

Reaching Traumatized Children in Classrooms: Trauma Sensitive Schools

APA- Trauma is an emotional response to a terrible event like an accident, rape or natural disaster. Immediately after the event, shock and denial are typical. Longer-term reactions include unpredictable emotions, flashbacks, strained relationships and even physical symptoms like headaches or nausea. While these feelings are normal, some people have difficulty moving on with their lives. Retrieved Aug 6, 2018 from <http://www.apa.org/topics/trauma/>

Child protection services in the U.S. get around three million reports each year. This involves 5.5 million children. Of the reported cases, there is proof of abuse in about 30%. From these cases, we have an idea how often different types of abuse occur:

- ▶ 65% neglect
- ▶ 18% physical abuse
- ▶ 10% sexual abuse
- ▶ 7% psychological (mental) abuse

How many children get PTSD?

- ▶ Studies show that about 15% to 43% of girls and 14% to 43% of boys go through at least one trauma. Of those children and teens who have had a trauma, 3% to 15% of girls and 1% to 6% of boys develop PTSD. Rates of PTSD are higher for certain types of trauma survivors (National Center for PTSD, 2015) <http://www.ptsd.va.gov/public/family/ptsd-children-adolescents.asp>

Symptoms & Signs of PTSD in the Classroom

Children exposed to violence may exhibit the following behaviors:

- ▶ Impulsivity
- ▶ Loss of emotional control
- ▶ Become easily angered, agitated, frustrated or Irritable
- ▶ Display defiant behavior
- ▶ New behaviors may emerge post the event
- ▶ Helplessness- their lives are meaningless
- ▶ Experience flashbacks
- ▶ Engage in harmful risky behavior
- ▶ May engage in highly sexualized behavior
- ▶ Younger children may feel scared, clingy, crying, thumb sucking or toileting problems or stomach aches
- ▶ Hypervigilant – reacting to noises or touch

The Impact of Trauma on Learning

Trauma affects a student's ability:

- ▶ To learn
- ▶ To attend to
- ▶ To problem solve
- ▶ To retain new information
- ▶ To regulate his/ her behavior
- ▶ Interfere with creative play
- ▶ Cope

- ▶ Excessive absences

Academics

- ▶ Math skills
- ▶ Literacy skills
- ▶ Communications skills
- ▶ Verbal skills

(Diamanduros, Tysinger & Tysinger, J. 2018; Sorrels, 2015)

How to Support Traumatized Children

- Build healthy and positive relationships with students
- Use positive language and positive encouragement
- Build on students' strengths
- Create a caring, predictable and supportive classroom environment (Souers & Hall, 2016)

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Literacy as a Portal to Trauma Safe Schools

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