Secure Relationships as a Necessary Ingredient to Help Students Heal and Recover from Trauma
My Plan

• The Why

• The What

• The How
The Why
What should go on educators’ plates?
Is mental health something that students and staff can hang up at the school house door?
SAMHSA’s Definition:

“Mental health is defined as… how a person **thinks, feels, and acts** when faced with life’s situations... This includes handling stress, relating to other people, being able to concentrate, and making decisions.”
Healthy Brain Development = Behavioral Health

Neuroplasticity
The Science of Human Behavior

Setting Events
An event that increases the likelihood that the trigger will provoke the behavior

Triggering Antecedents
The immediate event that provokes the behavior

Problem Behavior
The main behavior of concern

Maintaining Consequences
The purpose or reason why the problem behavior occurs (i.e., function)
Setting Events

• Factors outside the immediate situation in which a behavior occurs that increases the probability that a given situation will provoke a behavior

• TRAUMA!!!
Factors outside of the school (e.g., trauma)
Sense of belonging
Feelings of being respected
Understanding of expectations
Cultural factors

Surface – what we see

Beneath – what we don’t see that impacts what we see
The What
Metaphor
Effective Schools as a Cooking Recipe

• Providing high quality school experiences that serve as a platform for life success is like a good cooking recipe that involves the integration of **core active ingredients**
  – An active ingredient is a **component** of a recipe that helps achieve its desired outcome
  – Single **ingredients** represent necessary features of the recipe, **but insufficient** alone to produce the desired outcome
Active Ingredients of a Trauma-Informed School

• Educators understand how trauma impacts development and manifests in school

• Core, foundational supports (Tier 1)
  — Secure relationships with adults
  — Safe, positive and predictable environments
  — Teach replacement behaviors and self-regulation skills

• A continuum of high quality trauma-informed interventions available based on student need
Relationships as a Necessary Condition

- Law enforcement
- Healthcare
- Business
- Family life
- Education
Sense of Belonging as a Core Human Need
The Science of Human Behavior

Prevention/Proactive Strategies

Setting Events
An event that increases the likelihood that the trigger will provoke the behavior

Triggering Antecedents
The immediate event that provokes the behavior

Teaching

Problem Behavior
The main behavior of concern

Consequent Strategies

Maintaining Consequences
The purpose or reason why the problem behavior occurs (i.e., function)
The Problem

• No evidence-based approaches available that introduce common language and practice regarding establishing, maintaining, and restoring secure educator-student relationships
Establish-Maintain-Restore is an approach that guides teachers to reflect on their relationship status with students to inform more strategic and purposeful interactions.

- **Common language:** EMR is a heuristic designed to create common language among staff regarding the dynamic phases of relationship.

- **Reflective practice:** Teachers reflect on and rate their relationship status with students on a semi-regular basis (e.g., once a month) to identify specific practice.

- **Concrete practices:** Each phase of EMR is linked to concrete practices that teachers can select from and implement with particular students.

- **Supports:** EMR involves brief training followed by integration within existing peer interactive supports embedded within the team (e.g., professional learning community, department meetings, grade-level meetings, etc.).
Common Language: Three phases to every relationship

- **Establish**: Making sure no child falls through the relational cracks
- **Maintain**: Ongoing effort to keep positive relationships intact
- **Restore**: Repairing harm following negative interactions
EMR General Things to Do and Avoid

**Do**

- Correct behavior privately and with empathy
- Positivity
- Greet
- Recognize & acknowledge positive behavior in ways that fit with the child

**Avoid**

- Publically correcting behavior to embarrass or shame
- Negativity
- Ignore
- Taking positive behavior for granted
Establish Strategies

The Practices
Banking Metaphor

Relationships are transactional, like banking:

One will have difficulty withdrawing from a relationship until deposits have been made.
Banking Metaphor

Types of withdraws educators make from students:

- Correcting student behavior
- Motivating a student to do unwanted work
- Reminding students to show up to class on time
- Getting students to be okay with failure
- Encouraging students to try their hardest
Banking Time

1. Find individual time to spend with a single student to engage in relational conversation
2. Adult uses effective communication techniques
   - Open-ended questions to facilitate conversation
   - Actively listen so the person feels heard
   - Express an interest in what the student says
   - Avoid judgment, giving advice, delivering instruction
   - Respond with empathy by putting yourself in your student’s shoes
Gather, review, and acknowledge (GRA)

- The more information a teacher strives to learn about a student, the easier it is to strike conversation, potentially link instruction to student interests, and demonstrate that they care.

- GRA involves:
  - Showing an interest in learning information about students
  - Reviewing that information to combat forgetfulness
  - Finding natural opportunities to acknowledge or reference that information about students
Establishing Positive Relationships
Strategy #3

Positive greetings and farewells on a daily basis

- *Positive greetings* (salutations) at the door using the student’s name provides an ongoing opportunity to personalize interactions with each student to welcome and demonstrate that the teacher values their presence.

- *Positive farewells* each day by offering words of encouragement, saying thank you for participation, and wishing someone a good rest of the day.

**NOTE:** Be sure to do this for students who need it the most and recognize when students have been absent the previous day.
Maintain Strategies

The Practices
Without intentional maintenance practices, relationships tend to strain or get worse over time.
MAINTAINING Relationships with Students: Strategy #1 - Ongoing Positive Interactions

Relationships are maintained by striving for a **5 to 1 ratio of positive to negative interactions.**

AKA - the “Magic Ratio”

5:1

Gets the job done!!!
Example of positive interactions

**Relationship Check Ins**

- Interaction with no strings attached other than to check in on how things are going
- Capitalize on brief moments to check in with students
  - Open-ended questions
  - Expressing an interest in how the student is doing in general
Responding to Problem Behavior with Empathy

- Empathy is the ability to decipher what the other person is thinking and feeling in a given situation.
- Before correcting behavior begin the interaction with an empathy statement that communicates you are seeking to understand how they are thinking/feeling.
Steps to responding to problem behavior with empathy

1. Empathy statement
2. Label behavior of concern
3. Label alternative, described behavior
4. Rationale
5. Decisional Dilemma
6. Feedback
Restore Strategies

The Practices
Why is Restore a critical aspect of any healthy relationship?
Reconnect and repair in order to restore (R³)

Goal
• Reconnect with the student after a negative interaction to repair harm through a skillful communication to restore the relationship
  o Reconnect and repair in order to restore (R³)

Actions
• Find a window of opportunity to reconnect with the student, select 1 of the 5 skillful communication techniques, and deliver it genuinely and authentically to the student
## When is Restore Needed?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Changes in student’s behavior</th>
<th>Your internal feelings</th>
<th>Following a negative interaction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- changes in eye contact</td>
<td>- you don’t like/are</td>
<td>- argument/disagreement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- starts ignoring your</td>
<td>annoyed by the student</td>
<td>- removal from class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>instructions</td>
<td></td>
<td>- unintentionally</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- argues, debates,</td>
<td></td>
<td>embarrassed the student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>challenges more than</td>
<td></td>
<td>- misunderstanding (e.g.,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>usual</td>
<td></td>
<td>student takes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- starts shrugging</td>
<td></td>
<td>constructive feedback</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>when you ask questions</td>
<td></td>
<td>personally)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- becomes more</td>
<td></td>
<td>- student gives you</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>withdrawn</td>
<td></td>
<td>negative feedback (can be</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>about other teachers or the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>school in general)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These MAY indicate a need to restore the relationship.
Reconnect and repair in order to restore (R³)

Four-Step Process

1. Identify when R³ is needed
2. Find a natural opportunity to reconnect with the student
3. Communicate skillfully to repair harm
4. Observe to examine whether skillful communication repaired harm and restored the relationship

(repeat steps 2 & 3 if needed)
1. Letting go of the previous interaction
   • Fresh start

2. Ownership for the problem
   • Acknowledging one’s own mistake/missed opportunity

3. Empathy statement
   • Showing effort to understand the student’s perspective

4. Statement of care
   • Separating the deed from the doer

5. Collaborative problem-solving
   • Working together to find a win-win solution
## Choosing a Restore Strategy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Technique</th>
<th>Student</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Letting go conversation</td>
<td>Student who thinks adult will hold a grudge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ownership for the problem</td>
<td>Student who needs to hear adults make mistakes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empathy statement</td>
<td>Student who wants their perspective/feelings recognized</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statement of care (separating deed from the doer)</td>
<td>Student who thinks the adult does not care for or want them in the class because of their behavior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaborative problem-solving to identify a win-win scenario</td>
<td>Strong willed student who likes to have input on the solution moving forward</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Letting go of the previous interaction: Do over (Fresh start)

When to use this strategy: when there is a student who the adult believes may think the adult is going to hold a grudge and bring up the negative interaction and hold it against the student

Examples

• “Hey, yesterday was rough, but I’d like to start over today.”

• “Hey, I know that yesterday was difficult for both of us and I want to start over fresh today.”

• “Yesterday was kind of a tough day in 6th period for both of us. Today is a new day and I’m going to start fresh so we have a great class today.”
Restore Strategy #2

Taking ownership/responsibility for part of the problem

When to use this strategy: when the adult reflects on the interaction and recognizes something they could of handled more skillfully with the student.

Examples

• “Hey, I was thinking about what I said yesterday and I think I wasn’t being fair to you because… I’m sorry and I’ll try to do better next time.”
• “I wasn’t my ‘best’ self yesterday. I wish I would have been more patient with you and found the time to hear your perspective.”
• “I feel like the way I responded to your request yesterday didn’t communicate that I value your ideas or needs. That was not my intention. I am working on thinking before I react.”
Empathy statement
(Demonstrating an understanding for the student’s perspective)

When to use this strategy: students who want their perspective understood and the adult to understand the ‘reason why’ they engaged in the behavior

Example
• “I noticed that yesterday you seemed frustrated in class. Is that what was going on?”
Restore Strategy #4

Statement of care for the student

When to use this strategy: students who need to hear that you still value them as a person and aren’t going to label them based on the past behavior

Example

• “After our interaction yesterday, I want to make sure that you still know that you belong in my class. That there’s still a place for you and that’s not in question. I value your energy, humor, and the life you bring to class.”
Collaborative Problem-Solving

When to use this strategy: with students who have a strong opinion and want to have a voice in the matter and to diffuse a power struggle

**STEPS**
1. Start with an empathy statement
2. Express your perspective while diffusing the power struggle
3. Collaborate to identify possible solutions
4. Pick an idea, try it, repeat
The How: Implementation Supports
"Train and Hope" ;-(

I'M BACK FROM TRAINING.

I GOT A BIG BINDER.

THE TRAINING IS ALREADY FORGOTTEN, BUT THE BINDER WILL LAST FOREVER.

A LIVING MONUMENT TO TEMPORARY KNOWLEDGE!
Implementation Supports Defined

- Non-evaluative, informative supports that help a professional reflect on and action plan how to follow through with specific practices that students are in need of to promote their success in school.
Implementation Supports

• **EMR Resource Library (hard and electronic copy)**

• **Dedicated professional learning community (PLC) meetings**
  • Equity/Triage Tree Exercise
  • EMR Reflection Form
  • Student Relationship Data
  • Relationship Action Planning Form
  • Fidelity Reflection Forms
EMR Resource Library

- Contents of Resource Library
  - Menu of Practices
  - Flow Chart
  - Practice Profiles describing specific EMR practices
  - Appendices
  - Question bank for Banking Time and Gather, Review, Acknowledge (GRA)
  - GRA Template
Professional Learning Community

• **EMR PLC Meeting 5-Step Agenda:**
  • Step 1: Reflect on last month’s effort and progress
  • Step 2: Reflect on your current relationship status with your students
  • Step 3: Equity reflection
  • Step 4: Action planning to build secure relationships with specific students
  • Step 5: Building accountability for yourself
Equity/Triage Tree Exercise: Identifying Who Needs it the Most

Apples represent the students in your class.

Where a student is located depends on the relationship you have with the student.

Step 1:
Select the class you are struggling with the most
Step 2:
Separate the tree into thirds

- **Bottom** = low hanging fruit (easy to build relationship)
- **Middle** = those who require more effort but you have a relationship with
- **Top** = difficult to reach students who need you to extend a relationship latter
Equity/Triage Tree Exercise: Identifying Who Needs it the Most

Step 3: Exploring inequities

- Is gender equally distributed across the tree?
- Is race/ethnicity equally distributed across the tree?
- Is socioeconomic status equally distributed across the tree?
Equity/Triage Tree Exercise: Identifying Who Needs it the Most

Step 4: Equity

- Action plan: Identify, Establish or Restore strategies that you can use with the students in the upper third of the tree who are in need of them the most.
**Establish (E):** the relationship is currently characterized more as an acquaintance because a sense of trust, respect, and connection has not been established with the student.

**Maintain (M):** the relationship with the student is secure and characterized by a sense of trust, respect, and connection.

**Restore (R):** the relationship with the student has been strained/harmed due to a negative interaction and there is a need to restore the relationship back to its previous state through a skillful interaction.

See EMR Monthly Reflection Handout
Have you already established a relationship with this student characterized by a sense of trust, respect, and connection?

- **No**
- **Yes, but this relationship is strained/harmed**

**ESTABLISH**
- Are you having difficulty establishing a relationship with this student?
  - **No**
  - **Yes, 2x10 Objective Observation (COR)**
    - Positive Farewells
    - Wise Feedback
  - **5:1 Ratio Positive: Negative Interactions**
    - Letting Go
    - Ownership for Problem
    - Empathy Statement
    - Statement of Care
    - Collaborative Problem-Solving
    - Repeat as necessary

**MAINTAIN**
- Is this student continuously in the Restore stage?
  - **No**
  - **Yes, Getting out of Ruts (COR)**

**RESTORE**
- Move to Maintain
Students are asked to indicate the extent of their agreement with each of the following six statements:

- **Belonging**: I feel like Mr. Cook wants me in the classroom.
- **Respect**: I feel respected by Mr. Cook.
- **Connection**: Mr. Cook has made an effort to get to know me as a person—not just a student.
- **Equity**: Mr. Cook treats students like me fairly.
- **Care**: I can tell Mr. Cook cares about me.
- **Motivation**: Mr. Cook motivates me to try to do well in class.
Student Relationship Data

See Student Data Summary Handout