How Does Complex Trauma Impact the School Experience?
**Impaired Language and Communication Skills**

- Speech delays
- Non-verbal learning issues – an inability to read body language and social cues
- Difficulties with pragmatic language – idioms, malaprops
- Inability to connect words to experience
- Inability to verbalize feelings and emotions
Difficulty Organizing Materials

• Difficulty organizing school materials and personal environment

• Deficits in creating routines and timelines
Difficulty Understanding Cause and Effect

• Inhibited development of ability to set goals and delay gratification
• Lack of motivation and persistence in achieving academic success
• Inability to learn from consequences (which can also lead to retraumatization)
Difficultly Taking Another’s Perspective

• Lack of sense of self
• Inability to make independent choices
• Underdeveloped skills for empathy and remorse
Inattentiveness to Classroom Tasks

• Anxiety and fear create hypervigilance
• Lack of focus
• Ignoring sensory input if not interpreted as traumatic
• ADHD and trauma may coexist, or be misdiagnosed
Trouble Regulating Emotions

- Flee, Fight, or Freeze
- Misperception of ordinary sensory information due to hypervigilance
- Overreaction to pain and disagreement
- Dampening or restriction of feelings

“It shouldn’t hurt to be a child.”
Executive Functioning

• Difficulty initiating and carrying out plans
• Acting instead of planning
• Acting without thinking (on impulse)
• Poor abstract reasoning (thinking in terms of black and white)
• Making decisions with negative consequences
Lack of Engagement in the Curriculum

• Lack of ability to master tasks just for the sake of competence
• Difficulty establishing good study skills
• Avoiding challenging tasks due to fear of failure
• Inability to perceive the future as promising
Developing Collaborative Strategies for Safe and Supportive Classrooms

• What happened to this student?
• How can we help?
• Shifting our perceptions of behavior
• New paradigm: a code of dignity for all students
Concurrent Sessions: Impact of Trauma at Different Developmental Ages

- Divide into 3 groups:
  - Young Child (Birth to 5 years old)
  - School Age (6 to 12 years old)
  - Adolescence (13 to 18 years old)
- Facilitators to start and support conversations
- Discussions focuses on:
  - How trauma looks at different developmental ages
  - Role families play in supporting children
  - Strategies educators can use to support children and families
Concurrent Sessions: Impact of Trauma at Different Developmental Ages

First Activity: Looking at Our Own ACEs

Second Activity: A Real Life Example

Third Activity: Designing Strategies
Closing Activity: Putting It All Together: Impact of Trauma on a Child and Family Over Time

• Return to large group gathering
• Share discussions of concurrent sessions
• Share TWO most effective strategies discussed
• Complete training evaluations
• Saying good byes
Thank you for coming!

You will receive an email
  • Evaluation
  • Request for your suggestions
    – our improvement cycle!
  • Link to presentations posted to the web

We value your participation in today’s professional development and look forward to hearing from you.