



Alum Rock Counseling Center

AN EDUCATOR'S GUIDE TO TRAUMA- INFORMED TEACHING DURING A PANDEMIC



Social Emotional Needs of Students and
Online Distance Learning: Teaching in
the age of COVID-19



Alum Rock Counseling Center

A Letter from our Clinical Director

VICKY TAMASHIRO, LMFT

Dear Friends,

Thank you for taking the time to read this guide on trauma-informed practices. We are living within conditions that are unprecedented. You may have heard the term, “new normal.” I don’t believe any of this is “normal”, and I don’t believe that the children and families we work with consider this to be a normal time. Our lives have been upended. Many of us who have the opportunity to work from home and keep our jobs are simultaneously caring for family members and children in our homes. Others are living under less fortunate conditions. Each day, I hear from therapists that families are unsure if they can pay their rent or if they will be homeless in the next month. They must decide what bills to pay or if they will buy groceries. They may be living in a bedroom with all of their children or sharing a home between multiple families. Unfortunately, though they may have guides and packets and homework provided for their children, learning and education are their last priorities. Realistically, the academic work may not be completed and the children will lose several months of learning. In addition to the lack of learning and the loss of the safety and consistency that you provide for them at school, the children are dealing with problems associated with unemployment and poverty. Increased tension in the homes can lead to increased incidents of domestic violence, child abuse, substance use, sadness, and anxiety.

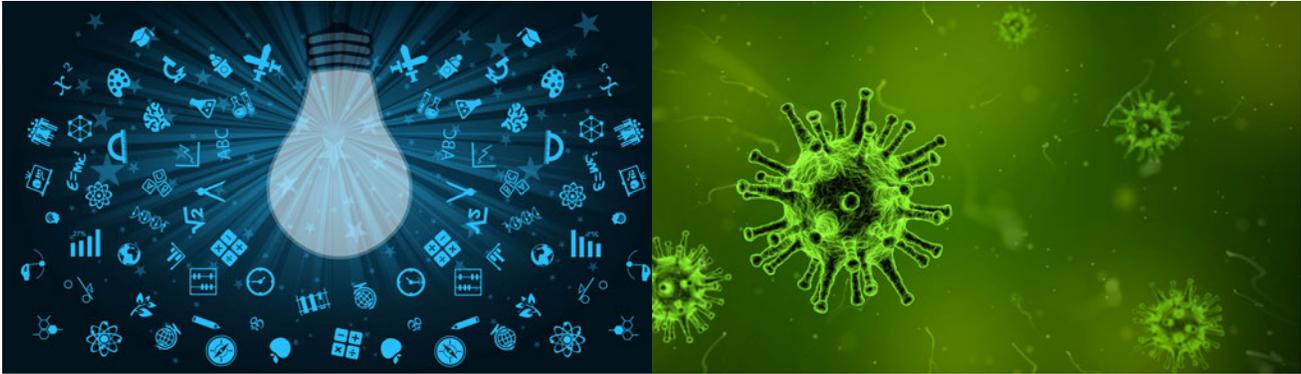
While the transition from distance learning and integration back into the classroom will not be a simple or smooth process for anyone, it is our hope that we can support you, as well as your students, with these changes by providing information about trauma, the effects of trauma on children and learning, and ways that we can work together from a trauma-informed lens to ease this transition for students, staff, administrators, and families. Please be safe and remember that none of us are alone. We are the helpers in the community that the children and families will look for and we also need to help each other. Please take a moment to read the information provided and know that the staff at Alum Rock Counseling Center will be available to support you and your students as we navigate this process together.

Sincerely,

Vicky Tamashiro

Vicky Tamashiro, LMFT
Clinical Director

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The Traumatic Impact of a Crisis on Children

KATHRYN (KITZI) HENDRICKS, AMFT

In the midst of a crisis such as COVID-19, children are often more vulnerable than adults to the emotional impact of how a traumatic event disrupts their lives. Some children may struggle with the significant change in their routines and social interactions, which often provide them with a sense of safety, security, and predictability. Children are also highly aware of and react to the increase in stress that adults, family members, community members, and caregivers around them may be experiencing. With the economic impact of COVID-19, they may be more attuned to the financial hardships of their families and worry more about how they will have access to food, stable housing, and clothing. They may also experience increased fear and anxiety around the physical safety and health of themselves and loved ones. These fears can have a significant impact on their emotional wellbeing and daily functioning.

Children who have a prior history of experiencing traumatic events, have a developmental disability, or whose families struggle with financial instability, food insecurity, poverty, systematic injustice, racism, mental health disorders, or substance use, are at a higher risk for developing chronic stress responses and emotional disturbances. For some children, receiving consistent support from sensitive and responsive caregivers and adults will help them to find healthy ways to cope with the stress and fears of COVID-19 and re-establish a sense of security, structure, and predictability.

Educators are on the front lines of these responses. When children are facing an increase in stress and challenging life experiences, three areas are particularly impacted: a sense of safety, feelings of connectedness and feelings of hope. All children can benefit from the supportive and attuned response and support from a caring adult and, for some children, an educator may be the only source of consistent support, safety, and predictability in the child's life. Educators can continue to make a significant impact on a child in mitigating the traumatic impact of COVID-19.

Sources:

Resources for Supporting Children's Emotional Well-being during the COVID-19 Pandemic (Dym Bartlett, Jessica Griffin, Dana Thomson) and A Trauma-Informed Approach to Teaching Through Coronavirus (Teaching Tolerance staff).



Potential Stress and Trauma Responses to COVID-19

Everyone responds differently to stressful situations & every reaction is valid and ok.

Anxiety about:

- One's health or wellbeing
- Others' health or wellbeing
- The world being an unsafe place
- Obstacles to getting essential items

Helplessness:

- Feeling a loss of control
- Being exhausted/not as able to function and engage in daily activities

Anger:

- Perceiving that other's actions may put self or others in harm's way
- Missing important life events - graduations, birthdays, etc
- Due to the constant uncertainty
- Over the challenges of being stuck at home

Grief/Sadness about:

- Loss of lives
- Loss of time
- Loss of health
- Loss of income/resources
- Loss of stability
- Loss of abilities/beliefs/attitudes/values
- Loss of connection or affection
- Loss of Plans

Guilt about:

- Fear of illness, loss of resources, or death for themselves or loved ones
- Not being able to do as much as one wants to
- Not wanting to work/care for others because of fears
- Not doing enough because of not feeling empathy
- Not coping as well as one wants to or feels as if one should

Numbness:

- Feeling emotionally detached or disconnected
- Feeling empty inside and unable to experience a range of emotions

Adapted from:

[Caring for Yourself & Others During the COVID-19 Pandemic: Managing Healthcare Workers' Stress \(The Schwartz Center\)](#)

[Parent/Caregiver Guide to Helping Families Cope with the Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(National Child Traumatic Stress Network\)](#)

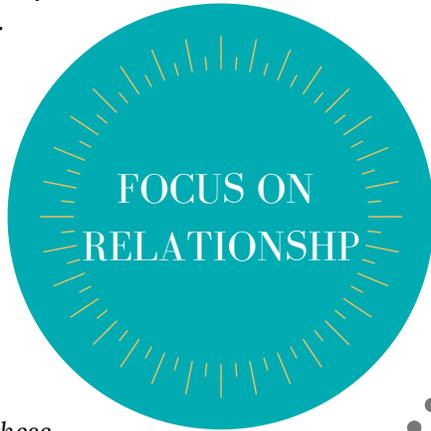


A Trauma-Informed Approach to Distance Learning

Relationships are the key to resilience and healing.

Students do best when they know their teachers care about their well-being just as much as their behavior and assignment compliance.

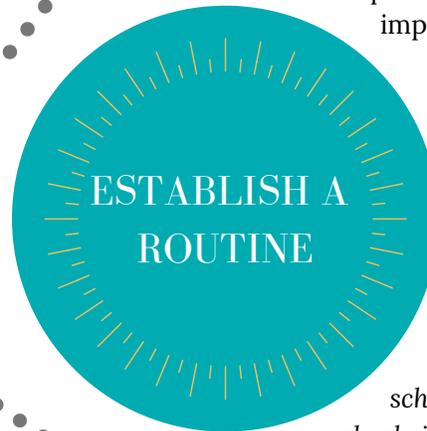
Example: creating relational rituals and starting with these rituals prior to school work check-in



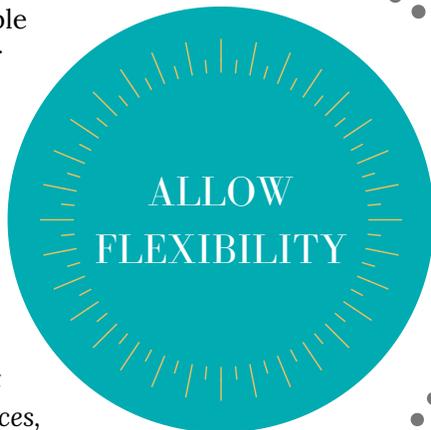
Trauma can create feelings of unpredictability, which impacts students' sense of psychological safety.

Creating and communicating a clear routine helps students to maintain their sense of psychological safety and predictability.

Examples: Include normally-scheduled calming activities, check-ins, taking time to explain changes and provide a predictable agenda



Since trauma can strip away one's sense of control, inflexible teaching strategies can trigger trauma responses.



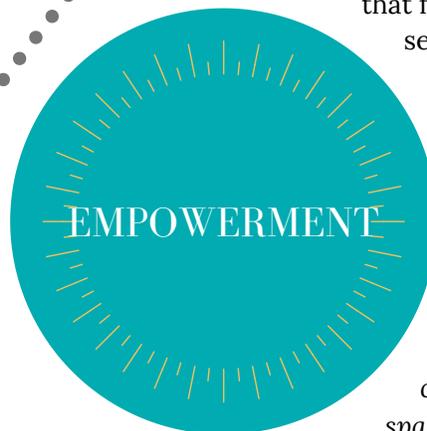
The home learning environment looks different for each child and each child needs flexibility in order to thrive.

Example: working with student to collaborate and find resources, routines and strategies that work best for the student's unique needs

Focus on opportunities and assignments that foster a sense of competence, self-worth, self-regulation and safety in students.

Focus on empowerment through shared decision-making and providing authentic choice.

Examples: Letting go of demands for students to wear certain clothes or sit in a certain space, providing opportunities to model and teach emotional regulation strategies, providing choices in assignments



Sources: [A Trauma-Informed Approach to Teaching Through Coronavirus](#) (Teaching Tolerance staff) and [Four Core Priorities for Trauma-Informed Distance Learning](#) (Kara Newhouse)

Life After COVID-19: Preparing for Re-Entry

Although there is uncertainty about the details, we know that schools will resume and plans for re-entry will be needed. Here are 15 considerations recommended for educators by trauma-informed educators and mental health professionals. Some considerations have been adapted based upon the needs in our own community:

1. **Ensure access to mental health professionals that are easily accessible to staff, students, and families.**
2. **Expect a prolonged honeymoon period as students re-enter school and re-establish relationships when compared to returning from summer.** This honeymoon period will likely be followed by an apparent increase in gaps/disparities caused by inequities in the months of school closures
3. **Consider the viability of "looping"** - allowing a brief period for students to spend time with the teacher/teachers from the previous year before transitioning students to their new teachers. This needs to be done with significant planning and determined at the local level.
4. **Consider opportunities to virtually meet next year's teachers over video conferencing.**
5. **Anticipate significant academic, emotional, and social regression;** yet try to build off of some of the unique learning experiences students may have had at home.
6. **Establish an intentional focus on Social Emotional Learning (SEL) skill-building,** which likely regressed with a lack of social interactions. Avoid assuming that lack of demonstration of social skills represents willful disobedience or purposeful insubordination.
7. **Anticipate significant challenges in re-establishing a routine.** Allow extra time to learn new routines.
8. **Anticipate student defiance or resistance as a method of establishing control.** Many students may feel disempowered, victimized, abandoned, or resentful. Others will have lost trust and faith in the school's ability to care for and protect them. Adults working with students should remember, "it affects me, but it's not about me" and establish mechanisms to empower students and provide unconditional positive regard to build trust.
9. **Anticipate significant fatigue and sleepiness.**
10. **Consider the needs for students and families transitioning to new schools** (kindergarten, middle school, high school first-years) that lacked an opportunity for orientation
11. **Recognize the potential for higher rates of certain adversities and stressors during school closures, and underreporting of those stressors,** such as:
 - a. Parental substance use and abuse
 - b. Exposure to domestic violence
 - c. Child maltreatment and abuse
 - d. Homelessness and Housing Instability (and general worsening of poverty and economic gaps)
 - e. Mental health concerns or exacerbation of underlying issues
 - f. Family separations (some were away and couldn't return, or not seeing loved ones)
 - g. Grief/loss that has not yet been processed
 - h. Stigma and racism that occurred as a result of COVID-19
12. **Connect with families** - consider a needs assessment from students and caregivers.
13. **Provide students with opportunities to voice concerns, challenges, and needs.** Incorporate restorative practices when appropriate.
14. **Recognize staff needs upon return to school**
 - a. Having potentially experienced their own losses, traumas, or stresses (financial, personal, social, physical, medical)
 - b. Having potentially seen negative comments about the school's response to COVID-19 or feedback from families
 - c. Not getting to say goodbye to certain students or staff members that aren't returning to the school
15. **Establish a mechanism to address secondary traumatic stress in educators and school staff:**
 - a. Examples: Tap-in/Tap-out system, Buddy Classrooms, Boundary Setting, Self-Care as an essential part of the school environment and woven into the school day

Source: [COVID-19: 15 Educator Considerations \(Paradigm Shift Education & Eric Rossen\)](#)



Self-Care, Community Care, and COVID-19

KATHRYN (KITZI) HENDRICKS, AMFT



After multiple weeks of conference calls, FaceTime and Google classroom, many of us find ourselves asking, "why am I so tired?" In addition to having to set new personal and work boundaries while simultaneously managing your home life and your new work reality, we know that the zoom exhaustion is real. Being on video calls requires a lot of continuous energy - we have to focus more to pay attention to nonverbal cues, such as body language, facial expressions, tone of voice, and pitch and these nonverbal cues can often become lost or distorted through video. We are constantly attending to decipher details and context clues and trying to maintain engagement with our students and colleagues. We are waiting patiently for one person to finish before we can share our own thoughts, hoping that somebody else doesn't try to jump in at the same time. We are hoping that our students respond to our calls and hope that they are safe and healthy. And we are doing all of this in the middle of a pandemic, while we are worried about the health and well-being of our families, friends, students, communities, and ourselves.

Tennis courts, gyms, and playgrounds have been closed. Our weekly coffee dates with close friends that bring us a sense of energy and connection have been transitioned to video calls. Daily lunch breaks with colleagues have stopped. Our weekly worship or spiritual practices have been cancelled or switched to a new digital format. Our regular self-care and community care practices have been stripped away from us or no longer provide the same renewal of energy that we once received. Our self-care needs may have changed and our practices may need to be adapted to address the reality of our lives with COVID-19.

Here are a few ideas to consider when reflecting upon your own care needs in the age of COVID-19:

Work/Life Balance

- Take breaks in between video calls and schedule breaks from sitting at your computer
- Create a separate space for work-related video calls vs. social video calls, if possible
- Protect your time - set "in office" hours and communicate these hours with colleagues and family members
- Disconnect work email from personal devices, if possible
- Set "Do Not Disturb" hours on your phone outside of work hours

Connection

- Take time to disconnect from technology and find creative ways to intentionally connect with loved ones and community support systems
- Limit time spent reading the news/social media
- Make time for "break room chat" - send an email or text a colleague for a check-in and share your experiences
- Keep your one-on-one check-ins
- Find a way to support someone in need in your community, if able, or ask for support from your community

Mental & Physical Health

- Create a routine during the day to create consistency and stability
- Schedule regular movement breaks into your day - set an alarm reminder, if needed
- If the weather is nice and video isn't needed, walk and talk
- Take mini stretch breaks throughout the day
- Practice deep breathing exercises
- Acknowledge moments of gratitude and joy
- Be kind and compassionate toward yourself - you are doing the best you can!





Local Resources



Free Community Resource Information
Dial 2-1-1
24/7 access to information and referral services, available in all languages

Food

To find the nearest food pantry:
1 (800) 984-3663 or
Text: "GETFOOD" to (408) 455-5181
Email: getfood@shfb.org
English, Spanish, Vietnamese, Cantonese, Mandarin, Tagalog

Sacred Heart Community Service
1381 S. 1st Street,
San Jose, CA 95110
(408) 278-2160
Pantry Hours: M-Th (9am - 4pm)

Housing/Shelter

SCC Homeless Helpline:
(408) 510-7600
For all people currently homeless or who are at risk of becoming homeless and need housing, services, etc.

Sacred Heart Community Service
(408) 278-2166

1 time rental & deposit assistance
Salvation Army of Silicon Valley
408-282-1165 ext. 3210
1 time rental & deposit assistance

Legal Support

Law Foundation of Silicon Valley
Housing: (408) 280-2424
Children/Youth: (408) 280-2416
Health/Mental Health: (408) 280-2420
www.lawfoundation.org

Bay Area Legal Aid
Legal Advice Line: (800) 551-5554
www.baylegal.org
(408) 850-7066

COVID-19 Assistance

Sacred Heart Community Service
Financial Assistance Relief Fund
www.sacredheartcs.org/covid19/

Catholic Charities of SCC
1 (866) 490-3899
California Disaster Relief Assistance for Immigrants, including undocumented adults
www.catholiccharitiesscc.org

Mental Health (Youth)

Mental Health Call Center
1 (800) 704-0900
24/7 Days a week central entry point for those seeking services from Santa Clara County Behavioral Health.

Alum Rock Counseling Center
(408) 294-0500
Mental Health Services for low-income youth and families, including those who have Medi-cal

Mental Health (Adult)

Mental Health Call Center
1 (800) 704-0900
24/7 Days a week central entry point for those seeking services from Santa Clara County Behavioral Health.



Trauma-Informed Schools & COVID-19 Resources



Articles

- [Trauma-Informed School Strategies During COVID-19 \(NCTSN\)](#)
- [A Trauma-Informed Approach to Teaching Through Coronavirus \(Teaching Tolerance\)](#)
- [Four Core Priorities for Trauma-Informed Distance Learning \(KQED\)](#)
- [COVID-19 Considerations for a Trauma-Informed Response for Work Settings \(Organizations/Schools/ Clinics\)](#)
- [Trauma-Informed Teaching/Parenting in our New Online Environment \(Attachment & Trauma Network, Inc\)](#)
- [Antioch: During COVID-19, How Does a Trauma-Informed School Pivot to Distance Learning \(SFGate\)](#)
- [Supporting Students Experiencing Trauma During the COVID-19 Pandemic \(REL\)](#)
- [Teaching Through Collective Trauma in the Era of COVID-19: Trauma-Informed Practices for Middle Level Learners](#)
- [5 Essential Trauma-Informed Priorities for Remote Learning \(ASCD\)](#)



Videos

- [COVID-19: 15 Educator Considerations \(Paradigm Shift Education\)](#)
- [COVID-19: Teaching from a Trauma-Informed Perspective \(Howard University\)](#)
- [Trauma-Sensitive Practices During the COVID-19 Pandemic \(Second Step\)](#)



Acknowledgements

Kaiser Permanente's community involvement uniquely pairs grant funding with 65 years of clinical expertise, medical research, and volunteerism to support prevention-focused, evidence-based programs that are expanding access to care and creating healthy environments. Kaiser Permanente recently awarded Alum Rock Counseling Center a \$98,000.00 grant that will help more people in this community get access to the resources they need to lead a healthy life. For more information about Kaiser Permanente's work in the community, visit about.kaiserpermanente.org/community-health.



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