

APPLYING THE 4 RS OF TRAUMA-INFORMED APPROACHES IN THE RETURN TO SCHOOL

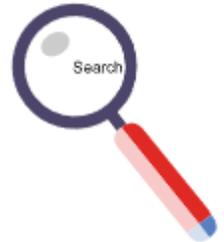


REALISE the widespread impact of trauma

- "After trauma, the world is experienced with a different nervous system" - Bessel Van Der Kolk.
- COVID-19 opens avenues for toxic stress - anxiety, isolation, bereavement, family conflict, exposure to neglect and abuse.
- "What may be traumatically stressful for one person may be trivial for another" - Dr Bruce Perry. Resilience will depend on individual protective and risk factors. Some children found school itself to be highly stressful and dread the return.
- We need to obtain a rich picture of lockdown life from children, parents, social workers and other supporters.

RECOGNISE the signs and symptoms of trauma

- Be curious and non-judgemental about changes in behaviour, emotional regulation, relationships, cognition and self-esteem.
- Consider Louise Bomber's "The Big Ask" - which daily transitions and changes to routine will be a challenge for students?
- Recognise emotional contagion. "If we are drowning in our own dysregulation...we lose our capacity to help" - Jen Alexander.



RESPOND using trauma-sensitive principles

- Safety: Verbal & visual communication of new rules and routines; clear and factual language; establishing safe spaces.
- Connection: "Key Adult" approach; "therapeutic doses" from all staff; eliciting the child's views with a "student passport".
- Regulation: Teaching about "flipping your lid"; "wondering aloud"; preventative stress reduction; personalised calm breaks.
- Learning: Revisiting previous topics and concepts; differentiation & repetition; practical tasks which regulate AND educate.



RESIST re-traumatisation

- "When a flower doesn't bloom, you fix the environment in which it grows; not the flower" - Alexander Den Heijer
- Revisit policies: zero tolerance vs relational approaches; behaviour plans vs stress support plans; time-out vs time-in.
- Find communication methods which work for individual parents. Signpost them to support using the newsletter or website.
- Reflective practice for school staff: individual supervision or solution-focused consultations with external agencies.
- Identify members of senior leadership who can offer individual or group support. Arrange opt-in opportunities for self-care.

