



Mental Health Awareness for Educators: Trauma Responses in the Classroom

2023/2024

mimtsstac.org



Acknowledgments

The content for this training day was developed based on the work of:

- The National Child Traumatic Stress Network (NCTSN)
- Midwest PBIS Network

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Group Agreements

We are Responsible

- Return on time from breaks
- Take care of our needs

We are Engaged

- Share “air time”
- Plan to participate in multiple ways
 - Chat, breakout rooms, polls, reactions, unmute
 - Ask questions

Training Effectiveness

- At the end of the session, you will be asked to provide feedback on today's training
- Results will be used to make improvements to professional learning and for reporting to TA Center stakeholders
- One of the feedback questions you will see is related to promoting and positively portraying diversity among educators and learners (e.g., focus on asset-based language, positive representation of multiple identities)

Purpose

- This session is part of the Mental Health (MH) Awareness for Educators Series designed to increase educators' exposure to and knowledge of various aspects of mental health and well-being.
- This session aims to help participants understand trauma, trauma responses, and how to better support students in the classroom.

Intended Outcomes

- Define what trauma is
- Identify four common trauma responses
- List ways that schools can support individuals impacted by trauma
- Build educator capacity to become Mental Health Aware

Educators' Role



- Play a critical role in students' MH and well-being
- Report a lack of relevant learning opportunities to feel competent in addressing students' MH and well-being
- MTSS offers a framework and rationale for educator-focused MH awareness PD for educators

J. Semchuk et al., 2022

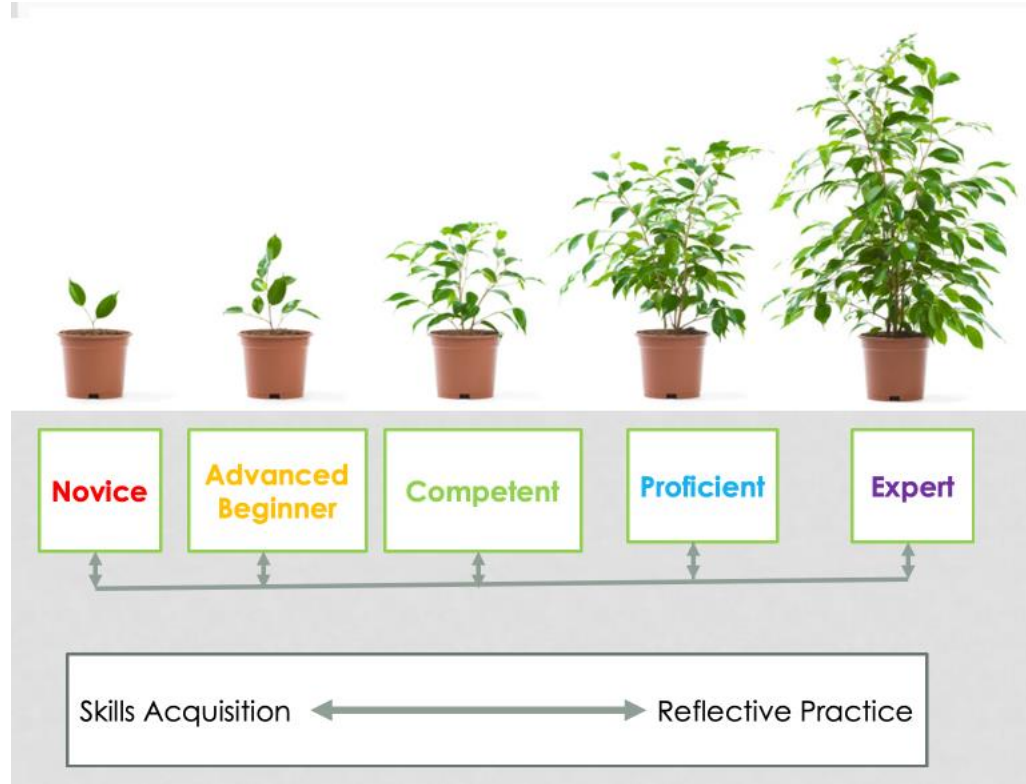
MH Awareness Topics and Goals of this Series

- Understanding ACEs
 - Internalizing and Externalizing Behaviors
 - Anxiety Disorders 101
 - Depressive Disorders 101
 - **Trauma Responses in the Classroom**
- Reducing the knowledge gap
 - Increasing educator capacity to support student MH and well-being
 - Promote positive SEB skills for students and staff
 - Reduce the stigma around MH
 - Support positive school climate and student/staff well-being

Agenda

- 1.0 Understanding Trauma
- 2.0 Trauma Responses
- 3.0 Supporting Students
- 4.0 Wrap Up and Next Steps

Activity 0.1



- Self-reflect on your current knowledge and skills related to trauma responses in the classroom
- Where do you currently rate your level of knowledge and skills related to trauma responses in the classroom?
- You do not have to share your responses!

1.0 Understanding Trauma

What is Trauma?

“Trauma is an experience that is emotionally painful, distressing, or shocking, that provokes feelings of extreme fear, vulnerability or hopelessness, and that can cause lasting psychological and/or physical effects.”

Child Traumatic Stress

“Child traumatic stress occurs when children and adolescents are exposed to traumatic events or traumatic situations, and when this exposure overwhelms their ability to cope with what they have experienced.”

Traumatic Experiences

- Are subjective
 - We do not get to decide what is stressful or traumatic for someone else
- Can result from one event or a series of events
 - Examples: adverse experiences, chronic stress, exposure to marginalization
- Do not have to be experienced directly to be traumatic for the individual
 - A child may witness a traumatic event, see it through the media, or be told the details of a trauma

Who May Be at Increased Risk?

- Individuals impacted by substance misuse
- Individuals dealing with economic stress
- Individuals experiencing housing or food insecurities
- Military and Veteran families
- Historically marginalized groups of individuals
 - Racial and ethnic minorities
 - LGBTQ+ individuals
 - Individuals with intellectual or developmental disabilities

Types of Trauma

Acute Trauma

- An event that happened at a particular time/place
- Usually short-lived
- Examples: a car accident, a scary medical procedure, or a singular incidence of violence

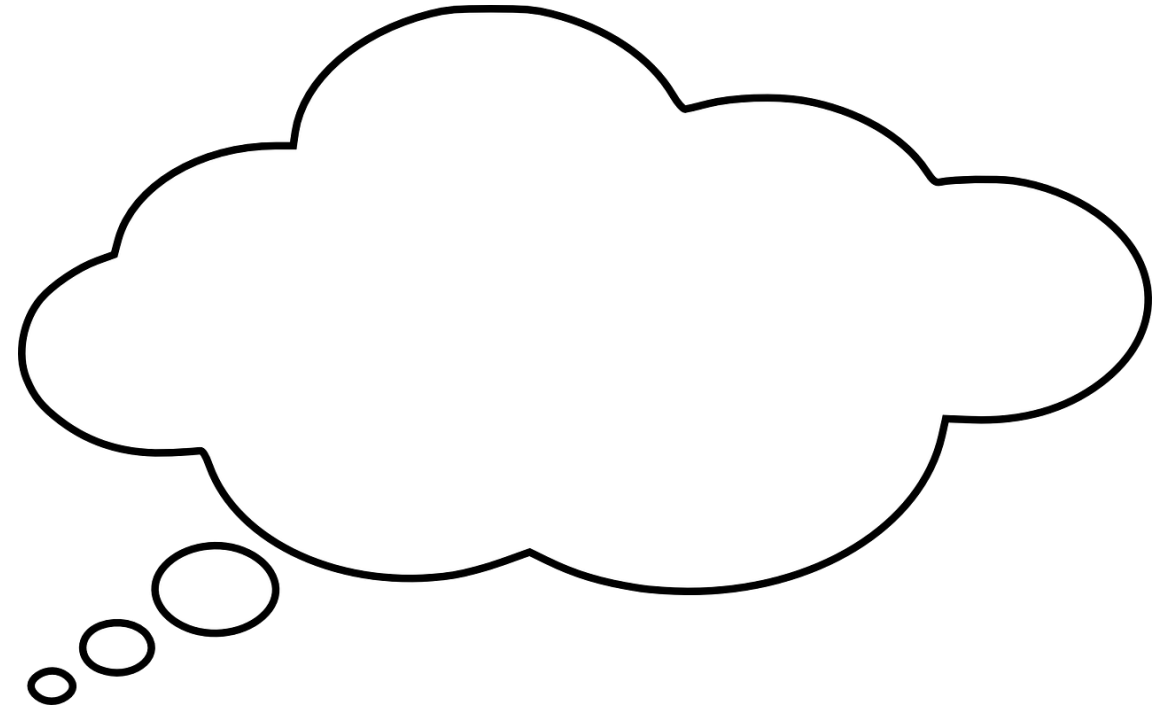
Chronic or Complex Trauma

- Exposure to multiple or prolonged traumatic events
- Examples:
emotional/physical/sexual abuse, neglect, prolonged bullying, community violence/war, or impoverished living conditions

Activity 1.1

Self-Reflection

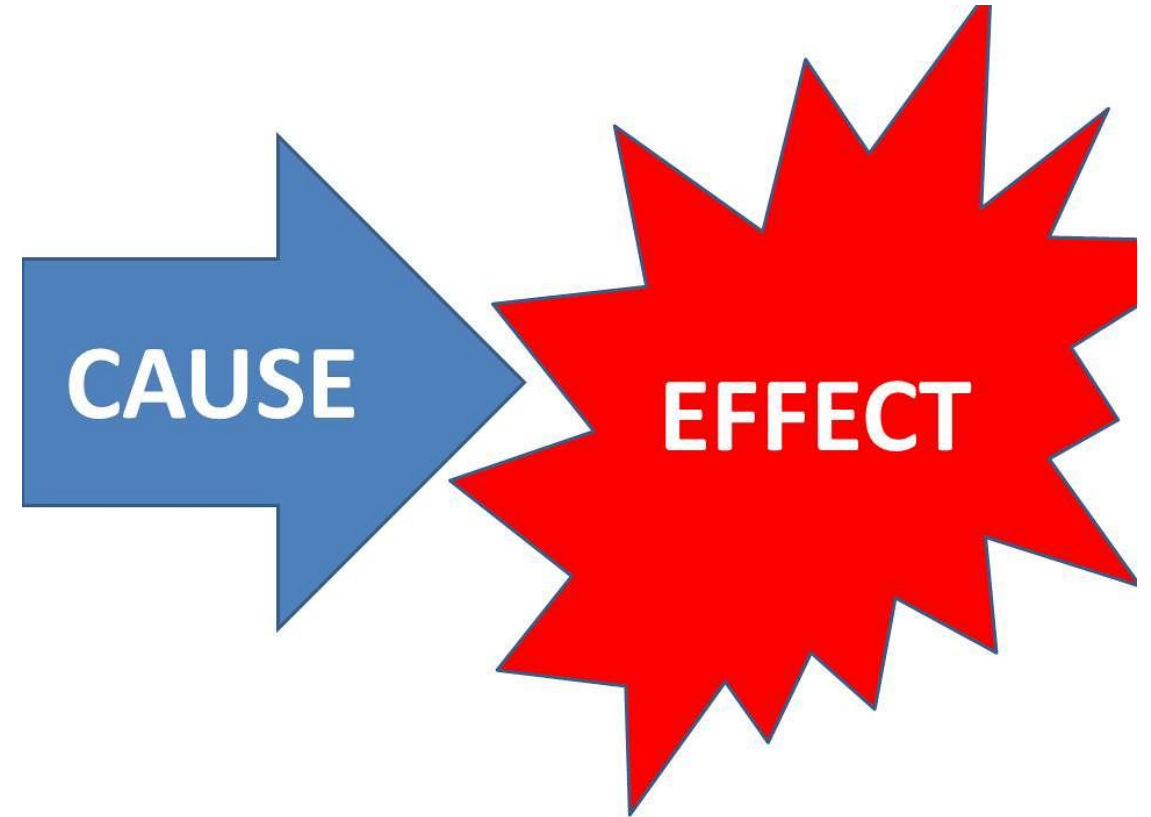
- What was something new you learned about trauma?
- How aware do you think your school staff are about trauma and the traumatic experiences your students may be experiencing?
- What do you want to learn more about?



2.0 Trauma Responses

Trauma/Stress Responses

- How an individual reacts or responds to trauma
 - Can include reactions/responses to perceived threats
- Automatic
 - Unconscious reactions
- Self-protective
 - Coping/Defense mechanisms

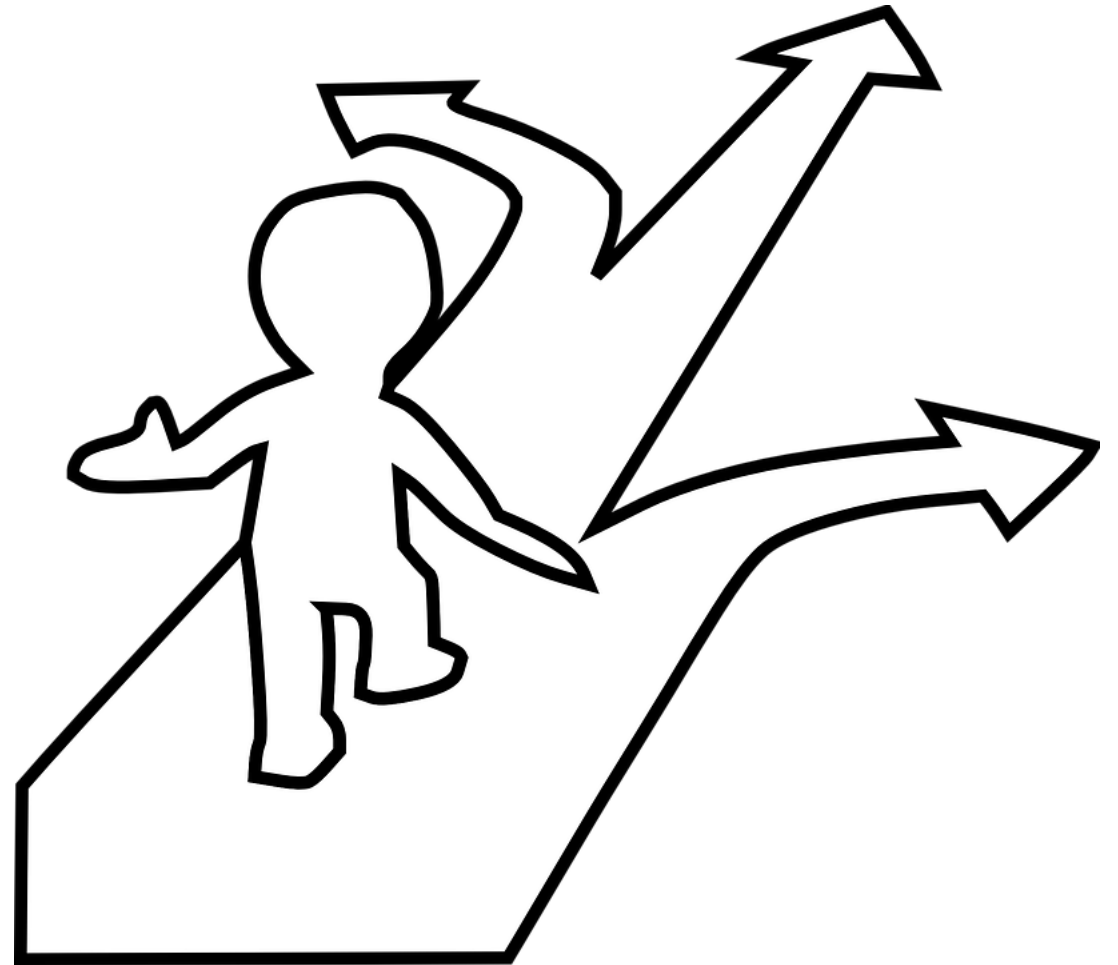


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Activity 2.1

Stop, Think, & Chat Activity

- What might you think, feel, or do in the following situations?
 - You see a spider on your bedroom wall
 - Someone asks you to ride a rollercoaster with them
 - You are hiking and you spot a bear on the trail a few feet ahead of you



Trauma and the Brain

- Downstairs Brain

- A more primitive part of the brain
- Controls basic body functions
 - Blinking, breathing, etc.
- Controls innate reactions
 - Stress responses

- Upstairs Brain

- Evolved/sophisticated part of the brain
- Controls higher-order thinking
 - Thinking
 - Empathy
 - Body control

Common Trauma Responses

Fight

Facing any perceived threat
aggressively

Freeze

Unable to move or act against a
threat

Flight

Running away from danger

Fawn

Immediately acting to try to please
to avoid any conflict

Fight Response in the Classroom



- Verbal aggression
- Physical aggression
- Silly behaviors
- Exhibiting defiance
- Hyperactive behaviors
- Argumentative behaviors

Freeze Response in the Classroom

- Refusing to answer
- Exhibiting numbness
- Refusing to get their needs met
- Giving blank looks/starring off
- Appearing unable to move/act



Flight



- Disengagement
- Withdrawal from tasks/others
- Fleeing the classroom
- Truancy
- Daydreaming
- Sleeping in class

Fawn

- People pleasing
- Inability to say “no”
- Difficulty setting boundaries
- Difficulty making decisions
- Quiet
- Passive
- Resigned disposition





Activity 2.2

Breakout Room Discussion

- Create a Brave and Safe Space
 - Introduce and welcome one another to your breakout room
 - Share your name, location, and role
 - Consider the students you support in your school(s)
 - Confer and consult with colleagues
 - Share some ideas you have for ways to support students who may be exhibiting trauma responses in the classroom.
 - Do you have any compelling examples that can help support your colleagues in their work with students?
-

3.0 Supporting Students

What Can Teachers Do?

- Be mindful that trauma exists
- Create physically and psychologically safe spaces
- Empathize, validate, and show sensitivity to students
- Be aware that some topics may remind students of traumatic events or experiences
- Recognize that each student's experience is individualized and unique
- Monitor students' "emotional temperatures"
- Be mindful of signs of trauma
- Refer students for additional support as needed

Trauma Aware	Trauma Sensitive	Trauma Responsive	Trauma Informed
Begin to build an awareness about trauma	Explore principles of trauma-informed care	School or district culture begins to change	Trauma-responsive practices are the norm
Begin to consider its impact	Build consensus around the principles	Re-thinking the routines and infrastructure	Policies/procedures are measured for fidelity
Examine how to address it in the school setting	Consider implications of adopting the principles	Integrate the principles into behaviors, practices, and support	Safe and supportive school culture
	Prepare for change		Data drives decisions

Getting Started with Trauma-Informed Practices



Edutopia

Trauma-Informed Classroom Practices

- Create positive relationships
- Arrange an orderly physical environment
- Define, teach, acknowledge rules and expectations
- Define, teach classroom routines
- Employ active supervision
- Provide specific praise for behavior
- Continuum of response strategies for inappropriate behavior
- Class-wide group contingency
- Provide multiple opportunities to respond

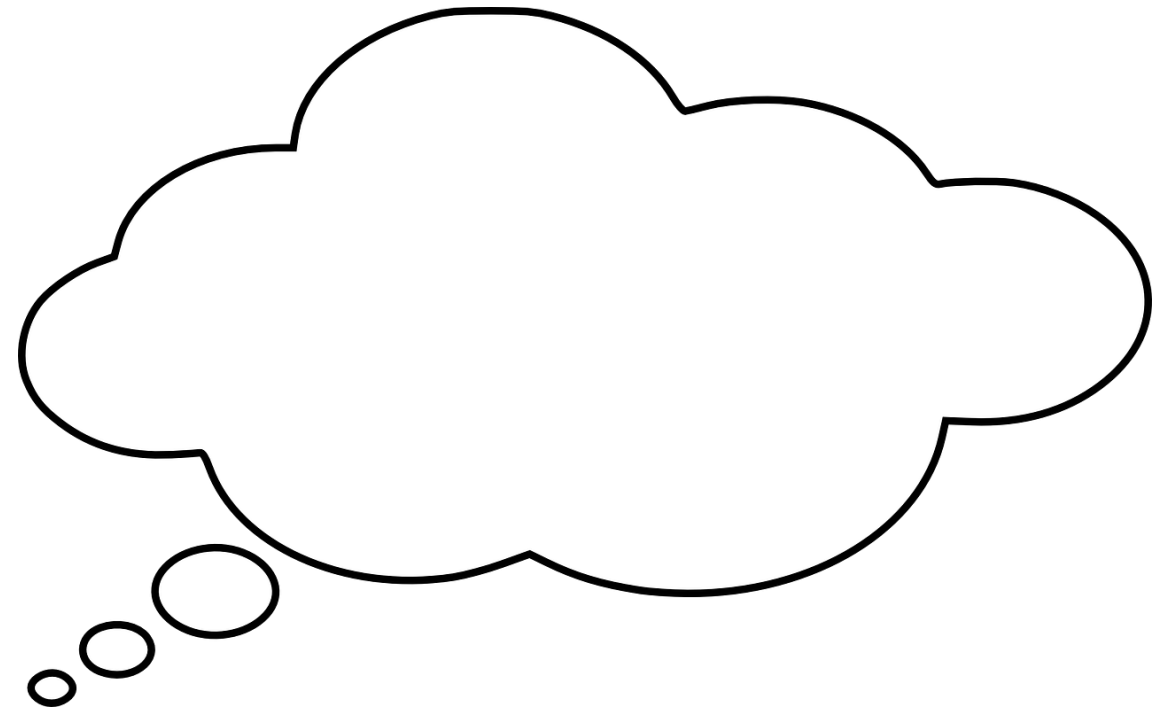
How to Assess Current Practices

- Identify your current Tier I, II, and III Practices
- Identify any gaps
 - Create an action plan for strengthening gaps in implementation efforts to become more trauma-informed
- Identify how each practice is trauma-informed
 - Does it create a safe, predictable, and consistent environment?
 - Does it build community or relationships?
 - Does it teach/reinforce new skills?
 - Does it support regulation?

Activity 3.1

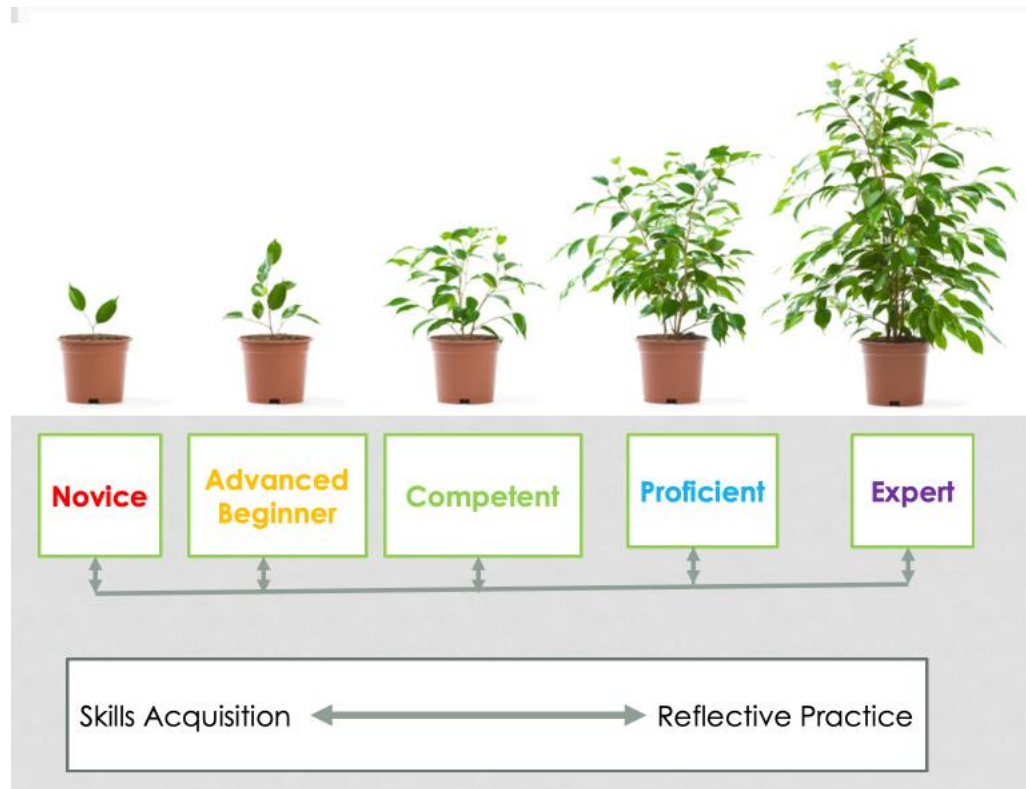
Self-Reflection

- What are some ways you currently are supporting students?
- What is something you want to do differently to support students?
- What is one thing you've learned or want to learn more about?



4.0 Wrap Up and Next Steps

Activity 4.1



- Self-reflect on your current knowledge and skills related to trauma responses in the classroom
- Where do you currently rate your level of knowledge and skills related to trauma responses in the classroom?
- You do not have to share your responses!

Closing Review

- What we experience as traumatic is subjective
- How we respond to trauma is self-protective
- Flight, fight, freeze, and fawn are common trauma responses
- Educators can support students by being trauma-aware and working towards creating trauma-informed classrooms and schools
- Trauma-informed practices support all learners, not just those impacted by trauma

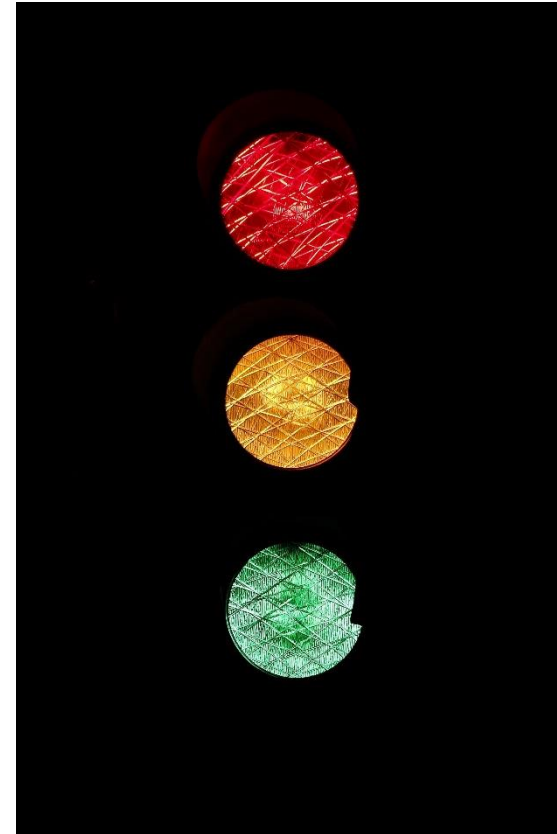
Next Steps

- Consider what items or resources piqued your interest in learning more today
 - Do you want to explore more learning around Trauma-Informed Practices and Trauma-Informed Schools?
 - Do you want to do a deeper dive into assessing your school's current practices?
- Identify how you might strengthen your ability to support students
 - Do you need to work on being more trauma-aware?
 - Are there trauma-informed practices that you can build upon in your setting?

Activity 4.2

Share in the chat:

- One thing to **STOP**
- One thing to **CONTINUE**
- One thing to **START**



References

- American Psychological Association (2021, October). *Students Exposed to Trauma*. APA Mental Health Primers. Retrieved from URL:
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