

How the Incredible Years® Teacher Classroom Management Program Is Trauma Informed and Promotes Students' Resilience and Recovery

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12-5-20

What is the prevalence and effect of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) on children's development and behavior?

An increasing body of research identifies the long-term impact and health harm to children's learning and behavior due to chronic stress or a traumatic or frightening event. Collectively such childhood stressors are called Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs). ACEs experiences can include physical and sexual abuse or neglect, witnessing domestic abuse and violence, parental drug and alcohol problems, incarceration of a parent, severe accidents, natural and human-made disasters such as an earthquake or tornado, or a pandemic such as the Covid-19 virus, violent or accidental death of a parent, sibling or important relationship figure, parental separation or divorce, and exposure to terrorism, or refugee conditions.

In community samples, more than 2/3 of children in United States report experiencing a traumatic event by age 16. Children often experience more than one ACE because one ACE may be associated with concurrent losses. For example, in the current Covid-19 pandemic, children may face the upsetting event of not being able to go to school and connect with friends and the frightening effects of seeing parents overwhelmed by stress, depression, and conflict due to unemployment and economic hardship or illness, or death of a family member. High levels of family stress due to Covid related events may mean that some parents are unresponsive or even abusive with their children and unable to meet their needs. Research has shown that greater exposure to chronic ACEs, referred to as "toxic stress", can alter how children's brains develop and ultimately lead to impairment in their social, emotional, and academic development, resulting in their own health harming and anti-social behaviors in adolescence. Children who experience 4 or more ACEs are

likely to have more time out of class, academic failure and school dropout, health harming behaviors such as drug or alcohol problems, to be involved in violence, and to be incarcerated when they are older. Data suggests 1 in 10 children report 5 or more exposures to violence. Childhood trauma is thought to be more pervasive than previously thought because it is often invisible and not recognized.

(<https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/acestudy/about.html>)

Recognizing symptoms of trauma and its possible impact

Symptoms of childhood trauma can be particularly challenging for teachers to address because children often don't directly express their feelings, and they may mask their distress or anxiety in a variety of ways. Children who experience multiple traumas or ACEs may develop dysregulated affect (fear reactions, sadness, anger, anxiety, withdrawal), aggressive and defiant misbehavior, inaccurate and unhelpful cognitions (self-blame, guilt, shame, negative self-image), self-injury and interpersonal difficulties, poor peer relationships, attachment difficulties, problems with eating, sleeping in their room, toileting, self-harming, or academic problems. Trauma symptoms often occur in response to *trauma reminders or triggers*, that are internal or external cues that remind children of their original trauma experiences. These can include people, voices, objects, situations, smells, or internal sensations that the child associates with the traumatic event. This anxiety or fear response may be exhibited in some children by withdrawing from the situation, people or objects that trigger fears, or by others with an overwhelming need to strike back in tantrums and defiance in ways that are read as anger, opposition, or hyperactivity. For example, due to the Covid virus, children who have been receiving remote schooling may have anxiety about going back to school after being physically isolated at home for some months. They might be worried or embarrassed about not having done enough schoolwork at home, overwhelmed by their inability to cope, or feel pressured by school expectations. On the other hand, children who have switched between remote and in-person learning may feel stressed and helpless about the unpredictability of this schedule. They may be worried about losing their friendships or concerned about the safety of family members at home while they are at school. Other children maybe anxious about getting sick at school because they got too close to another child, took their face mask off, or touched unsanitized toys or food. Still other children may respond to experiences of abuse or neglect at home by being hypersensitive to teacher criticism. In general students may feel a loss of control due to the unpredictability

of events and lack of connection and meaning. Careful assessment and screening for acute or chronic trauma is critical in planning to support children's school experience during and after Covid or other traumatic events. Not all children will have experienced the pandemic in the same way, and some children will thrive when back in the regular routine of school, while others may feel disengaged and confused when they return to school. Children will need varying degrees of support and intervention to feel safe and supported in the school environment.

Protective Factors Promoting Resilience to Traumatic Stressors

Research has also shown there are protective factors that promote the resilience and recovery of children exposed to multiple ACEs. These include positive trusting, loving, and safe parent and teacher relationships, positive and supportive peer friendships, predictable rules and routines, and support to develop positive social, emotional, and academic skills. Teachers and parents working together to help children cope in healthy ways with traumatic events can have a major impact on their long-term emotional, educational, and health outcomes. One documented factor that significantly impacts children's response to trauma is the amount and quality of trauma-related emotional support that children receive. Parent and teacher support and appropriate responses to their symptoms has been found to be a significant predictor of children's mental health outcomes in several outcome studies (e.g., Cohen 2007).

What does it mean to be trauma informed?

This is an approach where the teacher is trauma-sensitive and considers the possible impact or link of trauma on children, their behavior, relationships with others, learning and their symptoms. The teacher uses cognitive, affective, and behavioral principles as well as relationship building skills involving the school, child, and parents to overcome the negative effects of traumatic experiences. Being trauma informed begins with an understanding by the parent, teacher, and child about the specific trauma or complex traumas that the child experienced and the child's symptoms, emotional reactions, and current triggers. It also includes education about normal psychological and physiological responses to trauma and how teachers can reinforce the students' accurate cognitions about what has occurred. It involves teachers offering hope and reassurance to the student and parents that the child's symptoms will improve with support and trusting

relationships. Other aspects of trauma-informed teaching include therapeutic approaches woven into the classroom such as affect literacy and self-regulation, cognitive and behavioral coping strategies, and support from parents, teachers, and peers. More details of how these methods are incorporated into TCM training are described below.

Incredible Years® Programs

The Incredible Years® (IY) evidence-based parent, teacher, and child programs are based on cognitive, affective, behavioral, and relationship principles which are also key elements in trauma-focused interventions. The IY programs have been used and evaluated for decades as selective and indicated prevention programs delivered by trained teachers and parent group facilitators for high risk, economically disadvantaged children (e.g., Webster-Stratton, Reid, & Hammond, 2001, Linares, Montalto et al. 2006, Menting, Orobio de Castro et al. 2013a, 2013b, Webster-Stratton 2016, Webster-Stratton and Bywater, 2019) as well as treatment intervention for teachers and parents of children diagnosed with Oppositional Defiant Disorder, Attention Deficit Disorder and developmental and language delays (e.g, Webster-Stratton, Reid, and Hammond 2004, Webster-Stratton, Reid & Beauchaine, 2013, Webster-Stratton and Reid 2017, Reinke,Herman & Dong, 2018; Ford et al. 2018, Allen et al. 2019)) Within these populations, young children's behavioral problems are sometimes a manifestation of their emotional and psychological difficulties because of single or multiple traumatic family life experiences including abuse and neglect or homelessness, witnessing violence at home or school, experiencing the loss of a family member or friend, or reactions to parental divorce or incarceration. Multiple randomized control group studies have indicated the success of the IY trauma-informed parent, teacher, and child programs in promoting more responsive, nurturing, and loving parent-teacher-child interactions, reducing child externalizing and internalizing problems, and promoting 3-8 year old children's social competence, emotional regulation, and school readiness skills (for summary see chapter Webster-Stratton and Reid 2017 on web site). <http://www.incredibleyears.com/for-researchers/research-library/>

All of the IY parent, teacher and child programs focus on positive parent-teacher-child relationship building, child directed play, four types of adult coaching methods (academic, social, emotional and persistence coaching), praise and incentives, predictable routines and rules, positive discipline, teaching children

problem solving and building support groups. These methods are central to creating a safe and secure home and school environment and helping children persevere and become resilient in the face of adversity and traumatic experiences.

How is the Incredible Years® Teacher Classroom Management Program trauma-informed?

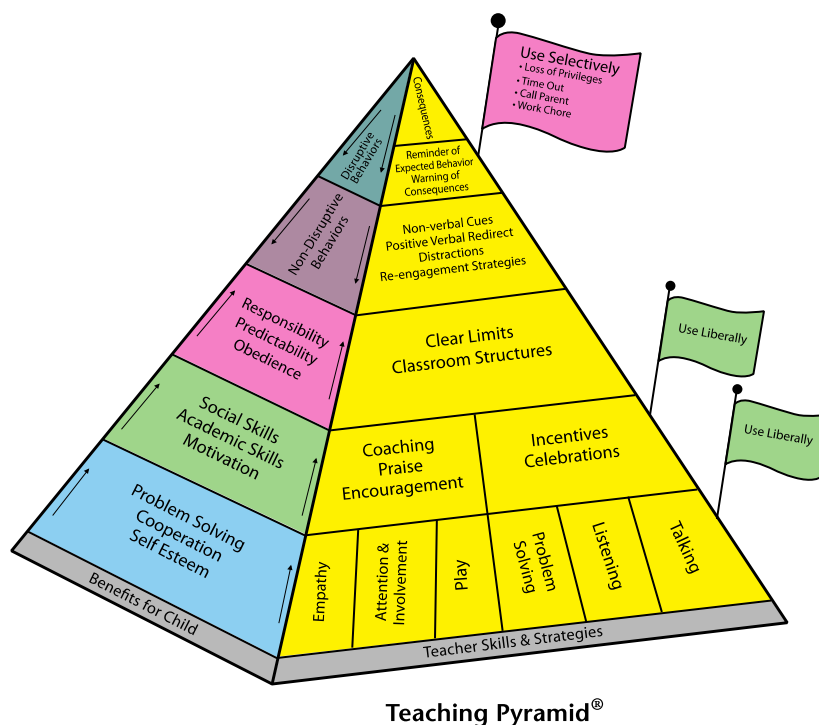
The rest of this document will provide a summary of how the six components of the IY Teacher Classroom Management Programs designed for training teachers of students (3-8 years) are “trauma-informed” and weave the trauma-focused cognitive, affective, and behavioral elements throughout the programs and how they are tailored to the developmental and emotional status of young children and their particular family experiences.

The *IY Teacher Classroom Management Program* consists of 6 classroom management components which are delivered by trained IY teacher group leaders to small groups of teachers (15 teachers) in 6 monthly full day workshops. The curriculum consists of video vignettes, a comprehensive group leader manual, and a text entitled *Incredible Teachers: Nurturing Children’s Social, Emotional and Academic Competence* (Webster-Stratton, 2013). The teacher program topics and sequence of delivery with one program building on the prior program include the following:

- Building Positive Relationships with Students
- Preventing Behavior Problems – The Proactive Teacher
- The Importance of Teacher Attention, Persistence, Social, Emotional and Academic Coaching and Praise
- Motivating Children through Incentives
- Decreasing Inappropriate Behavior
- Teaching Emotional Regulation, Social Skills, and Problem Solving

The training is based on a collaborative, teacher self-reflective model utilizing video vignettes of classrooms to elicit teacher discussions, problem-solving, and build teacher support groups. Following teacher discussions of video vignettes, group leaders set up large and small group practices tailored to the teachers’ goals and the students’ developmental, language, emotional and cognitive level. Numerous randomized control group studies have been conducted by the developer and by independent investigators showing outcomes of the TCM program including:

increases in teachers' self-reported use of positive classroom management strategies, reductions in use of negative discipline strategies, improved teacher-child relationships, increases in teacher self-efficacy and wellbeing, and increases in parent involvement in school. Some studies also showed reductions in high-risk children's misbehavior, and improved student emotional regulation, prosocial behavior, and social competence. In addition, higher risk students who initially scored lower on measures of social and academic competence demonstrated significant improvements in comparison to similar peers in control classrooms (e.g, Asheim, 2018; Ford et al. 2018; Reinke, Herman & Dong, 2018; Allen et al., 2019;).



TCM Program One

Building Positive Relationships with Students

The first “trauma informed” IY teacher program workshop begins with teachers discussing ways to build a sensitive, responsive, nurturing relationship and trusting bond with their students through developmentally appropriate child-directed narrated play and individualized special time as well as positive connections with parents. This understanding that a strong teacher-student relationship must come before successful learning can occur is considered the foundation of the IY teaching

pyramid. Children who have been traumatized by abuse or neglect often have problems forming trusting relationships with teachers. Such children may not trust teachers or believe their needs will be met because they have been ignored, betrayed, or abused by their parents or caregivers and are insecure in their attachments. They may even seem to reject praise and supportive efforts from teachers. Therefore, rather than jumping to responses like withdrawing attention imposing consequences, or using school suspension for problem behaviors, teachers must first build a relationship with the child and family. This will allow them to assess the possible impact of trauma on their student's emotional or behavioral problems, to learn what is provoking the child's behavior, assess what situations are trauma reminders or triggers for misbehavior, and plan how to help them feel safe and loved and learn to calm down.

In the TCM program teachers start by assessing the underlying reason for the student's behavior issues through functional analyses. They also learn about the importance of not taking the children's misbehavior or negative attitudes personally or blaming the child for not trying or caring. The teacher learns to look past the disruptive behavior and to get to know the child and develop a more secure relationship. Teachers consider possible causes or functions of the student's misbehavior such as: a need for teacher attention, a desire to escape from a situation that the child finds scary or uncomfortable, or an emotional response to an environmental trigger or reminder of the trauma.

We know that developing these positive relationships with a traumatized child is far from simple. One highly disruptive child can bring an entire class to a halt and result in teacher frustration and negative feelings. Responding in a compassionate and caring way in the face of extreme behaviors takes commitment, consistent effort, and a proactive teaching approach. The group format of the TCM sessions is important because it strengthens teachers peer support as they brainstorm and share ideas for enhancing their relationships with their students. Teachers share ideas such as being playful, making time for child directed play or special chat time, listening and supporting their student's communication of their thoughts and feelings, having predictable and welcoming daily greetings and personalized goodbye rituals, tailoring books and projects to students' areas of interest, and at times being an appreciative listening audience. Moreover, teachers share ideas for how to build relationships with the students' parents such as making home visits, sending positive notes home or newsletters, calls to celebrate an achievement,

developing interest surveys about their family, culture, and important rituals, setting up opportunities for parents to participate in the classroom, and running school information sessions or workshops. The aim is to build up a bank account of positive contact with parents before progressing to more challenging discussions. The TCM curriculum also includes teacher-to-parent communication forms that can be used to tell parents about what their children are learning in the classroom and a corresponding form to elicit feedback from parents to teachers.

Partnering with Parents

It is important to remember that when children are distressed, parents are also undergoing extraordinary stress because of their child's trauma experience or their own trauma experience. Some parents are reluctant to talk about the trauma event with their child for fear it will be overly distressing to themselves and their child. Other parents may overtalk the traumatic event, creating more child stress. Parents may feel helpless and hopeless because it seems impossible to fix or cure their children's anxiety and behavior problems. Involving parents in their child's educational goals requires a teacher commitment to families, a proactive plan for involving parents that is carefully crafted prior to school starting, and adequate teacher time set aside for communicating, listening and collaborating with parents. Moreover, parents are helped to partner with teachers to develop behavior plans to address behavior problems at school. This consistent approach across home and school settings will create a predictable environment for children and enhance any child's learning. For children who have experienced trauma, this partnership between parents and teachers offers promise for helping children to feel safe, socially, emotionally, and academically competent, and supported to cope with life's challenges. It is ideal if schools can offer the accompanying group-based Incredible Years parent program that begins with parents learning ways to build a sensitive, responsive, and nurturing relationship with their children and reinforces parents using many of the same strategies at home that the teachers are using at school.

TCM Program Two

Preventing Behavior Problems – The Proactive Teacher

The second topic in the TCM program focuses on ways to structure the classroom environment and school day framework to help the students feel calm, safe, and

secure in their learning. Teachers do this by developing regular predictable schedules, consistent routines, transitions, and norms of behavior to help students succeed. Children are involved in setting the rules that are stated in terms of observable behaviors such as, “Keep your hands to your own body” or “use walking feet” or “wearing masks, washing hands and staying 6 feet apart” and are practiced in role play scenarios. Schedules and routines are posted on the board while teachers engage in predictable opening connections, planned transitions to new activities, closure rituals, and fresh starts. Commands are clear, short, specific, and positive allowing for lead time with a warning. Non-verbal cues, signals, sounds, and visual prompts are encouraged and samples are provided in the curriculum such as pictures of listening ears, quiet hands up, inside voice, or “show me five” rules. Once teachers have developed trusting relationships with trauma affected students and their families, then teachers can begin to normalize children’s responses to traumatic events, by helping them understand that the classroom is a safe and predictable place. They can also provide information about typical responses to trauma and reinforce children’s accurate cognitions about what occurred. Once children feel secure in their relationships with teachers and peers and understand that the classroom environment is stable and safe , they begin to develop the emotional resources to deal with the less predictable world outside.

TCM Program Three

The Importance of Teacher Attention, Coaching and Praise

Attention and Praise

When we look at the classroom environment to see what building blocks help students to cope with traumatic stressors and to become motivated and successful learners, the quality of the teacher’s attention emerges as one of the most important foundational qualities. Consistent and meaningful positive encouragement and praise from a teacher builds a child’s self-esteem, confidence, and eventual academic and social success. Unfortunately, children who have experienced chronic neglect or trauma tend to be better at getting negative teacher and parent attention fast and predictably by provoking them with inappropriate behaviors. Unfortunately, children who need attention the most may get it in the most unloving ways; that is, they get negative attention for negative behaviors, thus having their inappropriate behaviors reinforced. The second TCM workshop day is focused on how teachers can turn their attention focus around so that these children learn they are more likely to get quick,

consistent, warm, and meaningful positive teacher attention and praise for positive behaviors than for their negative disruptive behaviors.

Descriptive Commenting: Academic and Persistence Coaching

One of the key foundational building blocks from the teaching pyramid that is helpful for nurturing very young children's learning (ages 1-3) is called *descriptive commenting*. This is called *pre-academic and academic coaching* for older children (ages 4-8). Teachers learn about the importance of using this descriptive commenting form of attention where the teacher narrates the child's ideas, thoughts, and interests, helping him feel confident and expanding his language vocabulary by being an "appreciative audience" and providing a focused narration of his learning process. This kind of teacher communication is child-directed, describing what the child is doing or showing interest in, is not too "teachy", avoids question asking, and is noncritical. It encourages students' cognitive awareness of what they are seeing, doing, thinking, or feeling, and supports creativity, self-discovery, language, and independence. A second type of teacher coaching is called *persistence coaching*. This type of descriptive narration helps children persist with difficult tasks and continue to try despite frustrations, obstacles, and difficulties. With this kind of coaching, the teacher helps the child to recognize when he is concentrating, trying hard, staying focused, paying attention, and being calm and patient. When the teacher draws attention to these persistence behaviors, the child will learn it is normal to struggle to learn something new, but with patience, persistence, practice, and teacher support, he can accomplish the task and feel proud of it. This is an important life message for any child. It is particularly important for those who have experienced trauma and adversity and need more support to feel confident that they can manage challenging situations.

Emotion Coaching

The third type of coaching is *emotion coaching*. This communication approach helps children develop feelings literacy; that is, a vocabulary for expressing emotions to teachers and peers in appropriate ways. Teachers start this by naming the student's emotions whenever they notice them. Labeling feelings at a time the student is experiencing them allows the child to associate the feeling with the word and with an internal emotional state. Once children have developed an emotion vocabulary, then they can identify their own feelings and verbally share them with others. This verbal language leads to an ability to regulate their emotional and behavioral responses without hitting, being destructive, or withdrawing.

Traumatized children often have difficulty managing strong emotions. Neglect or abuse may mean that they weren't soothed by their parents and therefore lack the secure attachment system that helps children learn to self-soothe. This can lead to chronic dysregulation and difficulty in self-calming and self-managing their uncomfortable emotions. Such children may be hyper-vigilant, meaning overly alert to danger, and appear jumpy. Many are misdiagnosed with ADHD. To counteract hyperactive, impulsive, impatient, and easily frustrated responses, the teacher will learn to focus on labeling and scaffolding positive opposite emotions such as times they are being patient, calm, focused, thoughtful, and persistent. For children who seem anxious, fearful, embarrassed, and withdrawn, the teacher will label times when they are brave, curious, taking initiative with a friend, trying something new, or looking confident. For children who appear angry, defiant, and sad, the teacher will label feelings such as happy, excited, helpful, and forgiving. This strategic emotion coaching brings focus to positive emotion states and will help children become more aware of these positive states and what actions or situations lead to these calmer feelings. With coaching, children will gradually learn to recognize more happy, calm, and safe feeling states than negative or distressful ones. This will set the stage for them to communicate, problem solve, cope successfully with their negative feelings, and feel and express empathy towards others. The TCM curriculum includes an emotion thermometer that children can use to show when they are in the red angry zone and when they are in a cool blue relaxed state. Additional resources such as laminated feeling cards and feeling wheel games are also part of the curriculum.

Social Coaching

The fourth type of coaching is called *social coaching*. This serves to build students' social skills and ability to make supportive friendships. Social skills are a prerequisite for academic learning because they help children learn how to give and get help from others, how to work together cooperatively, how to communicate with others, and how to problem solve. Children who have experienced trauma feel great support having friendships, being a successful part of a team, being accepted by others, and being able to share their experiences.

Attention, Encouragement and Praise

Consistent and meaningful encouragement and praise from a teacher build students' self-confidence and contributes to trusting and supportive relationships.

In the TCM training, teachers explore ways to make praise more effective including being genuine and warm, giving clearly labeled praise, tailoring the praise to the child's temperament, praising effort and persistence rather than outcomes, and keeping praise pure without qualifiers. They support children to internalize praise by teaching them self-praise and self-encouragement. They encourage students in circle times to give compliments to peers and to celebrate the success of others.

Throughout the program, teachers are helped to understand the triangle relationship between their students' thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. They help students reframe their thoughts about themselves, learn how to use positive self-talk about themselves and others, to manage their feelings, and learn appropriate social behaviors and communication. This, in turn, leads to more positive student attributions and positive feelings about themselves and others and more productive learning and coping.

Program 4

Motivating Students Using Incentives to Motivate

While coaching and praise strategies are foundational elements of the TCM program, they may not be strong enough reinforcers to motivate children with particularly challenging behaviors or children who have been exposed to trauma. One reason for this is that these children have more difficulty forming trusting relationships, so do not feel close to their teachers. This makes teacher praise and attention less meaningful to them. A small tangible reward plan can sustain a child's motivation until a positive relationship has been developed with the teacher, making their praise in the future more motivating and reinforcing. Teachers learn how to identify developmentally appropriate target child behavior and learning goals and choose inexpensive incentives and special privileges that are meaningful for the child. Teachers brainstorm ideas for both tangible (hand stamps, stickers, small prizes, positive note home, ticket that is traded in for a prize, choosing book for reading time) and nontangible (high five, special job, extra time doing a preferred activity, eating lunch or spending time with a teacher or chosen peer) rewards. Teachers learn important elements of a successful incentive system such as: clearly defined target behaviors, achievable goals, explaining the system to the child, involving the child in choosing the reward, combining the incentive with praise, and not taking away earned rewards. Eventually the incentive system is

phased out and replaced with the teacher and peer group social approval. Success is shared with parents.

Program Five

Decreasing Inappropriate Behavior - Ignoring and Redirecting and Follow through with Consequences

More than half of the TCM program content training time is spent on the foundation of the IY teaching pyramid in terms of building teacher- student positive relationships and attachment, and teacher-parent relationships, particularly in cases where students' past traumatic experiences result in their low-trust of adults. Teachers identify specific long-term and short-term goals in their student behavior plans for teaching the positive behaviors that will replace their students' unproductive behaviors. For children who have experienced trauma, teachers work to understand the impact of trauma on their students' emotional or behavioral problems and school learning, what school situations act as trauma reminders or triggers for misbehavior, and how to help them feel safe and loved with consistent relationship-building efforts, predictable routines, and schedules. However, despite the best proactive teacher classroom management, students can still exhibit disruptive and defiant behaviors that are frustrating to manage. Many teachers feel guilty about disciplining such children, especially if they know they have experienced something traumatic. Teachers are helped to understand the importance of not being either overly protective or too permissive and to appreciate that clear rules and a predictable discipline plan will help the student feel safe and secure at school.

Planned Ignoring: The next layer of the IY teaching pyramid starts with identifying the student behaviors teachers want to see less of and then learning the least intrusive teaching discipline tools to respond to them. These include: distractions, physical and verbal redirections, ignoring, and limit setting. Planned brief ignoring for carefully selected negative behaviors, coupled with a quick return of positive attention for appropriate student behavior has been shown in research studies to be an extremely effective tool for modifying students' behavior. In this component of the *TCM* curriculum, teachers identify behaviors they will ignore and learn effective ways to ignore respectfully. Ignoring is often paired with a distraction or redirection to reduce the student's reactions to being ignored and with proximal praise for those students displaying the positive opposite behavior. Often teachers

ignore a specific negative behavior but are not ignoring the child completely. For example, if a child is complaining loudly about a math assignment, the teacher may completely ignore the complaints, but might point to the next problem on the sheet and say: *“I think you know how to do this one! Would you like some help to get started?”* Peers are taught to ignore a friend’s tantrums and distractions and learn to give their classmate privacy to calm down. It is important to note that ignoring is not likely to affect how a student behaves until a positive relationship has been built up between the teacher and student. With the context of prior trauma in mind, some teacher strategies (such as ignoring and Time Out) are delayed and extra time spent to establish a more secure teacher-student relationship and positive replacement behaviors before starting this.

Most students’ misbehaviors will be managed with the lower level discipline strategies such as reminders of rules, redirection, ignoring, and warnings. However physically or verbally violent behavior such as hitting another child or teacher, screaming so loudly that other children cannot pay attention, lashing out and pushing over furniture, or persistently refusing to comply with anything the teacher requests needs to be addressed with a strategy that will calmly and respectfully stop, de-escalate the behavior and promote compliance. Teacher approaches such as lecturing, yelling, criticizing, putting students’ names on the board, sending them to the principal’s office, or suspending them from school do not work and instead actually reinforce and escalate the inappropriate behavior. These punitive responses also contribute to the student’s negative self-image and negative reputation with peers. The task for the teacher is to provide an ethical and respectful approach that teaches that violent behavior behaviors do not work and will not be tolerated, serves to regulate student negative affect, promotes peer understanding, establishes positive expectations for future appropriate behavior, and conveys the message that the student is valued despite his mistake.

Time Out (TO) to Calm down: The evidence-based and appropriate use of Time Out is brief, infrequent, thoughtful, and delivered in a calm way that helps a child self-regulate. This type of Time Out is followed by a new learning opportunity and positive connection. Time out is reserved for high intensity and unsafe behaviors, such as aggression towards peers or teachers and destructive behavior. Time out is actually a structured form of ignoring where the child is removed from all sources of attention. Time Out is taught as a way for children to learn to calm down and re-regulate in the midst of strong emotions and to give children time to reflect on a

better solution to their problem. It maintains a respectful, trusting student-teacher relationship in which children feel they can be honest about their problems and mistakes. Time Out can only be used when the teacher-student relationship has been well established with positive “time in” methods and a prior focus on promoting children’s social, emotional and language skills.

The first step of using Time Out in the classroom is to teach the students what Time Out is used for, where it is, and the steps involved in going to TO. Students are then provided with a chance to practice each step. Students also learn and practice self-regulation strategies such as deep breathing, positive imagery, and positive self-talk. Puppets and role plays are useful methods for helping children learn how to take Time Out to calm down. Time Out supports students’ self-regulation and development of an internal sense of responsibility by giving them the privacy and space to practice calming down. After Time Out is completed, students quickly return to the classroom activities and experience a new learning trial, positive connection, and chance to be successful resulting in teacher praise.

Logical Consequences are used to respond to challenging behaviors that aren’t dangerous but that don’t respond to being ignored or redirected. Logical consequences do not need to be severe to be effective, and, in fact, the key aspect of appropriate consequences is brevity, consistency, immediacy, but not severity. They are planned and predictable, not reactive or punitive. They do not embarrass or humiliate the student and help the student understand the link between their behavior and the logical consequence. This will assure that students understand and can predict the consequences of their actions, and that they perceive the teachers uses them fairly. This is particularly important for children who have experienced unpredictable responses from adults in other settings. They may have been harshly punished for small misbehaviors or at other times may have experienced no consequences for severe misbehaviors. At first these children may react strongly to a logical consequence, but overtime, they will learn that the classroom is a safe and predictable environment and will welcome the reassurance that their behaviors will be contained and responded to consistently. Children can be helped to see a consequence as a choice that they have made and can be supported to make a better choice in the future. Some examples of consequences can be losing some minutes of recess, going to the back of the line, cleaning up a mess, or losing a favorite activity for a short period of time.

Program Six

Teaching Emotional Regulation, Social Skills and Problem Solving

Emotion Regulation: This part of the TCM program builds on the earlier emotion and persistence coaching. Teachers focus their attention to students' positive feelings to scaffold the feelings they want to encourage in their students, listen and validate students' feelings, and model talking about their own positive feelings and coping responses to negative feelings. More focus is placed on strategies that students can use to self-regulate when they are so out of control that they are destructive or hurtful. Learning to calm down instead of acting out is a skill that can be taught. Once emotional literacy has been taught, teachers continue this teaching of self-regulation skills just as they would teach an academic skill. Teachers make the learning fun and interesting by modeling, prompting, practicing, and praising. For example, children are encouraged to talk about their feelings through feeling games and activities, positive imagery and relaxation exercises, puppets, and class activities like making a happy book. Deep breathing is a tried and true method of inducing a calming response, but it can be difficult for young children to learn this breathing method. One helpful visualization is to have children imagine they are smelling a flower (breath in through the nose) and then blowing out a candle (breath out through the mouth). Other imaginary images can be used such as blowing up a balloon and letting it out. Teachers also use the "turtle technique" and practice this frequently. With the help of a turtle puppet, the teacher asks the students to imagine they are a turtle and have a shell, so like the turtle they can retreat in their shell to calm down when they are angry. During this time in their shell they take deep, quiet breaths and say "I can do it, I can calm down." When they are calm, they can come out again. It will take a lot of practice before students can transfer emotional strategies such as the turtle technique from hypothetical imaginary situations to real-life conflict. The calm down thermometer is another useful way to teach self-control and to monitor a student's mood and self-regulation efforts. Students can use the arrow on the thermometer to show where their feelings are and take deep breaths to bring the arrow down from feeling "red hot mad" to the cool blue range. Once children have reached a cooler and more relaxed state, they can then talk about their feelings and more effectively problem solve. Teachers will have even more success in helping their students regulate their emotions if their parents are also using feeling language and the self-regulation strategies such as the thermometer or turtle puppet at home. The TCM curriculum provides home communication letters for teachers to send parents explaining what

self-regulation children are learning in the classroom and how they can use some of the same strategies at home.

Social Skills: A major challenge is for teachers to prevent peer rejection and exclusion and to promote effective social skills and positive friendships for all children but especially for children who are acting out their trauma in disruptive ways. This misbehavior can lead to peer rejection, compounding their anxiety and feeling of loneliness and lack of safety. Teachers are even more important than parents in this endeavor because parents are not often present to help when their children are having difficulties in large peer groups. Teachers do this teaching by using puppets to introduce real life problems in a safe manner. The puppets share problems that are similar to those that are happening in the classroom such a peer who won't share, being teased or left out, being bullied, or being embarrassed by having to wear hand-me-down clothes. The puppets share these problems using language that the children can understand and provide a neutral way to discuss real-life problems. Social coaching described above helps students learn the value of waiting, taking turns, ignoring, expressing feelings and sharing. Specific praise and incentives systems and compliment circle times are planned to encourage students to recognize another's strengths and positive qualities and build supportive friendships.

Problem Solving: Teachers have a key role in teaching social skills to all children but particularly those who are aggressive, impulsive, anxious, or fearful. These children need extra support to thinking of more prosocial solutions to their problems and to evaluate which solutions are better choices and will lead to more positive consequences. Chronic trauma affects children's memory, ability to pay attention, problem solve, or predict their future. Through the use of puppets and books and role-play narrated scenarios, teachers can help students learn the basic problem-solving steps. They learn that step one is to recognize that an uncomfortable feeling means they have a problem to be discussed. It can be hard for children to figure out exactly what the problem is and often they need the teacher's help with the language of describing the problem. For example, "We are angry and fighting because we both want to play with the same toy." After describing the problem steps 2 and 3 are to brainstorm one solution and then many possible solutions to the problem. Then teachers help students practice some of possible solutions to the defined problem (e.g., wait, take turns, get help, share, apologize, trade etc.). This is done through role plays with the puppets. For children ages 3-5, the primary

focus will be on these first three problem solving steps. Visual laminated pictures of the problem-solving steps and of possible solutions help the children to learn and remember some of the options. Older children (5-8 years) begin to learn to think ahead and evaluate the consequences of each solution. Children do this by deciding if solutions are fair, safe, and lead to good feelings. Then children practice the best solution and evaluate its effectiveness. To become effective problem solvers, children need opportunities to practice the steps in a fun and interactive way. For example, children are invited to be detectives solving a problem and wear a Sherlock Holmes hat as they test out solutions or play solution games, problem solving bingos, and play pass the hat. Teaching these social problem-solving steps is no harder than teaching any other complex set of academic skills such as math or reading. The teachers provide modeling and use puppets, books, and pictures as a stimulus for discussion and provide opportunities for students to practice the problem-solving steps. In these hypothetical role plays, children are reinforced for using appropriate solutions and are helped to come up with other solutions when their first solution doesn't work. After this learning, teachers start to prompt their students' use of these solutions in real life conflict situations.

Using Puppets to Enhance Teaching Feelings, Social Skills and Problem Solving with Young Children: Using puppets with children at this imaginary phase of cognitive development is a nonthreatening way to encourage discussions of feelings, problems, and possible solutions. First the teacher develops scenarios for the puppets that mirror some of the children's problems. These problems can be everyday problems related to things like sharing, taking turns, and teasing. This is part of the TCM program for all classrooms and all students. For students who have experienced trauma, puppets can talk about higher-level traumatic events that are similar to those that the children have experienced. For example, one puppet might be living with his grandmother or be in foster care because his mother is unable to care for him safely. This puppet talks to the children about what s/he does to stay safe and who s/he can talk to feel loved and then asks the children for their ideas about what to do when s/he feels unsafe when she visiting her mother. Or a puppet might talk about her worries when s/he hears her parents fighting and ask the children for help knowing what to do when this happens. Recently, in a school that experienced the death of one of the students, the teacher prepared a lesson on loss and grief. The puppet shared with the students his sad and confused feelings about the recent loss of his grandfather. This allowed the children to develop an emotional vocabulary for talking about grief and sadness when they

lose someone, realize the normality of these feelings, and learn things to do to cope with these feelings and ways to keep the memory of a loved person going. While all the children learn emotion vocabulary and the basic steps of problem solving, anger management and self-regulation strategies, their learning is strengthened by teachers when they practice these strategies with their peers. Frequently the puppet is used either to model strategies or to ask for help from the children. When students are prompted to teach the puppet how to use a self-regulation strategy or to solve a problem, they gain greater mastery over the language and behaviors. The following are some examples of possible puppet scenarios.

Death in the Family

Molly: *My grandpa died, and I felt sad and had nightmares. I really missed him.*

Teacher: *I'm so sorry that happened. I bet you do feel sad. When someone dies, we really miss them and wish that they were still here.*

Teacher: *Does anyone here understand how Molly feels? Have any of you had a special pet or person that you love die? Can any of you think of something to say to make Molly feel better?*

Children: *Maybe tell Molly that they are sorry or share their own experiences.*

Teacher: *Molly, could you tell us more about your grandpa? What good things do you remember about him?*

Molly: *He took me to the park to throw balls and sometimes we went for a treat sometimes and he told me funny stories.*

Teacher: *It seems like these are some good memories you want to remember.*

Molly: *Yes, they are. You know I drew pictures of my good times with grandpa in a special book and sometimes when I have a nightmare I think of this good stuff and it helps me feel happier and get back to sleep. Sometimes I take some deep breaths too.*

Teacher: *Wow you have shared with us two good solutions of two ways to take control of your sad feelings and thoughts. One is to make a memory book of your grandpa and the other is to take deep breaths to calm down. Molly you know talking about your feelings about your grandpa dying was a really brave thing to do.*

Teacher to children: *What would be a good way for you to remember all the good memories of your (grandparent, pet, parent, or other family member).*

As solutions to traumatic events are discussed, they can be modeled by Wally or Molly puppet, as seen in the example above, or the ideas can be generated by the children and then acted out for the puppets to learn from them. The children and puppets discuss the fact that there is often not a solution that will “fix” the child’s problem. Instead the focus is often on ways to get comfort, help, or to start to feel better, even if the original problem does not go away. The puppets also normalize that feeling sad, scared, or angry is okay and that other people feel this way too.

As children become comfortable with the problem-solving steps, more complex traumatic situations can be introduced. For example, scenarios where there is possible violence or sexual abuse in the home or bullying on the playground by older children. These scenarios first involve helping children understand what is appropriate or inappropriate touch followed by solutions that help them identify where are safe places to go, what people they can turn to for help, or how they can say “no” if an adult or sibling is doing something wrong.

Sibling Abuse

Wally: *Sometimes my brother gets really angry at me. One time I took his bike without asking and he yelled at me and started to hit me really hard. What should I do when that happens?*

Children: (encouraged to come up with solutions such as get help from adult or sibling or peer if feeling unsafe, say you are sorry, walk away, take deep breaths and stay calm)

Children are encouraged to talk about times they may have been hurt by someone or feel unsafe. For young children, the puppets can prompt these discussions with their own stories and children are encouraged to talk about what they can do to stay safe. Small group activities can include making a book or journal of places they would go when they feel unsafe.

In the small *Wally* books and the large teacher *Wally's Detective Books for Solving Problems at School and at Home* there are many problem-solving cases that teachers can use to help children practice the problem-solving steps. The large *Wally* book can be read to children in circle time and then children act out solutions. The small *Wally* books can be worked on in small group activities where children act out solutions, draw solutions, or write about solutions to the problem scenarios presented.

If children in a particular group have personally experienced violence, direct trauma, or sexual abuse, the puppets can also be used to talk about those issues. The puppet and teacher are used together to provide a safe atmosphere where the issues can be discussed. The puppet presents a version of the experience and the teacher can provide a safe and non-blaming response. Children are then free to share or not share their own experiences. It is very important that these groups are run by teachers who are comfortable and experienced with this kind of discussion.

While trauma focused treatment focuses on differentiating between thoughts and feelings, this distinction is intertwined and not age appropriate for very young children because they are not able to be introspective about their own cognitive processes. In fact, they still cognitively confuse fantasy and reality. However, young children can understand what others (including a puppet) might feel. So, they can learn from hearing about what *Wally* (or *Molly* or *Tiny*) feels and thinks, or from their suggestions of positive self-statements they might use to cope with a traumatic event. For this age group, the teachers, with the help of a puppet, will model alternative thoughts for children, whisper thought ideas for them to suggest in group discussions and find creative ways for them to express basic ideas about thoughts, feelings and behaviors. For example, we talk about “turtle power,” helping a child to envision himself as a turtle and imagining he has a shell or shield that can reject or bounce off nasty comments from others and absorb the friendly

comments and thereby feel better. The child learns to go inside his shell when he needs to calm down by taking deep breaths, visualizing happy places and thinking happy thoughts. Other puppets can be used to promote positive thoughts, feeling talk, empathy and problem solving. For example, one puppet Freddy Frog is hyperactive and jumps around a lot, getting into trouble, so the children help him to calm down and learn how to make friends. The puppet Oscar Ostrich is afraid to talk about his feelings and always puts his head in the sand so the children can help him feel better by sharing his feelings and problems. A baby Dina dinosaur puppet is nervous and wants to learn how she can feel less lonely and make friends.

Behavior Planning

It is important to develop an individual behavior plan to help the teacher be more precise and detailed in how s/he is using specific teaching tools for strengthening particular positive emotional, social, and academic behaviors and how s/he follows through with agreed upon consequences for targeted misbehaviors. These plans should be developed in collaboration with other teacher colleagues and students' parents. The goal is to set realistic goals determined by the children's developmental abilities and needs and to scaffold progress on these goals, ideally across the school and home setting. The behavior plan will include the behavior of concern and functional assessment, its desired replacement behavior, the relationship building, prosocial, attention, coaching, praise and incentives teaching strategies, the hierarchy discipline plan and how parents can and want to be involved.

Providing Support for Teachers

During the Covid-19 pandemic, teachers themselves have been ambivalent and anxious about their own safety while teaching in the classroom. They may also be exhausted and overwhelmed by on-line teaching. They may be eager to return to face to face to teaching with students but still concerned about their students and their own safety. The TCM training curriculum has always valued the importance of supporting teachers' discussions about ways to regulate their own emotions and affect, improve their positive communication and positive attention skills, and build support networks with other teachers. These discussions are particularly important when teachers are stressed by events such as Covid. Teachers learn strategies such as challenging negative self-talk and catastrophic thinking,

modifying inaccurate thoughts and guilt, or stress about a child's trauma, using deep breathing, relaxation methods, positive imagery, the importance of self-care, and teacher group problem solving and support. Building teacher support networks is integral to teachers' ability to manage uncertainty and anxiety about the ever-changing school situation.

Key Points about Delivering IY Teacher Classroom Management Programs that are Trauma-informed and Promote Students' Resiliency and Hope

Creating Students' Sense of Belonging, Connection and Trust

- Teachers help students develop a sense of belonging and resiliency by developing nurturing and trusting relationships with them and by using persistence, social, and emotion coaching in child-directed play individually and in small groups
- Teachers set specific goals for students' social, emotional, and cognitive development as well as academic development
- Teachers improve student's sense of belonging by building collaborative and honest relationships with their parents to enhance consistency and predictability of responses across settings
- Teachers help students to feel a sense of connectedness with peers by setting up support groups, normalizing their responses to traumatic events by helping them understand they are not alone and that others have experienced similar traumas and by reinforcing accurate cognitions about what has occurred

Creating Students' Sense of Control, Predictability and Safety in the School Environment

- Teachers help students feel they are in a safe and secure environment when there are clear, predictable routines and transitions, agreed upon rules, consistent limit setting, opportunities for choices, proactive discipline, and a strong teaching pyramid foundation of relationship building, coaching methods, praise and encouragement in a planned and strategic manner

Helping Students Learn to Self-Regulate

- Teachers help students learn to self-regulate by listening and supporting their ability to communicate their thoughts and feelings. Teachers also work to understand potential trauma triggers that can result in the child's misbehavior and understand how to manage and help children cope with these thoughts and responses

- Teachers help children learn to self-regulate by teaching deep breathing methods, positive imagery, positive self-talk, and how to ask for what they need in order to feel safe and loved
- Teachers use puppets to help students discuss and practice solutions to problem situations and to involve their peers as support in this learning
- Teachers help children learn to self-regulate by modeling calm, patient, and predictable responses to their students' misbehaviors

Teachers Building Support Networks

- Teachers understand the value of developing their own support networks through their teacher group experience, sharing of ideas and problem solving. This support helps them cope with the stress of managing their student's trauma reactions
- Teachers practice self-care through reflection, relaxation, and mutual support.

Summary

Working with students who have experienced trauma is a difficult balancing act for teachers. Teachers learn to recognize, acknowledge, and understand the harmful impact of their students' past traumatic experiences on their learning, and development as well as the way that these experiences are manifested in students emotional and behavioral responses. Teachers work to support these students and their families and to hold out hope for the future of successful healing. Because this teaching work is emotionally and intellectually challenging and can lead to teacher "compassion fatigue", it is important that teachers are supported by a school-wide trauma informed approach where teacher peer support and wellbeing is encouraged so that they don't feel alone and have the energy for this work. This requires a school commitment to a partnership and interdisciplinary team-based approach between counselors, teachers, parents, and administrators to help guide students in their recovery. Moreover, it is important to remember that trauma-informed practices such as building children's self-awareness, self-regulation, feeling literacy, empathy, teamwork, and ability to problem solve should not be seen as something extra. This approach benefits all children, not just those who have been trauma-affected in terms of social, emotional, and academic success. It should be the core of teacher practices.

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