

Healthy Environments and Response to Trauma in Schools (HEARTS): A trauma-informed approach aimed at ending the School-to-Prison Pipeline

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Healthy Environments and Response to Trauma in
Schools (HEARTS)

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Agenda

- Context – Aurora, Colorado
- Overview of HEARTS
 - Development of HEARTS aimed at addressing complex trauma and the School to Prison Pipeline
- HEARTS in Action
 - Complex trauma in the classroom and classroom strategies for school personnel
 - Wellness strategies for school personnel
- HEARTS Outcomes

Key Objectives:

- Objective One: The participant will understand the links between trauma and the school to prison pipeline
- Objective Two: The participant will be able to identify the key ingredients of the HEARTS program
- Objective Three: The participant will be able to demonstrate at least three effective trauma-informed strategies

Aurora Public Schools



- High concentration of poverty
 - 71% FRL lunch in district
- Students from 131 countries, 133 languages
- In 2013-14 – on time graduation rate: 55% compared to 76 % for the whole state
- In 2013-14 – dropout rate: 4.7% compared to 2.5% for the whole state
- Minority students overrepresented in suspensions and expulsions



Aurora Mental Health Center

- Comprehensive community mental health center for Aurora, CO
- 30 + years of providing school-based services. Currently housed in 31 APS schools

Healthy Environments and Response to Trauma in Schools (HEARTS)



- Developed by the University of California, San Francisco and SF United School District.
- Promote school success by decreasing trauma-related difficulties and increasing healthy functioning and trauma-informed, culturally-sensitive discipline and classroom management strategies.

Structure of HEARTS

Multi-level comprehensive prevention and intervention program for schools, families, and children affected by trauma. Today's talk will give you some of what we share with teachers and staff in the training component.

Three tiers are the key ingredients to address trauma in schools

1. Direct services – school-based therapy
2. Training – for teachers, staff, and parents
3. Consultation/follow-up support after training

Vignette



What is wrong with
Ryan?



What is wrong with his teacher?



Shift Your Perspective

Change the paradigm from one that asks,

"What is wrong with you?"

to one that asks,

"What has happened to you?"

(from Wisconsin Dept. of Health Services www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/tic)

Provides **context**, fosters **compassion**,
helps us to see **strengths** in face of adversity

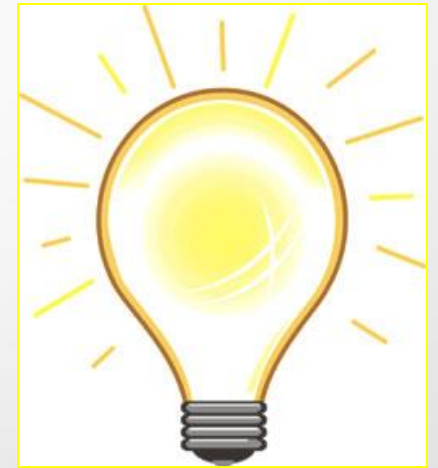


What has happened to Ryan?

What has happened to his teacher?

Understanding Chronic Stress and Trauma

“Learning about the psychobiology of stress, toxic stress, and trauma is liberating for people. It gives us explanatory reasons for some of the puzzling behaviors we engage in and the feelings that can come to dominate us.” (Bloom, 2013, p. 48)



What is Trauma?

- An overwhelming, overstimulating, extremely painful and/or terrifying experience
- An inability to employ the fight or flight response (e.g., cannot escape)
- At the core of the traumatic stress is a breakdown in the capacity to regulate internal states

(Herman, 1997) (Van der Kolk, 2005)

What is Complex Trauma?

Children's experiences of multiple traumatic events, often that occur within the caregiving system – the social environment that is supposed to be the source of safety and stability in a child's life

(National Child Traumatic Stress Network (NCTSN), 2003)

The Aim of Addressing Trauma in the Schools

“...the aim is to increase teaching and learning time and reduce time spent on discipline. The ultimate goal is to help all traumatized students become successful members in their school communities.”

(Cole et al., 2005, p. 6, emphasis added)

Unaddressed Trauma Can Hurt School Performance

- More days of school absence (Hurt et al., 2001)
- Problems with attention skills, abstract reasoning, long-term memory for verbal information, and reading ability (Beers and DeBellis, 2002)
- Difficulties in self-regulation (Kim & Cicchetti, 2009)
- Lower grade-point average (Hurt et al., 2001)

Unaddressed Trauma Feeds the “School to Prison Pipeline”

- Unaddressed trauma related to higher risk of school dropout (Porche et al, 2011)
- Dropping out of school increases the risk of being imprisoned (Center for Labor Market Studies, 2009)
- An African-American boy born in 2001 has a 1 in 3 chance of being imprisoned in his lifetime, and a Latino boy has 1 in 6 (Children’s Defense Fund Cradle to Prison Pipeline Report, 2007) (statistics attributed to intersection between poverty & racial disparities)
- Being abused or neglected as a child increases the likelihood of arrest as a juvenile by 59 percent, as an adult by 28 percent, and for a violent crime by 30 percent.



People who have experienced
trauma may be injured,
but they are not “sick” or “bad”

**Resilience and healing
is possible with support**

Adaptations to Complex Trauma: Effects on School Functioning

Neurobiology

School Relationships

School Behavior

School Achievement

Neurobiology: Neurons that fire together wire together (Hebb's Rule):

Formation of habits (automatic thoughts, feelings, behaviors)

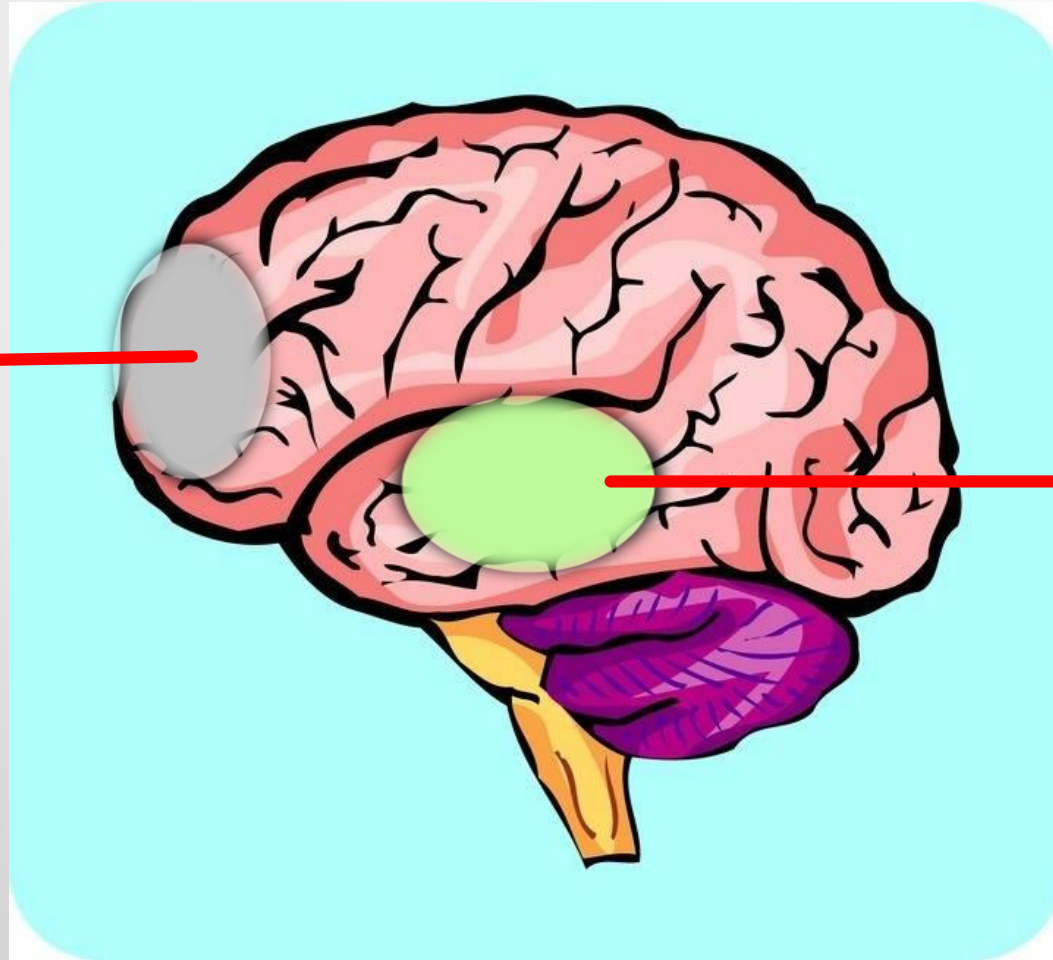


Survival Mode: Fight/Flight/Freeze

Frontal lobe (prefrontal cortex) goes offline

Limbic system / mid and lower brain functions take over

**Learning/
Thinking
Brain**
(Prefrontal
Cortex)



**Survival/E
motion
Brain**
(Limbic
System)

Learning Brain and Survival Brain



❖ Learning Brain = Rider

- Makes informed, rational decisions

❖ Survival Brain = Horse

- Protective instincts based on feelings

❖ When triggered, the **rider falls off the horse**

(van der Kolk)(Ford, 2009)

Common Triggers

Unpredictability (“what’s going to happen??”)

Transitions

Sudden change

Loss of control

Feeling vulnerable or rejected

Loneliness

Sensory overload

Confrontation

Embarrassment or shame

Praise, intimacy, and positive attention

(from ARC, Kinniburgh & Blaustein, 2005)



What does this feel like?

Script by PBS, Misunderstood minds

Demonstration

Read The Story Below and Answer the Comprehension Questions

According to the Oxygen Theory, burning and rusting involve an element called oxygen, which is found in the air. The complete combustion of a piece of wood involves the rapid reaction of the wood with oxygen gas (O_2) to produce carbon dioxide (CO_2), which is a nonflammable gas, and water (H_2O). The rusting of iron involves the slow reaction of iron with oxygen to produce iron oxides such as Fe_2O_3 . These iron oxides are known as rust. Heating rust with charcoal produces iron because the charcoal combines with the oxygen in the rust. In these transformations, there is a conservation of mass (the total mass of the reactants must equal the total mass of the products in a chemical reaction). In these reactions matter is neither created nor destroyed, but merely transformed.

Comprehension Questions

According to the Oxygen Theory, the gasses produced from the complete combustion of a candle


- a) can support the breathing of a mouse
- b) are nonflammable
- c) are toxic to growing plants
- d) are rich in hydrogen gas

According to the Oxygen Theory, both the burning of a material and the rusting of a metal involve:

- a) converting the elements for the material into gaseous compounds
- b) removing oxygen from the material and releasing it into the air
- c) producing high temperatures as a result of the chemical reactions
- d) forming oxygen-containing compounds from the elements in the material.

Which of the following best states the intent of the Oxygen Theory passage?

- a) To prove that all substances that burn contain oxygen
- b) To show that during a chemical reaction, matter is neither created nor destroyed
- c) To show that if air in a closed container did not support combustion, it could still contain oxygen
- d) To explain the process of converting wood as into rust



How does this relate to being in
survival brain?

Key Strategy for Creating Safe and Supportive Schools

- Aggravating behavior is “a cause for a pause”
- Pause, take a breath, and ask yourself, “What is happening here?”
- Understand that **BEHAVIOR HAS MEANING**
 - What need is this behavior communicating?
 - What can be done to address this need?
 - What is the healthy intention behind the behavior?
- Applies to kids and to adults

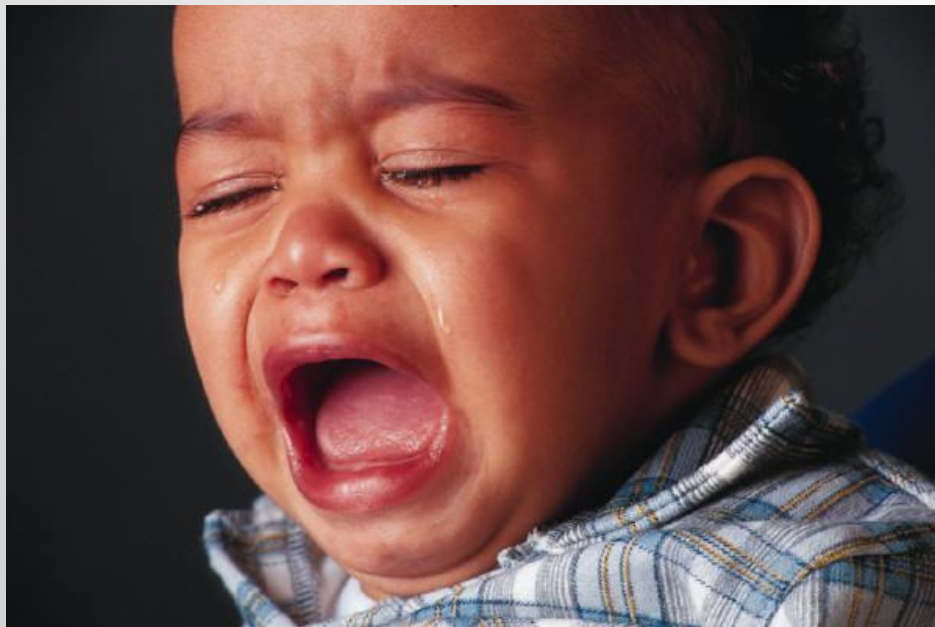
Strategies for Transforming Trauma

- Establish safety:
 - Eliminate threats and reduce triggers that unnecessarily escalate
 - Students cannot upshift from “Survival Brain” to “Learning Brain” if they do not feel safe (true for all of us)
- Focus on fostering strong, supportive relationships
- Build skills in managing emotions and thinking clearly (Ford et al., 2006)
- Facilitate voice and choice
- Promote resilience and build on strengths

Foster Strong Relationships

Healthy Relationships

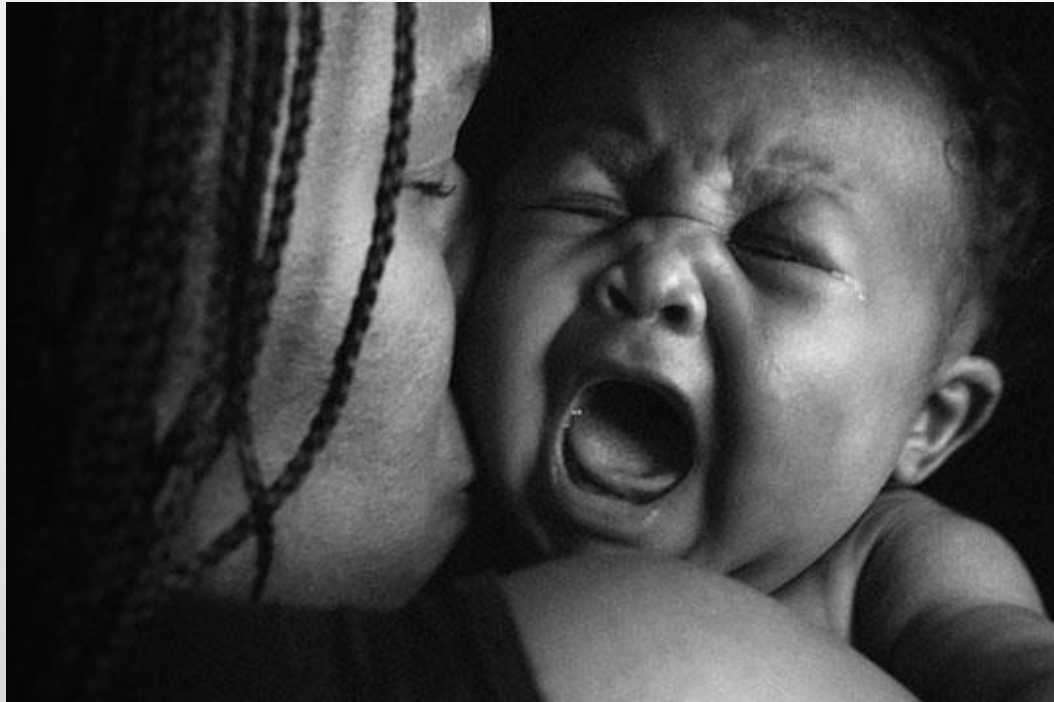
- Humans are hard-wired for connection; it is a basic need (Harlow, 1958)
- Healthy relationships involve attunement
 - Being sensitive and responsive to the feelings and needs of ourselves and of others
- Attuned relationships help us to feel safe and calm down when we are stressed out



UCSF/SFGH

z Adolescent Services,

Co-Regulation



J. Dorado (2014), UCSF HEARTS, Child & Adolescent Services,
UCSF/SFGH

Co-Regulation



Complex Trauma Interferes with Co-Regulation



- Excruciating dilemma created when other humans are the cause of trauma and extreme suffering
- Caregiver unavailable to provide co-regulation
- Development of affect/emotion regulation skills can be derailed
- This can affect relationships with others, including teacher-student relationship
 - Can pull for intense emotions from staff

You Can Make a Difference

- 5:1 ratio for relationship “deposits” to “withdrawals” (ratio of affirmations to criticisms/confrontations)
- Invest time in creating school community
- Understand “difficult” children and youth through a trauma-sensitive lens
- Don’t take traumatized student’s behavior personally
- Provide student with a different response than the one he/she typically gets
 - Listening, attempting to understand vs. judgment and admonishment



Safe and Supportive, Trauma-Sensitive Schools Attend to the Wellness of School Staff

(e.g., Educators, Support
Staff, Paraprofessionals,
Administrators)



Compassion Satisfaction

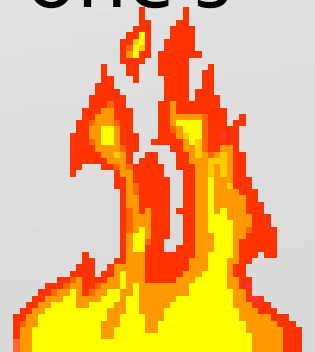
- Pleasure one derives from being able to do one's work well (Stamm, 2009)
 - Pleasure in helping others through work
 - Positive feelings about colleagues
 - Positive feelings about contributing to work setting and/or to greater good of society

Compassion Fatigue

- Compassion Fatigue has two components (Stamm, 2009):
 - Burnout
 - Secondary Trauma (Vicarious Trauma)

Burnout

- “A state of physical, emotional and mental exhaustion caused by long-term involvement in emotional demanding situations” (Pines & Aronson, 1988)
- Associated with feelings of hopelessness and difficulties in dealing with work or in doing one’s job effectively (Stamm, 2009)
- Gradual onset



Secondary Traumatic Stress / Vicarious Trauma

- Work-related, secondary exposure to extremely or traumatically stressful events
- Compassion fatigue/Secondary Traumatic Stress can be the result of “the exposure of helpers to experiences” of students, plus “the empathy that they experience for their” students (Collins & Long, 2003)
- Can be sudden and acute

Combatting Compassion Fatigue: Trauma-informed strategies for educators

- Mindfulness
- **Gratitude**
- Locomotion in Nature
- Self-care assessment
- Laughter
- And more

Practicing Gratitude Increases Well-Being

- **Physical**
 - Stronger immune systems
 - Less aches and pains
 - Lower blood pressure
 - Exercise more
 - Sleep longer
- **Psychological**
 - More positive emotions
 - More alert, alive, and awake
 - More joy and pleasure
 - More optimism and happiness
- **Social**
 - More helpful, generous, and compassionate
 - More forgiving & outgoing
 - Feel less lonely and isolated

(Emmons, 2010)



Cultivating Gratitude

- Gratitude Journal: Once a week, list 5 things that you are grateful
- Count your blessings once a day (e.g., when wake up, or before going to sleep)
- Use concrete reminders to practice gratitude (a picture, a routine)

(Emmons, 2010)

The Goodness of Gratitude

- Gratitude allows us to celebrate the present
- Gratitude blocks toxic, negative emotions
- Grateful people are more stress resistant
- Grateful people have a higher sense of self-worth

(Emmons, 2010)

Trauma-sensitive
educational practices create more
safe and supportive schools
that promote learning readiness, equity,
growth, and resilience for everyone in the
school community



Aurora HEARTS Outcome data

After 2 years of implementation in 4 schools, we saw an overall decrease of 67% in disciplinary actions

Self-report from teachers & staff (year 1): Significant increases in

a) Knowledge about trauma and its effects on children

($t=15.519$, $p<.001$)

b) Understanding of classroom strategies to use with traumatized children

($t=11.067$, $p<.001$)

c) Knowledge about vicarious trauma

($t=8.973$, $p<.001$)

d) Knowledge about burnout

($t=5.837$, $p<.001$)

e) Knowledge about self-care strategies

($t=6.263$, $p<.001$)

One school: Baseline, Year 1, Year 2

Race/Ethnicity of Students Referred	Altura Elementary School			
	12-13	13-14	14-15	% -/+
American Indian or Alaska Native	8	6	7	-13%
Asian	11	13	0	-100%
Black or African American	83	74	11	-87%
Hispanic	576	540	73	-87%
White	66	68	14	-79%
Other Pacific Islander	1	1	1	0%
Multi-Racial	30	27	0	-100%

Future Directions

- Data Analysis school by school
- Sustainability
 - Training APS school level and district level staff
 - Sharing of cost and training between AuMHC and APS
- Addressing ongoing challenges in the community and schools
 - Community trauma e.g. theater shooting, gang violence
 - Continued influx of refugee students
 - High truancy rates of students, transient families
 - High rates of staff and administrative turnover

Acknowledgements

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- Aurora Mental Health Center

Resources

- National Child Traumatic Stress Network
 - www.nctsn.org
 - For Educators: Resources for School Personnel
- Massachusetts Advocates for Children: Trauma and Learning Policy Initiative
 - Helping Traumatized Children Learn (Cole et al.)

Freely downloadable at traumasensitiveschools.org/
- Reaching and Teaching Children Who Hurt: Strategies for Your Classroom (Susan Craig)
- Greater Good Science Center (for wellness practices)
 - greatergood.berkeley.edu

Resources

- The Restorative Practices Handbook for Teachers, Disciplinarians and Administrators (Costello, Wachtel, & Wachtel)
 - www.iirp.org
- The Heart of Learning: Compassion, Resiliency, and Academic Success (Ray Wolpaw, et al.)

Freely downloadable at the website below

 - <http://www.k12.wa.us/CompassionateSchools/HeartofLearning.aspx>
- Lost at School (Ross Greene) (Collaborative Problem Solving)
 - www.livesinthebalance.org
- Mindfulness in Education
 - www.mindfuleducation.org/resources.html

For More Information:

Web articles featuring UCSF HEARTS:

- acestoohigh.com/2014/01/28/hearts-el-dorado-elementary/
- edsource.org/today/2013/schools-focus-on-trauma-informed-to-reach-troubled-students
- greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/the_silent_epidemic_in_our_classrooms
- greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/how_to_support_stressed_out_teachers
- coe.ucsf.edu/coe/spotlight/ucsf_hearts_story.html