

STRATEGIES TO SUPPORT CHILDREN WHO HAVE EXPERIENCED TRAUMA OR WHO MAY HAVE ATTACHMENT NEEDS

General principles of trauma informed approaches include:

Creating a safe environment

Positive relationships between adults and children including trust

Recognising each individual's strengths and skills

Empowering the children – this could include an element of choice

All of the above should be developed through collaboration between adults and children.

The following information is from the book : The A-Z of Trauma-Informed Teaching: Strategies and Solutions to Help with Behaviour and Support for Children Aged 3-11 by Naish, S et al (2023). We would strongly recommend this resource for practical advice on a range of trauma -resulting behaviour and the advice and strategies can be adapted for older children also.

The resource also contains excellent information and strategies on understanding many other behaviours including aggression, disorganisation/memory, disruption, sabotaging, immaturity, defiance/non-compliance, shouting/screaming and much more.

Examples of specific behaviours

Absconding/Running off

Why it might happen:

- Sensory overload
- Fear of a situation or anticipation of a situation/ response from an adult -avoidance
- Fear of change
- The need to feel in control
- A subconscious compulsion to break a forming attachment with an adult
- Sudden changes in the day/classroom activity or routine
- Feeling of shame

Preventative Measures:

- Need to think about the individual needs and challenges of every child.
- Think about their emotional stage and not age. They may need a safe place or boundaries that you may put in place for a very young child.
- Now/next board, visual time-table so the children know what is coming next.
- Speak to children if there is going to be a change to the normal routine.
- Look for patterns of when this happens and plan for these.
- Speak to the child and explain how if they run off that you can't keep them safe
- Regular sensory/movement breaks.

- Some children may just have a need to move around rather than wanting to abscond to plan for this.

Strategies During:

- The child to hold an adult's hand during an activity.
- Use the child's interests to create a distraction / redirection.
- Be realistic that they child may not do what is being asked of them so create an alternative.
- Chasing a child will make them run faster because of their elevated cortisol levels. A plan needs to be in place for what happens in these situations.
- Have a trauma-informed member of staff who will be called in these situations.
- Keep the child in sight but give them space.
- Explain the child they can go to their safe space.
- Make sure the situation/area they are in is safe.
- Use of an "SOS2 box with resources in to help them to regulate.

Strategies After:

- Check the child is okay and guide them to what they will be doing next
- They may be hungry and tired and these needs may need to be met to help them to regulate.
- When they are regulated, you can help them to explore the triggers of their response. Use empathetic commentary e.g "I wonder if..."
- Speak to parents/carers and other professionals about the situation and strategies they may have employed to support the child.
- Use PACE/emotion coaching.

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Further resources

Inner World Work have produced some fantastic freely available resources which show you:

- What external behaviour you may be seeing
- How the child might be feeling inside
- What you can do to support them

Primary School Resource: <http://www.innerworldwork.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Survival-In-Primary-School-2019.pdf>

Secondary School Resource: <https://beaconhouse.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Survival-In-Secondary-School.pdf>

We would also strongly recommend the Beacon House website for a fantastic array of free trauma-informed information and resources <https://beaconhouse.org.uk/resources/>

References

Naish, S., Oakley, A., O'Brien, H., Penna, S. and Thrower, D., 2023. The AZ of Trauma-Informed Teaching: Strategies and Solutions to Help with Behaviour and Support for Children Aged 3-11. Jessica Kingsley Publishers.