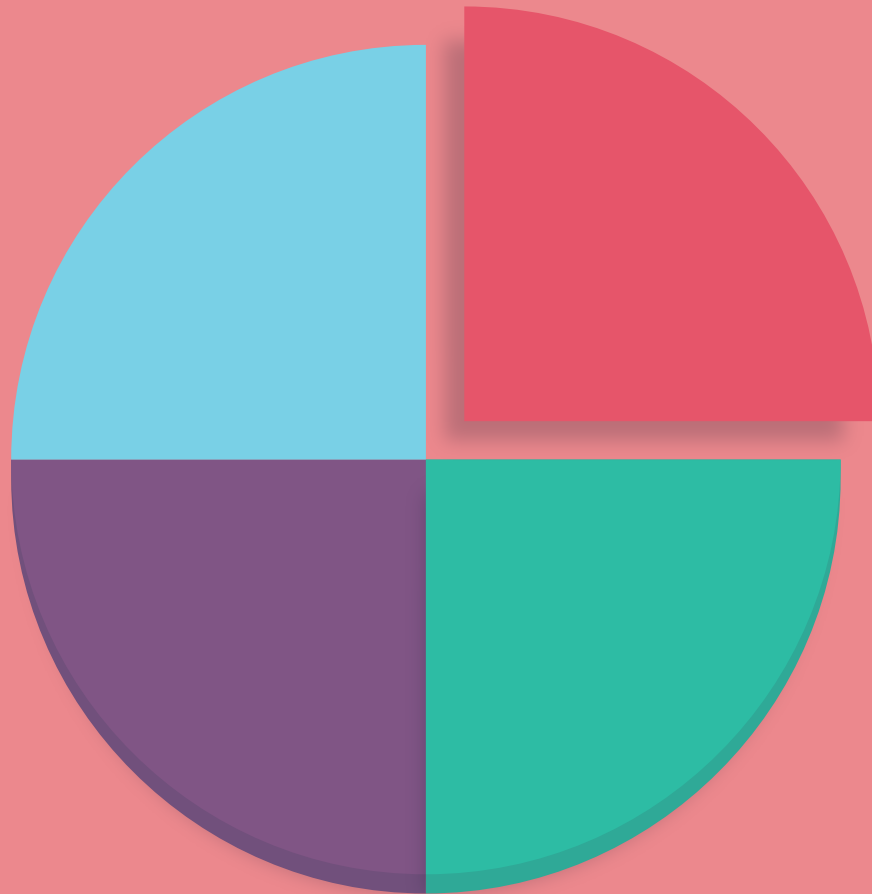


Compassionate Learning Communities  
Supporting a Trauma-Informed Practice

# Participant Handout

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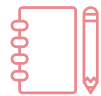
## Participant Self-Care

In keeping with a trauma-informed lens, you are invited to engage with the materials at your own level, especially if you have experienced adversity. We invite you to move around, have tea, coffee or water and to leave the room if you feel triggered or overwhelmed. The sharing of personal histories is not recommended in this format and facilitators have contact information for community resources. Hopefully your school or district has school counsellors or school psychologist available to speak to today if needed.

## Let's Begin

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).

These Participant Handouts include the following components:



1. Highlights from the slide deck:
  - Student voices / scenarios
  - Compassionate Educators
  - Discussion topics and questions for reflection
2. Some of the many available resources to supplement your study and practice
3. Brief introductions for speakers included in the videos
4. Slide screenshots with space for notes



## 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.



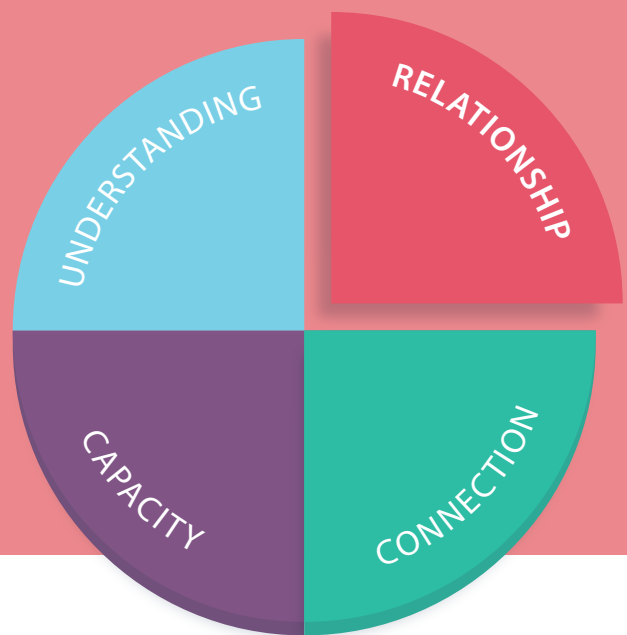


## Component 2

# Relationship

Relationship is the second part of a four-part framework for creating compassionate learning communities.

- Educator and staff wellness
- Reflective practice
- Acceptance and compassion



### Slide 1

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

Thank you for joining us today for the *Relationship* presentation on building compassionate learning environments. This presentation focuses on using one of the most important research findings of early adverse events based on interpersonal neurobiology presented in the *Understanding* presentation: the foundational importance of building relationships with children and youth who have experienced adverse events and the links to affect regulation, learning and social engagement.

Here are some objectives that we hope to meet in this presentation:

- Understand the power of relationship in helping children who are demonstrating Complex Trauma effects develop affect regulation and healthier coping.
- Incorporating relationships and mentorship as the foundation of safe schools.
- Understand possible secondary trauma effects from supporting children and youth experiencing adverse, traumatic events.
- Begin to formulate a wellness plan for schools and staff through acknowledgement of possible secondary effects of supporting children and youth experiencing adverse events.

The importance of *relationship* in motivating, developing and sustaining students' engagement in learning, no matter what the adversity is or has been, is a foundational element to the framework. To form and then maintain supportive relationships and help co-regulate students from adversity who may be struggling with regulation, educator and staff wellness becomes an essential component to the framework. Acknowledging how difficult the work may be in supporting and teaching children and youth from adverse events and what the effects may be for educators is important to establishing healthy, safe school environments. Healthier staff leads to increased ability for staff

to work as co-regulators and build relationships. Within this framework, ideas for increasing well-being for students and educators in sustaining practice are included as components to trauma-informed practice.

## Slide 2 **Kiki's Story**



My name is Kiki and I am 16. I don't connect with anyone; teachers, staff or other kids. My home environment is very stressful and there's been violent stuff happening over the past few years. I learned a long time ago how to leave my body and my emotions and daydream. I find it really hard to be present, I just drift away. I get really upset if attention is paid to me and I try to hide behind my hair or in my sweatshirt, I just want to be invisible. I don't like writing, so I don't write much but I draw all the time. When I see a younger kid in distress, I sit with them and try to help, I just hate seeing sad kids. My new teacher is very concerned with my "written and verbal output", those things are really the least of my worries. When she tries to talk to me, I check out, telling her that she does not know me.



### **Self-Reflection**

Many of us have likely had a child like Kiki, in our class. After reading this slide, we invite you to consider how you might intervene with this child or youth. There will be time for you to share your ideas with colleagues before presenting our suggestions for working with Kiki, in the final slide.

## Slide 3 **Compassionate Educator**



You know it took me awhile but one day I realized that the kids I struggled with the most were all just doing what makes sense to them, from everything they had seen and experienced, that they fight or hide because they are afraid and threatened, they trust no one and cannot seem to connect, even though they really, really want to...they are struggling, hurting so much. My kids who dissociate break my heart and I struggle to reach them, to bring them back. This is not who they can be, this is how they have become.

▷ Slide 4 **Safety and Assurance of Wellbeing: Am I Safe and Do I Feel Safe Here?**

 [Play Video: Safety and Assurance of Wellbeing](#)

▷ Slide 5 **Power of Relationship**

 [Play Video: Power of Relationship](#)

▷ Slide 6 **Relationship Benefits All**

Building blocks of a safe school community:

<b>Connectedness</b>	Communication and caring that makes people feel valued, respected and wanted.
<b>Climate</b>	Quality and character of school life with a focus on the quality of the relationships within the school community.
<b>Culture</b>	The way we do things.

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/erase/about>

▷ Slide 8 **Relational Repair**

 [Play Video: Relational Repair](#)

▷ Slide 11 **Attunement**

Attunement is a corrective experience, a feeling of connecting with the emotional state of the child or youth, or more specifically, “the repetitive experience of synchronizing appropriate arousal management with someone else...borrowing the arousal system management of a educator or staff member” (Montgomery, 2013).

 [Play Video: Attunement](#)

## ▷ Slide 13 **Educators Promoting Resiliency**

Protective factors that help children and youth mediate negative emotions and experiences include a positive self-image and positive role models. The most important factors for educators: providing a safe environment and relational base for this process of resolution.

 [Play Video: Educators Promoting Resiliency](#)

## ▷ Slide 18 **Co-Regulation**

The work of Elizabeth Warner (2011) helps us understand the process of eventually getting to self-regulation through co-regulation. Babies are born with the ability to auto-regulate to lower distress but need a co-regulator to move to self-regulation. Self-regulation is a life-long pursuit and may be the greatest challenge for children and youth from adverse events. Educators (and other children) serve as co-regulators in modeling regulation.

 [Play Video: Co-Regulation](#)

## ▷ Slide 19 **Show me how**

 [Play Video: Show me how](#)

## ▷ Slide 20 **Educator and Staff Wellness: Secondary Effects of Caring**

For first responders and others working in helping professions, the concept of secondary trauma is becoming better known, but in education, the effects of supporting children and youth from adverse events, including burnout and compassion fatigue, are not often talked about or understood. Awareness of how each of us may be affected by our work is important to working with a trauma-informed lens: if we struggle with self-regulation due to secondary stress, we cannot be as effective as co-regulators for children and youth.

 [Play Video: Secondary Effects of Caring](#)

## Slide 24 **Potential Issues Affecting Educators**

 [Play Video: Potential Issues Affecting Educators](#)



### **Possibility Discussion**

As individuals or in small groups, reflect on the following questions. 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.



### **Self-Reflection**

- What steps have you taken to help ease some of the distress you have felt?
- How do you see secondary trauma effecting relationship building with children and youth in the school setting?



### **Wondering Questions**

- What strategies do you recommend in working through some of the potential issues listed above or others that you may have experienced?

## Slide 25 **A Few Possible Signs**



### **Wondering Questions**

As individuals or in small groups, reflect on the following questions.

- What other possible signs have you noticed that may be linked to secondary trauma?

## Slide 27 **Broader Considerations**



### **Wondering Questions**

- How do you view aspects of secondary trauma at a systems level?



### **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 do we engage other supports, agencies, systems in this discussion?



**Play Video: Broader Considerations**



### **Self-Reflection**

We invite you now, to reflect on your initial approach to working with Kiki.

## Slide 28 Educator and Youth



I'm Kiki's new teacher. I'm working with the school counsellor to better understand dissociation and how Kiki uses it to cope. I try to gently check in with Kiki each day but I don't focus class attention on her, understanding her need not to be seen in order to feel safe. I'm learning to engage with Kiki each time she "touches down", using art as the media to connect. I'm working towards inviting Kiki to be a class mentor for a few quiet girls in the grade eight class. Kiki has recently shared a poem with me so I can get to know her. I am deeply touched by Kiki's situation and have reached out to a counsellor for personal support.



### Wondering Questions

- Would you respond to Kiki the same way?
- Is there anything you would do differently than you thought at the beginning?



### Possibilities Discussion

At your table, discuss your thoughts on current supports and barriers to intervening with Kiki in a trauma-informed way..

## Slide 29 Youth's Voice



I think about her a lot now, that one teacher. I mean there was a small group of us, we were all so needy and hurt and angry...and she was there, not sure how she put up with us, just upbeat, trying new stuff to get us to do anything. When she left, there was this poem we found to give her, about teachers who are friends in our eyes; teachers with big hearts and slow fuses. We just wanted her to know she was a good person.

It means a lot to feel like someone likes you and believes you are worth something; for some of us, there are not many people who do.

The voices of youth such as this are important for educators to hear. Often teachers don't know the impact they have had on a child or youth. This youth summarizes the power of relationship and touches on the need to connect to more people and increase capacity and understanding through a trauma-informed lens, leading to our next presentation on Connection.

**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 on how to build stronger relationships and improve staff wellness.**

————— **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.



The next suggested presentation is on **Connection**, a key concept in working towards compassionate learning communities. In Connection, we will look at connecting to families, to culture and to community.

## One-Page Tip Sheet

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

**RELATIONSHIP**  
Why trauma-informed practice matters in education  
Kiki is 16, and she does not appear to connect with anyone. Her home environment is very stressful, and there have been violent incidents over the past few years. She learned long ago how to leave her body and emotions and dissociate. She becomes visibly upset when she receives attention and she tries to hide behind her hair or within her sweatshirt. When she notices a younger child in distress, she sits with them and tries to help.

**SAFETY FIRST**  
Building safety through relationships is the core of a trauma-informed approach.  
Change for these children and youth will come easily if the focus is on relationship rather than behaviour management strategies.  
—Commission for Children and Young People, 2007  
Children learn how to self-regulate and how to have healthy relationships through adult and peer role modeling.  
Children must feel safe in order for new learning to occur.

**EDUCATOR CARE**  
Behaviours you may observe:  
• emotional exhaustion  
• numbing  
• social withdrawal and isolation  
• no time for self  
• reduced ability to hold empathy for youth  
• reduced respect for students and colleagues  
• depression and despair  
Educators are often first responders for children in crisis and are required to meet many children's needs.  
Many educators have also experienced unsafe situations.  
Secondary trauma is related to structural demands rather than personal inadequacy.

What do you need in order to sustain your work and provide supportive relationships for children?

Ontario  
Ministry of Education

# Videos

## **Safety and Assurance of Wellbeing**

Rachel Calder, MSW, RSW; Executive Director, Artemis Place Society

## **Power of Relationship**

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

## **Relational Repair**

Brittney Bertrand, Youth Communications and Project Assistant; Métis Nation BC

## **Attunement**

Lauren Petersen, Indigenous Educator and Fraser Valley Community Activator for Métis Nation BC's Ta Saantii Healthy Communities Project

## **Educators Promoting Resiliency**

Lauren Petersen, Indigenous Educator and Fraser Valley Community Activator for Métis Nation BC's Ta Saantii Healthy Communities Project

## **Co-Regulation**

Rachel Calder, MSW, RSW; Executive Director, Artemis Place Society

## **Show me how**

Sonia Pieraccini, Teacher, Annieville Elementary, Delta School District

## **Secondary Effects of Caring**

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

## **Potential Issues Affecting Educators**

Sonia Pieraccini, Teacher, Annieville Elementary, Delta School District

## **Broader Considerations**

Sonia Pieraccini, Teacher, Annieville Elementary, Delta School District

## Sample Resources

Craig, S. (2017). *Trauma-sensitive Schools for the Adolescent Years: Promoting Resiliency and Healing, Grades 6-12*. Teachers College Press.

Heller, L., & LaPierre, A. (2012). *Healing Developmental Trauma*. Berkeley, CA: North Atlantic Books

Mathieu, F. (2011). *The Compassion Fatigue Workbook: Creative Tools for Transforming Compassion Fatigue and Vicarious Trauma*

Weston, J. & Thomas, S. (2018) *Fetal alcohol spectrum disorder (FASD) and Complex Trauma*. Marninwarntikuru Women's Resource Centre, Western Australia

**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

Ainsworth, M. (1978). *Patterns of Attachment: A Psychological Study of the Strange Situation*.

Courtois, C. A. (2004). Complex trauma, complex reactions: Assessment and treatment. *Psychotherapy: Theory, Research, Practice, Training*, 41(4), 412-425. doi: 10.1037/0033-3204.41.4.412

Courtois, C. A., Ford, J. D., & Cloitre, M. (2009). Best practices in psychotherapy for adults. In C. A. Courtois & J. D. Ford (Eds.), *Treating complex traumatic stress disorders: An evidence-based guide* (pp. 82-103). New York, New York: Guilford Press.

Kagan, R. (2004). *Real Life Heroes: A Life Storybook for Children*

Montgomery, 2013

van der Kolk, B. A. (2003). The neurobiology of childhood trauma and abuse. *Child & Adolescent Psychiatric Clinics North America*, 12, 293-317.

Warner, E. (2011). *SMART Sensory Motor Arousal Regulation Treatment Manual*. Boston, MA: Trauma Center.

# Slide Deck Notes



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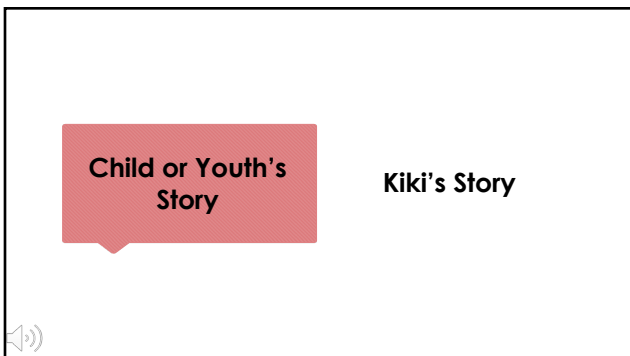
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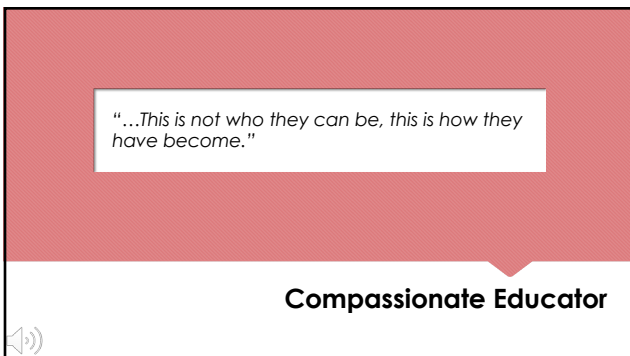
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**Safety / Assurance of Wellbeing**



Am I safe?  
Do I feel safe here?

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**Power of Relationship**



*“Change for these children and youth will come more easily if the focus is on the relationship, rather than on behaviour management strategies”*  
(Commission for Children and Young People, 2007).

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**Relationship Benefits All**

**Building blocks of a safe school community:**

- **Connectedness** – communication and caring that makes people feel valued, respected and wanted
- **Climate** – quality and character of school life with a focus on the quality of the relationships within the school community.
- **Culture** – the way we do things

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/erase/about>

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## Relationship First

Safe educators as sources of resiliency and learning  
Relationship must be established for many children to learn  
Safe base for learning will most often be the educator or support staff member

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## Relational Repair



The security of attachment - attunement bonds is suggested to be the most important mitigating factor against trauma-induced disorganization (van der Kolk, 2003).

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## Attachment Theory

### Types of attachment style:

- Secure attachment
- Anxious attachment
- Avoidant
- Disorganized



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## Attunement is about:

- Changing cerebral circuits
- subtle adjustments between the brain's internal states
- Providing a sense of security and regularity
  - predictable, routine, consistent with expectations and reactions
- The power of relationship between educators and students

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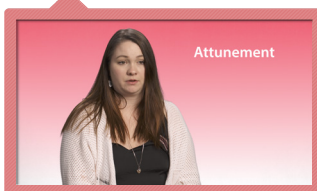
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## Attunement is about:



*Attunement is a corrective experience, a feeling of connecting with the emotional state of the child or youth.*

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## Relationship Helps

### Relational repair in supportive relationships, helps the child:

- improve affect regulation,
- increase interpersonal skills,
- increase self-capacity, and
- reduce problematic auto regulation (Pearlman & Courtois, 2005).

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### Educators promoting resiliency through:



- secure relationships with children;
- the positive emotional, social, and cognitive experiences they provide for children
- the support they provide to others who are responsible for the child's care (Jackson, 2010).

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13

### Social-emotional Skills

Be my friend



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14

### Other Kids

Other children in the class can be the greatest assets for children from adverse events... or the biggest triggers.  
Psychoeducational age appropriate information on the brain and stress at a classroom level may be helpful for children to understand what might be happening with their peers.

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## Hard to get along

Children from adverse events may be delayed in socio-emotional development, responding at a younger stage of development than their peers.

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## Hard to get along

Difficulty with emotional (affect) regulation may lead to the inability to connect, and sometimes conflict, often further isolating children.

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## Co-Regulation



Educators and other children may serve as co-regulators by modeling regulation, helping to identify and meet the basic needs of children from adverse events.

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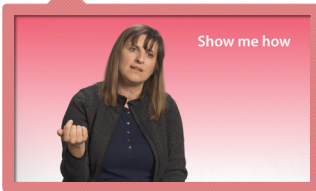
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## Show me how



Being with children who can regulate often helps children who cannot (yet) name or identify what they feel or what other children feel.

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19

## Educator and Staff Wellness



*My heart is in the right place  
but I am hurting...*



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## Tough Situations

- Educators are often first responders for children in crisis.
- Educators are required to meet many children's needs in one room.
- Educators often live complex lives and do complex work, moving beyond teaching.

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21

## Educator Stress

### Primary Trauma

- Directly experienced

### Secondary Trauma

- Third party effects of accumulation of workplace stress and/or child/youth traumatic material

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## Potential Issues Affecting Educators

- Children and youth's:
  - experience with adverse events
  - problematic coping strategies
  - grief and loss
  - struggle to regulate
- Heavy workload
- Lack of support or resources for children and educators
- Struggle to see positive results



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## Potential Issues Affecting Educators



*Wondering Discussion*

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## A Few Possible Signs...

- Emotional exhaustion, numbing
- Depression, feelings of despair, hopelessness
- Reduced ability to hold empathy for children/youth
- More negative view of the world
- Reduced sense of respect for your students, colleagues
- Social withdrawal
- No time or energy for yourself

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## Many Names for Secondary Trauma

### Definitions of workplace stress:

- burnout
- compassion fatigue
- traumatic countertransference
- secondary posttraumatic stress syndrome
- vicarious trauma

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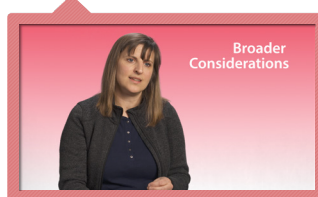
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## Broader Considerations...



Secondary Trauma is becoming viewed as more structural than individual.

There is a shift happening, from education to advocacy for supportive, safe environments (Bober & Regehr, 2005).

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27

**Kiki's Teacher**

What are your thoughts on current supports and barriers to intervening with Kiki in a trauma-informed way?



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*... it means a lot to feel like someone likes you and believes you are worth something, for some of us, there are not many people who do.*

**Youth's Voice**



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