Managing Mental Health Issues

Destigmatizing mental health & supporting our post-pandemic resilience
Joy Winchester

Alabama Department of Early Childhood Education

Director, Office of Early Childhood Development and Professional Support

Assist with challenging behaviors and professional development in neuroscience and brain development to understand behaviors of adults and children

Work with 0-5, k-12, college systems, families, and state level agencies to support challenging behaviors and building strong brain connections.

Email: joy.Winchester@ece.alabama.gov
Question to Answer in the Chat:

• When you hear “mental health” what does it mean to you?

• Why should mental health be a focus for educators?

(Please use the Chat Box for your responses. Check the dropdown box and select “All panelists & attendees” so everyone can see your responses.)
Our “New Normal”: Why is this tough?

Simple Brain Facts
• The brain is pattern-seeking
• The brain is survival oriented
• The brain is a social organ
  • The brain needs connections to grow
  • Eye contact, touch, playful, engagement
  • Technology does not provide the same connection

Impact from COVID-19
• This is a new situation, new world- some can’t find patterns; some make new patterns (resilience)
• When stressed the higher thinking areas shut down, people react instead of respond.
• Social distancing is asking us to do the opposite of what the brain needs for growth
Hidden Epidemic - Stress and Trauma

• What if we knew the cause of most chronic disease, most mental illness, and most violence in America?

• Research indicates that traumatic stress in childhood is the leading cause of morbidity, mortality and disability in the United States.

• ACEs - Adverse Childhood Experiences

• 64% of adults report Adverse Childhood Experiences (trauma); 87% have more than one ACE.

• What is an ACE?
  • Physical, sexual, emotional abuse
  • Physical and emotional neglect
  • Witnessing a mother be abused
  • Living with a family member with a mental illness, incarcerated, or addicted
  • Losing a parent to separation, divorce or other reason
ACES and Academics

Percent of Students with One or More Academic Concerns by ACE Exposure

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percent of Students with Academic Problems</th>
<th>No Known Adverse Events</th>
<th>One Reported Adverse Event</th>
<th>Two Reported Adverse Events</th>
<th>Three or More Adverse Events</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>One or More Academic Concerns</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Wrong Colored Balls: Children Fall Through the Cracks
The Brain State Model: Conscious Discipline

- **Executive State**: Prefrontal Lobes
  - What can I learn from this?

- **Emotional State**: Limbic System
  - Am I loved?

- **Survival State**: Brain Stem
  - Am I safe?
What Are Executive Skills?

- These skills empower us to:
  - Set and achieve goals despite distractions
  - Regulate our emotions and inhibit impulsive behaviors
  - Self monitor and reflect
  - Develop empathy and problem solve.
- Emerge during preschool years and don’t fully mature until early adulthood.
- More indicative of school success than IQ (predicts math and reading scores throughout the school years)
- Executive skills are critical to independent living; exist only as potential (newborns have none), they require up to 24 years to fully develop
- Prefrontal cortex guides behaviors, thoughts and feelings use representational knowledge.
A TOP WIFE Makes Good Tea (or Tacos)!

• Attention
• Time Management
• Organization
• Prioritization
• Working Memory
• Impulse Control
• Flexibility
• Empathy & Emotional Control

• Metacognition
• Goal Achievement
• Task Initiation
Stress Blocks Access…Sound Familiar?

• Attention: “Wait, what did you say again?”
• Time Management- “Oh my! Where did the morning go?”
• Organization: “Where are my keys?”
• Prioritization: “I am so overwhelmed, I don’t know where to start”
• Working Memory: “Why did I walk into this room?”
• Impulse Control: “Don’t say what mommy just said, it was a bad word”
• Flexibility: “We always go to Olive Garden on Sundays, why are we changing it this weekend?!?!?!?”
• Empathy: “No one ever listens to me!”
• Metacognition: “Don’t make me turn this car around!”
• Goal Achievement: “I worked so hard today, and literally got nothing done!”
• Task Initiation: “Ohh look Pinterest has how to paint mason jars to look like flower pots…. (6 hours later) ohhh look how to make jewelry from paper towels”
What is Conscious Discipline?

• Conscious Discipline is an evidenced-based, trauma-informed approach.

• It is recognized by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Administration’s (SAMHSA’s) National Registry of Evidence-based Programs and Practices (NREPP).

• It is a comprehensive self-regulation program that integrates school-wide discipline, school climate and social-emotional learning.

• Its goal is to provide systematic changes in schools by fostering the emotional intelligence of **teachers first** and children second.
Jen Thomas

Principal of Olive B. Loss Elementary School in Delaware’s Appoquinimink School District

• Served as an administrator for 12 years, leading 3 different buildings across 2 states

• Like all educators, I wear many hats throughout the day… for 2 students, I’m also mom!

• Email: Jenine.Thomas@appo.k12.de.us
Points to Ponder in the Chat

• What are 2 things you’re doing well to support your emotional, psychological & social well-being?

• What is 1 thing you deserve to be doing well?

(Please use the Chat Box for your responses. Check the dropdown box and select “All panelists & attendees” so everyone can see your responses.)
## Who’s Really Coming to School These Days?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Students</strong></th>
<th><strong>Teachers</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students learning a 2(^{nd}) language</td>
<td>Teachers caring for aging parents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students with learning challenges</td>
<td>Teachers in unhappy marriages or divorce</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students from low-income background</td>
<td>Teachers with financial hardships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advanced learners</td>
<td>Teachers who are also students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students who are homeless</td>
<td>Teachers who under-trained or ill-equipped</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students with emotional challenges</td>
<td>Teachers with personal health concerns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students from non-majority races or cultures</td>
<td>Teachers raising their own children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students whose families move often</td>
<td>Teachers for whom home is unhealthy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Impact of Trauma & Toxic Stress

**On Learning**
- Adversely affect attention, memory & cognition
- Reduced ability to focus, organize & process information
- Interfere with effective problem solving & planning
- Result in overwhelming feelings of frustration & anxiety

**On Teaching**
- Increased irritability & impatience
- Difficulty planning lessons & activities
- Decreased concentration
- Feeling numb, detached, or helpless

www.naesp.org  @naesp  @thenaesp
Responding vs. Reacting
Mentoring

According to a 2015 federal study, 92% of first-year teachers assigned a mentor returned to their classroom, compared to 71% without mentors.

Nationwide, teacher turnover costs districts $7.3 billion a year, according to the National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future (NCTAF) Training.
Mindfulness

• Mindful Mantra
• Setting Intentions
• Morning Meeting
• Quiet Time
• Breathing
• Gratitude
• Laughter
SEL Programs

CASEL
Collaborative for Academic, Social & Emotional Learning
https://casel.org/

Team-centered instruction produces SECL outcomes
teacher input + student process = learning outcomes
Balance

- Work vs Home
- Give vs Take
- Self-interest vs Sacrifice
- Teacher Sacrifice vs Sacrificing Teachers
Post-Pandemic

“We do not learn from experience. We learn from reflecting on experience.” ~ John Dewey