



Tips on Creating a Trauma-Informed Classroom

The following classroom ideas were developed for K-12 teachers using SAMHSA's six key principles for a trauma-informed approach to education.

1. Safety

- Conduct a meeting on the first day of class that lays out clear expectations for behavior, a process for addressing behavioral concerns and a way for students to express fear/frustrations they may have in a respectful way. Post classroom guidelines. Revisit this, as needed.
- Establish a 'Reflection Room' or area in a classroom for a student who needs some time or space.
- Use mindfulness to help students connect with their feelings and regulate their behavior in a positive way. Lead a 'Mindful Moment' each day as part of the morning routine, or when needed.

2. Trustworthiness and Transparency

- Be firm, but caring in your approach to classroom management.
- Model both verbal and non-verbal communication that you expect from your students.
- Show empathy. A trauma-informed approach would prompt the teacher to ask "What happened to him/her that led to this behavior?" as opposed to focusing more on applying consequences for unwelcome behaviors.

3. Peer Support

- Discuss and model ways students can display supporting behaviors for their classmates. Brainstorm words or phrases students can use or ways students can offer positive feedback for others. For younger students, award helping behaviors on a sticker chart.

4. Collaboration and mutuality

- Design a lesson around the book "*Have You Filled a Bucket Today?*" by Carol McCloud, which is about collaboration and mutual respect. The site www.bucketfillers101.com/ includes an [author's read-aloud video](#) of the book and other [free resources](#).

5. Empowerment, Voice and Choice

- Use "I" messages such as "I see that you are feeling upset today. Do you want to talk about it?" Summarizing what you hear a student say can reinforce that you understand/respect their feelings.
- Offer options such as "You can take a five minute break now before you start the project" or "You can begin now and then stop for a few minutes when you need a break" to make a child feel more empowered.
- Suggest students understand they are not their emotions (ex. "I feel angry" rather than "I am angry"). Remember that they might better express their feelings through art or writing (different learning styles).

6. Cultural, Historical, and Gender Issues

- Be aware of your own biases and work to understand the experiences of the students in your classroom. Solicit parents or community members from all backgrounds to share their personal experiences about cultural traditions, how they manage stress and relationships, personal challenges related to communication, hopes and fears, etc. Seek out professional development opportunities to enhance your cultural humility.

Resources

<https://www.ccsi.org/Technical-Assistance/Training-Practice-Transformation/Trauma-Informed-Care>

Coordinated Care Services Inc. (CCSI) offers a systems approach for trauma-informed care for prevention and treatment providers. Their staff can provide professional development and technical assistance to schools.

<https://tigconsortium.org/>

TIG (Consortium on Trauma, Illness and Grief in Schools) supports schools/districts within Monroe County and its surrounding counties. They are currently training other BOCES/school districts throughout the NYS in the TIG model. The TIG core curriculum prepares schools/districts to respond and intervene effectively during times of crisis and to support resiliency. The seven modules in the 5-day training include grief and loss at school, trauma, suicide risk and intervention, chronic and critical illness, school violence and threat assessment, TIG implementation and critical incident stress management. Training assures that responders are able to effectively and efficiently intervene to support their own district as well as districts throughout the network. In the event of a district- or school-wide crisis, school districts can deploy and receive responders from both within and outside of the school in a coordinated and systematic manner through the Back Up Support Network.

<https://www.acesconnection.com/>

ACEs Connection offers a variety of webinars, articles and a blog designed to inform the public about the impact of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) and ways to prevent ACEs, heal trauma and build resilience. The site includes webinars and links to articles specifically designed for the school setting.

<https://www.nctsn.org/>

The National Child Traumatic Stress Network consists of providers, researchers, family and national partners committed to improving care and systems transformations responsive to childhood trauma. Their site includes tools and resources that educators and schools may find helpful.

<https://childmind.org/our-impact/trauma-response/trauma-resources/>

The Child Mind Institute has prepared free trauma resources to aid parents, educators, and other adults in talking to children and adolescents about potentially traumatic events and identifying those who might benefit from more focused professional attention. This site includes a guide to helping children cope after a traumatic event and offers specific tips on this topic by age level. It also includes several articles on topics such as helping children after they hear frightening news, how to be resilient in the wake of a tragedy, talking to children about suicide and the impact of stress on adolescents. The information is available in several languages.