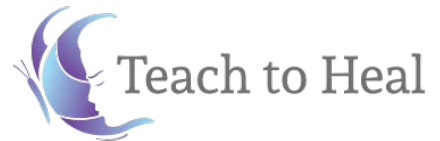
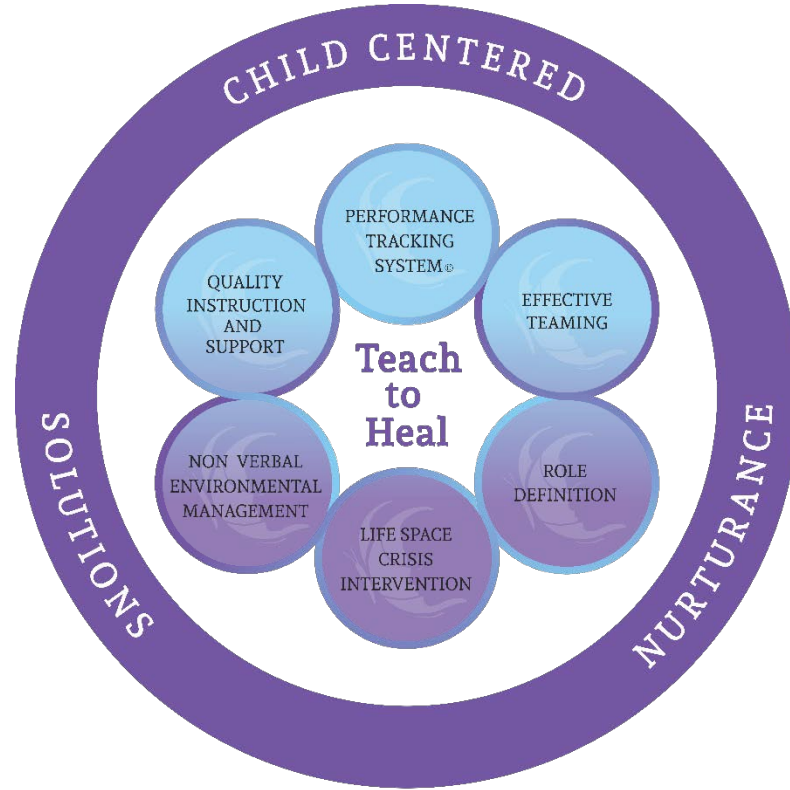


# Foundations For Trauma Responsive Schools

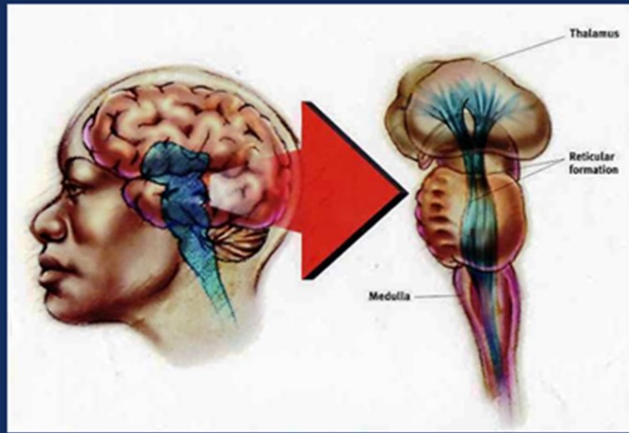
Understanding your role in working effectively with students who experience mental health and behavioral barriers in the classroom.

Danielle Theis, MSW, LICSW, Ed. S.





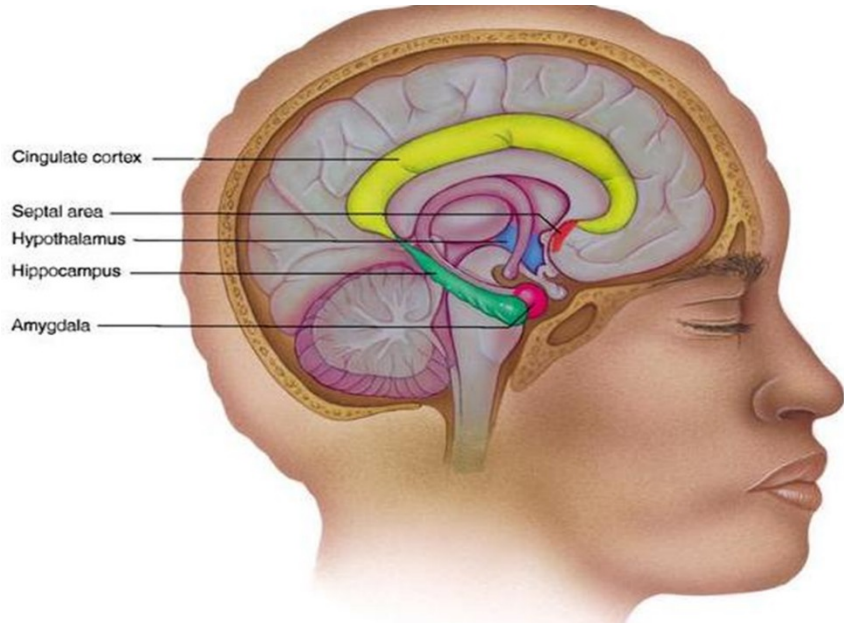
# The Brainstem



The Brainstem

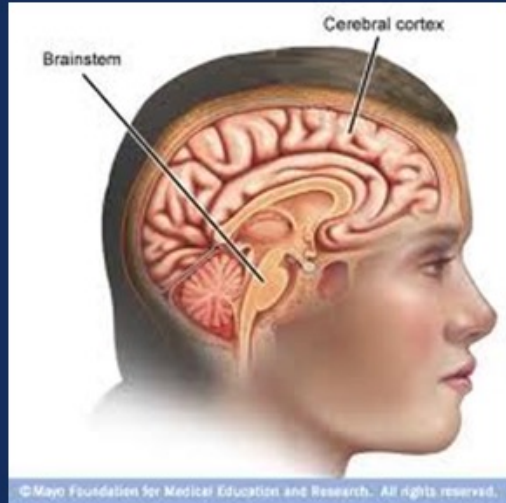
Responsible for survival functions, such as heart rate and respiration.

# The Limbic System



The emotional center of the brain. It plays the major role in the body's response to stress. Sensory memories are stored in the limbic system. The amygdala is housed in this part of the brain which is responsible for the fight, flight, or freeze reaction. This part of the brain has no language.

# The Neocortex



The Neocortex

The executive functioning center of the brain, where planning, problem solving, reasoning, and abstract thought all take place. This is also the storage area for facts, figures, dates, numbers, etc...

# The Traumatized or Stressed Brain

- Memories are stored largely in the limbic system which has no language.
  - Without language to process a troubling event the difficult memories are always live and playing in the background.
- Traumatized children operate at a constant high state of arousal.
  - They experience many events in their environment as safety threats and emotional triggers.
- We must bring language to the emotions to interrupt the patterns of self-defeating behavior.
  - We work to allow a new experience that does not mirror or re-enact the feelings associated with trauma that are held in the child's mind.

# Developmental Mastery



Developmental Stage	Existential Question	Irrational Beliefs if Not Resolved
<b>Abandonment</b> Age: 0 - 3	"Is the world a safe place?"	"I can't trust anyone but myself— I'll do whatever it takes to meet my needs!"
<b>Inadequacy</b> Age: Toddler/ Pre-school	"Can I measure up to my parents' expectations?"	"I'll never measure up, so why try?"
<b>Guilt</b> Age: Elementary/ Middle	"Can I measure up to my own expectations?"	"I'm no good so I deserve to be punished!"
<b>Conflict</b> Age: Middle/ High School	"Can I be accepted by my peers?"	"I'm an outcast so screw them all!"
<b>Identity</b> Age: Post High School – mid 20s	"Do I have what it takes to become the kind of adult I want to be?"	"I don't have what it takes to make it; I'm lost!"

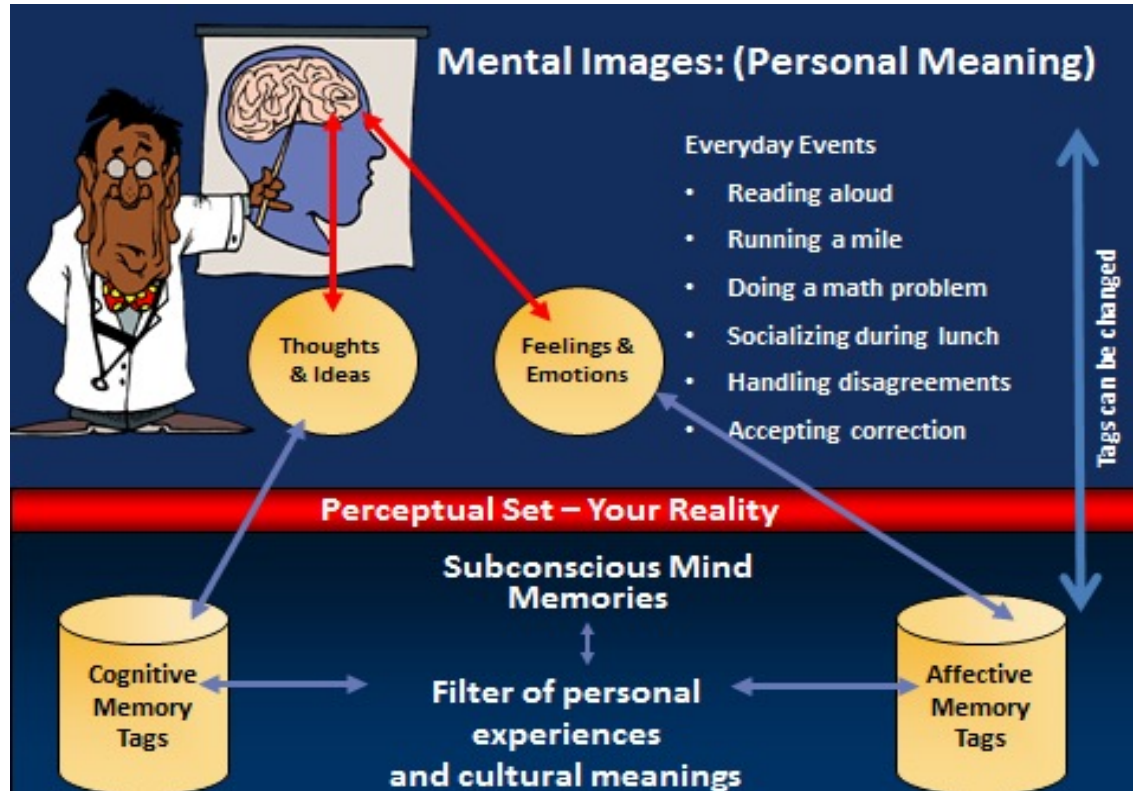
# Active Self-Talk



- Our Perceptual Set triggers an interpretation of an event and influences what we say to ourselves; our internal dialogue.
- Self-talk generates associated feelings; it's not the event which causes the feeling, it's how we think about it.
- Some self-talk is irrational.



# Biology Before Psychology




# Behavior is Solely the End Product



- Perceptions drive thoughts
- Thoughts drive feelings
- Feelings drive behavior

## The Difference in Psychological Worlds Between a Student in Stress and a Helping Staff

	Staff Reactions	Student Reactions
Perceiving	Diverse Multidimensional	Concrete One Dimensional
Thinking	Logical Cognitively-Based	Illogical Omnipotent Irrational Trap
Feeling	Accepts and Controls	Flooded Explosive
Behaving	Accepts Responsibility for Behavior	Does Not Accept Responsibility for Behavior

# Psychological Differences



## Compliance

1. I believe you must respect my authority due to my role.
2. Top down view from a position of status, power, and control.
3. Punitive in nature.
4. Interaction in uni-directional.
5. Do as I say, or as the policy book states.

## Nurturance of New Skills

1. I understand there may be developmental/ psychological deficits.
2. Bottom up view after purposefully building a solid foundation.
3. Focuses on needed skills and teaches them.
4. Interaction is reciprocal.
5. Mutual efforts toward holistically understood goals.

# Compliance VS. Nurturance

## Compliance

6. Uses dominance/ size/ voice/ non-verbals to create fear.
7. Seeks to be understood.
8. Can produce a quick response from student.
9. Short term results that reinforce the student's irrational beliefs.

## Nurturance of New Skills

6. Controls non-verbals to maintain a supportive stance.
7. Seeks to understand the student's perception.
8. Longer process due to restructuring inner thoughts and offering and practicing new experiences.
9. Long term change and positive outcomes.

# Compliance VS. Nurturance

# The Conflict Cycle Paradigm

- A stressful event occurs which **ACTIVATES** a troubled student's irrational beliefs.
- These negative thoughts determine and **TRIGGER** feelings.
- Feelings, not rational forces, **DRIVE** inappropriate behaviors.
- Inappropriate behaviors **INCITE** adults.
- Adults take on the student's feelings and may **MIRROR** his behaviors.
- This negative adult **REACTION** increases the student's stress escalating the conflict into a self-defeating power struggle.
- The student's **SELF-FULFILLING PROPHECY** (irrational beliefs) is **REINFORCED**; the student has no motivation to change thinking or behavior.

## Why Staff Become Counter-Aggressive

- Caught in the Conflict Cycle
- Personal irritability
- Embarrassed for not meeting our professional expectations
- Fury due to personal helplessness
- Student behavior triggers our own unfinished business
- Pre-judging a troubled student
- Student violates our middle class values



# Listen For What Is Not Being Said...

## Listening Skills

### Deepening the Dialogue

#### Attending

- Remaining fully present
- Being aware of one's own verbal and non-verbal messages to the student.

#### Responding:

- Affirming
- Checking for understanding
- Creating a sense of mutual problem-solving.

#### Decoding:

- Connecting feelings and behavior
- Adding more meaning
- Leading student to insight



# “I” Is Where To Begin...

## “I Messages” Are...

- Less likely to provoke more aggression.
- Less threatening to others.
- A model of honest exchange between people.
- Likely to open up communication
- Helpful in interrupting a power struggle.
- Helpful in releasing adult stress in a healthy way.



**Thank You for Choosing to be a  
Trauma Responsive School!  
Kids Succeed Through YOU!**

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Teach to Heal