



# Office of College and Career Readiness: Department of School Climate & Support

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# Agenda

- Increasing Wellness, Decreasing Toxic Stress: Overview of Trauma Informed Schools
- Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports (PBIS) Overview
- Tips on Handling Crisis Situations



# Introduction

- Everyone in SPPS plays a role in helping all students feel safe and connected during the school day.
- Every interaction with students creates opportunities to feel safe and assured, resulting in increased safety for everyone.



# We Believe Behavior is:

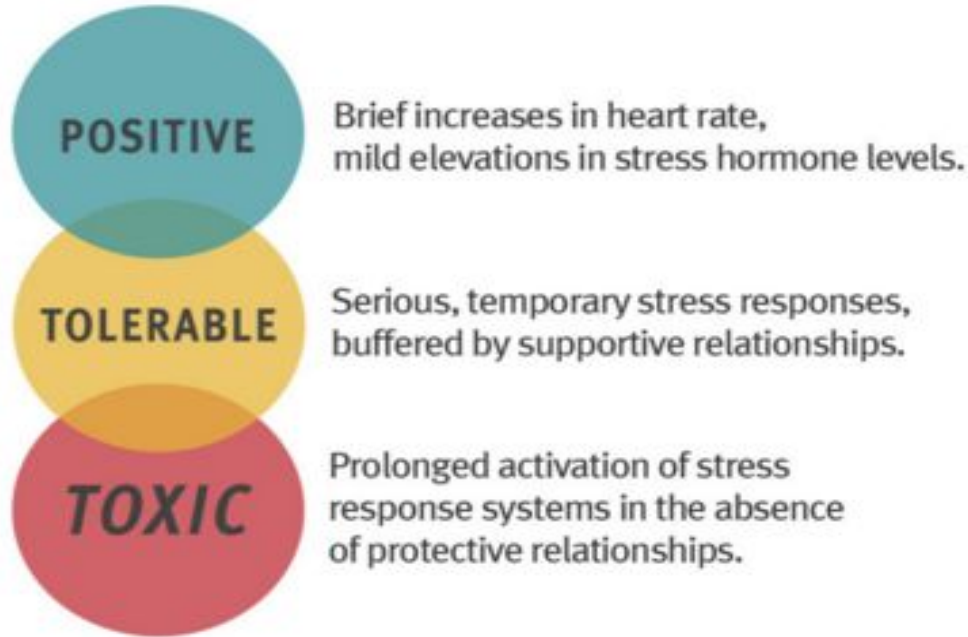
- A form of communication
- In response to a trigger
- Serves a function
- Fight, Flight or Freeze response
- Something that may need to be taught



# What is a trauma-informed school system?

1. All staff understand the impact of trauma on learning and behaviors.
2. It is sensitive to students' unique needs.
3. Steps are taken to reduce triggers and to avoid re-traumatization.
4. The use of universal precautions to keep all student and staff brains calm.

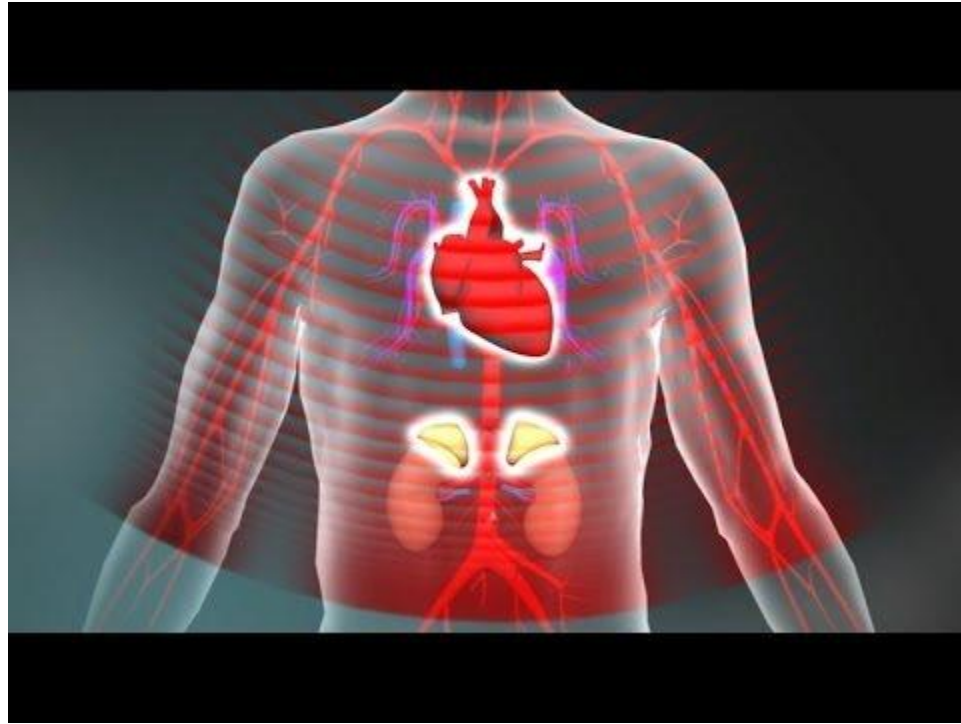
# Stress vs. Toxic Stress



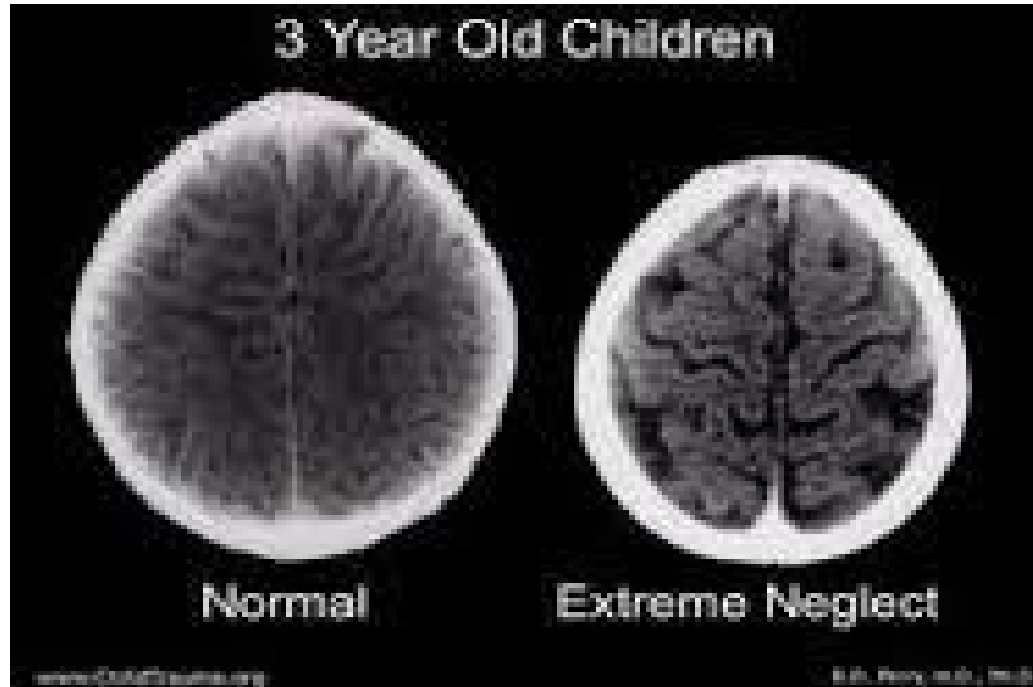
Center on the Developing Child, Harvard University

<http://developingchild.harvard.edu/science/key-concepts/toxic-stress/>

# Toxic Stress Derails Healthy Development



# Developmental Trauma & Impact on the Brain





# Fight/Flight/Freeze

- Fight response- physical aggression is used for defense or offense when feeling threatened.
- Flight response- escaping to avoid the danger when feeling threatened.
- Freeze response- The body becomes still to scan for danger or to attempt to avoid detection when feeling threatened.

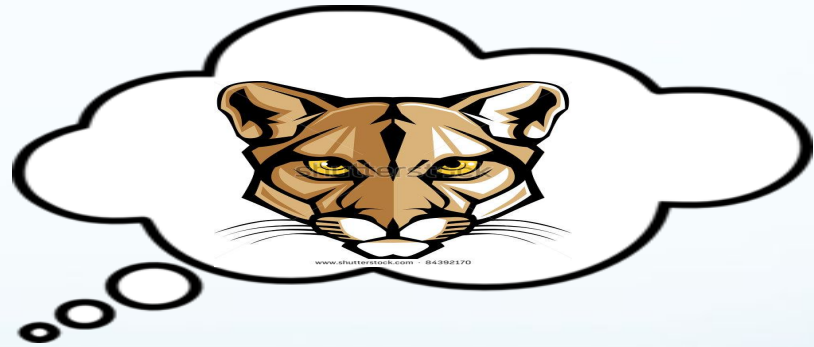


# Baby Bear Video



# Understanding the Brain: Fight, Flight, and Freeze responses-

“Threats of danger, whether real or not (e.g. symbols or flashbacks) seem real and can trigger the freeze-fight-flight response” – The Heart of Learning and Teaching.



# Understanding the Brain: Fight, Flight, and Freeze responses-

The fight response



# Understanding the Brain: Fight, Flight, and Freeze responses-

The flight response



# Understanding the Brain: Fight, Flight, and Freeze responses-



Acting withdrawn or frightened



# Understanding the Brain: Fight, Flight, and Freeze responses-

Some scholars seem to not care about consequences



# Trauma can alter brain functioning, however...



The brain can also be rewired to adaptively heal through a process called ***neuroplasticity***.





# Practical Strategies

- Attunement: Get in sync with the student
- Predictability: Rituals & routines
- Environment:

Transitions: Quiet & Orderly  
Appear Safe:



# Minimizing Triggers

Trauma experts Kinniburgh & Blaustein recommend:

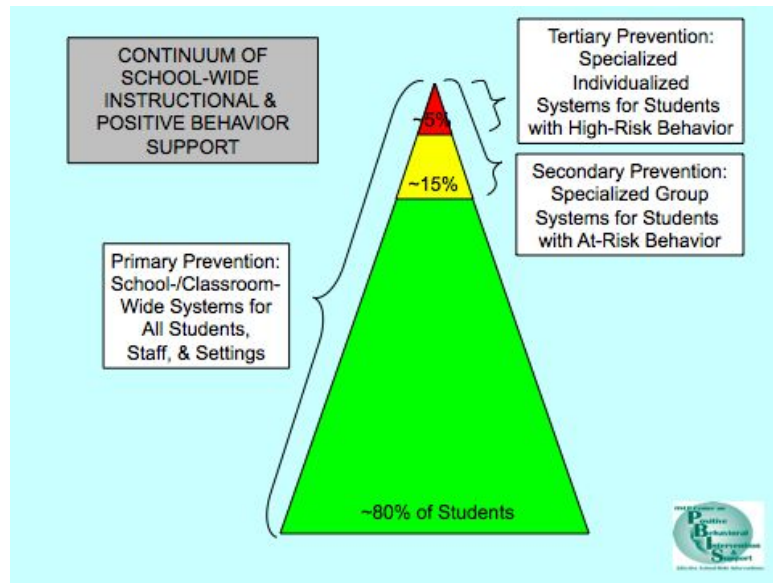
1. Naming the rationale for the limit. For example-“We stay in our bus seats to stay safe”.
2. Link the consequence to the behavior, not the person. For example-“The consequence for budging in line is to go to the end of the line”.
3. Move on & don't argue. Remember that it takes two to argue, and that the limit has already been set, and consequence given.

Our communication and interaction with scholars can have a big impact



# Positive Behavior Intervention & Supports (PBIS)

- A framework for every SPPS School
- Key Components:
  - Identify goals & outcomes
  - Design school-wide systems
  - Evidence Based Practices
  - Collect and use data



# Systems/Practices that Guide PBIS Implementation

- Each school creates clear and consistent, positive behavioral expectations that are defined, taught, modeled, reinforced and corrected.
- Schools collect and use student behavior data to guide the teaching of behavioral expectations and support that takes place for individual students, small groups of students, whole classrooms and school-wide.
- Each school continually builds upon and refines their systems and practices to meet the changing needs of their school community to provide positive and equitable outcomes for all students.



# What to look for in your school....

- School Wide Matrix of Expectations
  - In most schools the school-wide matrix of expectations is published in the staff handbook and on the website
  - Expectations are posted throughout the school on posters
- School Wide Discipline Plan
- Office Discipline Referral Form (ODR)
- Who are the staff that you can call on for assistance:
  - Social Worker, Counselor, Behavior Specialists
  - Administrators



# Handling Crisis Situations

There is a course on Google available to staff:

<https://docs.google.com/a/stpaul.k12.mn.us/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSc3INfAllmLzv6n8hKSX27ySdYiw8sJSXGXE5jnRkxx1trhdQ/viewform>



# Importance of Proactive Climate

Crises are **de-escalated more effectively** when the community has been implementing **proactive measures**, such as:

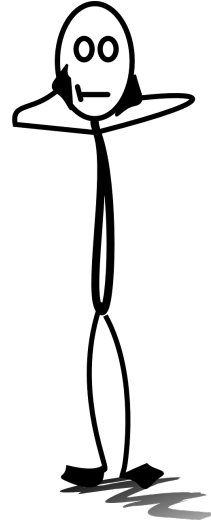
- **Building relationships** with students
- Using **rituals and routines**
- Providing **engaging, rigorous** learning opportunities
- Consistently being aware of voice **tone, volume and cadence**
- Using culturally **respectful nonverbals**, such as proximity and body language





# Defining Crisis

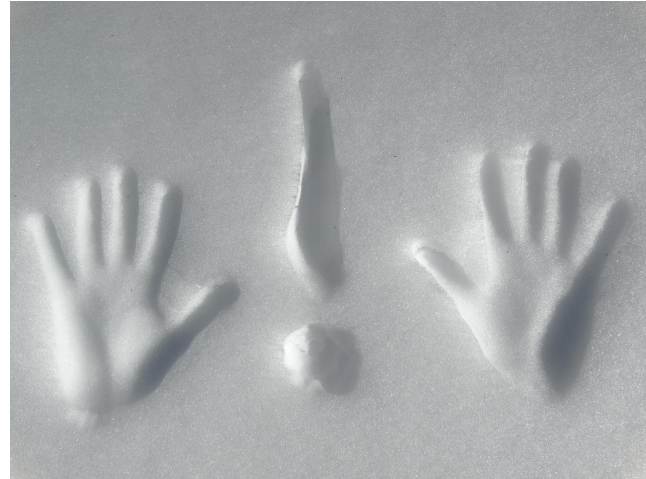
For the purposes of this session, **crisis** refers to a situation where there is a **threat of danger** to a student or staff.



# What is a Crisis Situation?

Examples of crisis situations in the classroom:

- **Throwing furniture**
- **Fighting**
- **Suicidal threats/ threats of self harm**
- **Extreme verbal threats**



# What can you do??

It is important to remember **you can only control yourself**. Taking control of your emotional response, body language, and voice can help decrease the risk of safety concerns and can de-escalate situations.



# Staff Fear and Anxiety

**Fear and anxiety are universal human emotions.** Our responses to them are both psychological and physiological. We freeze, fight, or flee in crisis situations, none of which help de-escalation.

## **Unproductive responses**

1. Freezing
2. Overreacting mentally and physically
3. Responding inappropriately verbally and physically

## **Productive responses**

1. Increase in speed and strength
2. Increase in sensory
3. Decrease in reaction time

# Choose Your Reaction

De-escalation techniques are different than our normal behavior. In crisis situations, **embrace your fear and face it systematically.** Practicing Imaginal exposure may help, where the experience that causes anxiety is repeatedly described and processed..

- **Control your emotional response**
- **Control your body**
- **Control of your voice**
- **Control the environment**
- **Control the message**

# Control Your Emotional Response

- Appear **calm, centered and self-assured** even though you don't feel it.
- **Relax facial muscles and look confident.** Your anxiety can make students feel anxious and unsafe which can escalate aggression.
- **Do not respond to verbal aggression**--even if the comments or insults are directed at you, they are not about you.
- **Be very respectful** even when firmly setting limits or calling for help. Agitated individuals are very sensitive to feeling shamed and disrespected. We want them to know that it is not necessary to show us that they must be respected. We automatically treat them with dignity and respect.



# Control Your Body

While de-escalating another person, you want to **be in a non-threatening, non-challenging and self-protecting position.**

- Slightly more than a leg's length away, at an angle and off to the side of the other person.
- Stay far enough away that the other person cannot hit, kick or grab you.



# Control Your Voice

- **Tone** - Use a modulated, low monotonous tone of voice (the typical tendency is to have a high pitched, tight voice when scared). Try to avoid inflections of impatience, condescendence or inattention.
- **Volume** - Keep volume at an appropriate level for the distance of the situation.
- **Cadence** - Use an even rate and rhythm.





# Control the Environment

## CLASSROOM

## HALLWAYS

## LUNCHROOM

- Call for **help** or have a student go for help.
- If there is more than one adult present, **limit the staff interacting with student**.
- When possible, **remove the student**, or **remove the audience**.
- **Remove items** that could be potentially **dangerous** (ie paper cutter, scissors).

# Control Your Message

## DO:

- Reduce stimuli
- Allow the student to vent
- Establish boundaries
- Call for help
- Be clear, concise and consistent with expectations
  - Listen to the student, and/or use few words

## DON'T:

- Try to resolve the student's issue
- Get into an argument
- Jeopardize your safety
- Make threats, dares, or taunts
- Insist on an explanation for the behavior
  - For example, don't use phrases like: "If you don't\_\_\_\_, I will \_\_\_\_\_."

# After a Crisis...

RELAX!

REVIEW!

RECORD!



## Signs of Distress in Students -- ie Signs of Students at Risk

A student who is tearful, agitated, disoriented, withdrawn, hostile, or enraged may be showing **warning signs** of being in crisis. A crisis may be related to family, medical, legal, financial or academic stressors. The following are commonly expressed signs of distress. Some may be due to reactions to a specific event or cause, while others may result from long-term factors.

## **Emotional and psychological**

- Appearing tearful
- Sighing frequently
- Appearing vague
- Appearing confused
- Experiencing high levels of anxiety
- Panic attacks
- Irritability
- Unpredictable outbursts of anger
- Displaying agitation
- Displaying speech patterns that seem pressured, racing or confused
- Sustained low mood
- Frequent expressions of negativity

## **Behavioral**

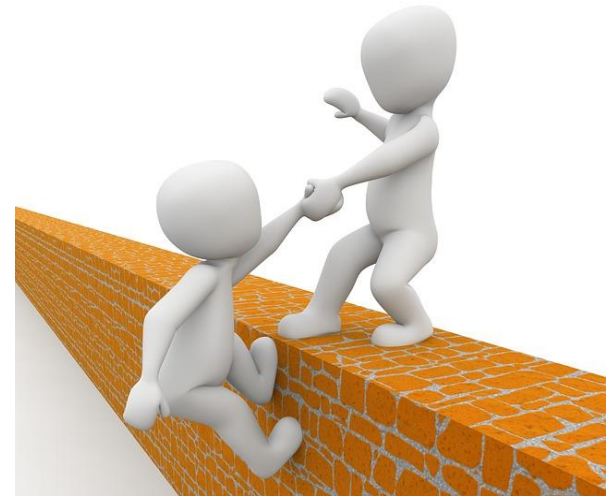
- Avoidance of tasks
- Withdrawing socially or verbally
- Poor self-care and neglected personal hygiene
- Being excessively demanding of others
- Increases in impulsive behaviour
- Talk of suicide

# Examples of Distress in Students

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Marked decline in performance</li><li>● Inconsistency between classroom and test performance</li><li>● Unusually inhibited or withdrawn behavior; very limited participation in class</li><li>● Clearly inappropriate behavior: outbursts, bizarre speech, constant daydreaming, unprovoked crying, excessive giggling, continuous provocative behavior (e.g.: sarcasm, hostile remarks, frequent interruptions).</li><li>● Illogical or confused thinking or writing</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Signs of possible alcohol or drug use</li><li>● Disorganized grooming and/or unusually poor personal hygiene (not obviously an intentional lifestyle).</li><li>● The student confides about difficulties of self support, relationships, self-esteem, past traumas, current obstacles, or future possibilities.</li><li>● Unusually dependent or demanding of time (e.g., requests many conferences without significant content, hangs around after class with no special purpose).</li></ul> |
|---|---|

# How to Intervene when there are signs of Distress

- Collaborate with a colleague
- Determine whether the student should be referred to the social worker or counselor
- Partner with the family
- Check with administration to determine whether a risk assessment (through ECC) is appropriate



## 4. Next Steps

Proactive behavior management reduces the risk of crisis situations. Closing the achievement gap in urban classrooms requires strong classroom managers. Whatever level of experience, teachers benefit by regularly refreshing management skills, leading to a positive impact on learning outcomes.

The following links provide additional behavior management strategies.





- **How To: Calm the Agitated Student: Tools for Effective Behavior Management**  
[http://www.interventioncentral.org/behavior\\_calm\\_agitated\\_student](http://www.interventioncentral.org/behavior_calm_agitated_student)
- **Classroom Management Techniques**  
<http://www.crisisprevention.com/Resources/Knowledge-Base/Classroom-Management-Techniques>
- **Classroom Management Strategies**  
<http://www.crisisprevention.com/Resources/Knowledge-Base/Classroom-Management-Strategies>
- **Intervention Tip Sheet**  
[https://docs.google.com/document/d/1rb0GXYsJZFu8OH0Qr\\_zuB8XrYuCkgJ7evwU\\_I9VUjA0/edit](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1rb0GXYsJZFu8OH0Qr_zuB8XrYuCkgJ7evwU_I9VUjA0/edit)
- **Real Issues at School, Positive Strategies for Crisis Prevention**  
<http://www.crisisprevention.com/Resources/Webinars/Real-Issues-at-School-Positive-Strategies-for-Cri/Presentation-Slides>



The kids who  
need the most  
**LOVE** will often  
ask for it in the  
most unloving  
ways.

~ Russell Barkley