

# Trauma-Sensitive Teachers

## TRAUMA-SENSITIVE TEACHER TOOL

### **Holiday Transitions & How They are Impacted by Trauma**

Holiday can trigger emotions, memories (good or bad), and trigger student who've been impacted by trauma. The big holiday transitions can be immediate triggers for those students, making smaller transitions within the classroom feel like BIG transitions. So preparing our students for these classroom transitions in a multi-sensory, intentional fashion will help minimize them becoming triggered.

#### **Challenges:**

During a time of big transitions, such as many days off during the holiday season, different celebratory activities, different sights & smells, you might notice your student isn't as engaging as they usually are. They may hide under their desk. They may get angry or shut down. They might elope from your work area or classroom.

Changes/transitions in their daily lives engage their fight, flight, freeze defense mode because in their past, change has been scary, life altering, & left them with a feeling of insecurity.

#### **How to Help Your Students**

##### **Be More Successful During Holiday Transitions:**

Preparing your students for transitions/change is crucial to helping them be successful. By knowing and understanding when a change might occur, as well as understanding what will still be the same, gives a sense of control & understanding, alleviating the fear of the unknown.

Creating a calendar, and posting it, will help you remember to take into consideration changes happening in your classroom or in school. By

posting the monthly calendar, highlighting any points that will change in their schedule with a different color, as well as talking about the change, having your student touch and read the calendar schedule out loud, are ways to prepare for the change. When your students feel in control of their environment, by keeping it predictable, they will be able to stay calm and feel secure during their day.

## Goal:

We are trying to minimize triggers and keep the student's world predictable during times of change & high emotion. The goal of the teacher calendar is to consider things you change in your classroom. Smells, colors, décor, and schedule can have the potential to trigger our students who've been impacted by trauma.

## Let's look at this tool:

# 01

### Monthly School Calendar

- Copy and paste your daily BIG picture schedule. Sample provided.
- HIGHLIGHT in an alternative color any schedule changes that will happen during the month.
- Post the calendar in your main group instruction area, alongside your daily schedule.

# 02

### Daily Schedule List

- Remove anything from your daily schedule that won't happen that day.
- Use a different color marker, paper, etc. Write in what change will occur (recommended using the same color you coded your monthly schedule with).
- Discuss what the change is, what it will look like, smell like, feel like. The more senses involved in painting that picture of the change will help students prepare for it.

# 03

### Postcard

- Included with the calendar is an example of a card that you can print or use the content of the card to send to your student over break. Students who've been impacted by trauma can struggle with permanence. This quick note can help you and school stay in their thoughts and can aid in transitioning back after break.

## Example of How Tool Might Look or Sound When in Use:

- "The Holidays are coming and we have a few fun activities this month. Look at all of the things we do every day, we do... (list what is a normal daily schedule), BUT look here on Wednesday. We have something different, and I colored it in purple. We are going to go to an assembly. In the assembly, we will sit on the bottom row; there will be singers standing on the stage singing us holiday songs. After they are done, we will come back to class and do..., just like we always do."
- "Let's look at our schedule today. We have something different! We are going to make a holiday card. It's going to happen after Math group. I marked it here on our daily schedule in purple. We are going to sit at our desks, color a turkey with our smelly markers, cut it out, then glue it to our card. Sometimes change feels scary, but we are safe, and we know it will happen after Math and I'm going to be here with you! We only have 1 thing different today, but everything else is the same. We will... (read off the calendar in order of events happening).

## Sample:

Attached is a sample classroom calendar, as well as a postcard template.

## Recap:

Using a calendar and highlighting change/transitions will help your students to know what to expect, feel in control, feel secure, and stay engaged in the classroom, when used this way. This might feel different, and seem like a lot of extra work, but start small! Highlight the daily changes and talk about them frequently! “Look, reading is done, math is next, and after Math is our project.”

Using the teacher calendar will also help you keep calm and remember to think about the changes happening during this time of year. In turn, it will help your students stay calm, regulate, and have an easier time during the busy time of year. It will also help continue to develop the relationship you have started with your students.

To make your monthly calendar, simply take what’s on your daily schedule and copy and paste that exactly into a calendar for each day of the week you are in school, then simply change, in a different color, what will be different!

Giving yourself just a few minutes at the beginning of each week, or over the weekend, to think about what is happening in your classroom/school will help you and your students during this exciting time of year.



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