

Trauma-Sensitive Teachers

PARENT-TEACHER PARTNERSHIP TOOL

Holiday Transitions & How They are Impacted by Trauma

Both daily transitions at school and home are important to understand and prepare for. The big holiday transitions are immediate triggers for students who've been impacted by trauma, making smaller transitions within the classroom feel like BIG transitions. So preparing our students for these classroom transitions in a multi-sensory, intentional fashion, both at school and home, 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.

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.

- Communicate with parents by sending a copy of your monthly schedule home. Your parents will then be able to discuss with their children any school schedule changes for that day. This also allows the parent to keep you “alive” away home. Students who have been impacted by trauma often have a hard time with permanence. When teachers can keep the parent “alive” during the school day and parents can help keep the teacher “alive” Remind the student that we are all a team, keeping them safe and loved.
- Encourage parents communicating with you. By sending home the caregiver/home calendar for the parent to fill in when their will be a change at home, will give you a huge insight to your student’s emotional state, and to predict when their trigger points are heightened. The calendar has a place for both schedule/event changes that will happen at home as well as a space for things that will stay the same at home. With this information, you can discuss at school what is happening at home. This will allow you to speak about home and caregiver/parent, keeping them “alive” at school, reminding your student again that you are a team, that they are safe and taken care of.

Goal:

We are trying to minimize triggers by keeping the student’s world predictable during times of change & high emotion.

Let’s look at this tool:

01 Monthly School Calendar

- Send a copy of your monthly school calendar you created (in the Trauma-Sensitive Teaching Tool) to the parents so they can help prepare their children for upcoming changes.

Home Schedule

- Once parents return their home schedule, make a space within your lesson planning book to attach the calendars.

02

- Reference them daily during the holidays.
- When you see a change at home is about to happen, have a special chat with the student. “Mom told me, Grandma is coming to town today!” Ask how the student feels, reassuring him he is safe!

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

- “Your mom told me that Grandma is staying at your house this week. That’s exciting, but can also feel like a big change. You could show Grandma your picture you did in art class.

Sample:

Attached is a sample classroom calendar and calendar to be sent home to parents, which includes a letter to parents.

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. Giving parents the changes and encouraging them to talk about them with their children, can help create smoother transitions and decrease anxiety.

Also, knowing what changes going on at home can make the transitions smoother for your students.

This might feel different, and seem like a lot of extra work, but start small! Highlight the daily changes and talk about them frequently!



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Trauma-Sensitive Teachers



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