

Identifying Trauma in our Schools

RECOGNIZE, REFRAME, RESOLVE

We are living in a time of great change and upheaval!

- ▶ Current COVID pandemic

- ▶ Social / Political situation

This challenged ALL of us:

- ▶ To fundamentally question
 - ▶ How we think.
 - ▶ What we do.
 - ▶ Even what we believe.

What makes an event traumatic?

- ▶ It was unexpected.
- ▶ Individual was unprepared.
- ▶ There was no way to stop it from happening.

Trauma is “an instant habit.”

► Everything changes in an instant!

Pause
for
Reflection
and
Questions



Trauma vs Stress

- ▶ Our ability to differentiate between trauma and stress is important.

Stress

- ▶ Stress can have the appearance of trauma.
 - ▶ Hyper arousal/ Hypo arousal
- ▶ Stress can be mediated by improvements in sleep, diet, exercise and social engagement.

Trauma

- ▶ Trauma, by contrast, has no simple solutions and is not improved by simple lifestyle changes.

Stress → Trauma

- ▶ Stress, if prolonged and unrelenting, can evolve into trauma the longer it endures.
 - ▶ #COVID 2022!!!!

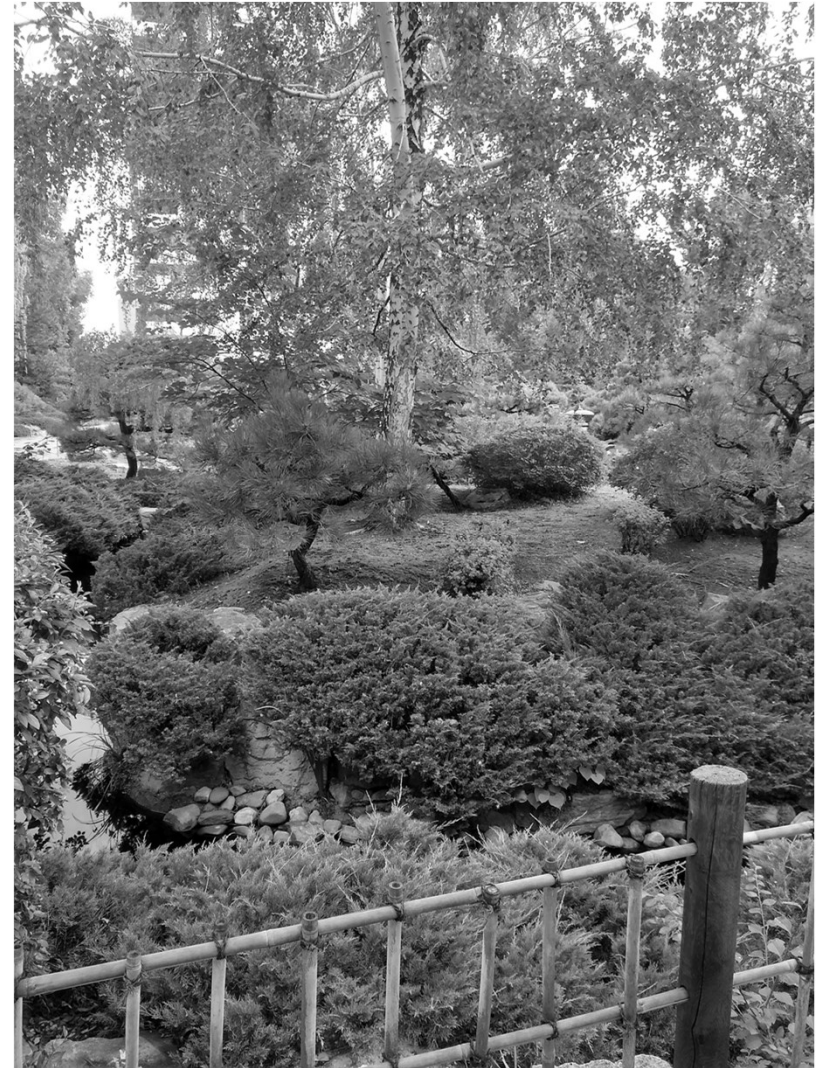
Stress → Trauma

- ▶ Each stressor elevates the baseline of arousal, making it easier and easier to become dysregulated with less stimulus.

Stress → Trauma

- ▶ Going back to school can be stressful for our students.

Pause
for
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Challenges:

- ▶ First Challenge – Providing structure:
 - ▶ Students are relying on the institutions to provide the structure and stability they are lacking in other areas of their lives.

Second Challenge – Learning:

- ▶ Trauma and prolonged stress can have detrimental effects on learning.
- ▶ The pre-frontal cortex is “hijacked” diminishing its ability to mediate fear and anxiety.

Learning challenge continued:

- ▶ 80% of our behavior is based on what the pre-frontal cortex has already experienced.
- ▶ Every future event is seen through the lens of a dysregulated nervous system.

Learning challenge continued:

- ▶ Learning occurs when the pre-frontal cortex is engaged in experiencing new ideas in a safe, trusting, relational context.

Learning challenge continued:

- ▶ However, when the pre-frontal cortex is dysregulated, learning is haphazard at best.

Learning challenge continued:

- ▶ Our challenge is to provide a safe container in the classroom necessary for learning to happen.

Pause
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Third challenge – Faculty/Staff:

- ▶ Another challenge is attending to the needs of faculty and staff.

Faculty/Staff needs continued:

- ▶ How do we provide a safe container for faculty and staff to voice their concerns.

Pause
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Resolution Oriented

- ▶ Schools need to see themselves as living systems. Living systems thrive when challenged and need to evolve or they will atrophy and die.

Resolution Oriented

- ▶ In order to survive, we must adopt a new framework of how we see ourselves.
- ▶ Instead of focusing on “the trauma” or operating from a “trauma-informed” attitude, it may be easier if we come from a **salutogenic** framework.

Resolution Oriented

- ▶ Trauma can become bearable if we can learn new ways of working with it.

Resolution Oriented

- ▶ This framework goes beyond resilience and builds on the concept of “anti-fragile,” where we adopt a growth mindset in contrast to a survival mindset.



Pause
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Growth Mindset

- ▶ In a growth mindset, the pre-frontal cortex is expanding. We are creating new neuronal maps that are linked to positivity and self-regulation.

Growth Mindset

▶ F.E.A.R:

FACE EVERYTHING AND RISE

Growth Mindset

▶ F.A.I.L.

First Attempt In Learning

Growth Mindset

▶ N.O.

Next Option

Growth Mindset

▶ E.N.D.

Effort Never Dies!

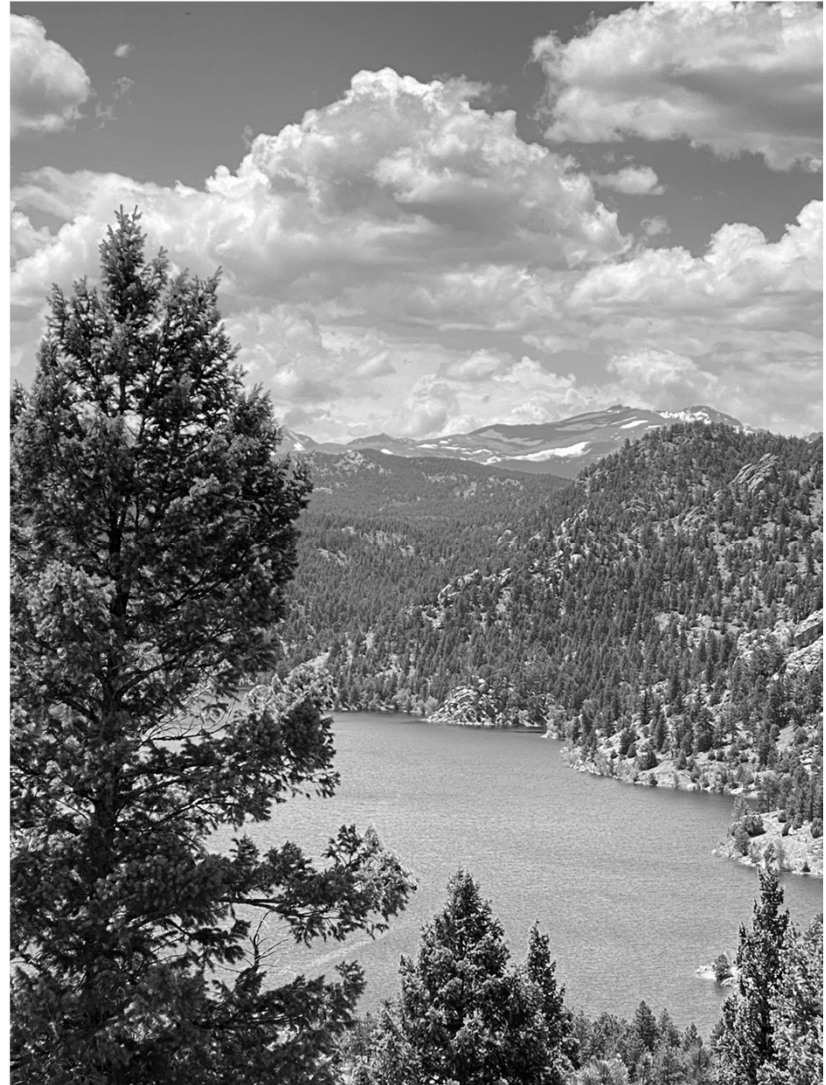
Growth Mindset

► F.A.I.T.H

Full Assurance in the Heart!
and/or

Fear Ain't in This House!

Pause for Reflection and Questions



Strategies for Staff and Faculty

- ▶ Sometimes opportunity comes knocking in work clothes. Strategies for rebuilding must begin from the top down.

Strategies for Staff and Faculty

- ▶ All administrators and key staff must put the oxygen masks on themselves first. The strongest nervous system takes the room!

Strategies for Staff and Faculty

- ▶ Adopt an open-door policy. Be willing to sit down (in person is best) and really listen to the concerns, needs, and ideas from all staff and faculty.

Strategies for Staff and Faculty

- ▶ Create a place of psychological safety where everyone is assured they will not be punished for speaking up and telling their truth.

Strategies for Staff and Faculty

- ▶ Ask yourselves what's working and what needs to change. Take the risk to offer more flexibility in how work is done in this ever-changing world.

Strategies for Staff and Faculty

► Embrace positive conflict!

Don't get thrown off if you
encounter anger and frustration.

Strategies for Staff and Faculty

- ▶ Be consistent with being inconsistent!
- ▶ Consistently communicate policies and expectations as they change.

Pause
for
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and
Questions



Strategies for Student Support

► Feel stuck or anxious?

Get up and walk!

Walk around the building,
hallways, parking lot, or
near by park.

Strategies for Student Support

- ▶ If possible, find a place in the school for students and staff to simply enjoy some quiet, reflective moments.

Strategies for Student Support

- ▶ Be visible to your students.

 - Walk around, go into classes.

 - Connect, connect, connect!

Strategies for Student Support

- ▶ Put a “food bank” somewhere accessible to staff and students.

These are hard times financially and everyone needs to eat!

Pause
for
Reflection
and
Questions



Strategies for Student Support

- ▶ Start classes with some mindfulness, Tai Chi, or stretching.
- ▶ Use as often as needed throughout the day.



Pause
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Anxiety First Aid:

- ▶ Sit upright in a chair.
- ▶ Slowly press your feet into the floor.
- ▶ One hand on upper chest and one hand on your abdomen.
- ▶ Eyes softly focused.
- ▶ Inhale with a long exhale. Repeat.

Pause for
a few more
“First Aid”
breaths...



Gently challenge:

- ▶ “So what you mean is...”
- ▶ “Do you have a plan to get back on track?”
- ▶ “Do you need support?”
- ▶ “Have you thought about what that support would look like?”

Pause
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Healing:

- ▶ Healing can only happen in relationship.
- ▶ Sustained healing only happens in community.

Metamorphosis!

- ▶ Imagine your Future!
- ▶ Spread your wings and fly!

