

Tips for Addressing Trauma and Learning

A CSCH Q&A



CSCH Staff member and Assistant Research Professor Jessica Koslouski, CSCH Co-Director Sandra Chafouleas, and Kristabel Stark of the University of Vermont recently wrote an article to help educators learn about the effects of trauma in the classroom. We asked the authors about it.



Why is it important to build educators' knowledge of the effects of trauma?

Nearly half of US students have experienced a potentially traumatic event, Although not all students will experience trauma as a result, those who do may have substantial challenges with learning and behavior. There are many evidence-based strategies to support students exposed to trauma.



What does trauma look like in the classroom?

We understand that the scientific explanations of trauma can feel abstract and overwhelming. Based on compilations of students with whom we've worked, we share five vignettes to illustrate various student trauma responses in the classroom. Ranging from stunned silence to violence and aggression, the vignettes illustrate student behavior (what we see) and how trauma (what we may not see) is linked to that behavior.



What can educators do if they feel overwhelmed by student trauma?

We share many strategies that address key challenges for students who have experienced trauma. We invite you to recognize the many strategies you are already using to support students exposed to trauma – we focus on ongoing, incremental shifts to strengthen your practice! We also share strategies for educators to reduce potential for secondary traumatic stress. This work is crucial to remaining healthy and effective when working with students who have experienced trauma.



What do we hope for educators?

We hope that this is an easily accessible resource that builds your understanding of the effects of trauma on students' learning and behavior. We hope you feel validated for the hard work you are already doing, gain a deeper understanding of student behaviors you are seeing, and empowered to incorporate a couple of new trauma-informed strategies into your practice.

Full article: Koslouski, J. B., Stark, K., & Chafouleas, S. M. (2023). Understanding and responding to the effects of trauma in the classroom: A primer for educators. *Social and Emotional Learning: Research, Practice, and Policy*, 1, 100004. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sel.2023.100004>

