

Understanding Trauma's Impact: Optimizing Safety to Enhance Learning

Presented By: Emma Wilson

Date(s):

Friday, January 17, 2020
9:00 AM - 3:30 PM

Session Location:

Central Alberta Regional Consortium
8 Page Avenue, Red Deer, AB

Registration Fee:

\$75.00

Audience: Teachers

Grade Level: K-12

About the Session:

Experts in the area of trauma have deemed trauma to be our greatest public health concern. It is estimated that 1 in 4 children are impacted by trauma. From an education standpoint, this would suggest that 25% of the students in our classrooms struggle with this issue. For some classrooms, particularly those that are densely populated with children living in poverty, children from war-torn countries, and/or children from marginalized communities – the number may be higher. Trauma can have devastating effects on our development, behaviour, as well as our availability to learn. In order to provide our children with optimal learning environments, where they can flourish and grow, it is imperative that administrators, teachers and support staff gain an awareness of trauma and learn how to address some of trauma's challenging barriers.

This workshop will prepare you with some basic knowledge of trauma, particularly with its impact on our brains as well as our bodies. To 'know' you are safe can often be worlds away from 'feeling' that you are safe. The importance of relationship can never be underestimated when dealing with a child who has been impacted. As children were never meant to learn from strangers, we will be discussing the importance of attachment and the kind of connection that is required for children to feel safe and taken care of. Strategies and 'tools' that will develop and enhance 'trauma-informed' environments/classrooms, will be discussed. However, it is my belief that these strategies will become apparent and even – intuitive, as we uncover trauma's impact.

Finally, it is with great compassion that I address the impact of working with traumatized children. As a social worker within the education system, I hear many stories that are steeped in trauma and grief. I often witness many concerning and even frightening behaviours. I wouldn't be human if I said that it didn't take a toll. However, my training as a social worker has provided me with the insight and tools to buffer against vicarious trauma. After having spent the past few years working with teachers, administrators and support staff who are often working much more closely with traumatized children than I am, I worry about the impact on them. Vicarious trauma was not part of their training. It is essential that we get better at caring for ourselves. Not only will we experience greater job satisfaction, but our services and interactions will be more effective and children will have a greater capacity to learn.

About the Presenter(s):

Emma Wilson

In Emma's fifteen years of working with children and youth she has frequently come in contact with families, teachers, administrators and colleagues, who struggle to support, teach and parent, children who have experienced trauma, as a result of neglect, marginalization and/or come from war torn countries. Emma is currently a Social Worker with the Thames Valley District School Board and in 2016, as the lead social worker, she gained extensive experience working with refugees coming from Syria, through the internationally acclaimed pilot project called GENTLE. This program assisted in 'gently' transitioning London's Syrian newcomers into the education system as well as community. It was this experience which gave her deeper insights into trauma and how it impacts on children, how it interferes with their development, behaviour and ability to learn. Since then, Emma has presented her ideas about trauma and attachment and their impact on childhood development at international and national conferences; the London Board of Education, OISE, school administrators, social workers and the community at large. She has also provided individual counselling for trauma impacted students and their families; organized and implemented trauma –informed classrooms for students with complex PTSD; and provided consultation to various system and community professionals. Emma earned her Masters of Social Work degree from King's College – University of Western, Ontario and for the past seven years she has immersed herself in attachment training, through the Neufeld Institute and trauma training through the National Institute for the Clinical Application of Behavioral Medicine and the Cape Cod Institute.

