

# The Alignment of Trauma-Sensitive & Restorative Justice Practices

**TRAUMA'S IMPACT ON WORLDVIEW:** A person who has experienced trauma will often come to see the world from this perspective: other people are untrustworthy and cannot be depended on; the world is an unsafe and unpredictable place where bad things happen and they are responsible; the future is something to be feared; in general things are hopeless and uncontrollable. This worldview can help contextualize the behaviors that make individuals difficult to engage.

Schools are increasingly moving toward the recognition and understanding that young people are resilient and more than their traumas and that caring adults and environments mitigate the effects of poverty and other adverse childhood experiences (ACES). Many of these ACES are effects of systematic oppression and white supremacy suffered disproportionately by people of color. Young people experience success even when trauma is the driver of some of their behavior within a "beloved" school community. This trauma-responsive, or healing-centered lens aligns with the restorative justice paradigm. A restorative school invests time and attention into relationships and community building, which can prevent adults and students who have experienced trauma from being triggered. Safe and supportive relationships can help move adults and students toward healing.

Not all trauma students experience takes place outside of school. Young people can be traumatized by interactions with educators, police in schools, and institutional racism. Undesirable behaviors can be triggered in response to trauma that occurs in the community, home, and/or school building. Additionally, educators facing their own unresolved traumas can impact how they show up in the workspace.

It is essential for educators to examine their responses to student behavior in the context of their potential biases and unresolved personal traumas. Common signs of unresolved trauma in adults can include:

- Anxiety or panic attacks in what could be considered normal situations
- Avoidance of people, places, things, or unpleasant emotions (possibly associated with a trauma)
- Trouble falling or staying asleep
- Feelings of detachment
- Feelings of needing to be on guard
- Inability to tolerate conflict
- Uncontrollable anger and acting on that anger

When these reactions manifest it can impact an educator's relationships and decision making. This can lead to difficulty in connecting with young people in the school community and recognizing the true root cause of any behaviors students may be exhibiting. Educators experiencing these signs should consider seeking additional mental health supports to address them.

Common student behaviors associated with trauma can be responded to restoratively. Below are several suggestions, but this list is not exhaustive - any response that centers relationship building and the individual's needs can be restorative.

<b>COMMON BEHAVIORS ASSOCIATED WITH TRAUMA</b>	
<b>BEHAVIORS</b>	<b>POSSIBLE RESTORATIVE RESPONSES</b>
Declining Academic Performance: trouble concentrating, problems with memory	Engage in conversation regarding the change, develop individualized behavior plans, allow brain breaks, build skills around and encourage self-advocacy & personal accountability
Hypervigilance: always alert, concerned about safety, restlessness, easily startled	Establish clear and predictable expectations and routines, allow for de-escalation, support self-regulation, start each day with a whole class body scan, connect before you direct
Avoidance: resistance to tasks, places, people that involve too much stimuli or reminders of the trauma, elopement	Provide an opportunity to identify potential triggers in the context of a safe and supportive relationship with a trusted adult, create space for the student to feel heard and understood, focus on healing
Aggression: argumentative behavior, anger, outbursts	After de-escalation - engage in restorative dialogue to determine the root cause of the behavior, educator and student connect individually to provide context and suggest appropriate responses, establish reintegration processes that welcome students back after needing to leave the classroom, provide an opportunity to repair any harm caused
Withdrawal: difficulty fitting in socially or maintaining meaningful connections with others, apathy, difficulty expressing oneself	Create intentional and dedicated time for relationship building with educators and peers, regularly engage in circle processes with opportunities for every participant to share, establish norms of equal voice and shared values
Engaging in high risk behaviors: substance use/abuse, re-enacting traumatic experiences, recklessness, self-injury	Offer engagement with trusted adults and or/peers to facilitate appropriate disclosure, arrange for appropriate referrals to higher level interventions (including mental health supports), allow the young person to participate in identifying their needed supports and solutions
<b>SHARED VALUES: RELATIONSHIP, SAFETY, TRUST, EMPOWERMENT, TRANSPARENCY</b>	