

# Trauma-Sensitive Teachers

## HOLIDAY SURVIVAL CHECKLIST

Survival...the “place” where children who are impacted by trauma go to “feel safe” when their environment is full of chaos, change, transition, and triggers.

At this time of the year, your students are most likely facing high anxiety, grief, not feeling like they belong in any given group, and overall doubting their worth. There are many fears and much sadness as every moment reality for them. They are triggered much more often than usual, they are distracted, their emotional age is lower, and they can't feel emotionally or physically safe.

When their challenge gets to a certain level, they are pushed to use old techniques and strategies that they believe will keep them safe. They are focused on surviving the moment, the experience, or the relationship. Their Limbic System has kicked in and its inability to work correctly due to what they have suffered sends them to trigger...fight, flight, or freeze.

Clearly when a student has been triggered there is NO learning going on, not to mention their decreased ability to do healthy relationships so our best bet is to do what we can to keep the original anxiety down at every level possible.

Keeping that anxiety down in the midst of all the transitions, emotions and unknown of the holiday season is tricky. Your first tool for this month is a quick checklist you can use to help you impact the anxiety levels in your classroom.

# QUICK HOLIDAY “SURVIVAL” CHECKLIST

## Consider the “Feel” of Your Room

- \_\_\_dim lighting
- \_\_\_decrease clutter
- \_\_\_increase cues to changes and movements
- \_\_\_increase sense of your students support system/family (pic, items, available)
- \_\_\_students who’ve been impacted by trauma will do better facing a door or window with back to a safe wall whenever possible
- \_\_\_empathy matters here...holidays are not often fun and enjoyable for these students

## Consider Basic Assurances of Life

- \_\_\_ extra snacks
- \_\_\_ talking about when food will happen
- \_\_\_be aware of temperature and direct students to use tools (get a sweater)
- \_\_\_talk about their people being okay and that that will not change

## Consider Transitions (more difficult now than ever)

- \_\_\_keep normal routine as much as possible
- \_\_\_cue students to a change ahead and multiple times
- \_\_\_slow down transitions and know that student needs more time
- \_\_\_use all 5 senses to help students be more successful in transitions
- \_\_\_paint a picture, using sensory descriptors, to help specifically describe the transition, taking away any unknown
- \_\_\_remember that a triggered person has no executive functioning
- \_\_\_ask for extra help during special activities, but stay this child’s lead. Don’t have extra help take them on

## Use Self Regulation Tools Wisely

\_\_\_make time to do square breathing or other tools multiple times/day

\_\_\_check with parents to see what works at home

\_\_\_photos and items of parents used often throughout the day

\_\_\_"What would the person who makes you dinner say about \_\_\_?"

\_\_\_diffuse oils

\_\_\_ use music with a strong steady beat to help regulate

\_\_\_ create some extra calm time in your day

\_\_\_ask parents to send lotions they use for their child



Impact Membership

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