner in which teachers promote cognitive and interpersonal decision making and problem solving in the classroom
- Helping students practice the first steps in developing frontal lobe functions of interpersonal awareness and self-control is a vital part of teaching, these include:
 - Developing awareness of emotional processes in self and others
 - Applying verbal labels to emotions
 - Encouraging perspective taking
 - Empathic identification with others
- Regulate, Relate, Reason



How Trauma Impact Students

Develop an expectation that bad things will happen to them

- They overestimate times when they are in danger, or are fearful or withdrawn even in situations that feel safe to other people.

Have a hard time forming relationships with other people

- When relationships are not consistently safe, students may develop a sense of mistrust

Have difficulty regulating or managing feelings and behavior

- Students are flooded by strong emotions and high levels of arousal. Students may feel like they are unable to rely on others to help them with these feelings. Without tools, students may try to overcontrol or shut down their emotional experience (be silly, get in fights, engage in power struggles, rely on substances or self injure)

Have difficulty developing a positive sense of self

- Students may feel damaged, powerless, ashamed, and/or unlovable. It is often easier for students to blame themselves for bad things happening, than to blame caregivers. Over time students may believe there is something wrong with them.

How Trauma Impacts Attachment

Have difficulty attaching to adults, especially authority figures

Healthy attachment to loving, supportive, and non-abusive adults is vital for proper brain development

Attachment can be disrupted at any age and profoundly affect normal development but the younger and more profound the disruption, the worse the developmental impact

Attachment and Attunement Tips for Teachers

- **Observe body language, facial expressions, impulsive comments** (non-verbal methods of communication)
- **Show genuine empathy with a caring response** (i.e. Warm individualized greeting upon entering your room)
- **Validation after difficult experiences** (i.e. “It seems you are having a difficult time, what can I do to help you?”)
- **Maintain structured relationship as boundaries can often appear blurred** (i.e. caregiver vs. teacher, trauma reactions)

Trauma's Impact on Social Functioning

- Chaotic and unstable living environments = minimal engagement in school and decreased learning (i.e. environmental deprivation)
- Student wrestles teacher for control (causing power struggles and conflict)
- Student does not attach to school and therefore does not care or know how to build healthy relationships with others
- Poor peer relationships = unpleasant school experience resulting in continued trauma

Circumstances that Elicit Emotion in Schools

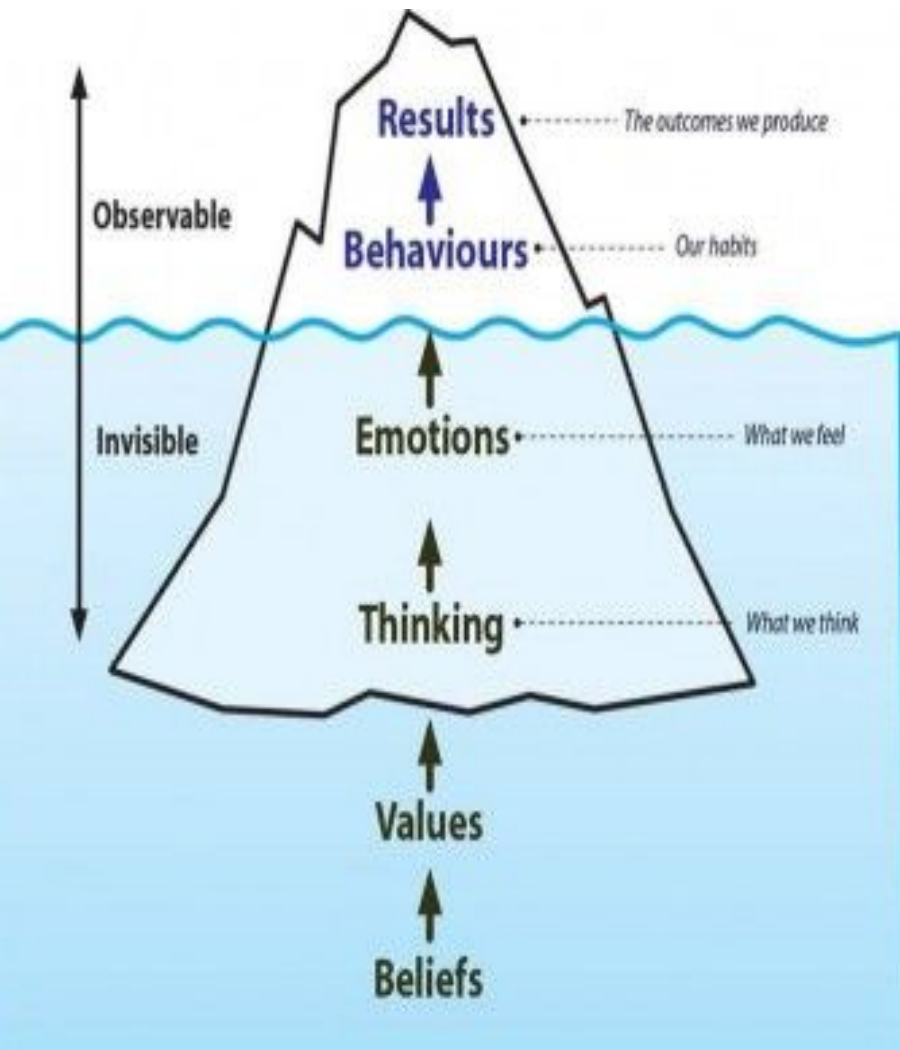
- Moderately high and constant levels of noise stimulate anger which can lead to verbal or behavioral outbursts (i.e. cafeteria, large assemblies)
- Escalating and undigested information stimulates fear or anxiety whether the information is contained in intellectual problems in the classroom or hallways
- Spatial arrangements that prevent privacy, concentration, and attachment (i.e. overstimulating environments, lack of 1:1 interactions)

Behaviors that Trigger Mistrust

- Silence
- Requesting eye contact
- Abruptness
- Snubbing
- Insults
- Blaming
- Discrediting
- Aggressive and controlling behavior
- Overtly threatening behavior
- Yelling and shouting
- Embarrassment
- Angry outbursts
- Secretive decision making
- Indirect communication
- Lack of responsiveness to input
- Mixed messages
- Aloofness
- Unethical conduct

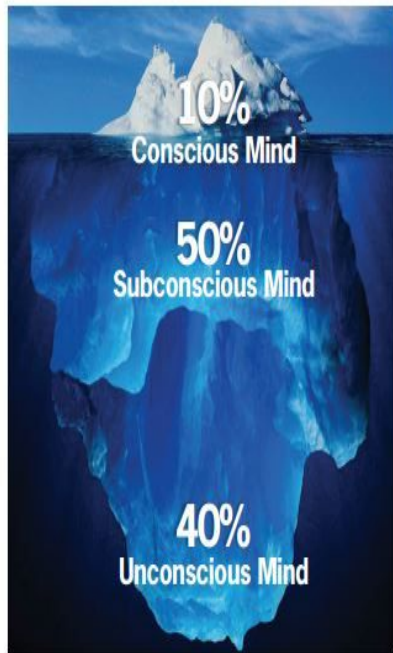
10 Things About Childhood Trauma Every Teacher Needs to Know

1. Students who have experienced trauma aren't trying to push your buttons
2. Students who have been through trauma worry about what's going to happen next
3. Even if the situation doesn't seem that bad to you, it's how the student feels that matters
4. Trauma isn't always associated with violence
5. You don't need to know exactly what caused the trauma to be able to help
6. Students who experience trauma need to feel they're good at something and can influence the world
7. There's a direct connection between stress and learning
8. Self-regulation can be a major challenge for students suffering from trauma
9. It's OK to ask students what you can do to help them make it through the day
10. You can support students with trauma even when they're outside your classroom



The Human Mind *and* How It Works

The mind is like an Iceberg with positive and negative thoughts, memories and beliefs.



Conscious Mind Controls:

- Always available & accessible information
- Willpower
- Decision Making
- Thinking Logically

Subconscious Mind Controls:

- Data you have to dig to access
- Reoccurring thoughts
- Behaviors, habits & feelings
- Recent memories

Unconscious Mind Controls:

- Memories, Beliefs & Habits from age 0 - 7
- Traumatic Stored Events
- Phobias & Addictions
- Information that's kept hidden, locked & resists change
- Overriding information stored in other two areas
- You & Your Life

The Trauma Cycle

	Child	Parent	Teacher
Thoughts:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● I'm bad, a failure, no one cares about me ● I can't trust anyone ● I don't belong 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● I am in ineffective parent ● This kid is bad; is causing trouble and making things hard on everyone ● School is failing my child 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● I am an ineffective teacher ● This kid/family is impossible; they're failing themselves/their kid
Feelings:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Shame, anger, fear, hopelessness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Frustration, sadness, helplessness, fear 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Frustration, helplessness, indifference
Actions:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Avoidance, aggression, noncompliance, rejecting help 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Overreacting, shutting down, overly permissive 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Disconnection, dismissing, ignoring, punitive response
The Cycle:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● I'm being controlled; I have to fight harder 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● I have to gain control. Or - why bother anymore? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● I have to gain control. Or - why bother anymore?

Resiliency and Protective Factors

- Close relationships with competent caregivers or other caring adults
- Parent resilience
- Caregiver knowledge and application of positive parenting skills
- Identifying and cultivating a sense of purpose (faith, culture, identity)
- Individual developmental competencies (problem solving skills, self-regulation, agency)
- Children's social and emotional health
- Social connections
- Socioeconomic advantages and concrete support for parents and families
- Communities and social systems that support health and development, and nurture human capital

Secondary Trauma in Classrooms

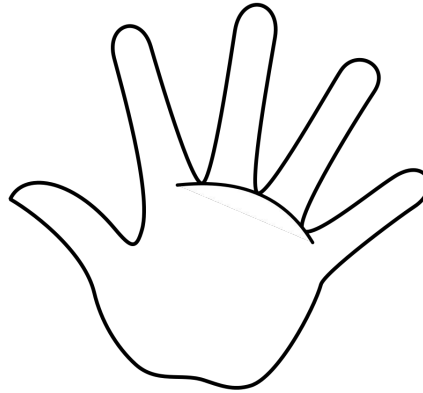
Secondary Trauma = exposure to others' trauma that overwhelms one's own healthy coping and meaning-making

- Marked by perceived loss of control and vulnerability
- Can trigger one's own traumatic emotions and memories
- Can shape one's worldview
- Can cause symptoms similar to PTSD

Helping professionals (particularly public school educators) are at high risk of secondary trauma exposure and its impacts

We can all positively impact students!

Make an outline of your hand



Write one thing you can do as a teacher in your classroom to support students who have experienced trauma, loss, or experience mental health challenges

Additional Resources

<http://www.beaconhouse.org.uk/>

Books:

Supporting and Educating Traumatized Students - Eric Rossen & Robert Hull

Helping Traumatized Children Learn (Purple Book) - Mass Advocates for Children

Fostering Resilient Learners - Kristin Souers with Pete Hall

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

-Bruce Perry



www.southernsandtray.com

"Students don't care how much you know until they know how much you care."

UPJOURNEY