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## RESPONDING to CHILDREN IMPACTED by TRAUMA

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Children and youth in homes formed by foster care, kinship care and adoption may have been exposed to violence and other traumatic events; many experience ongoing traumatic stress. Trauma interferes with a child's development, limiting higher order thinking, perspective taking, sequential skill development, attention, language development and problem solving.

It is often difficult for parents and caregivers to know how best to respond to their children's behavioral and emotional needs. Teachers, counselors, day care providers and other caregivers may be confused and frustrated by the often reactive and dysregulated behaviors of children in their care.



Here are some proven strategies for responding to children impacted by trauma. Proactive communication and genuine collaboration between home and school are critical to meeting children's emotional, behavioral and academic needs.

- Create opportunities for self-regulation. Many children and youth do not automatically develop the ability to regulate emotions in a socially-appropriate way. Adults can help:
  - Create predictable schedules and routines. Plan carefully for transitions - provide advance notice verbally and visually of upcoming shifts of tasks or attention; teach children to recognize the need for a break and how to request one; practice emergency drills in advance.
  - Help children understand their arousal state, recognize signs of escalating emotion and be conscious of their personal triggers.
  - Teach calming techniques and strategies to help them "stop and think".
- Focus on critical social skills. Children and youth may need to be taught specific skills steps for social skills such as initiating conversation with peers, asking for help, and voicing a complaint. Provide lots of practice opportunities and offer feedback. Some children respond to incentives and praise when they use a social skill effectively - catch them being good!
- Give lots of time for children to process requests. For example, in a class discussion reviewing questions in a textbook, give the student notice that she will be asked in a few minutes to answer question number 4.

Sources: Cole, S.F. et al., (2005); Craig, S. (2008); McInerney, M. & McKlindon, A. (2014)