



Play in a Trauma Responsive Environment



Early Childhood Council of La Plata County, Colorado

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Importance of a Disclaimer



The Manzanita Counseling Training Clinic

Free Counseling
505/277-7311

Manzanita Counseling Training Clinic is a community outreach program provided by the University of New Mexico Counselor Education Program. The Manzanita Counseling Training Clinic has been in existence for over 25 years and is the only free counseling clinic in Albuquerque



The topic of trauma can be difficult to consider. Talking about traumatic events or experiences can cause stress. Stories of real children and their traumatic experiences may be shared in this setting. It may be very difficult to hear these stories.

In addition, you may also have experienced trauma in the past or are currently experiencing trauma. We want to be sensitive to you.

Anyone in this training who becomes uncomfortable or distressed should take steps to care for yourself and your well-being however you see best fit to do so.

BRAINSTORM

With your group, write at least *one sticky note* each with a *word* or *phrase* defining or describing:

What is trauma?

WHAT IS TRAUMA?

“An event, series of events, or set of circumstances that is experienced by an individual as physically or emotionally harmful or life threatening and that has lasting adverse effects on the individual’s functioning and mental, physical, social, emotional, or spiritual well-being.” ¹

Childhood trauma: “The experience of an event by a child that is emotionally painful or distressful, which often results in lasting mental and physical effects.” ²

¹ Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. (n.d.). *Trauma and violence*, para. 2. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. <https://www.samhsa.gov/trauma-violence>

² Blue Knot Foundation. (n.d.) *What is childhood trauma?* National Center of Excellence for Complex Trauma. <https://www.blueknot.org.au/resources/information/understanding-abuse-and-trauma/what-is-childhood-trauma>

TYPES OF TRAUMA

Physical abuse

Domestic violence

Sexual abuse

Medical trauma

Community violence

and manmade disasters

Bullying

Refugee trauma

Traumatic grief

Terrorism and violence

Extreme poverty

Natural

PLAY ACTIVITY



BRAINSTORM

With your group, write at least *one sticky note* each with a *word* or *phrase* defining or describing:

What is play?

WHAT IS PLAY?

“Play is typically considered a pleasurable, spontaneous, non-goal directed activity that can include anticipation, flow and surprise.” ¹

Through play, children learn to persist, interact, engage, invent, and act out their ideas and share them. Play affirms and stimulates children’s creativity and nurtures the ‘thinking outside the box’ approach that children will use to contribute their own ideas to the world. ²

¹ Barnett, L. & Owens, M. (2015). Does play have to be playful? In Johnson, J., Eberle, S., Henricks, T., & Kushner, D (Eds.), The handbook of the study of play (pp. 453-459).

² Luckenbill, J., Subramaniam, A., & Thompson, J. (2020). The Importance of Play for Young Children. In This is play environments and interactions that engage infants and toddlers. essay, National Association for the Education of Young Children.

The Role of Play in Any Setting



Benefits of Play: Children Facing Trauma

- Play facilitates brain organization and healthy development
- Play disarms fears
- Play mimics important and purposeful behavior
- Play allows children to regain their voice
- Play reduces shame and helps children regain a sense of competence
- Play gives children an avenue for self-expression

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What's *our* role?

Play in a Trauma Responsive Environment

What does it *look* like?

- Time for child-directed play
- Open-ended materials
- Teacher welcoming children
- Songs during gatherings
- Smiling, laughing, language
- Child choice in activities
- Authentic connections

What does it *sound* like?

- Calm, consistent tone
- Child-directed conversation
- Praise for moments of success
- Validation of feelings
- Positive guidance strategies
- Freedom to make choices

“Play, **especially when accompanied by nurturing caregiving**, may indirectly affect human brain functioning by modulating or buffering adversity and reducing toxic stress to levels that are more compatible with coping and resilience.”

Yogman, M., A. Garner, J. Hutchinson, K. Hirsh-Pasek, & R.M. Golinkoff. 2018. “The Power of Play: A Pediatric Role in Enhancing Development in Young Children.” *Pediatrics* 142 (3): 1-17. <http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/143/3/e20182058>.

Authentic Connections

Eye Contact



Touch*



Presence



Playfulness



QUESTIONS?



Reflection Activity

Using the handout as a guide, take a moment to reflect on what you've learned this morning.

Are there strategies you can implement in your classroom immediately?

RESOURCES

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