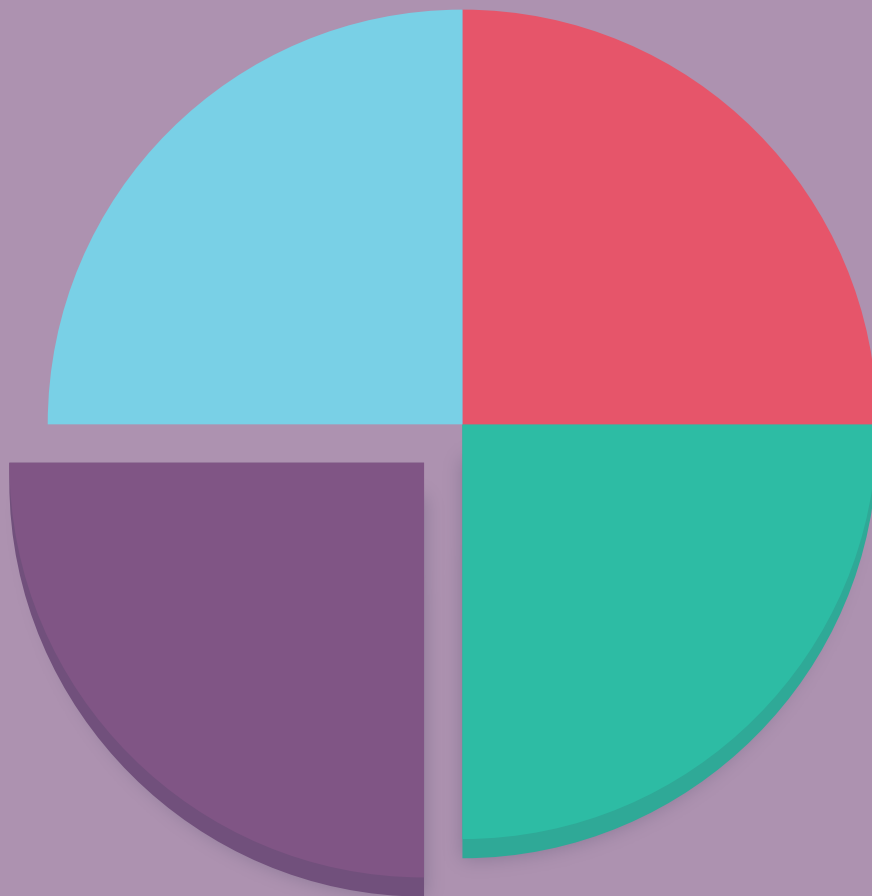


Compassionate Learning Communities  
Supporting a Trauma-Informed Practice

# Facilitator Guide

## CAPACITY



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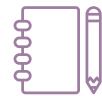
# Introduction

This guide is intended to support the information found in the slide deck presentation. We understand that many trauma-informed educators are working throughout B.C. and elsewhere and encourage you to customize the presentation material in any way that makes it more relevant to your staff and school. We have included *sample speaking notes* (below; also included in the *notes* section of the PowerPoint presentation). These notes are intended to provide a script where one is desired, but if you prefer, please feel free to use your own words. You can read the notes ahead of your presentation for background information on each slide. In some cases, there are opportunities to raise questions with the group and the background information is intended to support you to answer/debrief various topics.

It is always challenging to estimate the time for such a presentation due to different levels of engagement with various topics and questions, but we recommend scheduling a minimum of one hour for each of the four presentations included in the Compassionate Learning Communities resource set.

In order to provide participants with time to reflect on and discuss the material, we suggest spacing the four presentations several months apart. Presenting more than one topic at a time is strongly discouraged as it does not provide participants with time to reflect and apply what they learned in their classrooms and schools before supplementing their practice with the information from the next topic.

## Needed materials:



- Laptop and Projector
- Internet connection (wireless will suffice in most cases) to play videos directly from YouTube links embedded in the PowerPoint presentation (alternatively, videos can be downloaded prior to the presentation from links provided)
- Participant handout (student profiles/case studies for discussion with the questions related to each for the small group discussion, PowerPoint slides with notes field (fillable PDF file in digital format)



## Why Trauma-Informed Practice Matters in Education

Trauma-informed practice, sometimes referred to as ACEs (Adverse Childhood Events) informed practice, is a compassionate lens of understanding that is helpful to all children, youth and adults, especially those who have experienced traumatic events and early hardships. The main components of this lens are rooted in understanding that all behaviour and actions happen for a reason and that it is up to each of us, in our helping capacity, to acknowledge current coping strategies and to assist children, youth and adults find other ways of coping, building on personal capacity and growth through supportive relationships and creative opportunities.

The lens of trauma-informed practice is relevant to all helping practitioners as it focuses on safety, stabilization and reconnection. Trauma-informed is different than the trauma-specific work that many counsellors and psychologists do, which requires specialized clinical training. In the education system, school counsellors and school psychologists may have this additional training to support children and youth with significant adversity issues, but educators and staff stay in the world of trauma-informed to ensure competence in helping.

Trauma-informed practice is not intended to be a one-shot training or the latest educational fad; it involves the long-term work of transforming schools into compassionate learning communities. Trauma-informed is not about doing more in the classroom and community but rather, about doing things differently. This lens is about life and how children's environments have the potential to shape their beliefs and behaviours along the way.



## Safety in Presenting: Care of Participants

In keeping with a trauma-informed lens, facilitators are encouraged to present the material as safely as possible, encouraging participants to meet the material at their individual level, especially if participants themselves are from a background of adversity. Encourage participants to move around, have tea, coffee or water and to leave the room if they feel triggered or overwhelmed. The sharing of personal histories is not recommended in this format. Facilitators are encouraged to have contact information for community resources available to support participants and preferably, to host the workshop with the presence of a school counsellor or school psychologist. The pace of presenting the information and the need for compassion in facilitation are important elements.

We now understand that many people working within our schools have experienced adverse childhood events and we ask that you do your best to ensure everyone's safety. The sharing of detailed traumatic material is strongly discouraged! The focus here is on better understanding and providing support for the affected behaviours we observe with children and youth.

To ensure participant wellbeing, please check with your school counsellor or district school psychologist before adding additional material to this presentation.

## Before You Present

Schools and communities are diverse; facilitators are encouraged to customize the information to best fit the children, youth, caregivers, educators and staff in their community. You are encouraged to engage with the material before presenting to ensure that it fits with your school and community culture, modifying or adapting the information as required.

Many caregivers, educators and staff have been working within a trauma-informed lens for years but may not have used this specific term to describe how they work with children and youth. You are encouraged to honour and acknowledge the expertise and experience in each room, in each training session.

This guide contains information that you might want to summarize for each slide (what this is, why it is important), questions on which you might suggest participants reflect individually or in small groups (wondering questions), and group discussion topics intended for participants to share their unique perspectives, understanding of the material, and ideas that may enhance their trauma-informed practice (possibilities discussion). Each of the four PowerPoint presentation begins with a child's scenario and closes with how an educator might intervene. The presentations also include the voices of educators and youth who have experienced compassionate practice in their education journey.

If time and resources permit, please watch the [Meet the Speakers](#) video; alternatively, you may wish to read brief introductions to the specialists who appear in the video interviews (provided at the end of this guide).

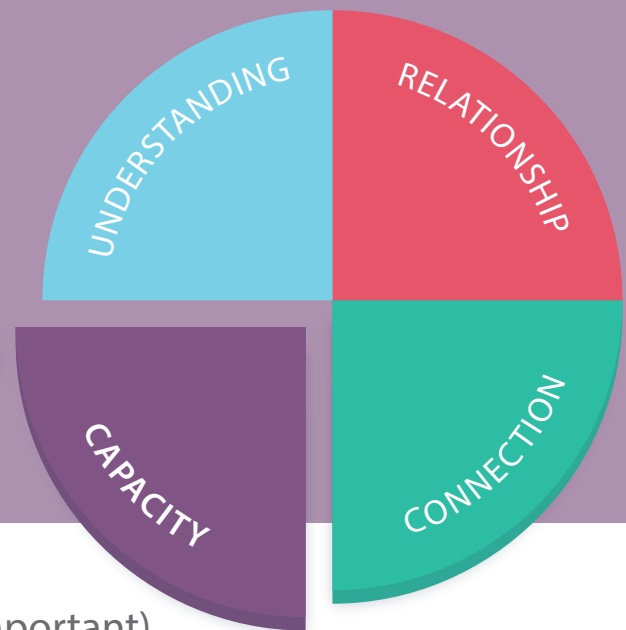


# Component 4

# Capacity

Capacity is the fourth part of a four-part framework for creating compassionate learning communities.

- Students' abilities
- Reframing behaviour as coping
- Strength-based



## Slide 1

### Introduction (What this is, why it is important)

Thank you for joining us today for the *Capacity* presentation on building compassionate learning environments. Through building on the components presented in *Understanding*, *Relationship* and *Connection*, the Framework element on increasing Capacity within students, educators, districts, families and communities in addressing the possible effects of early adverse events is envisioned. This *Capacity* refers to a strength-based approach where behaviours are reframed to understanding coping, providing educators with the opportunity to help students develop alternative coping to increase safety so that students can learn. The element of Capacity guides the compilation of resources intended to help educators better support students who have experienced adverse events; in supporting these students, educators may better support all students.

Some objectives of this presentation:

- Identifying strengths of children, youth, families, staff and community in order to build capacity, moving from where students are operating (at this time) to what is possible to achieve, building competence and confidence through successful experiences.
- Acknowledging the importance of assessing child or youth's developmental stage rather than chronological point emotionally, cognitively, psychologically, and physically.
- Increasing the capacity of children and youth to regulate emotions and move to more positive relationships and social interactions. Acknowledging the importance of staff regulation in order to provide the base of co-regulation for students who need attunement and modelling.
- Providing frameworks and visions for schools to build on in the process of becoming fully trauma-informed.

## Slide 2 **School**



We are hard-working educators at a school in a resource community reaching out for ways to support our students and staff. Staff turnover has been high over the past ten years, with educators identifying feeling overwhelmed by the needs of our students. Up to a third of our students struggle with affect regulation and what we describe as hyperactivity. Many of us have struggled to connect with families and community, especially when new to the school. Most of the staff is just beginning to learn about trauma-informed practice. Our school has a new principal who is passionate about building a compassionate learning community and has asked us to begin to brainstorm about next steps to implement on the journey of becoming trauma-informed.

In hearing the situation of this school, note some ideas you have on where to start the process of becoming trauma-informed with this school staff. We will revisit the school later in the presentation where you are invited to share your ideas with the larger group.

## Slide 3 **Compassionate Educator**



The fact is that given the challenges we face, education doesn't need to be reformed — it needs to be transformed. The key to this transformation is not to standardize education, but to personalize it, to build achievement on discovering the individual talents of each child, to put students in an environment where they want to learn and where they can naturally discover their true passions.

*Robinson (2009)*

Personalizing education and identifying the unique strengths of each child is at the heart of building capacity and moving children from being defined by what has happened to them to what they can do and achieve. One of the most important points in working in a trauma-informed way is to work to know each child in front of us and work from where this child is currently operating. There can never be a blanket program that addresses all the complex needs of children from adversity.

## Slide 4 **Compassionate Educator: Something Inspirational**



Teachers have the toughest job: we answer to administration, other teachers, parents, kids, society, and even our own families sometimes. It can be difficult to see the good in all the challenges.

I invite you to find a partner and pair share one amazing thing you as an educator have done this year. No modesty allowed.

*Callista (long-time educator)*

Callista identifies how difficult teaching can be and how it is hard to hold onto positive shifts. She believes that teachers need to acknowledge the challenging aspects of their work while not losing sight of the small, amazing things that a compassionate educator working in a safe school can facilitate with children and youth. Her intent is to give staff a brief moment of reflection on something good.



### **Wondering Questions**

As individuals or in small groups, reflect on Callista's invitation.

## Slide 5 **Strength: Personal agency, Competency: Let Me Show You What I Can Do**

The key with all work in trauma-informed practice is to begin to understand each child or youth and to identify what areas of strength they currently hold so we can begin to use these strengths to increase confidence and competence. Building confidence and competence changes how children and youth from adversity feel and begins to change how they view themselves: what aspects of their behaviour they can begin to control and what areas of their life they cannot control at this time.



[Play Video: Personal Agency](#)

## ▷ Slide 6 **Assessing Strengths and Capacity**

Children and youth from adversity are often stalled at a younger stage of development based on the age they were when significant events happened. Understanding where each child and youth is currently operating cognitively, emotionally, physically and psychologically is key to being effective in intervening and in identifying strengths in each of these domains. Educators can then better understand how to holistically support the child or youth.

## ▷ Slide 7 **Let's Start From Here**

Educators, Staff, Parents/Caregivers help:

- Acknowledge whole child, and their immediate strengths and needs
- Validate adaptive/protective nature of current behaviours, understanding from where they might develop
- Educate child about brain response, using age appropriate material and
- Differentiate past and present with awareness of the importance that school context not replicate adversity context

Supporting children and youth from adversity includes acknowledgement of current coping/survival strategies that are often described as being problematic behaviours. Reframing such behaviours helps us understand the purposes of what children and youth often do, giving us insight into other more life enhancing coping that will hopefully get their needs met.

 [Play Video: Capacity to Support Children Part 1](#)

## ▷ Slide 8 **Framework for Interventions**

This slide presents the main headings for the majority of interventions that have been helpful to children and youth struggling with complex trauma. Learning affect regulation through relationships with co-regulators including educators, staff and other students is of utmost importance and leads to improvement in interpersonal skills. Feeling connected to other children contributes to safety through a sense of belonging.

We cannot say enough about self-capacity. Possibly the most important intervention strategy for complex trauma effects involves ensuring daily successful experiences in child's/youth's life. These successful events provide evidence to combat negative internalized messages and incorrect behavioural assessments.

## ▷ Slide 9 **Elementary Interventions**

Building from the base of relational repair and connection, younger students from adversity often benefit from unstructured play, redirection, grounding (downregulation and upregulation) and movement.

- Play is important for all children but especially for many children from adversity who may not have had opportunities to play.
- Distraction and redirection helps downregulate many children in a preventative way, keeping the threat reaction in-check in a positive, supportive way.
- For children who dissociate, any activity that brings them back into the room helps facilitate learning.
- Movement is a powerful strategy for children struggling with affect regulation; once children can regulate their bodies better, then emotions are sometimes easier to work with.

A variety of interventions are provided in the resource section of your handout.

## ▷ Slide 10 **Secondary Interventions**

From the base of relational repair and attunement, strategies for youth range from working on self-esteem through competence, ensuring tasks that they will be successful at, to understanding shame-based and guilt issues that may arise from past experiences, to specific classroom strategies that include the use of multiple strategies to communicate information or instructions for tasks (ie. verbal instructions, visual reinforcement, practice, and role play).

Providing a range of methods to reinforce behavioural expectations, including visual, auditory, sensory, words and pictures also helps youth. A focus on healthy relationships and positive mentors is important for these students.

Resources for adolescents can be found in the resource section in your handout.

## ▷ Slide 11 **Building Capacity for Everyone**

In order for educators to increase capacity for complex learners, including children who have experienced adversity, basic principles of trauma-informed practice include:

- Lowering stress in the classroom to the best of their abilities using varied strategies for your students who are hyperaroused and hyperactive and other approaches for children who are dissociative;
- Enriching the environment through language, art, music, outdoor\land-based activities;
- Establishing safe boundaries for everyone working with the class with all students contributing at the beginning of the year to their development; and
- Then connecting children and youth from adversity with staff and students who can regulate, providing them with opportunities to build on their strengths.

## ▷ Slide 12 **Everyone Contributes**

 [Play Video: Building Students' Capacity](#)

## ▷ Slide 13 **Working with Staff Strengths**

In order to best support children and youth experiencing adversity and to facilitate growth, we are always looking for best fit between staff and the children and youth who require co-regulation currently. Whether students with complex trauma indicate an interest in sports, art, music, trades or other vocations, staff's interest often aligns, opening the door to successful experiences.

## ▷ Slide 14 **Feel: Emotion (Affect) Regulation: Help me name what I feel**

Many children from adversity are not raised in an environment of emotional language. Educators are often the first adults who introduce children to the world of naming emotion and modeling a range of emotion.

## ▷ Slide 15 **Regulation**

Failure to self-regulate affect (emotion) has been related to possible later mental health issues, substance misuse and justice involvement.

Moving a child or youth from auto-regulation to co-regulation to eventual self-regulation is one of the most important tasks educators and staff can do for children and youth from adversity. Once a child can name emotions, they can begin to understand what they feel and what situations require them to use various grounding, calming or redirecting strategies to control their behaviours.

## ▷ Slide 16 **Socio-Emotional Process**

Research is overwhelming on the need for development of social/emotional skills and personal agency for children who have experienced adversity.

Children and youth who have experienced ACEs often need support and modelling to develop abilities to interact with other children in socially acceptable ways.

Many schools are now putting time and energy into socio-emotional learning on a daily basis. This focus helps children from adversity begin to regulate and then connect with other children, increasing their interpersonal skills.

 [Play Video: Strategies](#)

## ▷ Slide 17 **Power and Control**

When children cannot control their environment or the events that have or continue to happen to them, they often don't feel safe unless they feel in control of their situation. Giving them some opportunity to be in charge of small tasks or roles often increases their sense of safety, leading to a decrease in problematic controlling behaviour.

## ▷ Slide 18 **Staff Regulation**

Staff wellness and emotional attunement are major considerations in the work towards becoming trauma-informed, compassionate learning communities. Regulated educators can facilitate discussions with children and youth around feelings of anger, frustration, fear and shame without setting children into defensive coping, modeling the ability to talk emotion and regulate using interpersonal communication skills.

## ▷ Slide 19 **Implementing and Sustaining: Integrating Trauma-Informed Practice in Schools: This lens fits**

The task of becoming fully integrated trauma-informed schools takes time and shared commitment by staff. Writers describe that implementing trauma-informed practice is challenging, but sustaining this lens is often more difficult due to the “gravitational pull of a more punitive approach” (Baker et al., 2009).

 [Play Video: Capacity to Support Children Part 2](#)

## ▷ Slide 20 **Trauma-Informed Systems**

The 4 Rs of a systems approach to trauma-informed practice from Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) adapted for schools may be helpful to envisioning all the important broad categories in trauma-informed practice:

- Schools, staff **REALIZE** the widespread impact of trauma and understands potential avenues for recovery;
- Educators and staff **RECOGNIZE** the signs and symptoms of trauma in children, families, staff, and others involved with the system;
- Districts, Schools, Administrators **RESPOND** by fully integrating knowledge about trauma into practices, policies and procedures;
- Everyone working with children and youth in the schools works hard to **RESIST RE-TRAUMATIZATION**.

(SAMHSA, 2014)



## Slide 21 **Steps in Helping Traumatized Children Learn**

In the summary of information from the Massachusetts Advocates for Children,

Helping Traumatized Children Learn I (2005) document, the school principal's involvement and leadership is envisioned as guiding the implementation of trauma-informed practice. The main steps include:

- Identifying staff interested in forming strategic planning group,
- Assessment of staff training needs and interest,
- Review of policies and procedures,
- Community consultation, and
- Evaluation of the program (Helping Traumatized Children Learn, 2009).
- Assessing the specific needs of staff and then implementing trauma-sensitive approaches is a process that takes time and will look different for each school and each community. The capacity of community to contribute needs to be acknowledged and worked with for the benefit of the students.

## Slide 22 **Vision for Schools: Trauma Informed**

In the second volume from the Massachusetts Advocates for Children, Helping Traumatized Children Learn II, Creating and Advocating for Trauma Sensitive Schools (2013), a working vision for schools is presented.

- Shared understanding of how trauma impacts learning, need for trauma sensitivity
- Support all students to feel safe
- Address students' needs in holistic ways
- Explicitly connect students to school community
- Embrace teamwork
- Anticipate and adapt to students' needs

This vision again stresses the importance of a shared understanding on the possible impacts of trauma, creating a safe environment and the need for flexibility.



### **Wondering Questions**

- Does this vision contain components you already have in your school?
- Any you believe the school should work towards?

## ▷ Slide 23 **Components of Trauma Informed Schools**

Adapted from the Compassionate Learning Community Rubric designed by the Puget Sound Education District, these main categories may be helpful to your school in defining the areas that need work and those areas in which the school already has capacity and observes children succeeding.

The area that schools find the hardest to adjust is school discipline, under the heading of positive boundaries.

## ▷ Slide 24 **Compassionate Capacity Questions**



### **Possibility Discussion**

In table groups, spend 5 minutes or so discussing a choice of the following questions, and then share whatever is most relevant with the larger group.

- How is compassionate practice defined within the school?
- What is currently being done in practice in this school?
- Where does the staff want to go, want to change, want to add?

## ▷ Slide 25 **Compassionate Capacity Questions (continued)**



### **Possibility Discussion**

In table groups, spend 5 minutes or so discussing a choice of the following questions, and then share whatever is most relevant with the larger group.

- What are the identified and untapped strengths of students in your school?
- What are the identified and untapped strengths of your staff?
- What successes do you witness?

## Slide 26 **School**

In revisiting the school introduced at the beginning of the presentation, initial steps are now being taken to begin the journey on becoming a trauma informed, compassionate learning community.



Lead by our passionate principal, the school staff have organized a working group consisting of educators and other staff members who are keen to work on shifting their school to becoming trauma-informed. Using the 10 main topics defined as components of trauma-informed schools, the group has decided to work on two each year, one that they feel the school is doing well and one that will require more work and discussion.

All staff have received basic training on possible implications for children who have experienced adverse events, with a focus on the brain response. Strategies for teaching children living with the effects of adversity have been included and mentoring teachers are supporting new teachers.

Staff wellness activities and events have been scheduled and organized for the upcoming school year and creative ways of including families are being shared.



### **Wondering Questions**

If this is the way for your school and staff, how will you begin your journey?



### **Possibilities Discussion**

At your table, discuss your thoughts on current supports and barriers to incorporating trauma-informed practice into your school or district.

**Thank you for engaging in this material and we hope it leads to productive conversations, the sharing of expertise and ideas and creative interventions over time. We hope the information helps with awareness and holding hope for your school, your staff and all children and youth from adversity that you support.**

————— **End of slides** —————

# Follow up

We suggest checking-in with staff over the following days or weeks to understand what discussions have developed out of the presentation. At this stage, staff interested in moving toward a fully trauma-informed school may want to download a working document on Developing Compassionate Learning Communities available on the website.

One page downloadable and links to other resources are included.

# One-Page Tip Sheet

Download this reference sheet for Understanding Adverse Childhood Experiences and Trauma.

**CAPACITY**  
Why trauma-informed practice matters in education

A school in a resource community is looking for ways to support their students and staff. Staff turnover has been high over the past ten years, with educators identifying feeling overwhelmed by the needs of their students. Educators have described that up to a third of their classes struggle with affect regulation and hyperactivity. Educators are also struggling to connect with families and community if they are new to the school. The school has a new principal who is passionate about building a compassionate learning community and has asked the staff to brainstorm steps to support the journey of becoming trauma-informed.

**STRENGTHS BASED**

Recognizing the unique strengths of everyone involved in the school, from support staff to principal to students, ensures that the school community sees its own members as meaningful. This models to students that everyone belongs. With this mindset, everyone benefits, not just those impacted by trauma.

Meet the child where they are at, and recognize their inherent capacity

Cultural Awareness

Everyone contributes, everyone benefits

What unique strengths do you bring to your school? How can you be supported to share these strengths?

**TRANSFORM**

Transformation means focusing on the small yet powerful ways you can bring compassionate practice to your school through your daily interactions with students and with each other as staff.

Realizes How trauma impacts children

Recognizes Behaviours related to trauma

Revisits Re-Traumatization Providing a different, safer response

Responds With attention and compassion

SAMSHA, 2014

How is Compassionate Practice defined in your school?

Ontario  
MINISTRY OF  
EDUCATION

# Videos

## Personal Agency

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Suman Hothi, Registered Clinical Counsellor, BC Borstal Association

## Capacity to Support Children Part 1

Dr. Jennifer Wolowic, Managing Director of the Stigma and Resilience Among Youth Centre (SARAVYC)

## Building Students' Capacity

Sonia Pieraccini, Teacher, Annieville Elementary, Delta School District

## Strategies

Allison Pooley, MAL, B.Ed; Executive Director, The Asante Centre

## Capacity to Support Children Part 2

Dr. Jeffrey Schiffer, Sessional Instructor, Justice Institute of BC; Special Projects Officer, Vancouver Aboriginal Child and Family Services Society

## Sample Resources

Craig, S. E. (2016). *Trauma-Sensitive Schools. Learning Communities Transforming Children's Lives.* New York, NY. Teachers College Press

*Trauma-Informed Classroom Strategies.* Compiled by O'Neill, L., George, S., & Wagg, J. (2015)

Available at <http://web.unbc.ca/~loneill>

*Interventions for Children Experiencing Complex Trauma: Preliminary Compilation.* O'Neill, L., Kichenham, A., Fraser, T. George, S. Pooley, J. Henklemen, S. (2012)

Available at <http://web.unbc.ca/~loneill>

*Supporting Trauma Informed Practices Working with Adolescents and Youth: A Manual for Service Providers,* Compiled and written by Wagg, J., George, S., & O'Neill, L. (2017).

Available at <http://web.unbc.ca/~loneill>

**These are just a few of the many resources available. We encourage you to seek out additional resources relevant to your practice, school, and community.**

## References

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Cole, S., Eisner, A., Gregory, M., & Ristuccia, J. (2013) *Helping Traumatized Children Learn II Creating and Advocating for Trauma-Sensitive Schools*

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Pearlman, L.A., & Courtois, C.A. (2005). Clinical applications of the Attachment Framework: Relational treatment of complex trauma. *Journal of Traumatic Stress, 18(5), 449-459.*

