

# DSL Twilight Session

## Approach to Trauma-Informed Practice

Session by:  
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Schools 2023



**Dorset**  
Council

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# What is trauma?

Trauma means injury. It relates to a distressing or disturbing experience, an emotional shock following a stressful event or a physical injury.

Feelings associated with trauma can include:

- Helplessness
- Distress
- Fear
- Overwhelmed/ unable to cope
- Vulnerable
- Unsafe



# Types of trauma

## **Acute Trauma**

(one-episode) This results from a single, sudden, usually unexpected event such as a rape, a serious car accident, an injury, or witnessing violence

## **Chronic Trauma**

(repeated trauma) Arises from long-standing, repeated events, such as sexual or physical abuse

## **Complex Trauma**

describes exposure to multiple or prolonged traumatic events and the impact of this exposure on youth's development.

## **Chronic and Complex Trauma**

involves the simultaneous or sequential occurrence of psychological abuse, neglect, physical and sexual abuse, domestic violence...that are chronic and begin in early childhood

# What is trauma informed practice?

‘Trauma informed practice’ describes how services reduce the likelihood of retraumatising children and families and support their recovery.

This will help you to develop a trauma informed perspective that will guide your practice and interactions with those students, to reduce the negative impact on them within school.

# Childhood trauma and the Brain



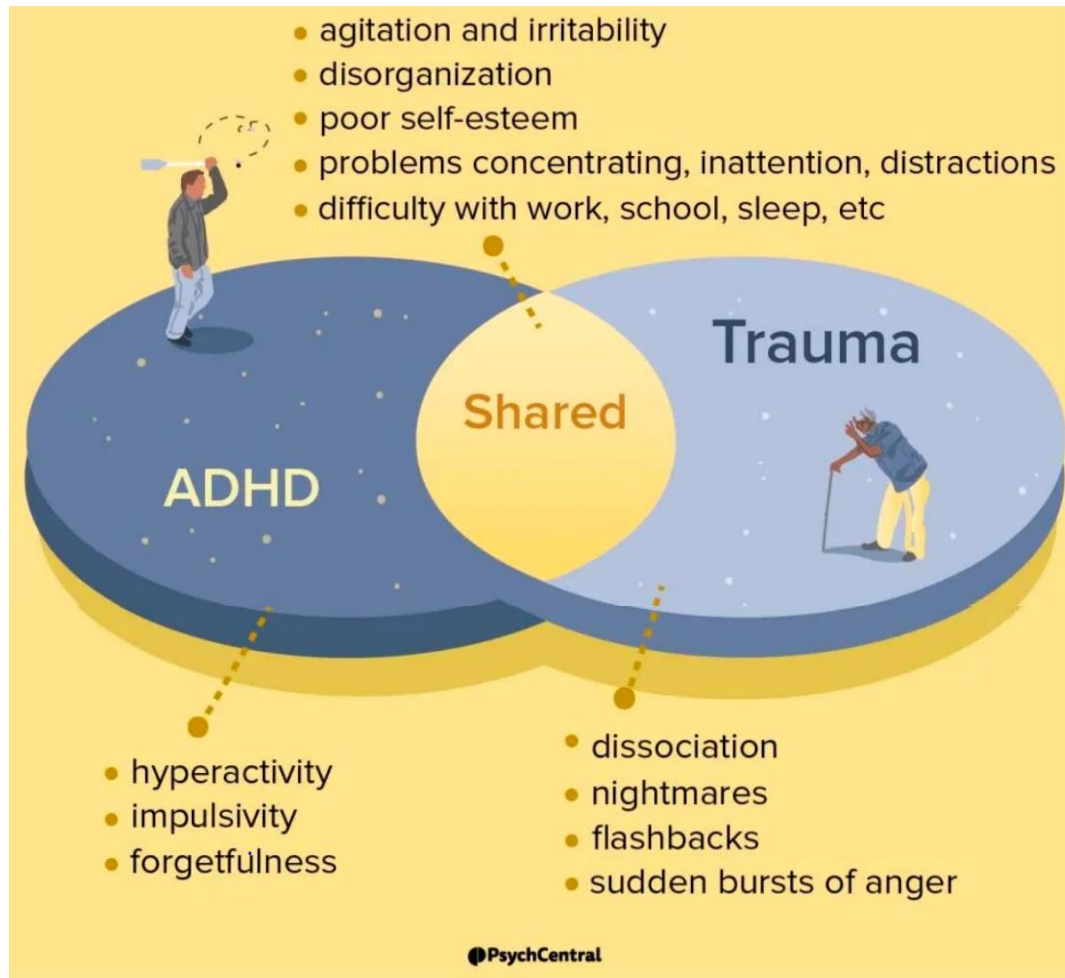
[Childhood Trauma and the Brain | UK Trauma Council - YouTube](#)



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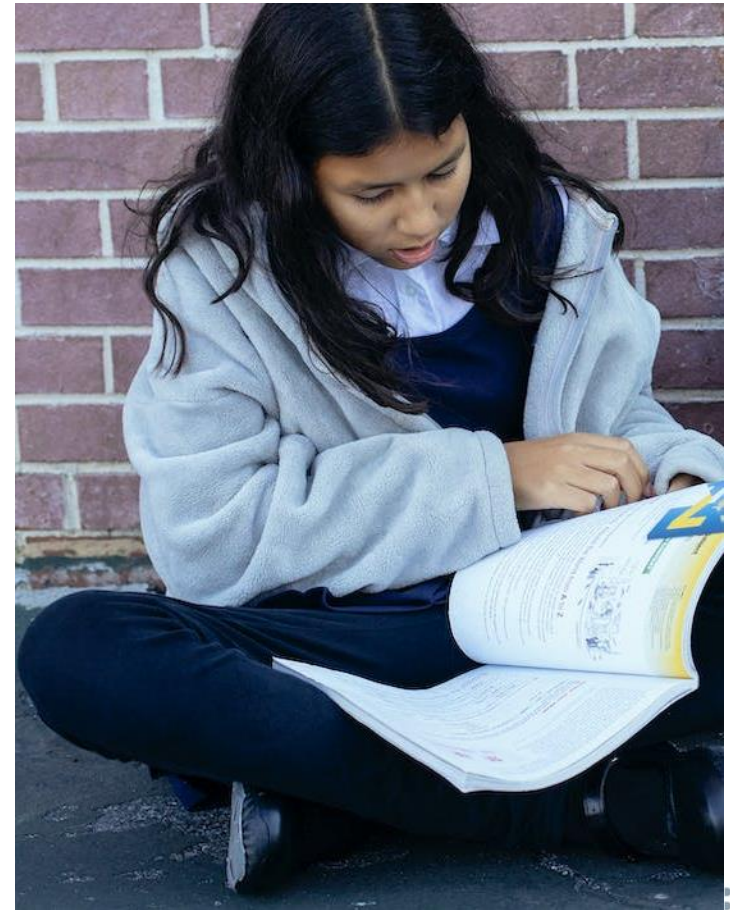
# Shared symptoms of ADHD/ASC and trauma

[ADHD and Trauma: Similarities and Differences | Psych Central](#)



# Impact of trauma on School performance

- Decreased reading ability
- Communication and Language difficulties
- Difficulty working in groups
- Deterioration/lower attainment
- Higher rate of school absences
- Increased dis-interest
- More exclusions and sanctions



# Impact of trauma on learning and development

**Acute** trauma can :


- Impair concentration & memory
- Bring intrusive thoughts
- Cause interrupted sleep and nightmares, moodiness, frustration, anger, social withdrawal

**Chronic** trauma can result in:


- Functioning deficits impacting goal setting
- Poor organisation and planning skills
- Difficulties in anticipating consequences
- Poor relationships with staff and peers that impact on learning




# How may a child that has experienced trauma present?



Withdrawn  
Pre – Occupied




Angry  
Aggressive  
Challenging




Dis-engaged  
Poor attendance  
Lower attainment



Hypervigilant  
Distracted

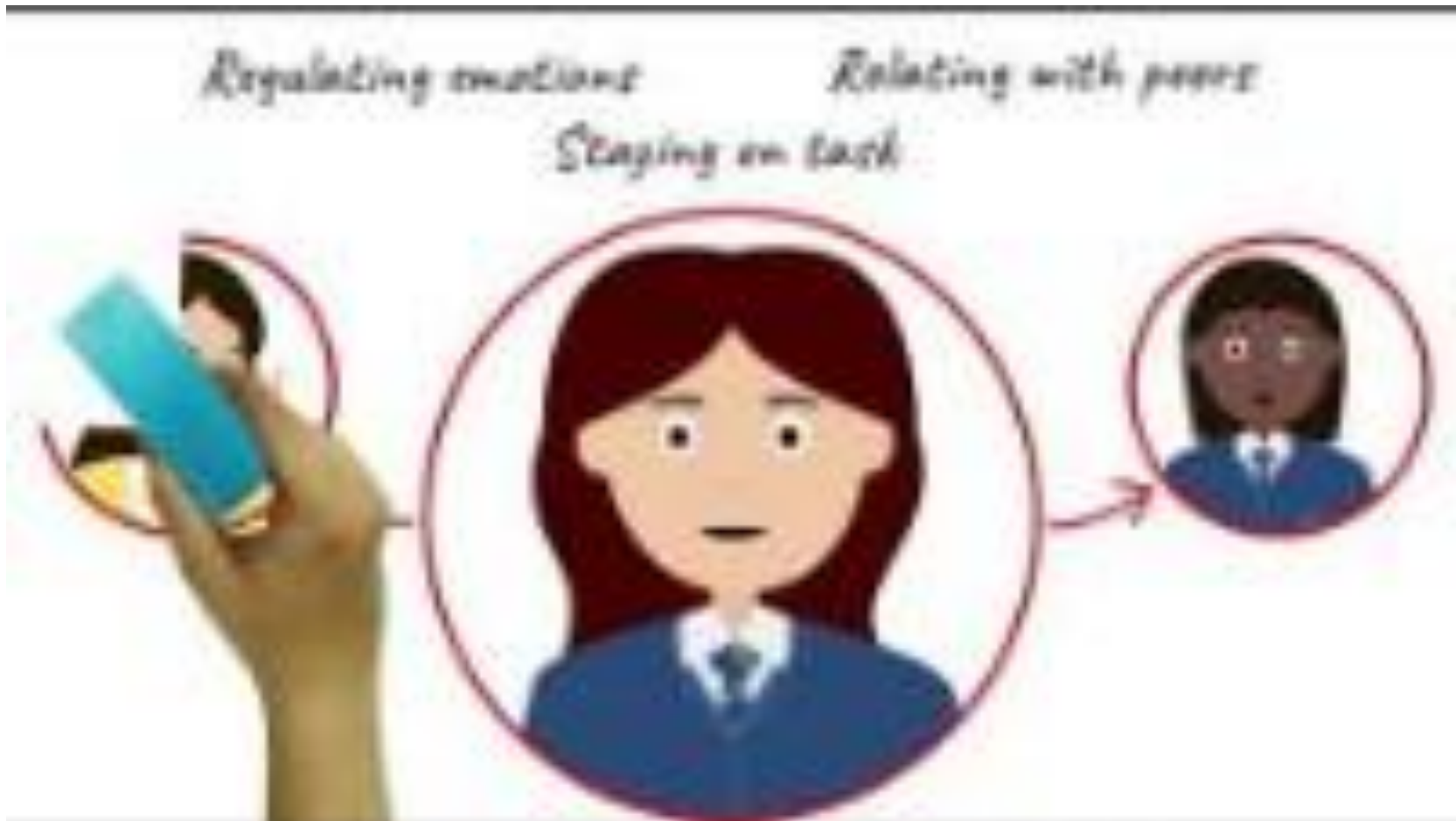


Passive  
Over-compliant



Moody  
Sullen

# Trauma informed practice



# What adverse experiences may have caused childhood trauma?

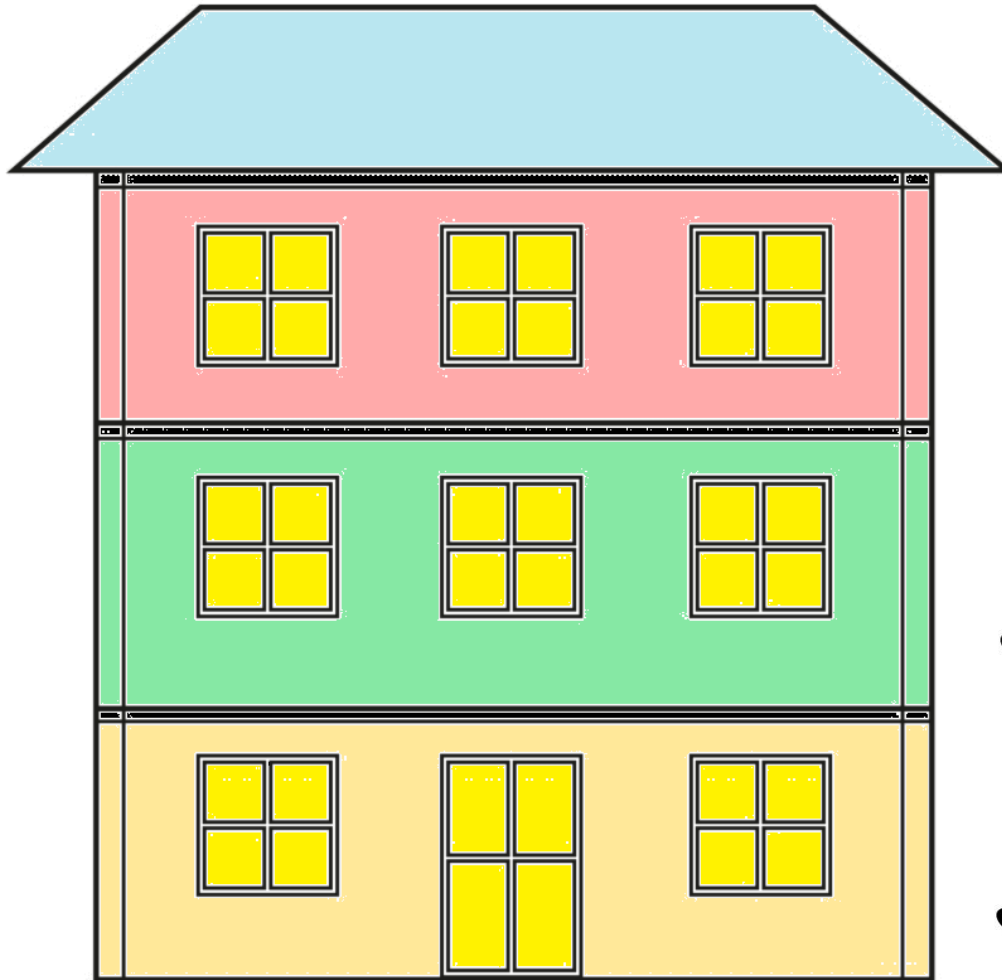
- Abuse and neglect
- An unsafe or unstable environment
- Bullying
- Separation from a parent
- Losing a parent or loved one
- Debilitating illness; intrusive medical and dental procedures
- Displacement: losing a home (fire/eviction/ fleeing to a place of safety)
- Fleeing a war zone, having a parent in a war zone
- An accident, injury, violent attack



# Long lasting impacting of ACEs



# It helps students to feel:



**Meaningfully  
Engaged**

**Valued**

**Respected**

**Safe**

# The trauma informed culture

- All staff understanding that children may not be able to express their experiences in ways that adults understand
- Emphasise the importance to a child of feeling safe
- Having support systems in place for children in the classroom
- Early identification of children who have had trauma experiences, before they become at risk of exclusion or reduced attainment
- Helping children to feel listened to, valued, respected and understood
- Being consistent, transparent and trustworthy with the child
- Being trusted adults, who will regularly 'touch base' with the child
- Having a plan for when a child needs support discloses trauma or abuse – following policy and procedure in reporting safeguarding concerns
- Working in partnerships with other agencies to offer wrap around multi-agency support

**Spend quality time with kids.  
When they feel loved and supported, children develop emotional strength.**

**Talk about feelings so your child learns to share their worries and fears with people they trust.**

**Instead of rushing to solve problems, give kids time to work things out themselves.**

**When children experience failure or disappointment, it's important to praise their effort and encourage them to try again.**

**Acknowledge your own mistakes to teach kids that mistakes are essential for learning and growth.**

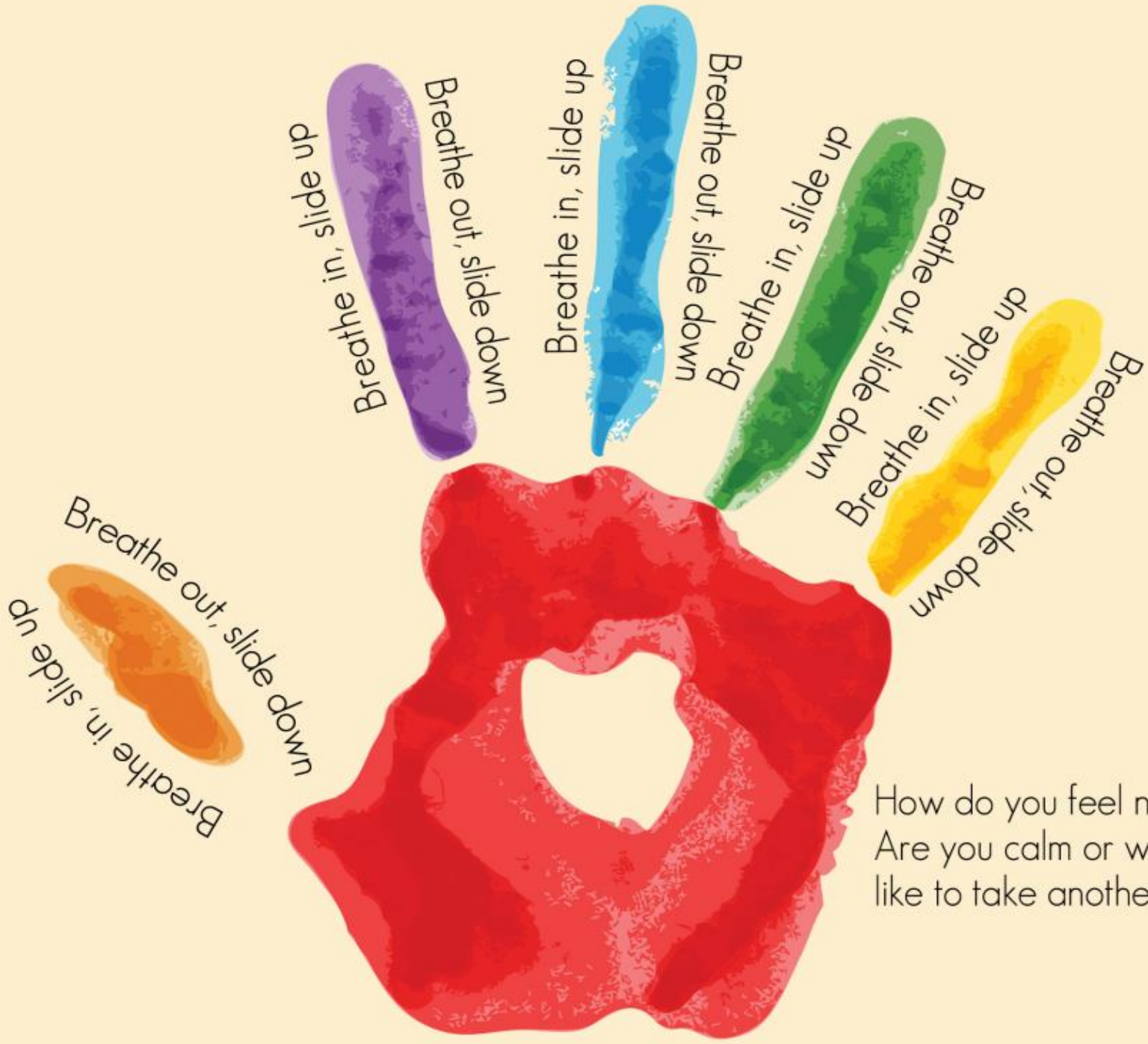
**If your child can't find a solution to a problem, use gentle questioning to guide them towards it.**

**Ensure kids are eating well and getting enough sleep and exercise.**



**tutor  
doctor**

How learning hits home.



Breathe in, slide up  
Breathe out, slide down

Breathe in, slide up  
Breathe out, slide down

Breathe in, slide up  
Breathe out, slide down

Breathe in, slide up  
Breathe out, slide down

Breathe in, slide up  
Breathe out, slide down

How do you feel now?  
Are you calm or would you  
like to take another 5 breaths?



### Brain Break Breathing

#### Waves on the Ocean Breaths

Lie back gently on the floor with your feet out in front of you. Place your hands on your stomach. Breathe in through your nose and feel your hands rise up. As you slowly exhale, feel your hands go back down. Pretend that your stomach is waves in the ocean and your hands are a sailboat. Each time you breath in the sailboat goes up on the waves and each time you breathe out the sailboat goes down on the waves. Repeat.



### Brain Break Breathing

#### Bubble Breaths

Breathe in deeply and form a bubble in your mouth. Your cheeks should be puffed out. Blow your bubble out of your mouth and push it away from you by blowing out hard and strong. Do this slowly and picture your bubble floating away. Keep breathing in and out deeply. Close your eyes and think about where else your bubble could go. Can you blow it far away? Can you blow it to a friend? Imagine your bubble is returning to you. Open your mouth and catch it for next time. Repeat.



### Brain Break Breathing

#### Starfish Breaths

Sit on the floor with your legs comfortably crossed in front of you. Open your left hand and extend it slightly in front of you so it looks like an open starfish. Take your right hand and extend your pointer finger. Beginning with your left thumb, take your right pointer finger and go up the outside thumb while taking a deep breath in. Go down the inside of the thumb and breathe out deeply. Continue the deep breathing in while going up each finger and exhaling when going down each finger. Once you are finished, switch hands and repeat.



### Brain Break Breathing

#### Bumble Bee Breaths

Open your hands out with the palms facing towards your face. Place your thumbs over your ears and your fingers over your eyes. Close your lips with your teeth slightly apart. Inhale deeply through the nose and breathe in. Count silently 1, 2, 3, 4, 5.

Exhale slowly through your mouth and make a humming sound like a bee. Count silently 1, 2, 3, 4, 5. Repeat.



**DOs AND DON'Ts OF A  
TRAUMA-INFORMED  
COMPASSIONATE CLASSROOM**



**1 CREATE A SAFE SPACE**  
Consider not only physical safety but the children's emotional safety as well.

**2**

**ESTABLISH PREDICTABILITY**

Write out a schedule and prepare children for transitions. It helps create a sense of security and safety.



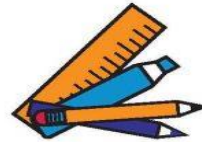
**3 BUILD A SENSE OF TRUST**  
Follow through with your promises and in situations where changes are unavoidable be transparent with your explanations.

**3**

**4**

**OFFER CHOICES**

Empower students and offer "power with" rather than "power over" strategies.



**5 STAY REGULATED**

Help your students (and yourself!) stay in the "Resiliency Zone" to promote optimum learning. Have regulation tools ready to help students bumped out of the zone into either hyperarousal (angry, nervous, panicky) or hypoarousal (numb, depressed, fatigued).

**5**



There's really only one **DON'T**  
Let's not punish kids for behaviors that are trauma symptoms.



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# Dorset whole school approaches

Dorset Therapeutic Thinking (Dorset Steps) – bookable courses on Nexus

Relational Practice (Attachment and trauma aware schools) – discuss with your school’s link educational psychologist and specialist teacher