Understanding Trauma: Theirs & Ours
How trauma shows up for youth and what we can do when it shows up for us.
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Understanding Their Trauma

One out of every 4 children attending school has been exposed to a traumatic event that can affect learning and/or behavior.

Understanding Our Trauma

In order for us to best serve our自家 youth, we need to understand why they may be exhibiting behaviors.

Self-Care for Sustainability

Grounded, Regulated, Attuned, Present, Egoless, Supported
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National Child Traumatic Stress Network
Understanding Trauma

"Traumatic events overwhelm the ordinary systems of care that give people a sense of control, connection, and meaning."

Judith Herman, Trauma & Recovery

- Acute
  - One-time traumatic event
- Chronic
  - Multiple traumatic events
- Complex
  - Ongoing, repeated trauma
- System-Induced*
  - Exposure to traumatic systems

Homeless youth struggle to integrate both previous and new traumatic experiences while trying to survive in a hostile world.
Developmental trauma negatively impacts neural development, growth & regulation

- Bullying
- Natural disasters
- Neglect or physical abuse
- Loss of a parent or sibling
- Incarceration
- Child abuse
- Exposure to violence
- The death of a loved one
- Life-threatening illnesses or surgery
- Undergoing intensive medical procedures
- Adverse experiences or trauma in everyday life
- Physical, emotional, or sexual abuse
- Natural or technological disasters
- Witnessing or experiencing violence
- Adverse experiences with mental illness or trauma

*Traumatic Situations (截至2021年)*
• Bullying
• Natural disasters
• Physical or sexual abuse
• Abandonment or neglect
• Acts or threats of terrorism
• Witnessing domestic violence
• The death or loss of a loved one (or pet)
• Life-threatening illness in a caregiver
• Life-threatening illnesses/medical procedures
• Witnessing or experiencing community violence
• Automobile accidents or other serious accidents
• Homelessness, displacement, sudden/dramatic move
• Divorce/Family separation, Deployment, Deportation
• Witnessing police activity/having a close relative incarcerated

* not an exhaustive list
Neocortex: Rational or Thinking Brain

Limbic Brain: Emotional or Feeling Brain

Reptilian Brain: Instinctual or Dinosaur Brain
Behaviors you might observe

- Absenteeism
- Increased somatic complaints
- Changes in school performance
- Changes in behavior:
  - Increase/Decrease in activity level
  - Withdrawal from others or activities
  - Angry outbursts and/or aggression
  - Decreased attention and/or concentration
  - Difficulty with authority, redirection, or criticism
- Distrust of others with both adults and peers
- Inability to interpret and respond appropriately to social cues
- Anxiety, fear, and worry about safety of self and others
- Increased distress (unusually whiny, irritable, moody)
- Over (or under) reacting to bells, physical contact, doors slamming, sirens, lighting, sudden movements, changes in plans
How Trauma Impacts Learning

**Survival Mode: Flight/Fight/Freeze**

Frontal lobe (Prefrontal cortex) goes offline
Limbic system / mind and lower brain functions take over

- Learning/Thinking Brain (Prefrontal Cortex)
- Limbic System
Understanding Our Trauma

In order for us to best serve our homeless youth, we must understand how this work may create/bring up trauma for us.
Burn-out & Compassion Fatigue

"...a syndrome of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment that can occur among individuals who do 'people-work' of some kind."
(Maslach (1992,2003))

Feels like:

- Fatigue/Exhaustion
- Helplessness
- Headaches
- Low-grade cold
- Tightness in the chest
- Lack of interest/engagement
Vicarious Trauma

Vicarious trauma is the emotional residue of exposure... from working with people... hearing their trauma stories and become witnesses to the pain, fear, and terror that trauma survivors have endured.

"Vicarious traumatization refers to a cumulative transformative effect or condition experienced by working with specific populations of survivors of traumatic life events."

(McCann & Pearlman, 1990, Pearlman & Saakvitne, 1995.)
Radical Self-Care
H.A.L.T.
Hungry, Angry, Lonely or Tired?

Internal Weather Report

Triggering of personal trauma
What about this student/parent/situation is bringing out what within me and where is it coming from?
Chronic Stress > Health & Wellness

Personal & Professional effects

Stress overrides our instinctive impulses, keeping us stuck in fight, flight, or freeze.

“You must be Timmy’s dad. I’m Timmy’s teacher.”
Self-Care for Sustainability

Grounded
Regulated
Attuned
Present
Egoless
Supported
Grounded
well-balanced, sensible, and firmly established

- Feel your physical connection to the ground.
- Let the rest of your body relax into this connection.
- Connect to something bigger than yourself.

Regulated
Being in control of & responsible for our nervous system responses, maintaining internal balance.
Attuned

Being receptive to & aware of what is going on inside YOU and those you serve.

...this is where mindfulness comes in.
Present

Being aware of things in their current manifestation (NOW) does not allow us to forget historical context.
Mindfulness as a Superpower
Egoless

"Not having an inflated view of one's self-importance."

NOT the same as selfless (concern more for the needs of others than one's own...self-denying, self-sacrificing.)
Supported

Human connection is crucial in the immediate task of clearing trauma.

We need support from our school leaders, community partners, and political leaders as we support homeless youth + accountability
YOU are the Intervention.

“What you leave behind is not what is engraved in stone monuments, but what is woven into the lives of others.”

~Percicles
Contact

“If you’ve come here to help me you are wasting your time. If you’ve come because your liberation is bound with mine, let us work together”
Lila Wilson

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In order for us to best serve our families, youth, we need to understand our own experiences.

Self-Care for Sustainability
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