More Than Their Trauma:
Moving Beyond the ACEs Study to Support Student Healing & Learning in School Settings

Hakimah Rasheed Greene, MA, PsyS
Chief Executive Officer
Positive Education Program

A Baseline for Today's Talk

Why Trauma & Adversity Matter

Our brains are pattern seeking, meaning making machines. The brain makes associations in order to SURVIVE.
The Cost of ACEs

Race, Trauma and Health Disparities

US Maternal Death Rate
Per 100,000 live births

Race, Trauma and Health Disparities
Ohio infant mortality rate
Number of deaths per 1,000 live births, 2013-2015
Transgenerational Trauma

Racism as ACE

Racial trauma, a form of race-based stress, refers to People of Color and Indigenous individuals' (POCI) reactions to dangerous events and real or perceived experiences of racial discrimination. Such experiences may include threats of harm and injury, humiliating and shaming events, and witnessing racial discrimination toward other POCI.


Racism as ACE

Track the eyes: Which students are teachers watching?

- Black girls: 42%
- White girls: 13%
- Black boys: 34%
- White boys: 34%

Research shows teachers tend to spend more closely above color lines than when evaluating black boys, when challenging behaviors are expected.
Trauma Defined

Individual trauma results from an event, series of events, or set of circumstances that is experienced by an individual as physically or emotionally harmful or life threatening and that has lasting adverse effects on the individual's functioning and mental, physical, social, emotional, or spiritual well-being.

Traumatization Defined

Traumatization occurs when both internal and external resources are inadequate to cope with external threat.

Van der Kolk, 1989

What does it mean to be "traumatized?"
The Impact of Trauma

- Brain Physiology and Development
- Learning and Memory
- Interpersonal Relationships

Relational Health

What Every Child Needs

"Every child needs at least one adult who is irrationally crazy about him or her."

Urie Bronfenbrenner
Break

Bizarro vs. Superman

Barriers to Helping Students Heal

What is your biggest challenge in supporting students?

- Social-Emotional Learning: 25%
- Lack of support from parents or caregivers: 27%
- Insufficient professional development: 13%
- Insufficient training in evidence-based programs: 8
- Insufficient support from mental health professionals: 8
- Insufficient support from administrators: 8

From Trauma-Informed Care to Healing-Centered Engagement

A healing centered approach is holistic involving culture, spirituality, civic action and collective healing.

A healing centered approach views trauma not simply as an individual isolated experience, but rather highlights the ways in which trauma and healing are experienced collectively.

Healing-Centered Engagement

✓ Is asset driven, focused on well-being
✓ Supports individuals in their healing
✓ Is culturally centered rather than clinical
Creating the Change We Wish to See

"Relationships matter: the currency for systemic change was trust, and trust comes through forming healthy working relationships. People, not programs, change people."

Bruce Perry

The Sequence of Engagement

Reason

Relate

Regulate

NME & The Sequence of Engagement

Reason

- Talk Therapies & Cognitive Therapies
- Psychoeducation
- Social Skills training
- SEL

Relate

- Presence in parallel or face-to-face
- Active listening
- Genuine interest and compassion

Regulate

- Somatosensory
- Activities
- Patterned, rhythmic, repetitive movement
- Rhythmic interaction

Adapted from the work of Dr. Bruce Perry
Healing the Helper: Self-Regulation & Professional Resilience

The Regulated Adult

"A teacher-counselor is a decent adult; educated, well trained; able to give and receive affection, to live relaxed, and to be firm; a person with private resources for the nourishment and refreshment of [their] own life..."

Nicholas Hobbs

Self-Regulation & Professional Resilience
Aspects of Self-Care

- Personal Physical
- Personal Psychological
- Personal Social
- Personal Moral
- Professional
- Organizational/Work Setting
- Societal

Safety Plans

Self-Regulation
- You do it yourself
- Can be done anytime/anywhere
- A relational tool

Sample Safety Plan
1. Take 10 Deep Breaths
2. Say a silent prayer or affirmation
3. Massage hands with lotion
4. Take time alone
5. Call a trusted friend

Break for Lunch
Classroom Management Strategies

- Structure the day
- Establish routines
- Create schedules
- Create and model use of safety plans
- Create and teach use of a "safe place"
- Use visual supports
- Honor loss
- Celebrate success

Supporting Regulation in the Classroom: Somatosensory Supports

- Manage lighting and temp
- Bring calming sounds into the space
- Allow students to self-modulate stimuli
- Anticipate and provide for basic needs that may present in a day or period

Supporting Regulation in the Classroom: Somatosensory Supports

Calming Supports
- Low lighting
- White noise
- Scent diffusers: calming scents
- Yoga balls
- Swing chair or rocking chair
- Heavy work activities

Activating Supports
- Full lighting
- Movement breaks
- Scent diffusers: activating scents
- Yoga balls
- Crunchy snacks, mints, chewy items
Supporting Regulation in the Classroom: Mindfulness

"Mindfulness is awareness that arises through paying attention, on purpose, in the present moment, non-judgmentally."

Jon Kabat-Zinn

Considerations in Using Mindfulness:
- Historical and cultural context for the origins of mindfulness should be honored.
- To teach mindfulness, you must be a practitioner of mindfulness.
- Leading mindfulness exercises requires an awareness of possible traumatic triggering.

Instructional Strategies: Arts & Movement

- Creates space for cultural and identity expression.
- Taps into the brain's regulatory system through rhythmic, patterned, repetitive activity.
- Provides space for relationship-building that feels safe to the young person.
- Is regulating for both the young person and adult educator.
Responding to Crisis: Attending

Enter the Dialogue
- Be fully present with the student
- Attend to verbal and non-verbal communication
- Manage feelings of counter-aggression

Deepen the Dialogue
- Remain fully present
- Be aware of verbal and non-verbal messages to the student
- Establish "resonance" with the student, so that there is a sense at a subconscious level that you "feel their feelings"

Responding to Crisis: Responding

Enter the Dialogue
- Keep the dialogue going
- Reduce student’s stress
- Remain non-judgmental
- Build trust
- Verbal and nonverbal messages MUST be congruent

Deepen the Dialogue
- Affirm the student and their feelings
- Check for understanding
- Create a sense of mutual experience and problem-solving.

Responding to Crisis: Decoding

Enter the Dialogue
- Search for the meaning behind the message
- Listen to what is not being said
- Link emotions to words
- Help the student to calm down, feel supported, and access the frontal lobe or "high road."

Deepen the Dialogue
- Connect feeling and behavior
- Add more meaning
- Lead student to insight
Responding to crisis

"Most troubled students want to tell their story but lack the necessary skills and trust."
—LSCI Institute

Conscious Discipline

Racially Responsive Education

1. Build personal knowledge about race,
2. Be willing to talk about race,
3. Plan and enact curriculum and instructional practices focused on race with students of all races and backgrounds
Empowering Youth Healing & Self-Advocacy

- Teach students about social justice
- Tap into social justice issues across the curriculum
- Engage students regarding the social justice issues that matter to them
- Use various modalities for students to express their views
- Tap partners to explore social justice content

Educators as Allies, Advocates and Activists

"As I have always said, those closest to the pain should be closest to the power."  
Ayanna Pressley
"EDUCATION CAN'T SAVE US. WE HAVE TO SAVE EDUCATION."
- BETTINA LOVE

Insights & Questions