

Scars remind us

where we've been.

They don't have

to dictate where

we're going.

Trauma among Families and Children Experiencing Homelessness

- **How trauma affects homeless caregivers? Parents may...**
 - easily feel overwhelmed, irritated and withdrawn
 - suddenly “fly off the handle” or “shut down”
 - be perceived as having disorganized thoughts or speech
 - have difficulty with memory of details
 - have a hard time separating their emotions from those of their children – resulting in not being able to “read” their children’s needs
 - lack knowledge of the developmental stages or safety issues for children –resulting in making poor choices

- **How trauma affects homeless children. Children may....**
 - Become frightened and worried about what will happen to them or their caregivers
 - Experience anxiety that can impede sleep, appetite, concentration, or completing their responsibilities like homework or socializing appropriately
 - Experience poor impulse control, refuse to share toys, engage in stealing, bad language or substance use, or risky sexual behaviors
 - Experience a lack of understanding about what has happened
 - Experience regression and exhibit behaviors typical of a younger child
 - Have difficulty forming relationships or trusting the support of caring adults

Recommendations

- Work to enhance safety, trust and stability
- Take time to build trust
- Listen openly and without judgment
- In family/parent meetings advocate for a routine in relation to homework requirements
- Promote partnerships between the school and community partner agencies that provide services for homeless families and children
- Work toward a trauma-informed school environment

“A real estate agent, a graphic artist and a teacher walk into a bar.”

The Trauma Informed Model

~~“What’s wrong with you?”~~

“What happened to you?”

Coping Strategies

- Avoiding persons, places or things
- Being on high alert all of the time
- Always knowing where the exit is
- Sitting so no one can get behind you
- Being irritable, loud, obnoxious, and using obscene language so people don't go near you
- Using legal or illegal substances/medications to alter your mood
- Dissociation
- Intentionally self-isolate

Trauma-Informed Care

- A commitment to provide services in a manner that is welcoming and appropriate to the needs of trauma survivors.
- Development of systems, structures and behaviors that counteract the impact of traumatic experiences

Elements of a Trauma-Informed System of Care

- Commitment to change at all levels – board, administrative, support and direct service staff
- Universal screening
- Training and Education
- Discovering and empowering “trauma champions”
- Review of policies and procedures
- Physical space and environment
- Knowledge of vicarious traumatization, burnout and self-care
- Survivors – not victims

Principles/Domains

- Systems-wide understanding of Trauma-Informed Approaches
- Choice
- Transparency
- Strengths-based
- Compassion and empathy
- Self-care
- Safety
- Trust
- Cultural sensitivity and humility

What happens in a trauma-informed environment?

- Some students may be allowed to sit close to the classroom exit or allowed to take breaks when needed
- Awareness that students, teachers and staff may have a trauma history.
- Awareness of how trauma affects persons from other cultures
- Policies and procedures that refer to trauma-informed care.
- Education about trauma and resultant issues

- Structured self-care programs for staff and teachers
- Safety for students, teachers and staff is a high priority.
- Understanding that disruptive/aggressive behavior is a coping strategy and may be the best the student can do at that moment.
- Physical spaces that offer multiple options for students: where to sit, who to face, etc.

Contact Information

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