

LBAT Getting Started Guide to Developmental Trauma

Key Messages

When children experience early Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) such as loss, separation, abuse or neglect, their brain development is affected in significant ways. They often experience what is known as Developmental Trauma, which means their development has gone off track and they cannot behave, feel, relate and learn like other children their age.

Children may struggle with social communication, attention, concentration and self-regulation and the underpinning difficulties of the whole-child must be taken into account before planning further assessment, referral to services and strategies to support.

Indicators

These are wide and varying but may include:-

- Signs that a child is in fight/flight/freeze/collapse – the brain is in survival mode and self-regulation and cognitive processes are 'switched off'.
- **Sensory overwhelm/sensory seeking behaviours.**
- Difficulties with adult relationships (clingy, needy or withdrawn and distant) and friendship/peer difficulties linked to play, social understanding, coping with social rules.
- **Unable to concentrate and attend to activities/tasks.**
- Fidgety, hyper-vigilant, anxious.

Classroom Strategies

- Plan in and find opportunities to nurture the child, showing a genuine interest in them.
- **Help the child build 1:1 relationships with adults encompassing predictability and consistency as this builds trust.**
- Help the child to name their feelings using statements, not questions, e.g. "I wonder if you are feeling sad because...."
- **Plan opportunities for the child to work in small, supportive groups in class.**
- Make sure you see the fear behind the behaviour.
- **Feel compassion and show empathy, even when the child seems angry and aggressive.**
- Carefully plan beginnings, endings and separations.
- **Provide a physical space for the child to retreat to.**
- Give children strategies to help them to calm strong emotions.

GUIDANCE

Guidance re attachment aware approach to behaviour (Brighton and Hove)

https://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/sites/brighton-hove.gov.uk/files/Behaviour%20Regulation%20Policy%20Guidance%20-%20Sep%2018_1.pdf

Department for Education review of behaviour in schools 2017

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/behaviour-in-schools>

Nurture approach in schools

<https://www.nurtureuk.org/>

Trauma Advice sheet

<https://www.mind.org.uk/media-a/4149/trauma-2020.pdf>

ONLINE TRAINING and PODCASTS

Training and weekly podcasts re trauma and attachment

<https://www.tpctherapy.co.uk/>

Podcast, video and blog re trauma, anxiety, mental health.

<https://www.pookyknightsmith.com/>

Introduction to Trauma – Adverse Childhood Experiences

<https://www.acesonlinelearning.com/>

Dan Siegel channel re attachment and the physiology of the brain's emotional states.

"Flipping the Lid" clips helpful for staff to understand reactions of students

<https://www.youtube.com/user/mindsightinstitute>

WEBSITES for FURTHER INFORMATION

Resources re attachment and developmental trauma for use with school staff, pupils and parents/carers.

<https://beaconhouse.org.uk/>

Attachment information and services to schools – Louise Bomber's organisation

<https://touchbase.org.uk/>

Information and links for carers of adopted children and schools

www.bravehearteducation.co.uk/

Resources and advice for schools re mental health, including trauma

<https://www.annafreud.org/schools-and-colleges/resources/>

BOOKS

- Bombèr, Louise "Know Me to Teach Me" and "What About Me?: Inclusive Strategies to Support Pupils with Attachment Difficulties Make it Through the School Day"
- De Thierry, Betsy "Teaching the Child on the Trauma Continuum" and "The Simple Guide to Child Trauma"
- Geddes, Heather Attachment in the Classroom
- Hughes, Dan Teenagers and Attachment: Helping Adolescents Engage with Life and Learning

**For additional information, resources and support, contact your
LBAT Advisory Teacher**