



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

## Part I

- Traumatic Reactions/Symptoms in Adults
- Self-Reflection
- Self-Care
- Comments/Questions/Suggestions

## Part II

- Traumatic Reactions/Symptoms in Children & Adolescents
- Understand
- Acknowledge
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- Closing

# Introduction

- 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

...

# Trauma defined

- 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)

## Traumatic Reactions/ Symptoms: Adults

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)

# Self-Reflection

- ?? ET survey results
- ?? Self- Assessment -

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**

## Traumatic Reactions/ Symptoms in Children & Adolescents

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

# Understand

- 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 burn out**

# Closing

- **Comments**
- **Questions**
- **Suggestions**