



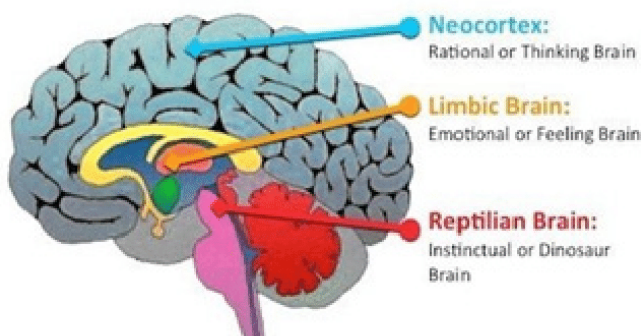
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Learning and Teaching Commons @ The Washington Center

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Taking a trauma-responsive approach to community care

April 8, 2024



Trauma is a normal human response that occurs when a person is overwhelmed by something out of their control. When an individual is in active trauma response, their reptilian brain (amygdala) is activated. The goal of engaging in a trauma-informed approach is to create work and learning environments that support activation of the learning brain (neo-cortex), thus creating an integrated brain.

Acknowledgement matters

When a person has experienced a traumatic event, it can often be at the forefront of their thoughts. Acknowledging trauma as a natural response helps one understand their response. Conversely, when the traumatic event is ignored, it can feel like being gaslit - or as if there is something wrong with you. When a collective traumatic event has occurred, recognize it. Don't sweep it under the rug.

Find your calm

The best way to support others is to take care of yourself. If you are rested, nourished, and regulated, you will be much better positioned to respond with care. Take time to ground yourself with a mindfulness exercise such as breathing exercises or a body scan. In a hot moment, take time to collect yourself before you respond.

Be prepared to listen. Don't fix or defend

Adopt protocols such as talking circles that give people opportunities to speak without challenge. Don't critique students' responses to a traumatic event. It is very natural to want to help someone in need - especially when they are angry or sad. Sometimes, your instinct will be to fix. Similarly, if you are challenged by someone, you're likely to defend yourself. Try to remember in these moments that when individuals are in a trauma response, it is important that they remain empowered to manage their own response. You don't need to have all the answers. Before you jump to problem solving, start by acknowledging and affirming.

Eight Principles of Trauma-Informed Teaching

Adapted from Imad, M. (2022). Our Brains, Emotions, and Learning: Eight Principles of Trauma-Informed Teaching. In [*Trauma-Informed Pedagogies: A Guide for Responding to Crisis and Inequality in Higher Education*](#) (pp. 35–47).

1. Work to ensure your students' emotional, cognitive, physical, and interpersonal safety. (SAFETY)

- Use your listening skills. Model assertive, non-violent communication skills.
- Be responsive to student needs. Be flexible where you can.

2. Foster trustworthiness and transparency through connection and communication among students. (TRUST)

- Consistency and routine help establish trust. Many people find routine a regulating activity.
- Communicate expectations clearly in multiple formats. Be especially clear about deadlines and requirements.
- Provide accurate information and correct mis-information when you can. Be transparent about what you don't know. Don't engage in speculation. Know where to turn for current information.

3. Intentionally facilitate peer support and mutual self-help in your courses. (SUPPORT)

- Familiarize yourself with the resources available. Be prepared to guide a student through the process of making an appointment with counseling services.
- Help students get connected with student groups where they can access peer support.

4. Promote collaboration and mutuality by sharing power and decision-making with your students. (MUTUALITY)

- Engage in collective solution building. Help students connect with one another.
- Engage students in deciding adjustments to the syllabus and determining flexibility in assignments and deadlines.

5. Empower voice and choice by identifying and helping build on student strengths. (CHOICE)

- Don't make assumptions about what a student needs. Be curious and listen to what they tell you.

6. Empower students to self-regulate by teaching them about the biology of learning. (SELF-REGULATION)

- Use Siegel's hand-brain model to help students understand their brain OR integrate deeper brain function learning in your program.
- Practice mindfulness exercises to settle the brain and prepare for intellectual engagement.

7. Impart to your students the importance of having a sense of purpose. (PURPOSE)

- Help students reflect on why they took your program or course.
- Facilitate activities that connect to career and life goals.

8. Pay attention to cultural, historical, and gender issues. (CULTURE & IDENTITY)

- Foster belonging and connection in the classroom by ensuring that all individuals are welcomed and celebrated for the strengths they bring to the learning community.

PRACTICE WITH SCENARIOS

Turn to a neighbor and talk through how you would apply the eight principles of trauma-informed teaching in your response to these scenarios

- A student/staff member is crying and has an angry outburst.
- A student/staff member asks to be excused from class/work to attend a protest/vigil/demonstration.
- A student/staff member stops engaging in discussions/meetings, or is showing significant changes in behavior.
- A student is afraid to live in housing/doesn't feel safe in a particular space or on campus.
- A student is asking for help in expressing their disappointment or anger with Evergreen or a specific office/employee.
- A student is upset or fearful in response to a building alarm or drill.

PREPARE YOURSELF

How will you prepare yourself to support students/staff members? Be specific! What tools will you use? How much time will you set aside? Where will you seek support?

Community Care Resources

If you find yourself or someone else in immediate distress, please call the Thurston-Mason Crisis Clinic at (360) 586-2800.

Campus Tragedy Information

<https://www.evergreen.edu/campustragedy>

- Refer to this website for current information about the institution's response to the carbon monoxide poisoning that resulted in the death of Jonathan Rodriguez and the hospitalization of three others.

Student Wellness Services

<https://www.evergreen.edu/student-life/health-wellness>

- Check this website for current student wellness services, resources, and events. Students can make appointments with a counselor through my.evergreen.edu.

Employee Assistance Program

<https://des.wa.gov/services/employee-assistance-program>

- Faculty and staff have access to the Employee Assistance Program (EAP). These resources include 24/7 support via phone at 1-877-313-4455.

Learning and Teaching Commons (SEM II E 3123) at the Washington Center

<https://sites.evergreen.edu/ltc/>

- Consult the Commons website for [resource guides](#) and [events](#).
- The resource guide, [Difficult Dialogues: Responding to the World](#), prepared by Julie Russo contains a curated collection of resources for facilitating difficult dialogues.
- Learning and Teaching Commons Staff are available for in-person or online consultations. To schedule, please email learningandteaching@evergreen.edu or complete the [Teaching Consultation Intake Form](#).

Social Justice Center

<https://www.evergreen.edu/academics/centers-institutes/social-justice-center>

- Consult the Social Justice Center website for events and opportunities for community connection.

Evergreen Community Circles

- The Social Justice Center and the Washington Center are collaborating to foster support, care, and resilience through community circles. [\[learn more\]](#)