

## Trauma-Responsive Strategies for Working with Youth

Activities to Try	Five Strategies of Trauma-Informed Care				
	Safety	Trustworthiness	Choice	Collaboration	Restoring Power
<b>To help with perspective taking</b>					
If you're having a conflict with a child, switch roles for a minute so that each person can understand why the other is acting that way.				●	
When reading a story, encourage children to listen for a character's point of view. Ask how their point of view is the same as or different from that of the character.				●	
<b>To help with achieving goals and making predictions</b>					
Help give expectations that are developmentally appropriate. When children are given meaningful tasks that they are capable of doing, they often feel more in control of themselves.		●			●
Teach youth to think out loud about the resources that they can use to solve a problem or reach a goal.					●
Have a buddy system that allows children to rely on one another to get the help they need and feel successful.	●				●

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<b>To help with achieving goals and making predictions (continued)</b>					
Model asking for help. Talk about how different people at the school/community/migrant education were able to help you do things that you needed to get accomplished. Help children see that it is all right to ask for and receive help and support from other people.		●			●
Provide children with “if...then” scripts that encourage them to anticipate possible outcomes of a behavior they are exhibiting.					●
Prior to reading a story aloud, ask the student to make predictions about what will happen in the text.					●
Give students numerous opportunities to practice sequencing events. Use timelines, before and after pictures, and “that was then, this is now” writing exercises to order things sequentially.			●		
Have students develop work plans for projects. Help them to develop a description of what the final product will be, including a rubric that contains its essential elements. A rubric should be developed prior to doing the project so that the child can use it as a guide.			●	●	●
Have students write multiple endings for stories that they are composing. Help them choose which is most congruent with the story.			●		●

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<b>To help with attention</b>					
Encourage youth to participate in physical activities such as running, dancing, and so forth. Exercise helps “kick start” the attending systems of people who require more stimulation to be ready to learn.	●				●
Pair oral directions with written directions. Never assume that children can act on what they’ve been told to do.		●		●	
Provide children with precise feedback on what they can do to improve their performance. Avoid using phrases such as ‘good work” that do not specify what parts of the performance make it good.		●			●
Help children learn how to distinguish between actual danger in their environment and “false positives” (events that trigger downshifting but are in fact benign) by giving them opportunities to reflect on their current experience and evaluate what is happening before acting.					●
Incorporate stress management techniques into activities. These might include deep breathing, stretching exercises, yoga movements, affirmations and calming mantras.	●				
Remind students that they are safe in school. Work with them to develop safety plans that include knowing what to do in an emergency and how to respond to peers who may be speaking or acting in a way that is threatening or harmful to their emotional safety.	●				
Follow through on things that you tell children you will do. Do not make promises you can’t keep.		●			

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<b>To help with reflexivity and mindfulness</b>					
Teach children how to replace “hot thoughts” with “cool thoughts”. Hot thoughts are immediate. They encourage children to react immediately. Cool thoughts come after taking a deep breath. They help children decide on the best way to handle a situation or solve a problem.			●		●
End your time together with a reflective activity that asks student to summarize what they have learned and how it can be applied somewhere in their lives.				●	●
Give students repeated opportunities to tell their stories through writing, art, and movement such as interpretive dance and sculpting.			●		
<b>To help with social aspects of language</b>					
Provide youth with opportunities for self-expression that do not require the use of language. These may include drawing, painting, dancing and drumming or playing other musical instruments.			●		
Provide a safe, comfortable place that children can use when they need to recover from an unexpected change in their environment or routine.	●				

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<b>To help with social aspects of language (continued)</b>					
When having a hard time expressing why they're upset, give the child an opportunity to calm down, and then invite the child to sit with you and explore ways of making change more manageable.	●				
Whenever possible, help children understand and anticipate changes in routines and activities.				●	
Play board games that give children opportunities to extend their vocabulary in a relaxed and enjoyable setting.		●			
Provide students with visual task cards that show each step in a task. The cards may be photos or line drawings. They can turn each card over as they complete the step.					●
<b>To help with encoding meaning and memory</b>					
Provide frequent opportunities to summarize or restate what you have just said.				●	
Read stories with children to discover the words or phrases that authors use to describe ideas or feelings they are trying to express. Keep a list of these phrases. Encourage children to use them when trying to describe their own ideas or feelings.	●				

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<b>To help with encoding meaning and memory (continued)</b>					
Use rituals that involve music and movement to ease the transition from one activity to another.	●				
Provide children with frequent opportunities to give you feedback on what is going on in your session with them, in school, how they feel they are doing and what you can do to help them feel more comfortable.		●	●	●	
Embed facts children need to recall into musical parodies or jingles. Sing these frequently to help children learn to associate the melody with the information they need to remember.				●	●
Wherever possible, link a motor movement with something you want children to remember.				●	●

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<b>To help with attachments and relationships</b>					
Provide children with as much consistency as possible. In addition to following a consistent schedule, use consistent rituals to begin and end activities, and use consistent language for labeling activities and giving directions.		●			
Get in the habit of asking children what they need to complete an activity or assignment. Provide them with anything they are missing.		●			●
Let children know every time you see them how much you like them and how happy you are to be working with them.	●				
Teach children to use a cognitive “brake” to determine whether the signals they are getting from their body match what is going on in the environment. Children can learn to use their brains to monitor their physical reactions by using keyword strategies such as SOLD: <b>S</b> top what you are doing. <b>O</b> bserve how you are feeling. <b>L</b> ook at whether how you are feeling matches what is going on in the environment. <b>D</b> ecide how you will behave.	●				
Lend children an emotional helping hand. Be willing to actively help children manage stressful and distressing situations that are beyond their resources to handle alone.	●				
Let children observe how you think about your relationships with other people and how you make efforts to correct misunderstandings.		●		●	
Provide children with opportunities to collaborate with you on the behaviors that are required to complete a certain task.			●	●	

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<b>To help with attachments and relationships (continued)</b>					
Provide children with rubrics that give clear examples of what is expected of them. Offer your support in helping the students meet these expectations.			●	●	
Help children know that disruptions in relationships can be repaired. When a child hurts someone’s feelings or behaves aggressively toward someone, acknowledge that it was the wrong thing to do and then offer to help the child make amends.	●	●			
Provide direct instruction on the roles that teachers and students play in school. Define your role to help each child achieve his or her goals.	●				
Explain that we all play different roles in different places. Acknowledge that some children are not able to play the role of child at home. School is their place to leave grown-up responsibilities at the door and explore new ideas and opportunities.	●				
Identify and use scripted greetings with children whose history suggests an early exposure to violence. These children may interpret changes in how you greet them as a shift in the relationship that threatens their safety.	●	●			
Talk with children about your responsibility to keep them safe.	●				
Never shame or embarrass a child through verbal reprimand or negative comments on written work.		●			



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<b>To help with self-regulation</b>					
Meet with the classroom teacher and identify behavioral expectations so that you can assure consistency when meeting with a student.				●	
Use rehearsal strategies to help children practice the behaviors that they will need in a new situation.	●		●		
Avoid escalating behaviors by asking children to explain their behavior when they appear angry and out of control. Provide them with a safe place to cool down before trying to discuss the behavior or to make a plan for avoiding similar occurrences in the future.					●
Provide children with opportunities to make choices. Start with safe, simple things, such as which color paper they want to use or whether they want to sit for your session.			●		
Talk with students about how you are feeling and things you do to help yourself feel happy and in control.	●	●			
Teach children to notice how they feel. Ask them to describe how their bodies feel after engaging in aerobic exercise compared with sitting still for a long time. Call attention to activities that help them feel good. Chart these and refer back to them when a child is feeling discouraged and needs a boost.					●
Teach children how to use their minds to control their emotions and moods. Use techniques such as visualization, deep breathing, or yoga poses to help children be more aware of their physical states.	●				●
Teach children to use scripts or self-talk to manage situations that are particularly difficult for them.	●				●

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<b>To help with reading and writing skills</b>					
Read stories about people who overcome great adversity to go on and make an important contribution to their communities.					●
Provide children with access to age appropriate magazines that give them opportunities to read and appreciate nonfiction.			●		
Model how you connect with what you have read.	●				
Brainstorm your questions about a topic in front of the children, recording the things you wonder about.	●			●	
Tell stories about people setting goals and the effort it took to achieve them. Encourage children to tell similar stories from their own family or personal experiences.					●