Understanding Why trauma-informed practice matters in education

Brian lives in an unpredictable world. He is never sure how his caregivers will respond, each day is different. Brian has learned to be invisible when he needs to be and to fight when he has to stay safe. School is very different than his home environment. At school, Brian makes himself invisible or fights when he is afraid because that is what Brian has learned to do.

BRAIN DEVELOPMENT

Pre-frontal cortex
- Thinking brain
- Logic and reason
- Self-regulation

Limbic system
- Feeling brain
- Emotions and memories
- Sensory input

Brain Stem
- Instinct
- Fight, flight, freeze
- Instant

Trauma:
- Any event that overwhelms the child’s capacity to cope

Behaviours you may observe:
- Fear
- Aggression
- Shyness
- Dissociation
- Body symptoms
- Hyperactivity

When children are triggered, they are using their instinct and emotion brain.

PROVIDING HOPE

Though early childhood experiences have long lasting effects on human development, the brain is very resilient. Its plasticity means the brain can be reprogrammed and old patterns changed. The first step is changing the environment and changing how the child feels.

Unpredictable Needs predictability
Unstable Needs stability
Punitive Needs safe boundaries
Controlling Needs choice
Not emotion focused Needs language of emotion

Did you know that just one safe adult in a child’s life can begin to plant the seeds of safety, hope, connection, beauty, self-mattering, healthy relationships and love.