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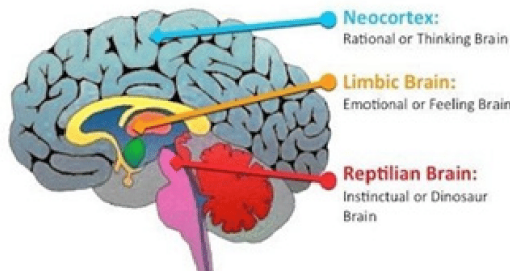
Learning and Teaching Commons @ The Washington Center

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Taking a trauma-responsive approach to community care

January 3 & 5, 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 and regulated, you will be much better positioned to respond with care. Take time before class to ground yourself with 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 of their own circumstance. You don't need to have all the answers.

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.

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

- Engage individuals in collective solution building. Help them understand how they can connect with each other and/or student groups.
- Engage students in deciding how the class moves forward 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 your 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.

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.

Scenarios

Reflect on the eight principles of trauma-informed teaching and use them to devise a trauma-informed response to the scenarios below.

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 on red square.
A student/staff member stops engaging in discussions/meetings.	A student is afraid to live in housing.

Create a plan

Reflect on the eight principles of trauma-informed teaching and use them to inform how you would plan to respond to the scenarios below.

Self-care plan

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

First-day plan

What is your plan for the first day of class (or staff meeting)? What will you say? What will you do? How will you use trauma-informed principles to shape your plan?

Community Care Resources

Campus Tragedy Information

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

Location for current updates and resources.

Student Wellness Services

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

- Students schedule appointments through my.evergreen.edu.
- Weekly Grief Support meeting Mondays, January 8 - March 11, 3 - 4 pm in the Social Justice Center.
- If you find yourself in immediate distress, please call the Thurston-Mason Crisis Clinic at (360) 586-2800.

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)

Learning and Teaching Commons Staff will be available for drop-in sessions at the following times:

- Thursday, January 4, 10 - 3 pm
- Friday, January 12, 10 - 3 pm
- Online by appointment. To schedule email learningandteaching@evergreen.edu