

# Trauma-Sensitive Teachers

## TRAUMA SENSITIVE TOOL

### Plugging Back In and Starting Over

“He drew a circle that shut me out-  
Heretic, rebel, a thing to flout.  
But love and I had the wit to win:  
We drew a circle and took him in!”  
— Edwin Markham

Students in our classes often struggle to fit in. They might overreact to things, have difficulty concentrating, dress differently, or just have mannerisms that are unfamiliar.

Rather than waiting for our students to naturally develop the social skills that will help them navigate our classrooms, we are going to have supports that create a culture of belonging. By doing this, we will show students the importance of their place in the classroom, giving them not only a sense of belonging but also a sense of purpose.

With this tool you can create a classroom culture that encourages belonging and support. Using this classroom culture, you can create a bridge to home, and you can personalize your teaching for each child in your classroom.

**Constant Empathetic Relationship Triangle** (see attached visual)

There are 3 parts to this:

**01**

#### **Community/Culture:**

Create a strong sense of community in the classroom, where everyone feels like they belong.

**02**

#### **Team:**

Building a bridge between school and home, all on the same team.

**03**

#### **1 on 1:**

Connecting with each student individually, getting to really know them.

Let's take a look at this tool in action.

## **COMMUNITY** (Widest Part of the Triangle)

### **1. Have a classroom word.**

Work together to choose a word that represents your classroom goal or vision. Sample words might include "Focus", "Overstudy", "Strive", "Helpful", and "Impact." Your class might also use an acronym such as "TEAM Together Everyone Achieves More". Guide students to choose a word that can help get them back on track, back to work, and be supportive other students who are struggling.

Post the word in a prominent location as a reminder of your shared vision. Remind students to write the classroom word at the top of their assignments. Make bracelets, desk signs, or t-shirts for each student to wear with the word.

### **2. Have a classroom playlist.**

Students can submit their favorite songs and you can have other songs that you use for transitions. If possible, try to incorporate your class word into the songs in the playlist. If you cannot find a song with your word, rewrite the lyrics to incorporate your word. Example: one year a school district built a new school and they had a playlist with songs that had the word "Move".

### **3. Create a classroom chant to help with transitions.**

This is something that is frequently used in summer camps to get kids tuned in with the rest of the group. It works well in gymnasiums with hundreds of kids. Used in your classroom, it becomes a "inside joke" or a common ritual that identifies students as a member of your class.

### **4. Get students involved in welcoming each other to class and supporting each other to learn.**

Have a class greeter stand at the door to welcome students in every day and send them off at the end of the day. To accommodate students that might have different comfort levels with touch, have a list of greetings available. Hugs, handshakes, fist bump, wave howdy, and high fives are great ideas for a greeting matrix. See attached for a Greeting Matrix to use in your classroom.

## **TEAM - BUILD A BRIDGE BETWEEN HOME AND SCHOOL**

(Middle Part of the Triangle)

Letting parents “in” on the specifics of the classroom culture will allow them to carry them over to home as well. This helps with transitions, keeping the routine fresh in the student’s brain, and more. Details to make this happen can be found in the Parent-Teacher Partnership Tool coming next week.

## **1 ON 1 - CONNECT WITH EACH STUDENT INDIVIDUALLY**

(Point of the Triangle)

This part of the triangle is all about connecting one on one with your students. Getting to really know them – their likes, their dislikes, hobbies, pets, family members, etc. Lots of ideas for connecting with your students and getting to know them better individually can be found in the tools from last month titled In Survival.

### **Recap**

Remember, the goal is to plug back in to your students and start over for the new year. Many students have been dealing with the challenges of the holidays and the changes in sleep schedule and structure. While you wouldn’t want to incorporate all of these activities the first day back, you might try one or two things each week. We look forward to seeing your Classroom “Words” and other ways that you build your classroom culture to include and support all of your students.



Impact Membership

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