



WASA

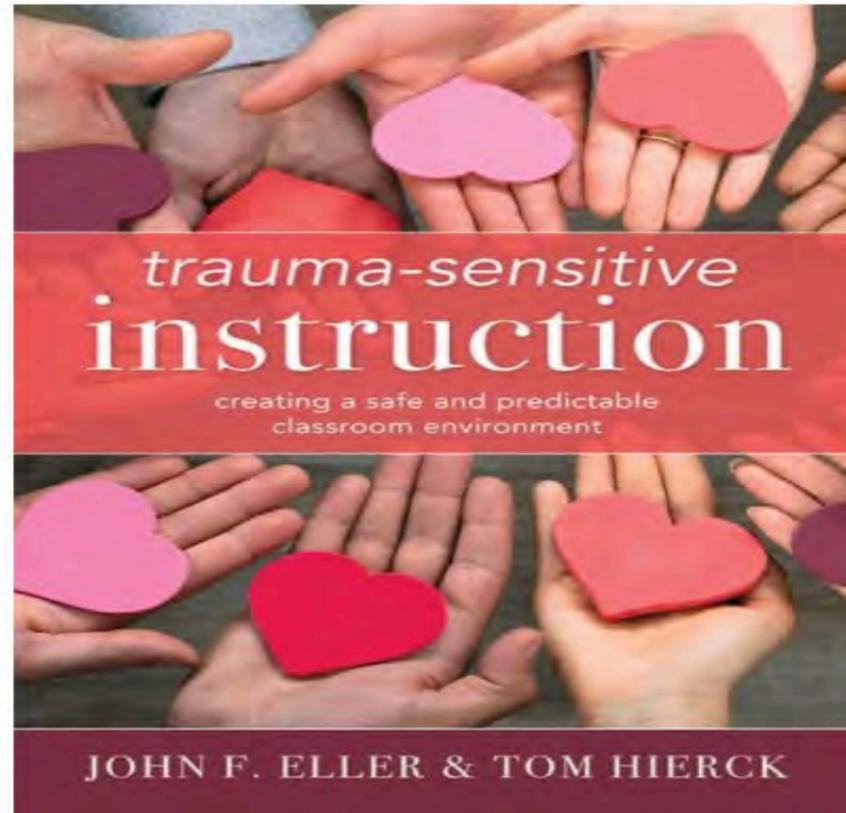
SEPTEMBER 26-28

2021

Fall Conference

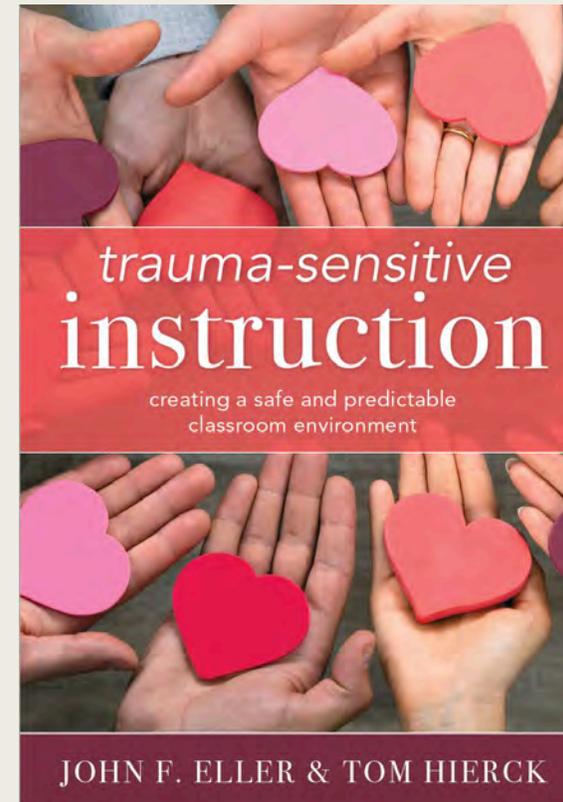
Permission to Feel... Permission to Lead

September 28, 2021
8:45 – 11:45



Tom Hierck
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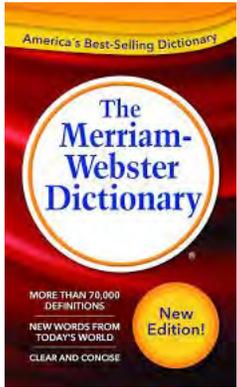
Implementing Trauma-informed Practices to Build Stability and Student/Staff Resilience



Our work has changed...

Flash back to a time where terms like pandemic, remote learning, hybrid learning, and Zoom were infrequently (if ever) part of the conversation in schools and districts, let alone the general population. Flash forward to today and it doesn't seem like we can have a conversation about education without regular and frequent mention of those terms (and many others connected to COVID-19).

What's our focus?



- Loss: decrease in amount, magnitude, or degree
- Unfinished: not brought to an end or to the desired final state
- Nostalgnesia: the condition that results in only remembering the good about the good old days





The
convenience
of the
negative...

To Ponder...

Is it “learning loss” or unfinished learning?

How do you know?

How should you respond?

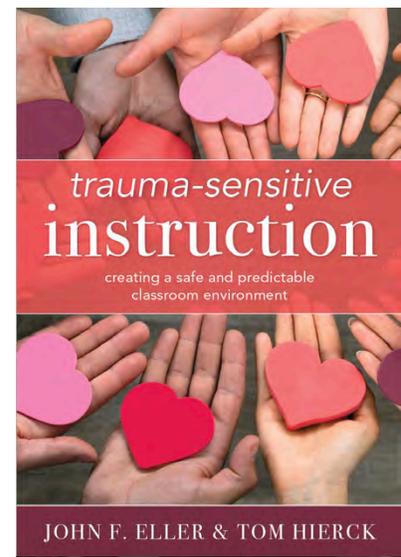


We've been given a unique opportunity to try some things we were never forced to try before.

Trauma Defined...

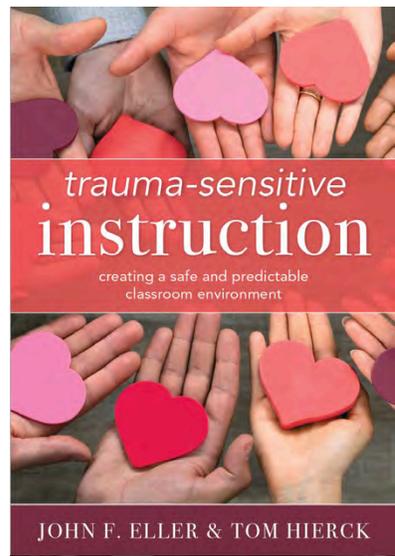
“Trauma is an exceptional experience in which powerful and dangerous events overwhelm a person’s capacity to cope” (p. 3). This definition contains key descriptors that communicate the impact of trauma, including exceptional, powerful, dangerous, and overwhelm. All these terms taken together convey the sense that some of our students’ experiences are well outside the boundaries of normal.

Rice and Groves (2005)

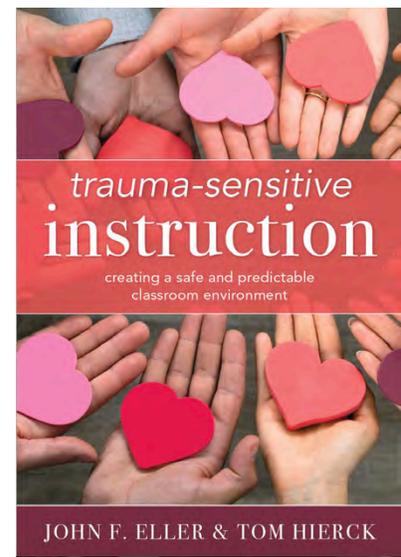


Trauma Impact...

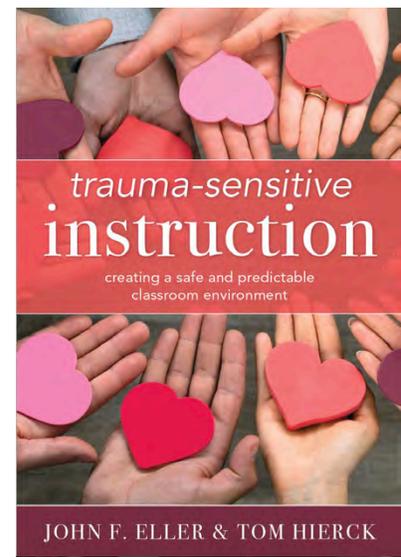
The impact of trauma can be different for each person. Trauma is an emotional experience that directly impacts each student in a slightly different manner but has a definite and lasting impact on learning. Kristin Souers and Pete Hall (2016) point out, “Our own interpretations influence the degree of impact we feel following exposure to a traumatic event” (p. 16).



- However, we also know that the essence of trauma-sensitive instruction, the strategies and connections essential to help all kids learn will not change.
- The lingering impact will be felt in schools in a myriad of ways, from reinvigorating past traumatic experiences to creating new ones for students and colleagues.
- Yet, educators do what they always have done – they carry on and continue to educate students to the best of their abilities.



While attending to the importance of these events, we do not want to lose sight of the significant impact of trauma that was occurring before the pandemic. If the changes that occur in schools and districts in attending to trauma are forever improved, then some further good will have come from the crisis. We hope there is a renewed interest and heightened awareness of the need for schools and districts to address trauma and its impact in a schoolwide and districtwide approach.



Opening Thoughts

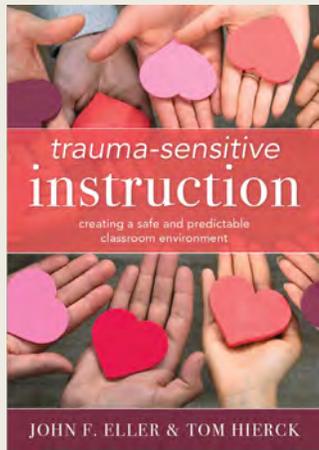


The Impact of Trauma on Educators and Students

Original ACEs Study

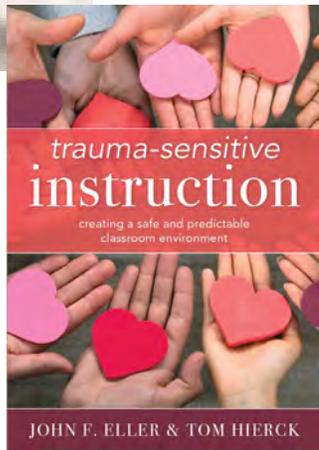
Impact of Trauma on the Brain

Our Reactions to Trauma



The ACEs Study

- 17,000+ middle class adults surveyed
- Late 1990s
- Collaboration between the Centers for Disease Control, Kaiser Permanente
- Questioned about their exposure to trauma as children
- Cross-referenced with health care records
- Correlation was astounding:
 - The higher the # of ACEs a person had experienced, the greater the health risks.



ACEs Study

Adverse Childhood Experiences

Abuse

Emotional Abuse

Physical Abuse

Sexual Abuse

Household Challenges

Mother treated violently

Household substance abuse

Mental Illness in household

Parental separation or divorce

Criminal household member

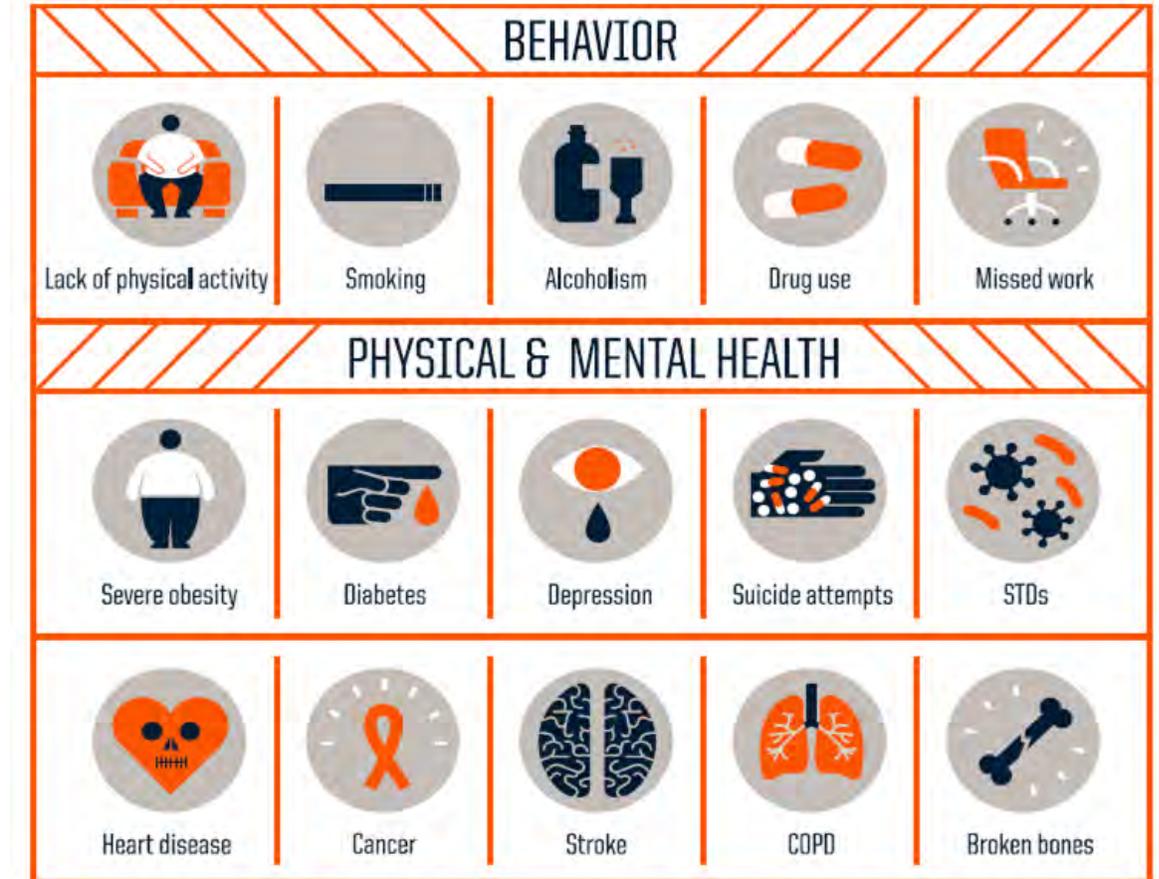
Neglect

Emotional Neglect

Physical Neglect

ACEs can negatively impact health outcomes

As the number of ACE's increases, so does the risk for negative health outcomes

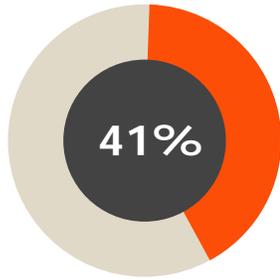


<https://www.rwjf.org/en/library/infographics/the-truth-about-aces.html#/download>

Since the original ACEs study, there have been follow-up studies directly related to children. Here is some of the information from follow-up studies.

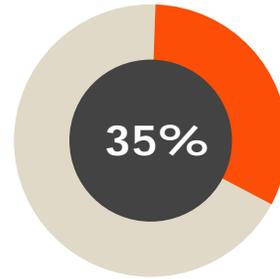
- Nearly 35 million U.S. children have experienced at least one type of childhood trauma (Lu, 2017).
- Egger and Angold (2006) found children ages 2–5 had experienced at least one severe stressor in their lives.
- “. . . more than half of the students enrolled in public schools have faced traumatic or adverse experiences and one in six struggles with complex trauma” (Felitti & Anda, 2009, as cited in Terrasi & de Galarce, 2017).

The Philadelphia ACE's Study



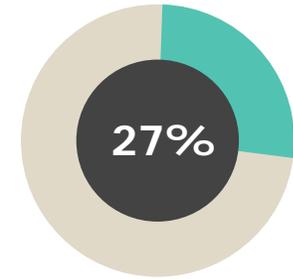
Witnessed Violence

How often, if ever, did you see or hear someone being beaten up, stabbed or shot in real life?



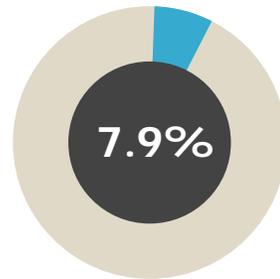
Felt Discrimination (Racism)

While you were growing up, how often did you feel that you were treated badly or unfairly because of your race or ethnicity?



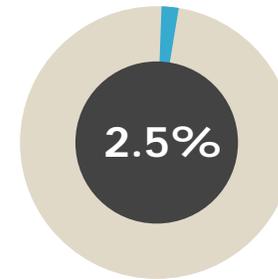
Unsafe Neighborhood

Did you feel unsafe in your neighborhood? Did the people in your neighborhood look out for each other, stand up for each other and could be trusted?



Experienced Bullying

How often were you bullied by a peer or classmate?



Lived in Foster Care

Were you ever in foster care?

Our Systems Have Led to Disparities...

INCARCERATION

Lifetime likelihood of imprisonment of U.S residents born in 2001

All Men



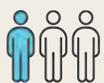
1 in 9

White Men



1 in 17

Black Men



1 in 3

Latino Men

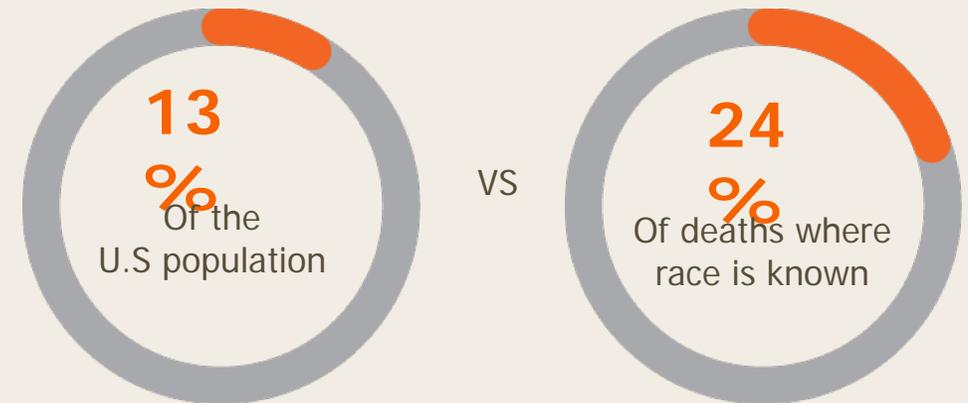


1 in 4

sentencingproject.org

COVID 19

Black people account for:

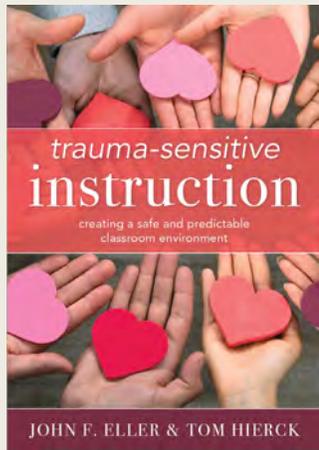


This means black people are dying at a rate nearly **2 times higher** than the population share.

<https://covidtracking.com/race>

Impact of Trauma on the Brain

- Normal brain functions include: protection, pleasure, pattern development
- Reaction during a traumatic event
- Reaction after a traumatic event
- Long-term reactions after ongoing and complex trauma

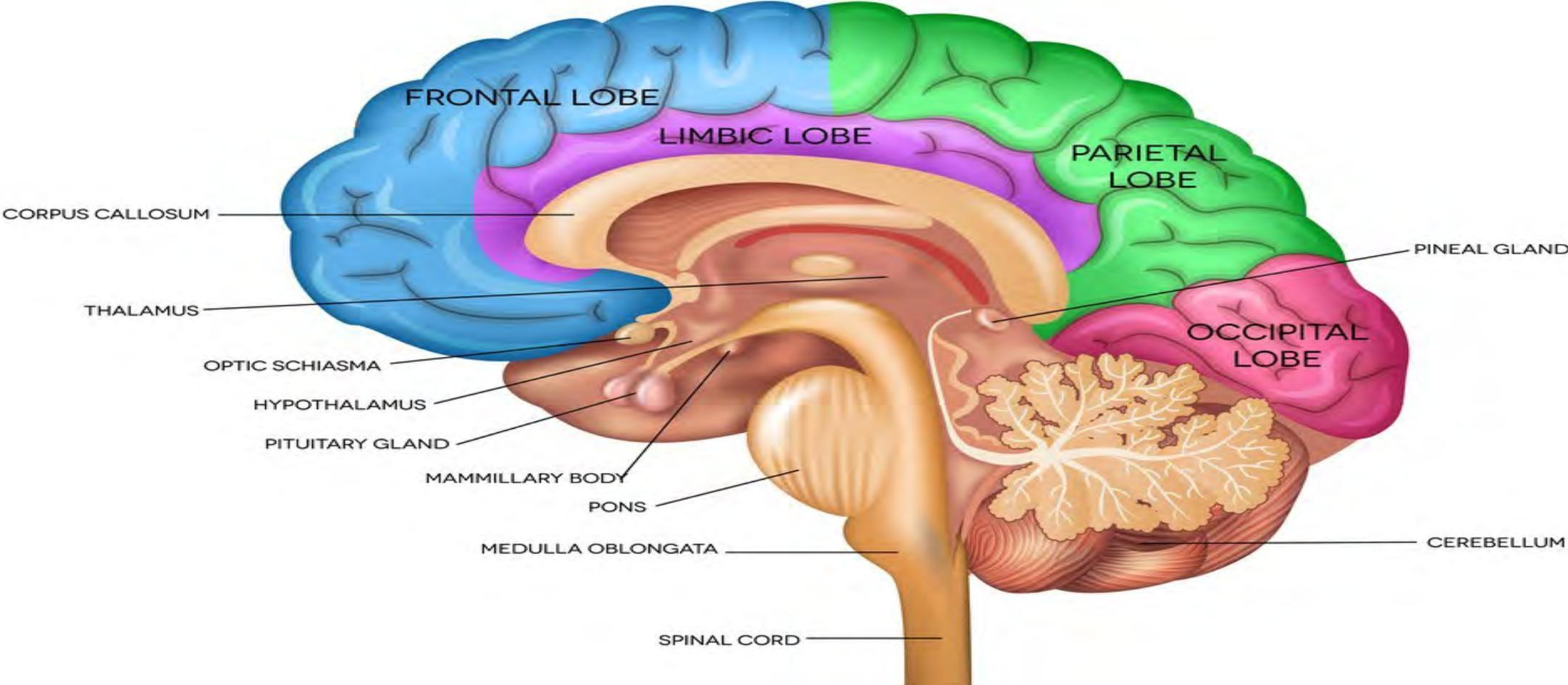


trauma-sensitive
instruction
creating a safe and predictable
classroom environment

JOHN F. ELLER & TOM HIERCK

Brain Structures

ANATOMY OF THE BRAIN



Fear activates a part of the brain called the amygdala. The amygdala stimulates the release of cortisol, which stops learning and stays in the body for two to three hours after the stressful event is over. The release of cortisol leads to a person's fight, flight, or hide survival behavior—whether that person is a soldier on the battlefield, an astronaut stepping onto the moon, or a student in his or her classroom. After a few hours, the body metabolizes the cortisol, and the person returns to a more normal state.

TRAUMA INDUCING

TO

TRAUMA REDUCING

TRAUMA-REACTIVE

- Fragmented
- Reactive
- No felt safety
- Overwhelmed
- Fear-driven
- Rigid
- Numb

TRAUMA-INFORMED

- Resists re-traumatizing
- Recognizes socio-cultural trauma
- Realizes widespread impact
- Recognizes effects
- Responds by shifting practice

HEALING ORGANIZATION

- Integrated
- Reflective
- collaborative
- Overwhelmed
- Relationship-centered
- Growth and Prevention-oriented
- Equitable & inclusive

“There is no equity in keeping ourselves unaware and insensitive to the huge number of children who should expect their schools to be aware, sensitive, and responsive to their mental health and well-being.

Our failure to do this compromises the very foundation of our educational missions and every other initiative to provide more students the quality educational programs and outcomes we all value.”

Smith, D., Frey, N., Pumpian, I., & Fisher, D (p. 51)

This is not about finding fault or someone to blame for the current state of affairs. Schools and districts need to accept that they are where they are, and then begin to plan for where they want to be. What growth opportunities (not weaknesses) exist in your school or district? Embrace them with enthusiasm as the leader of a team committed to moving forward.

Greg is a new grade five student to your district even though school has been in session for two months. The new school is his fourth in the last year and the likelihood of him completing the year with you is pretty slim. On his first day in class the teacher approached him at his desk and went to place a hand on Greg's shoulder as a friendly gesture. Greg flinched and pushed the teacher's hand away. The teacher sent him out of the class, but Greg did not leave quietly, instead offering a few choice words to the teacher.

Traditional Response...

The teacher explained to the Principal that he was being welcoming as per the school expectations. The response was totally uncalled for and demanded a clear response. The teacher needed to be supported by the office. Physical aggression cannot be tolerated or excused, and this child needed to learn that right away. Immediate and major consequences were expected if only to serve as an example to the rest of the students in the classroom. The additional verbal abuse as Greg was leaving class also needs to be consequence and it's reasonable to suspend him. He needs to learn that he cannot behave that way in school.

Trauma-Informed Response...

While the office is still informed of the situation, the teacher is reflective about the situation and wonders if they created a fear response without intending to. They wonder if Greg's constant moves between schools has left him feeling disconnected and misinterpreting even the slightest of gestures.

They understand the response comes from a place of mistrust and is the typical "fight" response. They realize that putting extra demands or expectations on the student right now will cause further escalation making the situation worse. Their prime concern is to sort out how to help the student feel safe, so he is able to learn in their classroom. They also embrace the notion that they may have to teach the desired behaviors rather than simply consequence the undesirable ones.

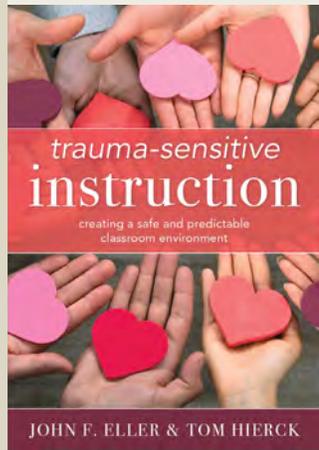
Trauma-Informed Response...

In order to understand and support students impacted by trauma, we need to change how we view them. Educators need to stop seeing these students as willfully acting out to disrupt the classroom or refusing to engage with the learning. Rather, we need to see that:

- their responses are adaptive patterns based upon their personal experiences and may not always be aligned with expected school behaviors
- they are seeking to meet their needs (remember behavior is communication)
- they have difficulty regulating and understanding emotions
- they lack important academic and behavioral skills to be successful in school
- past experience has led them to believe that adults cannot be trusted.

Attitude and Mindset

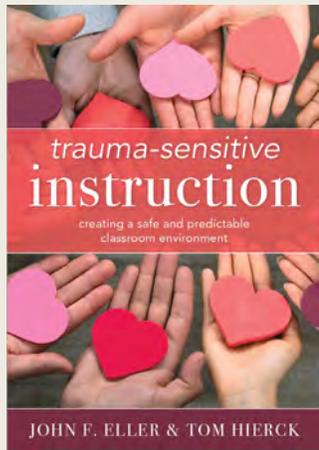
- Let's discuss the importance of, and the rationale behind, a positive mindset and attitude when working with trauma-impacted staff and students.
- What techniques and strategies help you stay productive and avoid negative thoughts when encountering difficulties?



Hmmm...

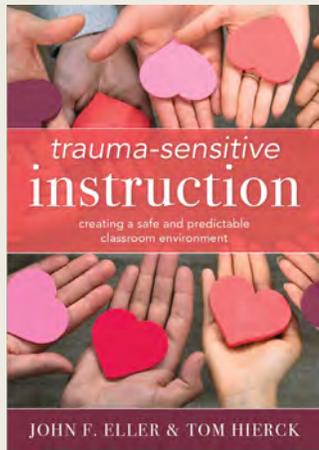
“Except for the student teaching element, preservice teacher education seems a weak intervention. It is sandwiched between two powerful forces: previous life history particularly that related to being a student, and classroom experience as a student teacher and teacher. Experience as a student is important in setting images of teaching that drive initial classroom practice, and experience as a teacher is the only way to develop the practical knowledge that eventually makes routine at least some aspects of classroom practice and provides alternative approaches when faced with dilemmas.”

“For twenty years, my research has shown the view you adopt for yourself profoundly affects the way you lead your life”.



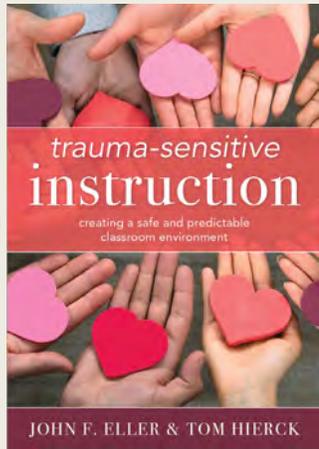
Our Reactions

Our reactions are crucial to our success in working with trauma-impacted individuals. Most of the traumatic situations involve some type of strong emotional experience. Because the emotions are heightened, individuals don't see (or learn) the value of calmness or of processing situations. Their normal world could include an adult who reacts violently to every situation.



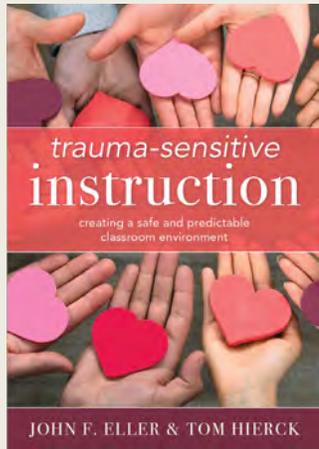
Temporary Suspension of Opinion

Temporary suspension of opinion is an internal skill that allows the receiver of communication (the listener) to withhold sharing an opinion about the message he or she heard from the sender. Suspension is used to increase the opportunity of thinking and problem solving on the part of the sender.



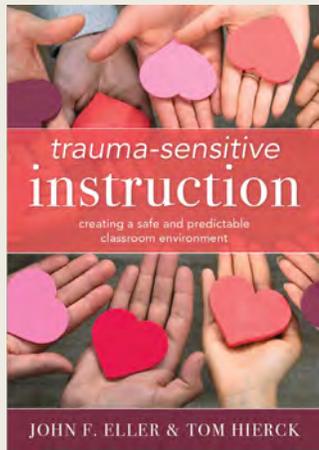
Temporary Suspension of Opinion

In our work with educators, we have found that there are three levels or stages of temporary suspension of opinion that people experience. These levels are (1) listening level, (2) diagnostic level, and (3) emotional level.



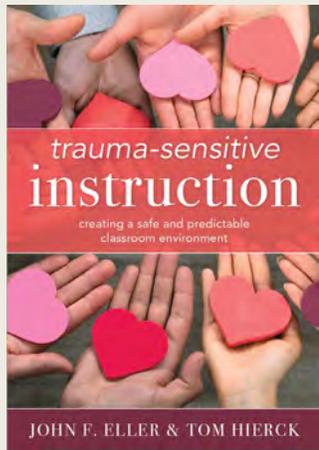
Listening

In the listening level, people find they are able to put their own need to talk on hold to listen more intently to the other person. Some people call this skill active listening. By listening to the other person more closely and intently, you'll find that you better understand what he or she is trying to say or communicate to you.



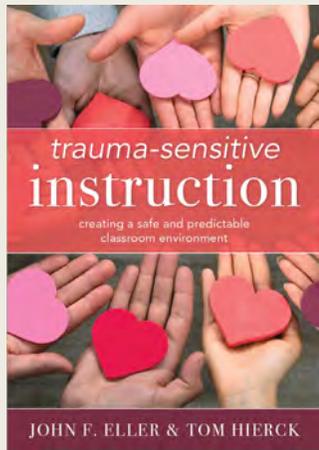
Diagnostic

Once you have improved your ability to listen, the next stage is called the diagnostic level. In this level, people are able to continue to listen intently to the message the other person is trying to communicate while simultaneously processing what their strategy should be once the other person has communicated their thoughts.



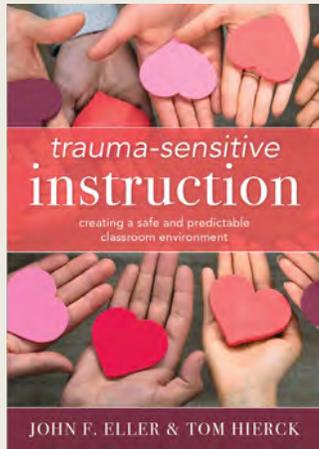
Emotional

At the emotional level, the person listening steps back from the emotional aspects of the communication and remains objective. This level takes concentration and practice since it can be easy for some people to become emotional or emotionally involved in a situation.



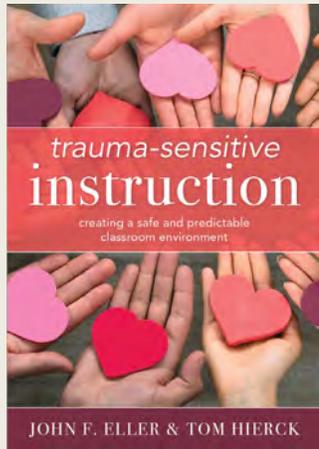
Changing the Reaction

Schools that approach behavior with a trauma lens are not only getting better outcomes in school, but they are also helping build student resilience. So instead of asking, “What’s wrong?” you may want to ask a question like, “What happened?”



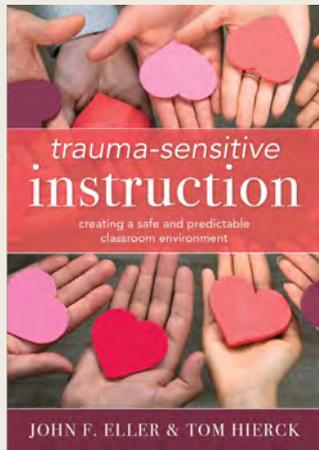
Changing the Reaction

You may also want to consider your knowledge of the student or what you know about him or her in asking supportive questions. Ask yourself what strengths students have as assets you can leverage so the focus is on the behavior and how students can change or replace the behavior with a more productive one.



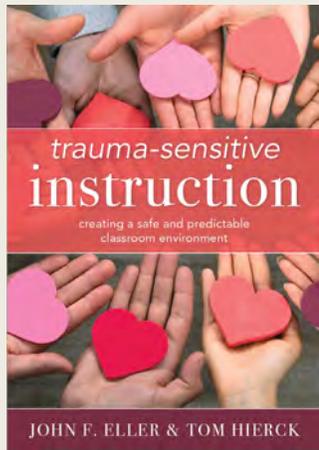
Evi Makri-Botsari

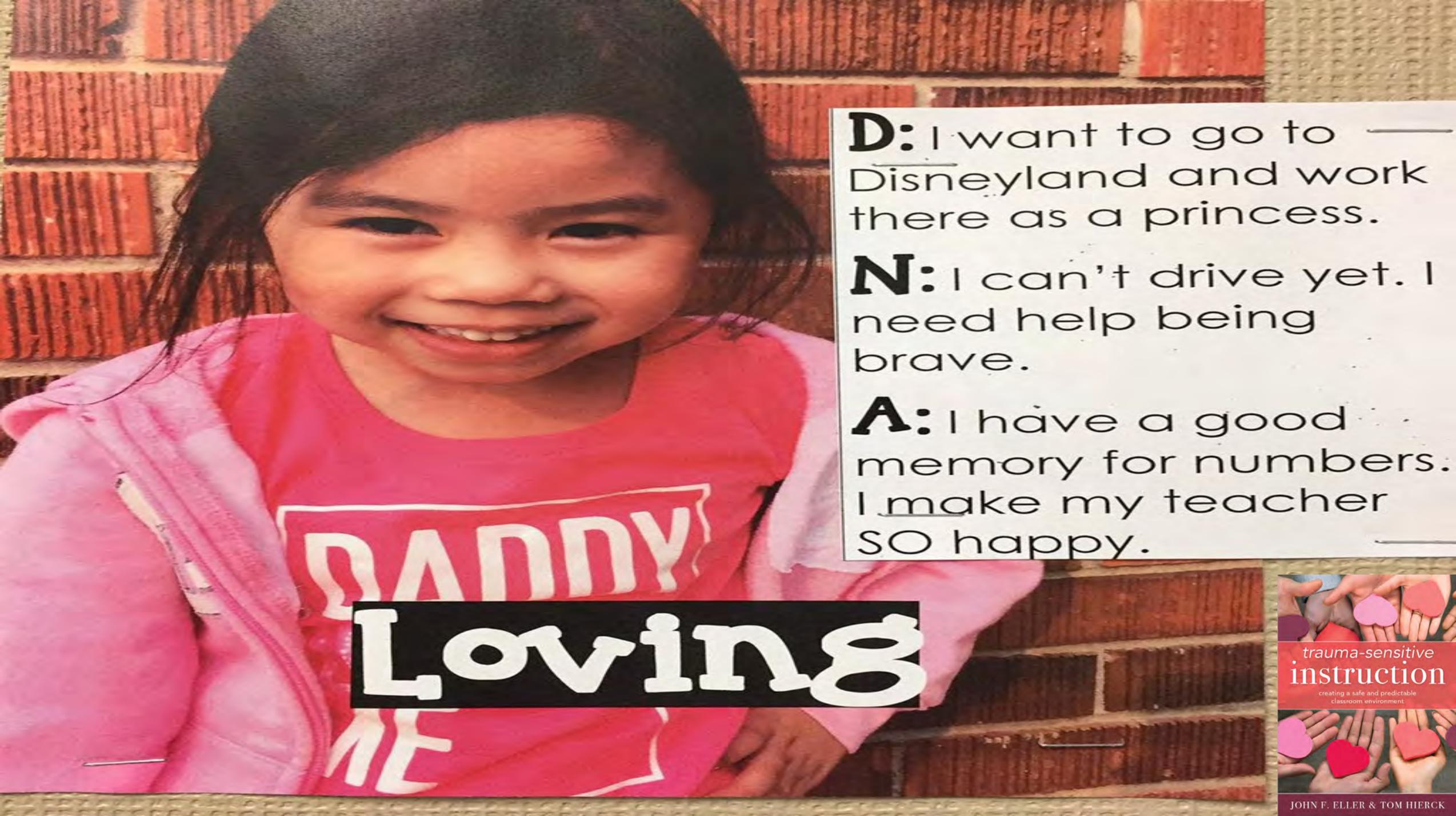
“Students who felt unconditionally accepted by their teachers were more likely to be interested in learning and to enjoy challenging academic tasks, instead of just doing schoolwork because they had to and preferring easier assignments at which they knew they would succeed.”



D.N.A.

To discover student strengths, teachers need to talk to their students and learn what skills, talents, character traits, and assets they bring to the classroom. This allows you to structure your lessons around these strengths and interests. One activity that supports this collection of student assets is to have students share their dreams, needs, and abilities—their **DNA**.



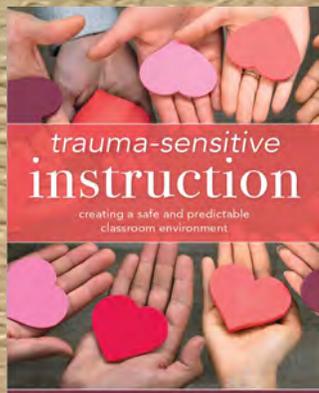


D: I want to go to —
Disneyland and work
there as a princess.

N: I can't drive yet. I
need help being
brave.

A: I have a good
memory for numbers.
I make my teacher
SO happy.

Loving



D: I want to learn—
everything I can
about monster trucks
and even how to
drive them.

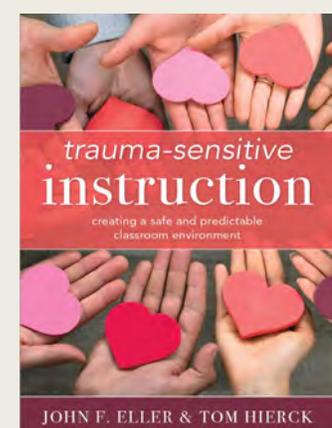
N: I need help
following directions
and cleaning up.

A: I can make great
art.

Enthusiastic

Would this help you to know your students better? To plan for their year of learning?

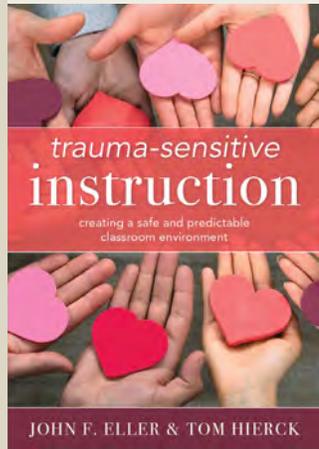
Would it help colleagues to know **ALL** students not just **their** students?



Summary

How can your attitude help you approach and work with the situations you may encounter in your schools?

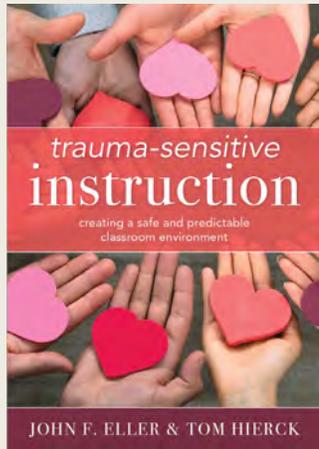
How does accepting staff for what they are experiencing, and their response affect your success in working with them?



IF "Plan A"
Didn't work.
The alphabet has
25 more letters!
Stay Cool.

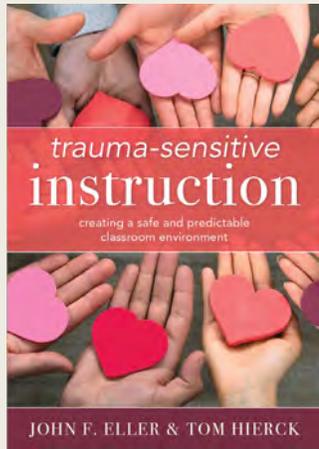
Model...

This is similar to the teacher who gives every student a cheery “good morning” regardless of the response he or she receives. If the objective is to get something, the motivation is entirely wrong. If the objective is to give something, to model the desired behavior, the motivation is consistent with promoting positive change.



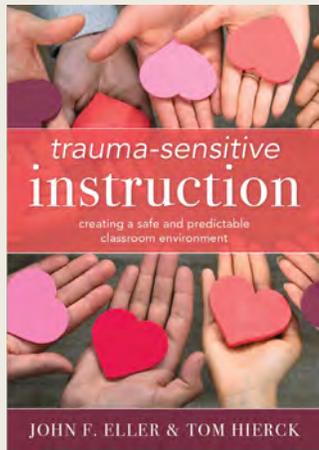
A Positive Culture

“When seeking to develop a successful, supported collaborative learning community, leaders must first develop a positive culture”



Culture

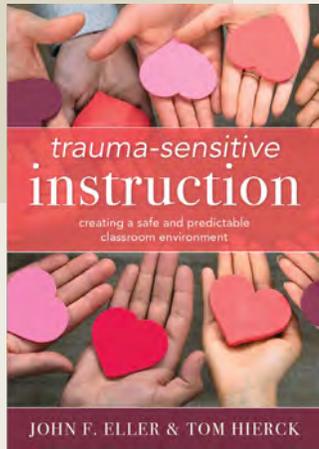
Consider culture as the way we do business, embracing the common ideas that hold us together and the bottom line in how we work together as a learning community to help ensure everyone is successful.





**Be Brave Enough
to
Suck at
Something New**

All leaders should consider completing an assessment of the learning environment, looking for areas that might be contributing to trauma or adding to outside traumatic situations.

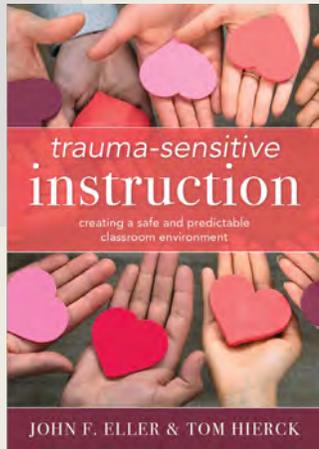


Physical Space Assessment

- List the suspected trauma areas that may be impacting your students.
- List the processes or procedures in the learning environment that seem to trigger undesirable behaviors.
- What evidence do you have that makes you think these processes or procedures are triggering problems?
- Discuss changes in the processes or procedures that you think would help make your learning environment more trauma sensitive.
- What is your timeline for making these changes? What resources will you need in order to make these changes?

Positive Relationships

As a leader, you can also serve as a “transition person” for some of your staff. When you reach out, seek to develop appropriate relationships, and serve in a mentor role, you increase your chances to help them transition out of trauma in the future.

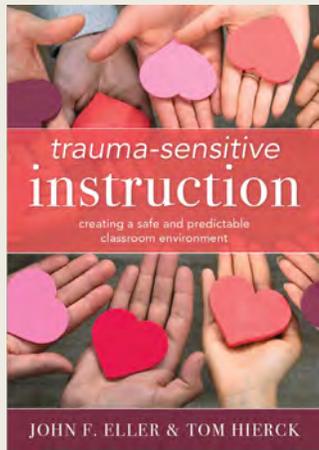




Parent and Family Engagement

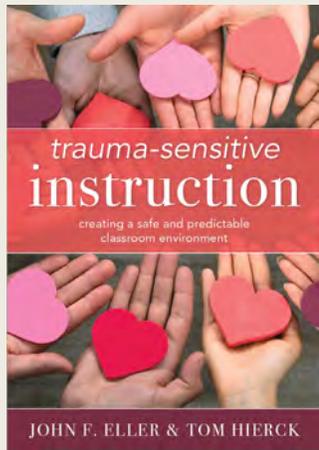
Parent and Family Engagement

- The importance of building relationships with parents and families of students in trauma
- The differences between parent and family involvement and parent and family engagement
- How to build positive, nonjudgment relationships with parents and families



Increased Engagement

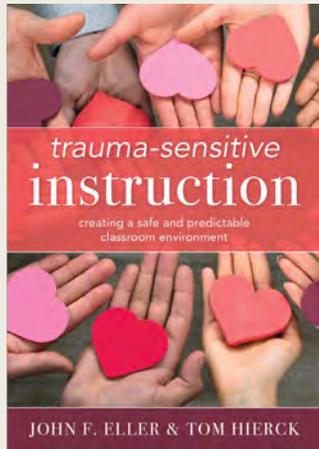
- Earn higher grades or test scores (American Psychological Association, 2014a)
- Graduate from high school and attend post-secondary education (Grand Rapids Public School District, 2020)
- Develop self-confidence and motivation in the classroom (Wairimu, Macharia, & Muiru, 2016)
- Possess better social skills and exhibit improved classroom behavior (Waterford.org, 2018)



Also...

They are also less likely to:

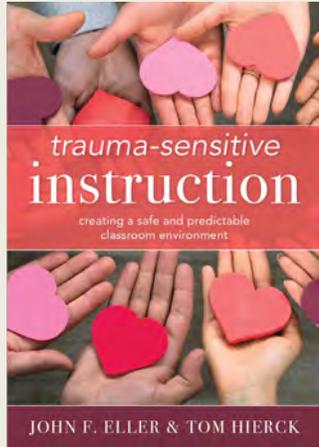
- Have low self-esteem (Waterford.org, 2018)
- Need redirection in the classroom (Sheldon & Jung, 2015)
- Develop behavioral issues (Waterford.org, 2018)



FACTOR	INVOLVEMENT	ENGAGEMENT
Who Initiates?	<p>When parents are involved, they act on the ideas of others, largely the school administration, and are basically a “rubber stamp” to approve direction.</p> <p>Some parents in trauma situations have been mandated to be involved with the school.</p>	<p>When parents are engaged, they feel welcomed by the school administration to directly offer ideas and suggestions based on the information that is openly shared with them. The administration addresses their needs authentically. These engagement behaviors focus on helping their child.</p>
Is this an Invitation or an Expectation?	<p>When we involve parents, we have them do our bidding and take actions that the staff might see as important.</p>	<p>When we engage parents, we support the ideas they have suggested and provide more information to complete the picture they might have. This is when it’s important to help them see that you have their child’s best interest in mind.</p>
Roles of Parents and Staff	<p>When we involve parents, we use them as figureheads for the school agenda.</p>	<p>When we engage parents, we support their plans and assist where we can. Engaging them in activities in which they feel comfortable and confident builds the relationship.</p>
Purpose	<p>When we involve parents, we remind them of what we are already doing and how they can support those programs.</p>	<p>When we engage parents, we are open to new approaches that contribute not only to the life of the school but to the community at large.</p>

The National Child Traumatic Stress Network (2017a)

1. Learn about the impacts of history and systemic racism.
2. Create and support safe and brave environments.
3. Model and support honesty and authenticity.
4. Honor the impacts of history and systemic racism.
5. Encourage and empower students as leaders.
6. Care for yourself.





To Conclude...

TRAUMA INDUCING

TO

TRAUMA REDUCING

TRAUMA-REACTIVE

- Fragmented
- Reactive
- No felt safety
- Overwhelmed
- Fear-driven
- Rigid
- Numb

TRAUMA-INFORMED

- Resists re-traumatizing
- Recognizes socio-cultural trauma
- Realizes widespread impact
- Recognizes effects
- Responds by shifting practice

HEALING ORGANIZATION

- Integrated
- Reflective
- collaborative
- Overwhelmed
- Relationship-centered
- Growth and Prevention-oriented
- Equitable & inclusive

DOES:

DOES NOT:

Require all staff to be trained to understand trauma, symptoms, and its impact.

Require or encourage staff to dig deeply into the causes or sources of stress and trauma.

Recognize the importance of staff' ability to develop their own social and emotional competencies. A trauma-informed school will encourage and support staff as they become aware of their own biases that may interfere with developing healthy, supportive relationships with students. Staff must consistently practice and model self-regulation.

Assume that adult behavior and mindset have little or no impact on student development and behavior.

Emphasize the development of students' resiliency through:

- o Supportive adult relationships
- o Self-efficacy and perceived control
- o Adaptive skills and the ability to self-regulate
- o Sense of self-value and feeling they have something to offer others.

Equate student achievement and success with proficiency in every characteristic of resiliency or social emotional competency. Students will have these in varying degrees and that's okay (Fixed versus Growth mindsets).

Understand that every behavior has an underlying meaning.

Require a "problem" to exist before students have access to trauma-informed services.

Prioritize the development of social and emotional competencies that foster resilience.

Insist or imply a student with signs of stress or trauma will "get over it." Honor and validate the student's experience.

Promote and foster school-wide connectedness and the development of supportive adult relationships.

Encourage a "just don't do it" approach to discipline.

Create safety through routines, structure, predictability, and equity.

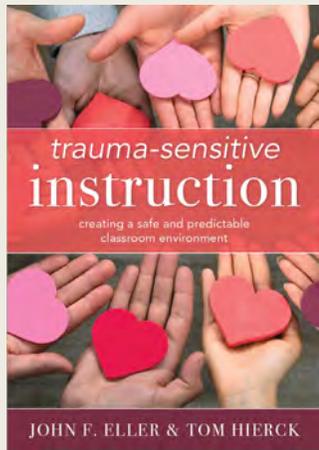
Forgo opportunities for consistency even when faced with conflict, change, or stress.

Utilize restorative disciplinary practices that keep a student in school and work to rebuild damaged relationships and understand the motivation of the behavior.

Punish most behaviors by excluding a student from class, school, or extracurriculars.

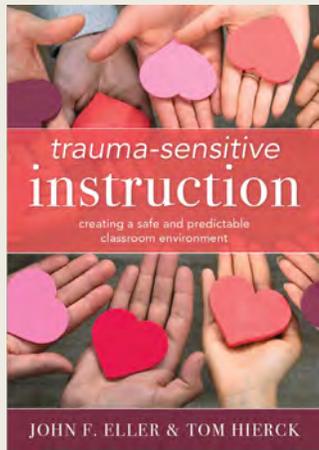
Closing Summary 5

1. Work together: A strong, committed team will overcome challenges a talented group of individuals never can. A team, built on collaboration, becomes an unstoppable force. “As part of the collaborative team, you’re either getting better at your job or helping someone else get better” (Williams & Hierck, 2015, p. 53).



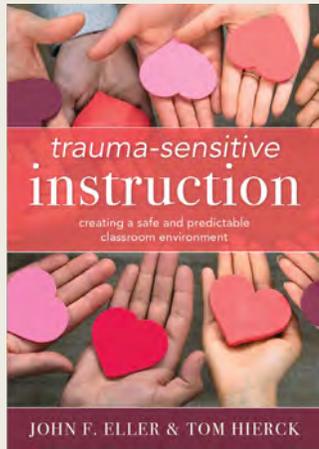
Closing Summary 5

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2. Keep a routine: Research has consistently shown that routines can play an important role in mental health (Arlinghaus & Johnston, 2018). We've heard from many colleagues that during the pandemic, routines have helped keep them grounded and reduced the mental load brought on by needing to make too many decisions.



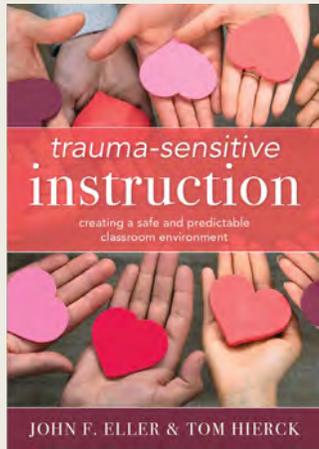
Closing Summary 5

3. Keep talking: An extension of number 1 is to make sure you have a buddy system. Having regular check-ins with colleagues (and committing to checking in regularly) gives you another person to lean on and share the load with. Being part of a trauma-sensitive district means having an open environment where everyone is willing to help everyone, and where educators know that they can talk to other colleagues throughout the district.



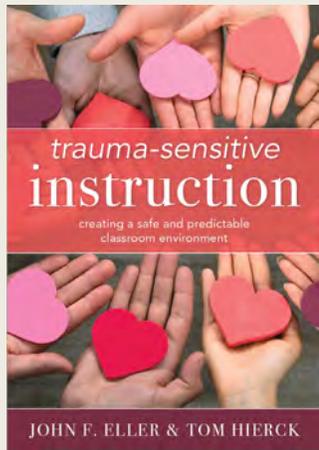
Closing Summary 5

4. Remember the students: As difficult and challenging as the pandemic has been, always remember your calling. You have been asked to do so much during this time and have shone admirably. Use the tools talked about today as touchstones to reconnect to the reason you became an educator in the first place—to make a difference.

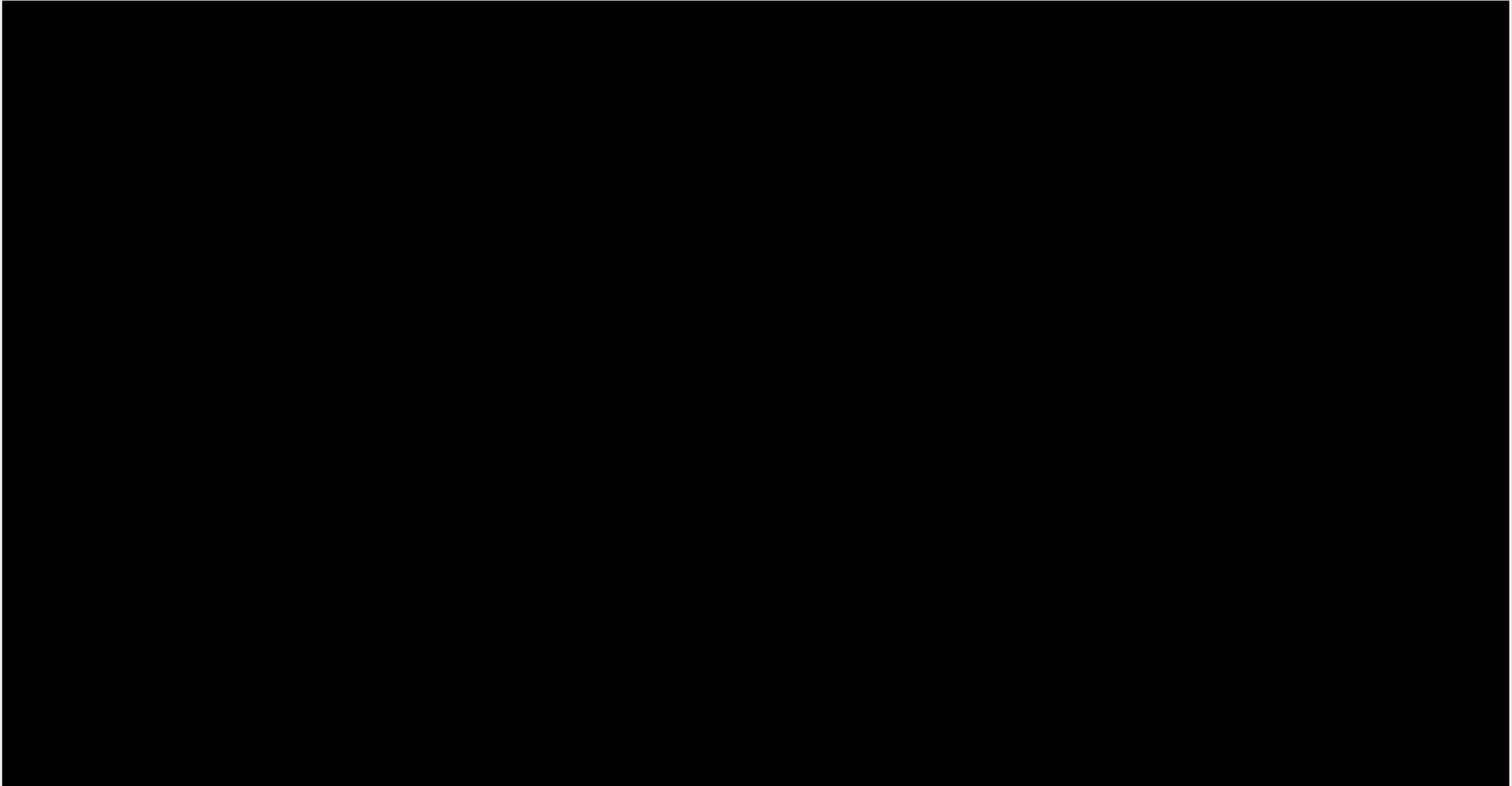


Closing Summary 5

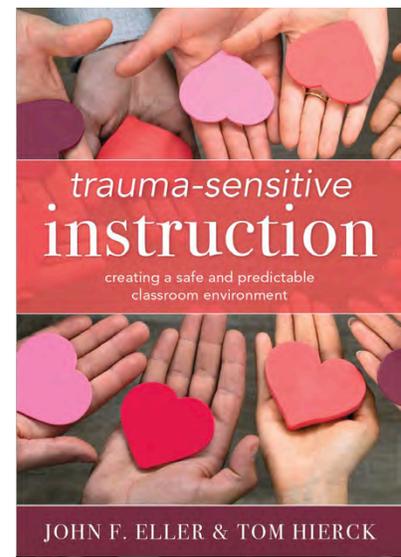
5. Put on your own mask first: Self-care can't be at the bottom of your to-do list. There's a reason why flight attendants advise you to put on your own oxygen mask first. It's okay to think of self-care as health care and ensure you are healthy and able to take on the role. Equally important—if your own mental wellness is flagging, seek help from a professional. It's not a sign of weakness and will go a long way to ensuring you can be strong in the face of these unprecedented times.



Continue to be Merchants of Hope



As you work to ensure all students and staff are successful, take stock in your own success, continue to provide opportunities for all, and keep the potential impact of trauma in mind. You can and will make a difference and be that transition person helping to build resonance for the many students and staff you serve.



Do the best you can until you

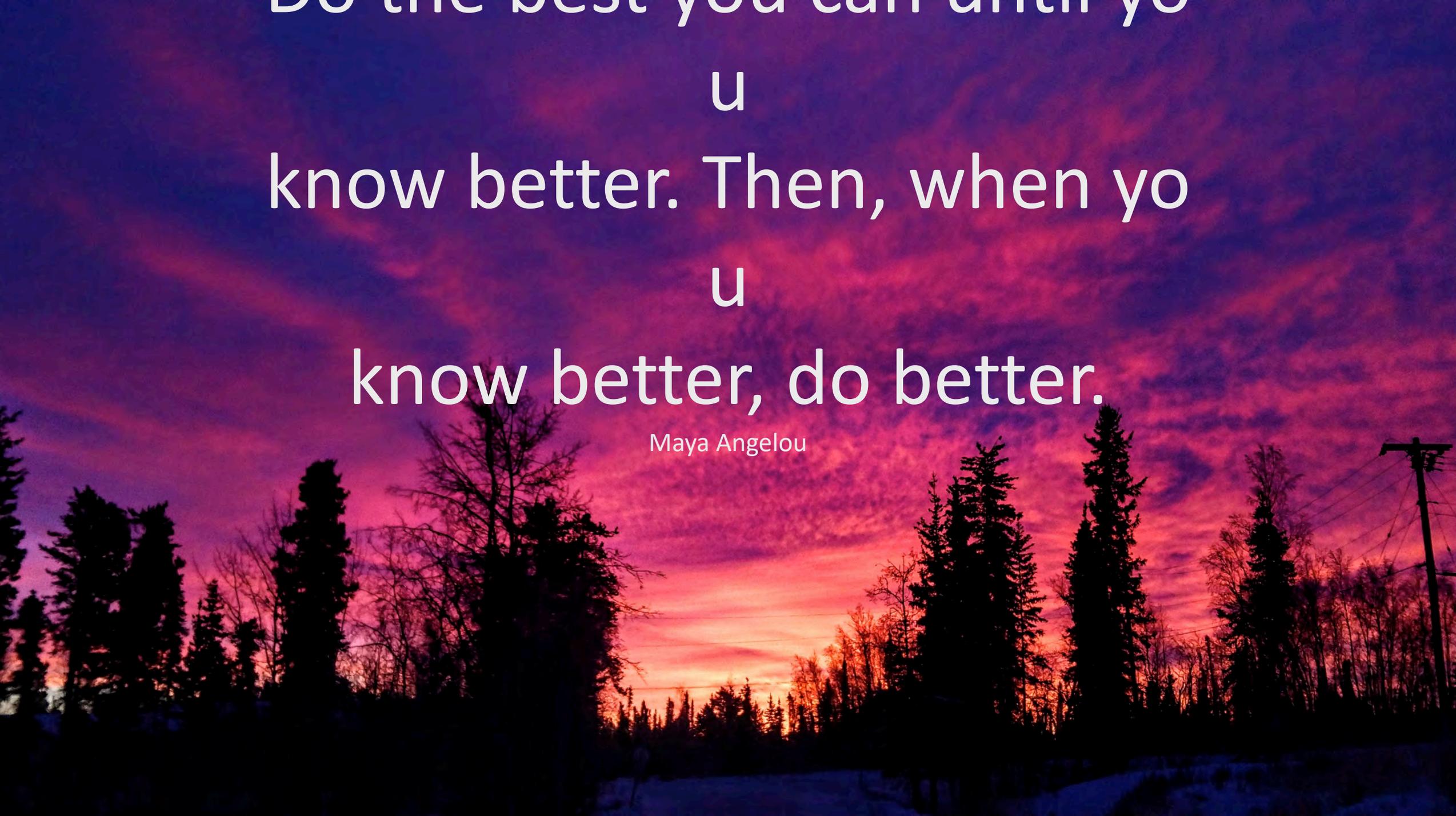
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know better. Then, when yo

u

know better, do better.

Maya Angelou



You can find me at...

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Heart of Education

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Thanks for the gift of your time!