What do teachers need to understand, acknowledge and do as we navigate through this COVID-19 time?
Introduction

- Rationale
Outline

- Introduction
- Trauma Defined
- Types of Traumatic Events
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  - Traumatic Reactions/Symptoms in Adults
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  Part II
  - Traumatic Reactions/Symptoms in Children & Adolescents
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Put on your own oxygen mask before helping others is being said quite a bit these days. Let’s make this more than a cliché saying by first talking about how you have been coping...

This presentation may trigger some uncomfortable memories or overwhelming feelings, here are some things that you could do should that happen:

- step away from the computer
- take some deep breaths
- be reassured that there are persons that you can reach out to who will help you to feel safe and cope appropriately

...
Dr. Becky Bailey defines trauma as a unique individual experience. The experience can be a single event (acute trauma) or a set of enduring conditions or witnessing events happening to someone else (complex trauma).

The National Child Traumatic Stress Network (NCTSN) describes a traumatic event as one that is frightening, dangerous or violent that poses a threat to life or bodily integrity.

It is possible that persons experiencing the same traumatic event can have different emotional, cognitive and physical reactions hence the reference to a unique experience.

A traumatic event can impact an individual’s ability to regulate emotions and leave him feeling either overwhelmed/agitated or subdued/disinhibited. A person can have difficulty balancing her fight, fright, and freeze reactions which results in distorting events; feeling threats to life and mental health even when there are none.

Repeated exposure to traumatic events can affect brain development (particularly executive functioning) and health (consider the ACEs studies).
Types of traumatic events

- Abuse of any kind
- Assault
- Neglect
- Serious accidents
- Violence (domestic, community and school)
- Natural disasters (hurricanes, earthquakes, fires, etc.)
- Complex grief
- Separation from loved ones (especially sudden moves/move to a foster placement, parental discord)
As stated earlier reactions are individual, however, here are some signs to be aware of:

- Intense and ongoing emotional upset; not able to tolerate own or others' feelings or feeling disconnected or numb
- Anxiety/intense, unexplained fears
- Depressive symptoms/suicidal ideations/self-harm behaviors
- Excessive blame/perfectionism or thoughts of worthlessness
- Eating disorders/Addictions
- Sexually acting out
- Relationship problems (including withdrawing from others)
- Confusion/difficulty concentrating/intrusive thoughts/all or nothing (black and white thinking)
Has the current pandemic contributed to a traumatic event or triggered a reaction because of a previous traumatic event in you?
Self-Care

- Reminder of self-care tips/strategies
- Sharing of activities
Comments? Questions? Suggestions?

- Share thoughts
- Ask Questions
Again reactions/symptoms are individual (NCTSN) - also refer to age range in the NCTSN Educator's Toolkit

- Intense and ongoing emotional upset
- Depressive symptoms or anxiety
- Behavioral changes
- Difficulties with self-regulation
- Problems relating to others or forming attachments
- Regression or loss of previously acquired skills
- Attention and academic difficulties
- Nightmares
- Difficulty sleeping and eating
- Physical symptoms; i.e., aches and pains
- Older children/adolescents: drug use, alcohol use, risky behaviors including unhealthy sexual activity
The current pandemic may have contributed to a traumatic event or triggered a reaction because of a previous traumatic event in students.

This could lead to child traumatic stress (stress resulting from exposure to one or more traumatic events manifesting in a variety of ways - reactions previously mentioned) which can play out in the classroom.

The reactions can interfere with teaching and learning and social interactions and may be triggered by things such as tone of voice, places, people, loud sounds, event anniversaries, etc.

There are risk factors that can exacerbate reactions such as poverty, inadequate parenting, prior history of trauma and the severity of the event (i.e., hospitalization was required).

There are protective factors that can mitigate traumatic events such as supportive/loving caregivers; how the adults cope/d with the situation and a caring school community.
Acknowledge

- The possibility/probability that one or more of your students have been adversely affected by a traumatic event in the past that current conditions exacerbated or that this current climate has created a traumatic response
- The importance of a welcoming school environment that will not re-traumatize anyone
- Any needs that you have to help you build positive relationships with students
Do

- Help to create a safe, nurturing environment that includes teaching, and, sometimes reteaching expected behaviors.
- Remember to respond from the what has happened/what traumatic event could have happened to a student who is exhibiting concerning behaviors or a change in behavior instead of what's wrong with a student.
- Resist the urge to take behaviors personally or expect that because you have a good relationship with a student that they won’t lash out at you or dissociate.
- Refer students to the school counsellor and/or ET if necessary.
- Use self-care strategies as students who exhibit traumatic stress can contribute to burnout.
Closing

- Comments
- Questions
- Suggestions