



# Intro Trauma-Informed Schools

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# Introductions



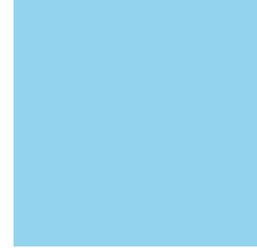
R.E.A.C.H

for Tomorrow

[www.REACHforTomorrowOhio.org](http://www.REACHforTomorrowOhio.org)

# Starr Commonwealth

Starr provides a wide array of services for children, families, communities, and professionals. From prevention and intervention, to enrichment and residential treatment, all of our trauma-informed, resilience-based programs are rooted on creating powerful and positive experiences for all to heal, and for all to thrive.





# Driven to Heal



Since 1913, Starr Commonwealth has led with courage to create positive experiences so that all children, families, and communities can flourish.



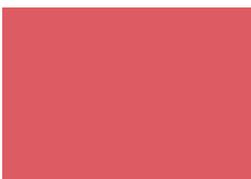
We identify and assess the impacts of toxic stress and trauma on children and design and implement interventions that build resilience, heal pain, and create new pathways to success and opportunity. Then we teach others what we know and what works.



We've had over 100 years of working with youth and 30 years of sharing our expertise with social workers, counselors, teachers, schools, and organizations.



With direct services across Michigan and professional training and coaching in all 50 states, over 60 countries, and 6 continents, we are



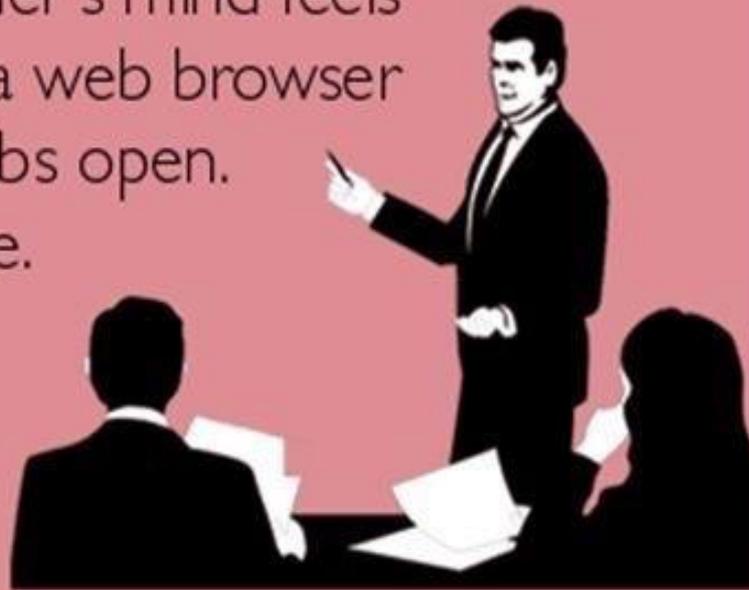
*Driven to Heal.*



Self-care is an act of self-love.

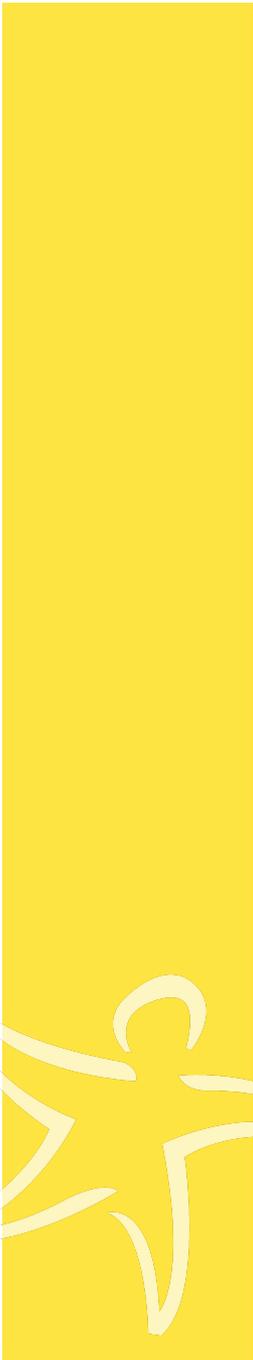
fb.com/CurllyHairedChica  
www.thecurlyhairedchica.com

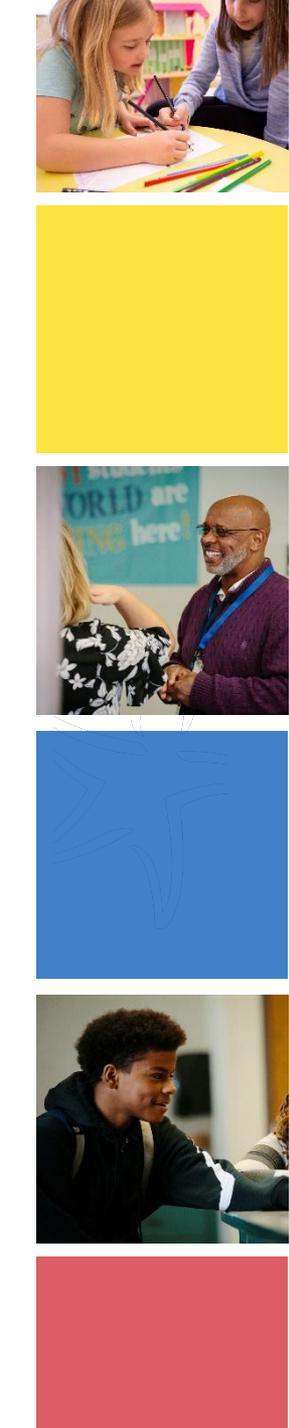
Students: if you ever want to know  
what a Teacher's mind feels  
like, imagine a web browser  
with 2,879 tabs open.  
All. The. Time.



somee cards  
user card







# Today's Agenda



Focus on Resilience



Understand Trauma as an Experience



Foster Connections



Establish Safety

**Remember...**

**Stressed**

**Brains Can't**

**Learn!**

# Call to Action

- The *National Center for Traumatic Stress Network* is now asking **schools** to play a key role in **addressing the needs** of traumatized children.



# Children of Trauma

- **Over 50% of the nation's children** have experienced at least one or more types of serious childhood trauma (34,835,978 children nationwide)
- **33% of children** have experienced two or more types of childhood adversity
- **15% of all girls ages 14-17** have experienced sexual assault
- **33% of students** have been bullied
- **60% of students 17 years or younger** have been exposed to crime, violence, and abuse
- **30% of students in inner-city schools** have witnessed a stabbing or shooting
- **16 million children in the United States** live at or below the poverty level (6 million are under the age of 6)

(National Survey of Children's Health – CDC, 2017)

**Overview of Life Events Checklist Survey completed by Highland County Students**

Number of surveys completed	237
Male	117
Female	117
Prefer not to say	3
<b>Questions asked</b>	<b>Percentage who answered they had experienced or witnessed</b>
Transportation accident (for example, car accident, boat accident, train wreck, plane crash)	60.00%
Exposure to parental / caregiver use of illegal substance (for example Marijuana, methadone, heroin, non prescribed pain pills.)	30.00%
Exposure to parental / caregiver addiction to alcohol	28.00%
Experience feeling you didn't have enough to eat, had to wear dirty clothes, and had no one to protect you? or Your parents were too drunk or high to take care of you or take you to the doctor if you needed it?	17.00%
Experience a parent or other adult in the household often ... Swear at you, insult you, put you down, or humiliate you? or Act in a way that made you afraid that you might be physically hurt?	30.00%
Experience feeling ... No one in your family loved you or thought you were important or special? or Your family didn't look out for each other, feel close to each other, or support each other?	25.00%
Were your parents ever separated or divorced?	50.00%
Was a household member depressed or mentally ill or did a household member attempt suicide?	34.00%
Physical assault (for example, being attacked, hit, slapped, kicked, beaten up)	30.00%
Did a household member go to prison?	24.00%
Assault with a weapon (for example, being shot, stabbed, threatened with a knife, gun, bomb)	10.00%
Sexual assault (rape, attempted rape, made to perform any type of sexual act through force or threat of harm)	11.00%
Other unwanted or uncomfortable sexual experience	14.00%
Any other very stressful event or experience	35.00%
Have you taken any illegal substance in the last 30 days (pot, alcohol, non prescribed opiates, hallucinogenics etc.)	17.00%



What is the best place to positively impact children outside of the home?



# 10 Steps to Creating a Trauma-Informed Resilient School



1. Focus on Resilience



2. Understand Trauma as an Experience



3. Foster Connections



4. Prioritize Social-Emotional Skill Development



5. Establish Safety



6. Promote Play



7. Believe the Link Between Private Logic and Behavior



8. Collaborate with Families & Communities



9. Support and Invest in Staff



10. Collect and Utilize Outcome Data

...Where  
**ALL** Children  
Thrive

# About the Ten Steps

It is **hard to identify** the most important step.

The steps **overlap...**

The steps are **not linear...**

With each small implementation,  
the **benefits are significant...**



**Be patient** with the process.

# What is Trauma-Informed and Resilience-Focused Education?

**It is a MINDSET**



# What is Trauma-Informed and Resilience-Focused Education?

- It is being curious rather than “all knowing”
- It is asking or wondering:
  - *What happened or what is happening in this student’s life?*
  - *What is already right for this student?*
  - *What are the strengths of this student?*



# What is Trauma-Informed and Resilience-Focused Education?

- It is asking, “What experiences are driving the way this child thinks about themselves and others?”
- And, “How does that impact the way they behave?”



# What is Trauma-Informed and Resilience-Focused Education?

- It is **NOT** asking, “What is wrong with this child?”
- It is **NOT** labeling
- It is **NOT** diagnosing without first REALLY assessing



# What is Trauma-Informed and Resilience Focused Education?

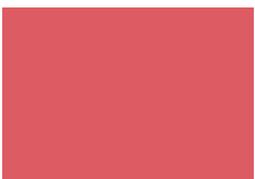
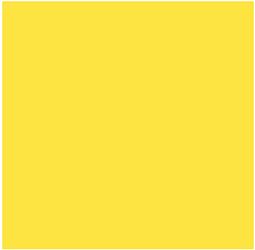
- It is wondering, *“What can I do to support this student most?”*
- And, *“What are the new opportunities and experiences I can provide this child to restore and nurture resilience, despite all they have experienced?”*



# The Most Important Thing You Will Hear Today...



Trauma-Informed and Resilience-Focused Education is a **MINDSET**



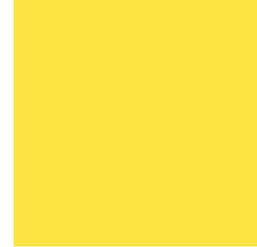
The bad news is,  
**TRAUMA** is a fact...

The good news is,  
so is **RESILIENCE!**



# Step 1

## Focus on Resilience



# What is Resilience?

“...the ability to achieve positive outcomes – mentally, emotionally, socially, and spiritually – **despite adversity.**”



# We Begin Here: RESILIENCE

We can't talk about making a school trauma-informed without talking about how to make a school resilience-focused.

We may not be able to take away toxic stress and trauma a child has experienced or will continue to experience in their homes and communities, but we can create new experiences of resilience in our schools.

**Resilience = Hope**



# 4 Main Protective Factors for Resilient Children



Supportive adult-child relationships



A sense of self-efficacy and perceived control



Adaptive skills and self-regulatory capacities

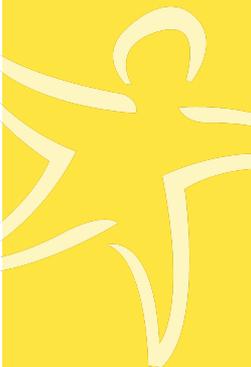


Sources of faith, hope and cultural traditions



The Lakota  
word for Child:

*Sacred Being*



# We Believe...



That there's no such thing as a bad child.

# We Believe...

That badness is not a normal condition but the result of misdirected energy and unmet needs.



# We Believe...



That every child will be good if given an opportunity in an environment of love and activity.

# We Believe...

In play.



# We Believe...



That children are  
resources.

# We Believe...

That children merit  
confidence and trust.



© 2019 Starr Commonwealth

# We Believe...



That problems are opportunities.

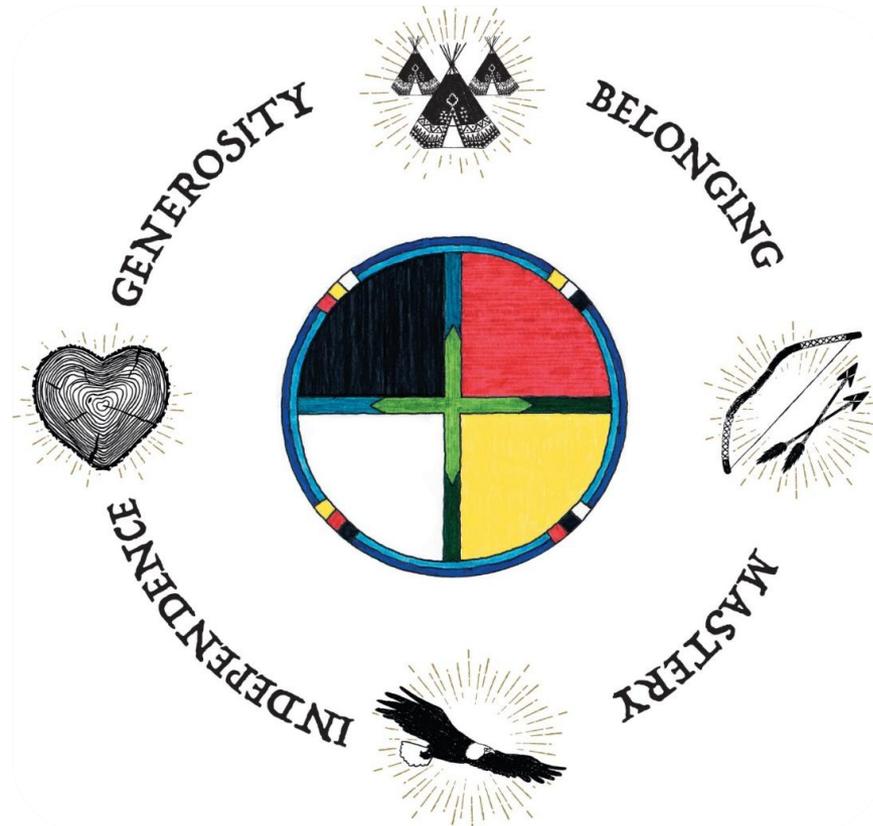
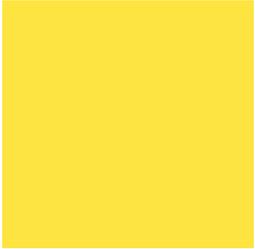


# We Believe...

That everyone has a responsibility to help  
and no one has the right to hurt.



# Restore & Nurture Universal Needs



# Belonging

## Attachment and Significance

*“I am important to someone and they want to know what my life is like, not only what is wrong with me but what is good about me to.”*

How can educators connect with students?

- **Be continuously curious about how the child is experiencing their world.**
- **Get to know them!**
- **Find out their likes, dislikes.**
- **Explore what they need most to feel supported.**



# Mastery

## Achievement and Competence

*“For once I feel like I am good at something.”*

*“I am in control of my behavior and reactions.”*

*“There is more to me than just my stress and trauma...”*

How can educators promote mastery?

- **Identify each student’s potential.**
- **Teach emotional awareness and regulation and then practice with them.**
- **Provide opportunities for students to experience their strengths.**

# Independence

## Autonomy and Power

*"I have a choice."*

How can educators promote a sense of independence?

- **Provide choices.**
- **Provide options for the best ways they can be ready to learn.**



# Generosity

## Altruism/Virtue

*“I have value and I can help others.”*

How can educators help students feel valuable?

- **Help students feel that they are not alone – this helps them to develop empathy for others.**
- **Point out student’s self worth.**
- **Provide opportunities for them to experience their value when they help others!**



# Resilience

When we focus on resilience, we find **HOPE**,  
**SOLUTIONS**, and **JOY**.

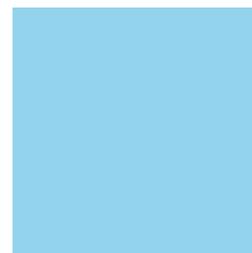
When we focus on resilience, we bring out the best in  
our students and in ourselves!



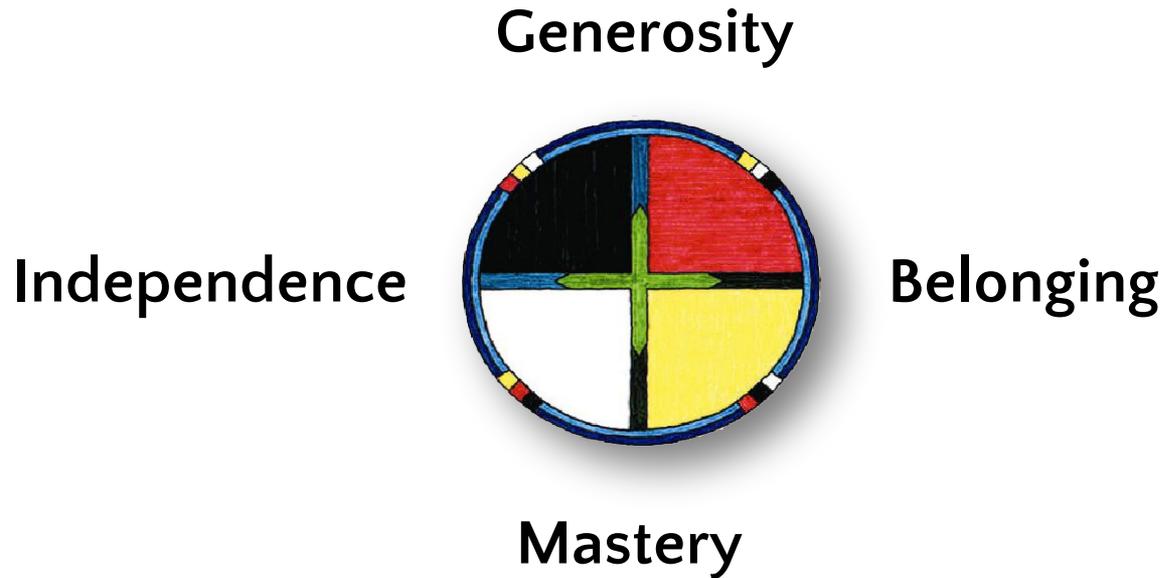


# Step 2

## Understanding Trauma as an Experience



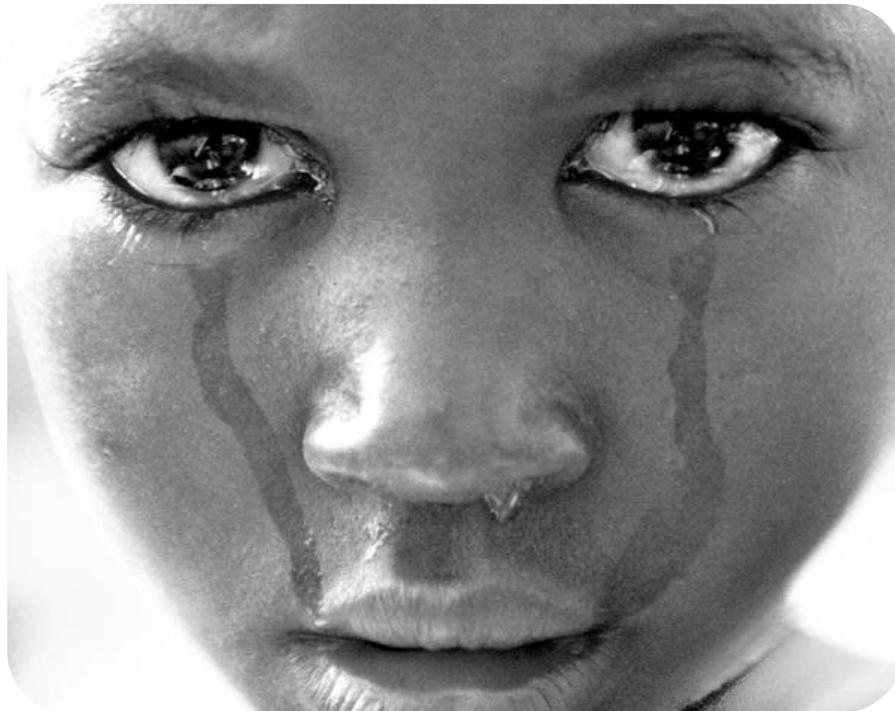
# Broken Circles



# How do circles become broken?



# TRAUMA









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# Trauma

Any experience that leaves a person feeling hopeless, helpless, fearing for their life/survival, or their safety.

This experience can be **REAL** or **PERCEIVED**.



# We can Experience Trauma in Many Ways

The causes of trauma are less important than **how trauma manifests in** a client's life...

It is important to understand we can **experience trauma** in many ways.



# Trauma Exposure

## **Victim**

(e.g., abuse, neglect, car accident)

## **Witness**

(e.g., personal witness – domestic violence, police, fire)

## **Related to**

(e.g., peer, siblings – of chronically ill siblings, sibling that completed suicide)

## **Listening to details of trauma**

(e.g., therapists, media exposure, video games, etc.)



# Types of Trauma

**Type 1** – Single exposure

**Type 2** – One type of exposure that is repeated OR exposure to one or two different events

**Type 3** – **Toxic Stress** and Developmental Trauma Disorder



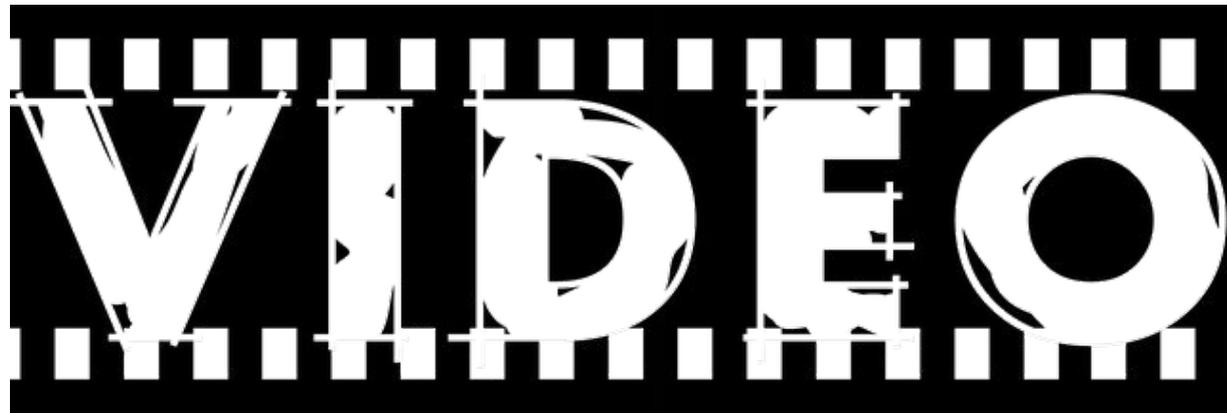
# Developmental Trauma Disorder

A proposed diagnosis to **help us understand the symptoms and reactions children experience** when they have grown and developed in a **constant state of stress and trauma.**

- Robert Pynoos and Bessel van der Kolk in 2005, 2009, 2013 – with  
no success for approval by the APA



Removed





# Trauma-Informed Resilient Schools

Understand the impact stress and trauma have on children's bodies and their ability to regulate emotions, behavior, and ultimately learn.



# Trauma-Informed Resilient Schools

Recognize the strong and significant correlation between **trauma** and **low academic achievement**.



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# Trauma-Informed Resilient Schools

Know the **science...**

Electronic imaging techniques clearly indicate that **brain structure and chemistry is altered for students who are stressed, anxious, or insecure.**

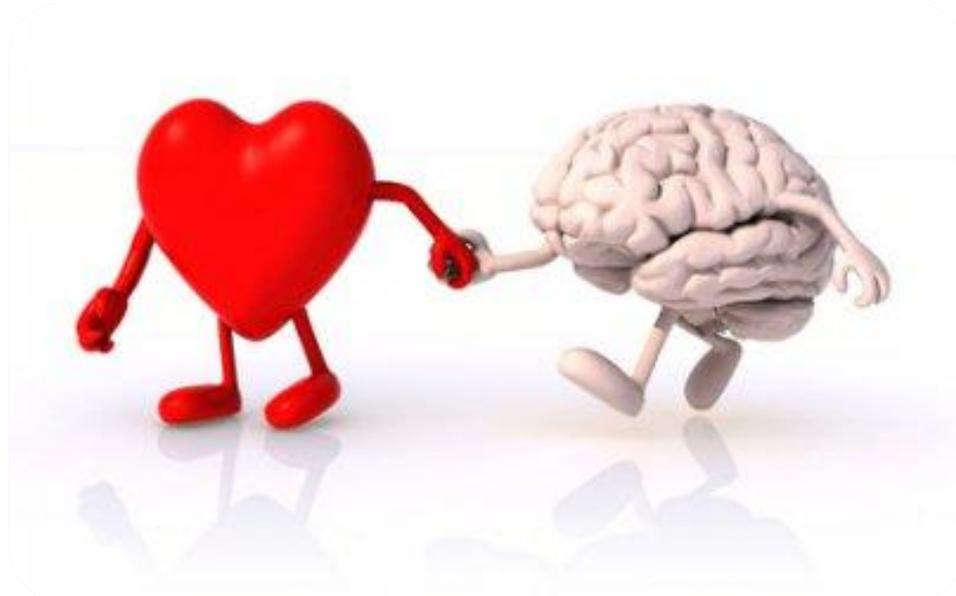




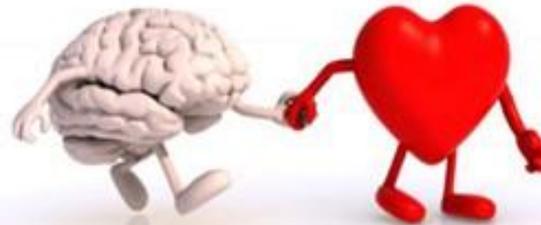
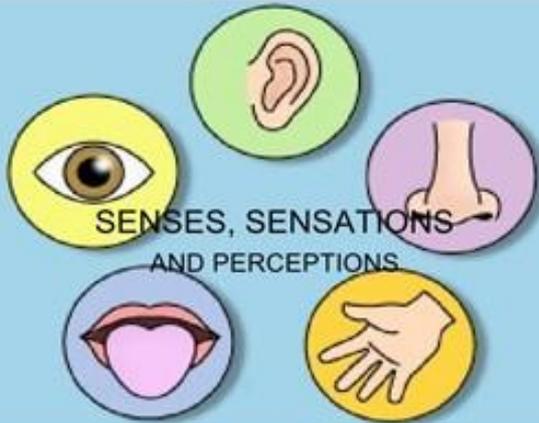
# BRAIN SCIENCE

# Deep Brain Functions

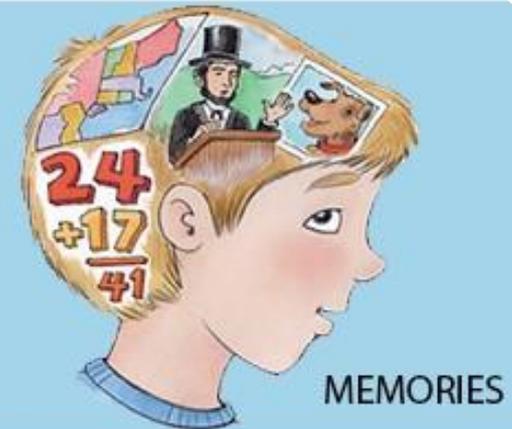
- Sensation
- Stress Regulation
- Memory



# What was the DANCE?



Stress Regulation

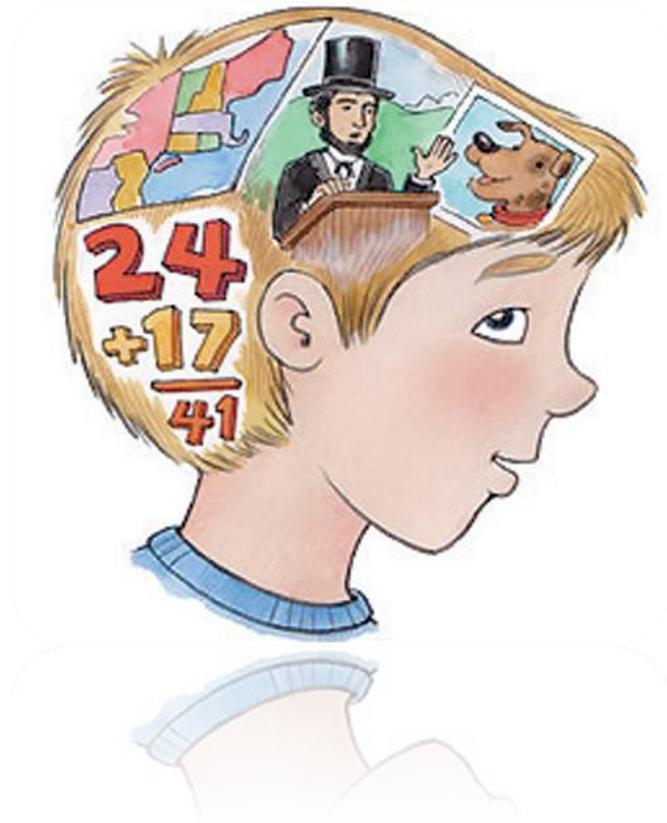


These three functions must "dance" together.

These three functions must "dance" together.

# Outer Brain Functions

- Thinks
- Learns
- Recalls information
- Pays attention
- Solves problems
- Makes decisions
- **LEARNS**



# Trauma's Impact on the Brain

## OUTER BRAIN

(THINKING)

- Language
- Reasoning
- Understanding
- Processing

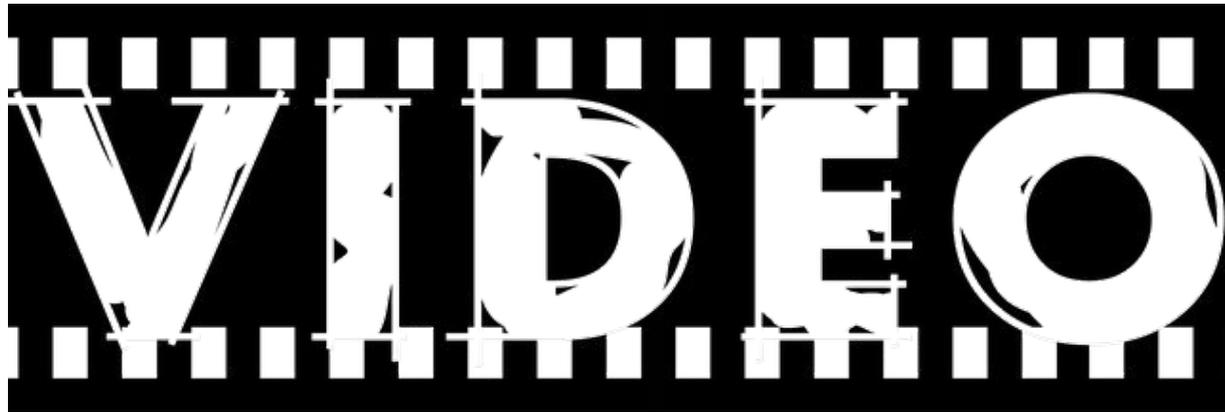
## DEEP BRAIN

(SENSORY)

- Senses
- Affect
- Emotional Regulation
- Memory



# Zoe Remembers



Removed – Part 1  
Revisited





A stylized white figure composed of thick, curved lines, resembling a person with arms raised, set against a solid green background. The figure is positioned on the left side of the slide.

**Did Zoe overreact?**

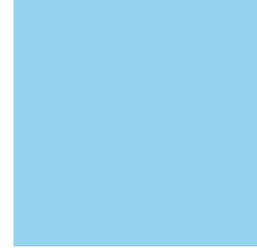
# What did we learn?

- Do you work with any children like Zoe?



# Understand Trauma's Impact on Students

## ACTIVITY



# Activity: The Animals Inside Me

## Script:

*Today I want to teach you about how your body responds to various experiences. The best way I have found to teach kids about this is to have them think about three animals. I am sure you have heard about tigers and owls, but there is another less common animal. Let's talk about the animals now.*



## Meerkat

*Have you ever heard of a meerkat? They are cat-like animals that live in Africa. Meerkats live in groups and one of them is always watching out for the others. They take turns being the watch guard for their pack. They keep a look out for predators like hawks and eagles. When the meerkat sees, hears, smells, or feels something suspicious they let out a big bark to alert the others. When you think about a meerkat, think about them as watch guards.*



## Tiger

*Tigers are part of the cat family. They love to eat, sleep, and play. They are excellent hunters and can be very ferocious when they feel threatened. They are always ready to run or fight.*



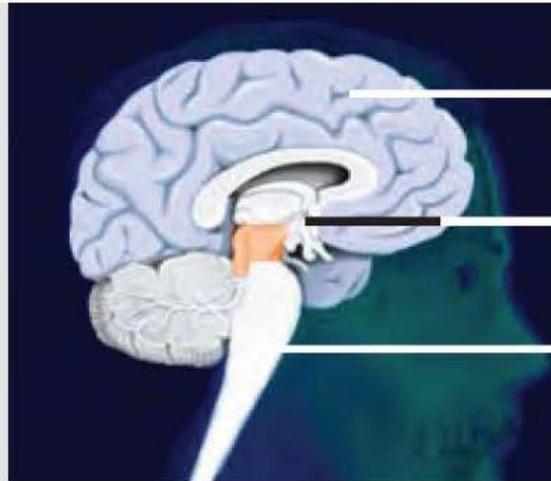
## Owl

*Owls are wise and able to see things from a long distance. They are good problem solvers and decision makers.*

# Understand Trauma's Impact Activity

**TRAUMA** activates the stress response. When the brain stem is activated, do the following physical symptoms increase (▲) or decrease (▼)? Circle the arrow below that applies.

- ▲ Heart rate ▼
- ▲ Respiration ▼
- ▲ Muscle Tension ▼
- ▲ Blood flow ▼
- ▲ Cortisol ▼
- ▲ Adrenalin ▼



thinking brain

sensory brain

brain stem

When this activation lasts for LESS than four weeks it is called acute stress.

When this activation lasts for MORE than four weeks it is called posttraumatic stress.

### When stressed, the Thinking Brain:

WORKS WELL or  DOES NOT WORK WELL

Name or describe three symptoms of trauma as a result of the stress impact on the Thinking Brain:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

### When stressed, the Sensory Brain:

WORKS WELL or  WORKS OVERTIME

Name or describe three symptoms of trauma as a result of the stress impact on the Sensory Brain:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

Students in trauma often react by engaging in fight, flight, or freeze responses. Describe a student experience for each of the responses in the appropriate boxes below.

**FIGHT**

**FLIGHT**

**FREEZE**

# What does this look like in the classroom?

The student who...

- Is always looking around, out window, out door, at others.
- Is always up and out of their seat, talking, and not paying attention.
- Is sad.
- Is mad.
- Falls asleep in class.
- Cracks jokes to get attention.
- Is afraid to say or do the wrong thing.
- Never follows directions.
- Seems like they don't care.

**Children of Trauma:  
there is no one  
specific profile!**



# Trauma-Informed Schools

View children from the perspective of “What happened or what is happening?” rather than with a label or diagnosis.



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# Screen for Trauma & Toxic Stress Exposure

The best screening tool is your own **curiosity...**

*"I wonder what has happened...what is happening?"*

**NOT...**

*"What is wrong with this child?"*

- Adverse Childhood Experiences Questionnaire
- Starr's Life Events Checklist



# Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (DSM-5)

Re-experiencing (INTRUSION – 1)	Avoidance (NUMBING - 1)	Negative Cognitions and Mood (2)	Arousal (2)
Flashbacks	Detachment	Distorted sense of self	Aggression
Intrusive thoughts -images	Numbing	Estrangement to others	Reckless behavior
Traumatic dreams	OCD like behavior Phobic like behavior	Markedly diminished interest	Self-destructive and Rule-breaking behaviors
Sleep problems	Self Harm	Depression	Hypervigilance
Physical complaints	Substance Abuse	Blames self or others	Irritability
	Eating Disorders		Inattention
	Not wanting to talk about it		Cognitive/Learning problems



# Overlapping Symptoms

Symptomology	ADHD	PTSD
Hypervigilance	X	X
Inattention	X	X
Detachment	X	X
Irritability	X	X
Anger Outbursts	X	X
Distracted	X	X
Restless	X	X
Impatient	X	X
Impulsive	X	X
Limited sense of future	X	X
Difficulty Concentrating	X	X



# ACE Study

- The Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) Study is one of the largest investigations ever conducted to assess **associations between childhood maltreatment and later-life health and well-being.**
- More than 17,000 participants (white, college educated, employed, with health insurance)
- Findings suggest that **certain experiences are major risk factors** for the leading causes of illness and death, as well as poor quality of life in the United States.

(<http://www.cdc.gov/ace>)





# Resilience

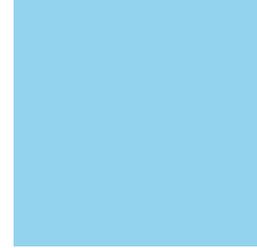
While we can't take away what has happened and we might not be able to change what is happening, we CAN help foster characteristics of resilience!





# Step 3

## Foster Connections



# School Connectedness

**School connectedness** is the strongest factor in reducing incidence of:

- **Anxiety**
- **Depression**
- **Suicide**
- **Substance abuse**
- **Violence**

A **protective** factor for all students, regardless of race, ethnicity, and level of family income.



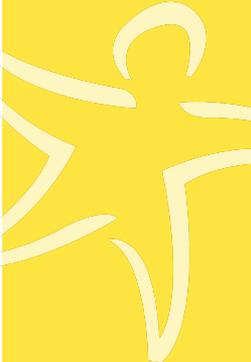
# Connections

The single most common factor for children who develop resilience is at least **one stable and committed relationship with a supportive parent, caregiver, or other adult.**



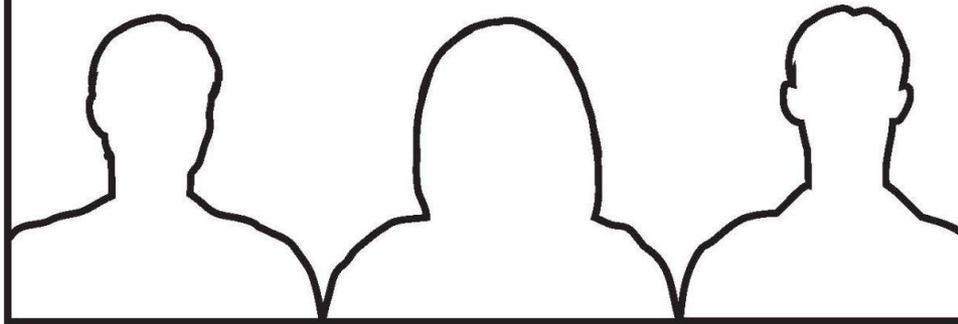
(Harvard University's Center on the Developing Child, 2017)

# Connections Assessment

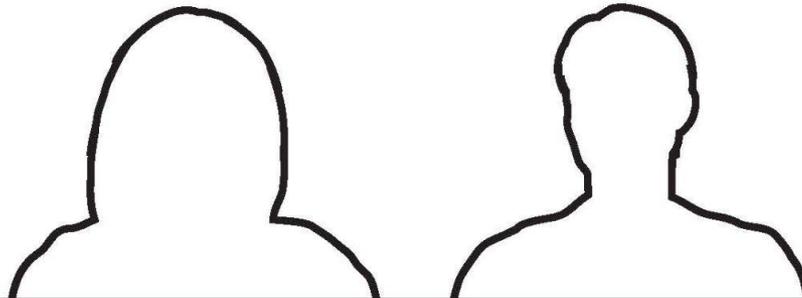


# Fostering Connections

Name 3 kids you are solidly connected to.  
What specifically makes you believe they feel the connection too?



Now, name 2 kids you know in your classroom/your school who could benefit  
from a connection with you or a peer.



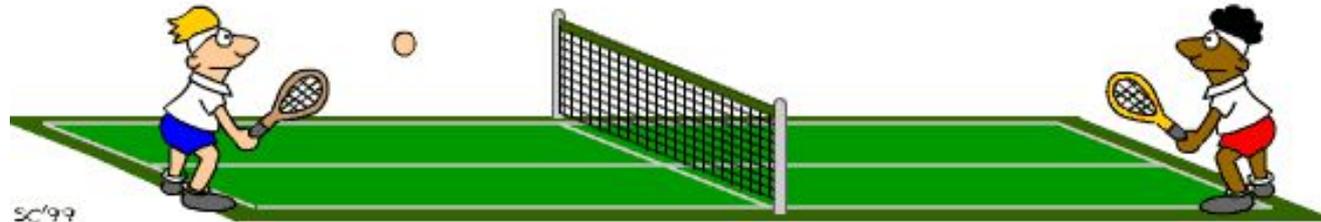
What are 3 ways you can make a bid to connect with these kids?

A large empty rectangular box with a black border, intended for writing three ways to connect with the kids identified in the previous step.



# Bids for Connection

- We know how much stress changes the brain...
- So do acts of caring, teaching, learning, and love!
- Kids learn and grow when meaningful connections are made with adults they can trust.
- Like a tennis match... Serve and return... Accept and make bids to connect. Repeatedly!



# 4:1 Interactions Ratio

Increase the number of **positive interactions** with students instead of negative interactions.

(e.g., friendly conversation, nonverbal acknowledgement, praise vs. criticism, punishment, negative or non existent nonverbal towards student)

The critical ratio is 4:1

**Increase connectedness**  **student feels engaged**   
**motivation increases**  **academic achievement and regulated behavior**

# 4:1 examples

## **Praise** for correct answers

- e.g., “You worked really hard on that one!”

## **Appreciation** of assignments or work done

- e.g., “Thank you for getting your homework turned in. Great work!”

## **Acknowledgement** of character strengths when displayed

- e.g., “That took a lot of courage to try that super difficult question!”

## **Positive greetings** in the mornings or after breaks

- e.g. “Welcome back... I’m excited to get working with you all again.”



# 4:1 examples

## **Gratitude** for good behavior

- e.g. “Thank you so much for helping \_\_\_\_\_ clear up the paper scraps”

## Taking a moment to **check-in** with a student

- e.g., “How’s your family?” “What did you do this weekend?”

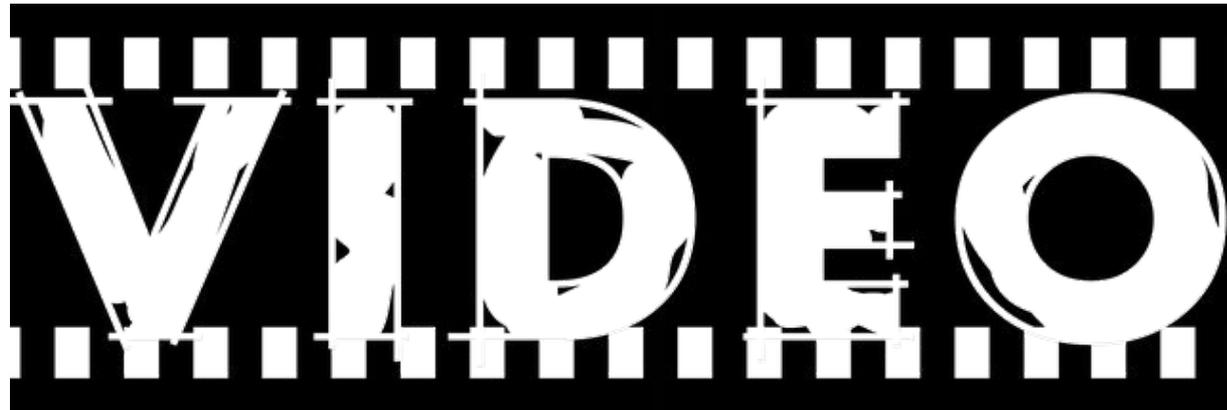
## **Inquiring** about hobbies or interests

- e.g., “I heard your track team has a meet this yesterday... how did you do?”)

## **Smile** or give friendly gestures



# Every Child Deserves a Champion



VIDEO





# Discussion

- **What impacted you the most from the video**
- **What inspired you?**



# Time Out vs. Time In

## TIME OUT

- Kids act out because they WANT attention
- Time apart
- Withdraw attention/disconnect
- Very little opportunity to learn
- Child is left to regain regulated state on their own
- Punitive, shame, rejection
- Ineffective

## TIME IN (Co-Regulation)

- Kids act out because they NEED attention
- Time together
- Give attention/connect
- Learning opportunity
- Adult is present to help child regain regulated state
- Growth, empowerment, acceptance
- Effective

# How to do a TIME IN

- Invite child to sit with you, go for a walk with you, go run an errand with you, etc. (if highly child is highly aggravated – do not touch).
- Make eye contact (if possible, do not force).
- Remain calm.
- Be firm but kind (these are not mutually exclusive).
- Tell the student you would like to help.
- Acknowledge/validate the child's feelings; tell them it is okay to be angry, upset, etc. but it is not okay to hurt themselves, hurt others, disrupt the learning environment, etc.
- Address misbehavior only after the student is calm but refrain from lecturing.
- Assist the student in identifying one or two strategies and move on.
- Revisit and practice strategies.



# Benefits

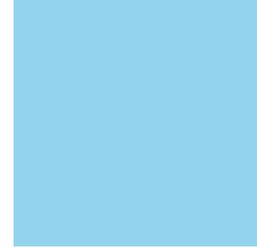
- Improved mood
- Fewer disruptive behaviors
- Decreased anxiety and fear
- Improved communication
- Enhanced interpersonal interactions





# Step 5

## Establish Safety



# Impact of Safety at School

Many children in the United States do not grow up in homes that are fully protective, do not experience a safe and supportive neighborhood, and do not think that their school is a safe school.

Yet, when they do think

**THEIR SCHOOL IS A SAFE SCHOOL,**

the **positive effect** is profound, regardless of the other adversities the child experiences.



# Restore Safety & Power

Terror is the experience of feeling totally unsafe and powerless to do anything about the situation...you must **restore safety & power.**



# Limit Opportunities for Students to Feel Anxious and/or Threatened

## SAFETY

- ...SECURITY
- ...STRUCTURE
- ...CONSISTENCY



**Every child knows what to expect all of the time!**

# Safety

It is not what you think children “know” about feeling safe. It is what **they experience as safe.**

- My teacher will be **even-tempered**
- My **schedule** is pretty much the same everyday (if it changes though, someone will let me know as soon as they know!)
- When I make a mistake, **someone will help**, not call me stupid
- **Nobody will tease me**
- I **have someone** to walk to class with, sit with at lunch, go to the game with...



# Traumatized Children will Always be Wondering

- What is going to happen next?
- Is something bad going to happen?
- What is she going to say or do?
- Am I going to get in trouble?
- Is the teacher/friend upset with me?
- Who will be there?
- What will we do?



# How is learning affected?

Childhood trauma can negatively impact learning and behavior because of the way terror and fear create changes in the brain. Following exposure to a traumatic experience, survivors may become frozen in a heightened state of alertness or have a persistent fear for their safety.

Without trauma intervention, research has shown that these emotional states alter brain function and the student's ability to process information.

**This leads to difficulty in:**

Processing verbal information

Focusing

Following teacher directions

Recalling what was heard

Retaining information

# Practical Ways to Add Play to your Classrooms

- Drama (i.e., **Readers Theater**)  
– supports reading comprehension and allows kids to act out characters
- **Math fact dances** – raps and dances that go along with multiplication tables
- **Read aloud** – have kids get up to act out characters
- **Silent Ball**
- **Heads up – 7 up**
- Group discussion or prep for questions for a test – write questions on paper, crumple it up, and **throw it into basket** or across room – someone randomly picks it up and answers question.
- **Art** or **technology** – integrate into every subject!
- **Science kits** – go on hunts, hands on activities – get outside!
- **Dance** at the end of every day!



**WHY CAN'T  
THEY SEE THE  
REAL ME?**



**WHINING WIG**

**TANTRUM TOP HAT**

**MISCHIEF MASK**

**STICKY BEAK**

**LYING LIPS**

**SASSY SCARF**

**SILLY SASH**

**BOSSY BOOTS**

**TATTLE TALE**







# Review From Today



1. Focus on Resilience



2. Understand Trauma as an Experience



3. Foster Connections



4. Prioritize Social-Emotional Skill Development



5. Establish Safety



6. Promote Play

**Of all you heard today, what  
stands out most?**

**How will what you have learned  
change your approach to  
teaching or working with  
students?**



Do the best you can until  
you know better.

Then when you know better,  
do better.

-Maya Angelou

