



HWC Georgia with AC HIDTA

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Andrea Darr

Co-Founder of Handle with
Care West Virginia

Available to provide
training, coaching and
mentoring for HWC
Implementation

Welcome to Handle with Care



304-610-3474



adarr@handlewithcarenational.com

What do you think of when you hear the word Trauma?

Potential Causes of Trauma:

Loss of a loved one, accidents, child abuse and neglect, homelessness, bullying, community or school violence, domestic violence, removal from home/family, serious medical illness, man-made or natural disasters, witnessing violence, terrorism

Potential Emotional Responses:

Fear, anxiety, sadness, anger, helplessness, feeling overwhelmed

Resulting in:

Recurring memories and flashbacks, difficulty sleeping, physical symptoms, hypervigilance

Three E's of Trauma

Event

Events or
circumstances that
caused the trauma

Experience

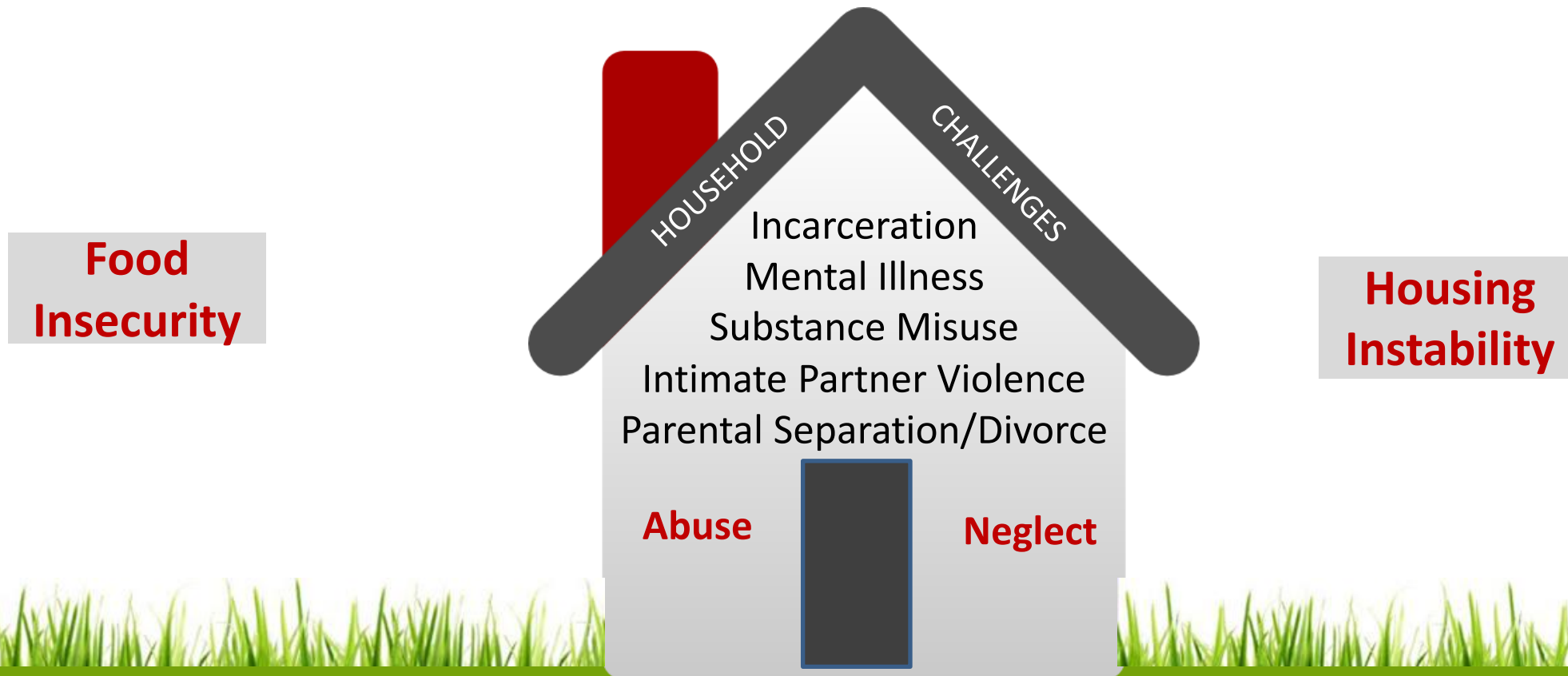
An individual's
experience of the
event determines if it
is traumatic

Effect

Effects of trauma
include adverse
physical, social,
emotional, or spiritual
consequences

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE's)

Trauma is prevalent in the lives of children



Poverty

Discrimination

Lack of Opportunity

Grief

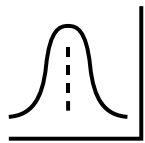
Poor Housing

Violence

Childhood Trauma Changes the Brain and Body



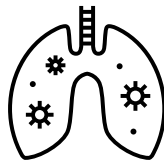
Neurological Rewiring



Your alarm system becomes overactive



Nervous system struggles to reset

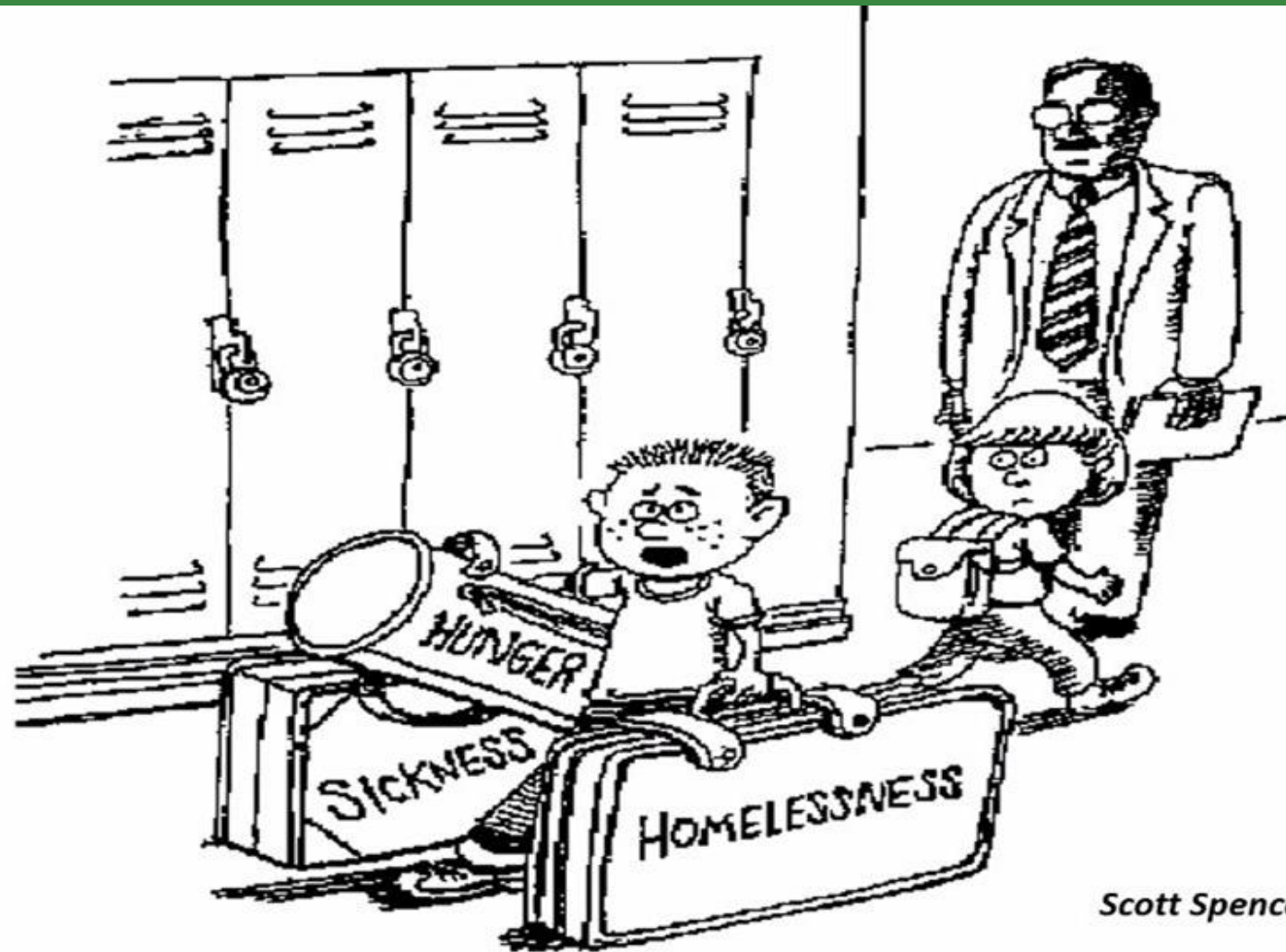


Immune system alterations

Trauma Changes Things

Traumatic experiences can set in motion a cascade of changes in children's lives that can be challenging and difficult.

- ✓ Changes in where they live
- ✓ Where they go to school
- ✓ Who they are living with
- ✓ Daily routines
- ✓ Living with injury or disability to themselves or others
- ✓ Ongoing criminal or civil proceedings

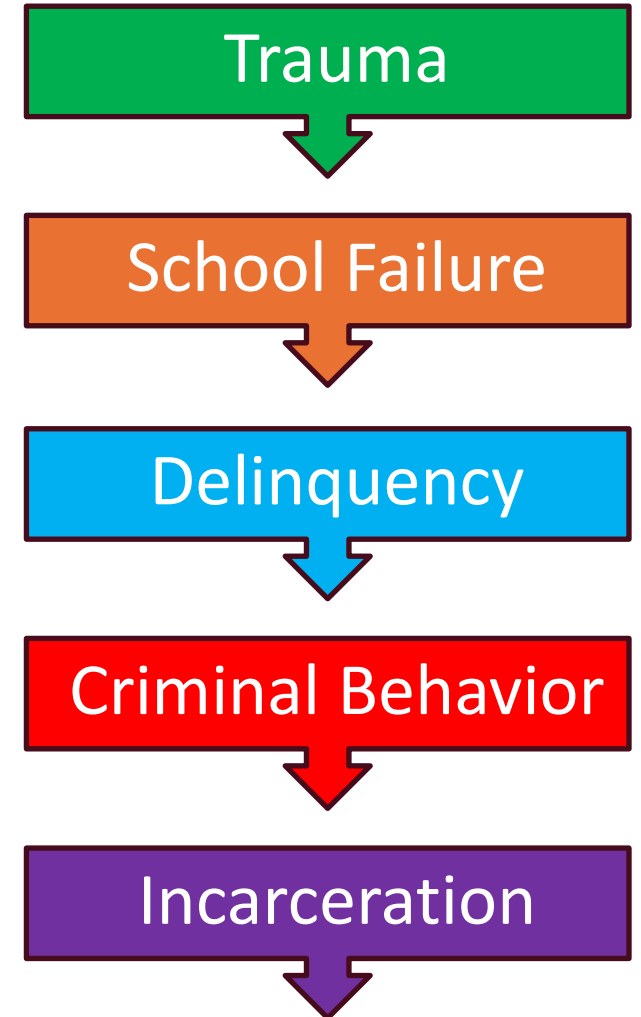


Scott Spencer

***“Could someone help me with these?
I’m late for math class.”***

Adverse Childhood Experiences

- Get behind in school
- Start skipping school
- Drop out of school
- Become involved in things they should not be involved in
- Often become involved with the Juvenile Justice System



Children with 3+ ACEs

- 5 times more likely to have attendance issues
- 6 times more likely to have behavior problems
- 3 times more likely to experience academic failure

Kaiser Permanente. (2023). *Adverse childhood experiences (aces)*.
Thriving Schools | a Partnership for Healthy Students, Staff & Teachers.
<https://thrivingschools.kaiserpermanente.org/mental-health/aces/>

Schools Have Tremendous Power to:

- Buffer the impacts of trauma and support resilience and post-traumatic growth

OR

- Further distress, perpetuate ACEs, or even retraumatize at school

Early intervention can be the difference between a child who struggles for months or years versus a child who's supported, understood, and getting what they need to live their best life.



**Where is the child
the next day?**



What Could Happen at School the Next Day?

The Student

- I don't have my homework
- I'm worried about mom/dad
- I forgot to study for the test
- I'm so tired and hungry
- My belly hurts
- Staring off into space
- Short tempered/acting out

The Teacher and Staff

- Where is your homework?
- Why didn't you study for the test?
- Why can't you stay awake?
- Please pay attention
- Detention for bad behavior
- Moved closer to teacher
- Why is wrong with you?

What is Handle With Care (HWC)



HWC is designed to support children who have recently been exposed to traumatic events by minimizing the negative effects of the trauma as quickly as possible so that it does not interfere with the child's ability to learn, form relationships, and function appropriately.

The Solution: Handle Kids with Care

1

Police and other first responders send a confidential HWC notification to the school when a child is on the scene of an incident.

2

Schools provide trauma-sensitive supports for identified HWC students who exhibit the need for a little extra support.

3

Mental health providers partner with schools for accessible mental health services.

Handle with Care Continuum

Local Law Enforcement
notifies school staff
when a student is on the
scene of any incident

Key school staff are
alerted to handle the
student with care and
watch for signs of trauma

Students who need
interventions are
provided with
appropriate supports or
referrals

**Handle with Care improves
behavioral, social-emotional,
and academic outcomes.**

HWC History

In 2012 HWC was created in a subcommittee of the West Virginia Children's Justice Task Force in partnership with the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Southern District of West Virginia as part of a Defending Childhood Initiative.

- 2009 Office of Juvenile Justice & Delinquency Prevention Survey
- 2010 Attorney General Eric Holder launched the DCI
- 2011 WV CJTF & U.S. Attorney's Office formed a subcommittee
- 2012 Developed the HWC program
- 2013 Piloted the HWC program
- 2015 WV State Police launched HWC statewide
- 2018 HWC stakeholder meeting in all 55 counties
- 2026 HWC is in over 40 states

Why Did we Create Handle with Care?

Rural State

Job – Coal is no long King

1 in 4 WV Children live in poverty

Ground zero for the opioid crisis

Highest Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome

High rate of transient kid/couch surfers

Lead the nation in removing kids

2nd in the Grandparents raising grandkids



First Responders initiate the HWC Process

We don't have a program without you!

The Ask: child's name, age and school

Before HWC

First Responders would file a mandated report for children that met the reporting criteria

If children did not meet the *victimization criteria*, they were not identified or provided additional services.

Now with HWC Interventions

All children at the scene are identified

The school is provided a HWC Notification.

Trauma informed practices are heightened at the school

Flagged student(s) are simply "Handled with Care"

Police School Communication



Handle With Care Notice

From Law Enforcement to the School

To: _____ From: _____
(School) (Law Enforcement Agency)

Date: _____ Time: _____ Incident Date: _____

The child referenced below was on the scene of a police action in the last 24 hours and could exhibit academic, emotional and/or behavioral problems as a result of exposure to a traumatic event. Please handle him/her with care. For more information go to www.handlewithcarewv.org

Childs Name: _____ Age: _____

Childs Name: _____ Age: _____

Childs Name: _____ Age: _____



To: _____ From: _____
(Teacher) (Principle/Counselor)

Handle With Care

Student _____

Incident Date _____

FRAGILE



The Notice

It's only 3 words:
Handle with Care

No details are
every given

Best practice is
that it arrives
before the start of
the next school day

“Need to Know”
basis only at
school

Dose not stay in a
child's permanent
record

It does not mean
you approach the
child



A Handle with Care Notice does **NOT** take the place of a Mandated Report to Child Protective Services.

The Notice and Confidentiality

- The notice does not include any law enforcement sensitive information.
- No details as to what the operation concerned is share – and really isn't necessary.
- The notice does not imply that the child was involved in a First Responder operation.
- All the school knows is that the notice is coming from a First Responder agency and the child needs to be watched and handled with empathy.

Who Gets a HWC Notice?



Just check the box
Children present (yes or no)
IF yes, then name, age and school
And send the notice

When to Send a HWC Notice



- ✓ Before the start of the next school day.
- ✓ 24 hours a day, 365 days of the year – including weekends, holidays and school breaks.
- ✓ When school is out during the summer, keep sending the notices.

How To Send a HWC Notice?



HWC First Responder Responsibilities

- Provide notification to the school system when a child is exposed to trauma in the home or in the community to enable the child's school to handle the child with care upon arrival at school the next school day following the incident
- Interpret the phrase “exposed to trauma” broadly
- Include child's name; approximate age; school attended, if known; and “Handle with Care” or HWC
- Give no details about the event to the school
- Maintain the confidentiality of students and their families

Receiving HWC Notice at the School

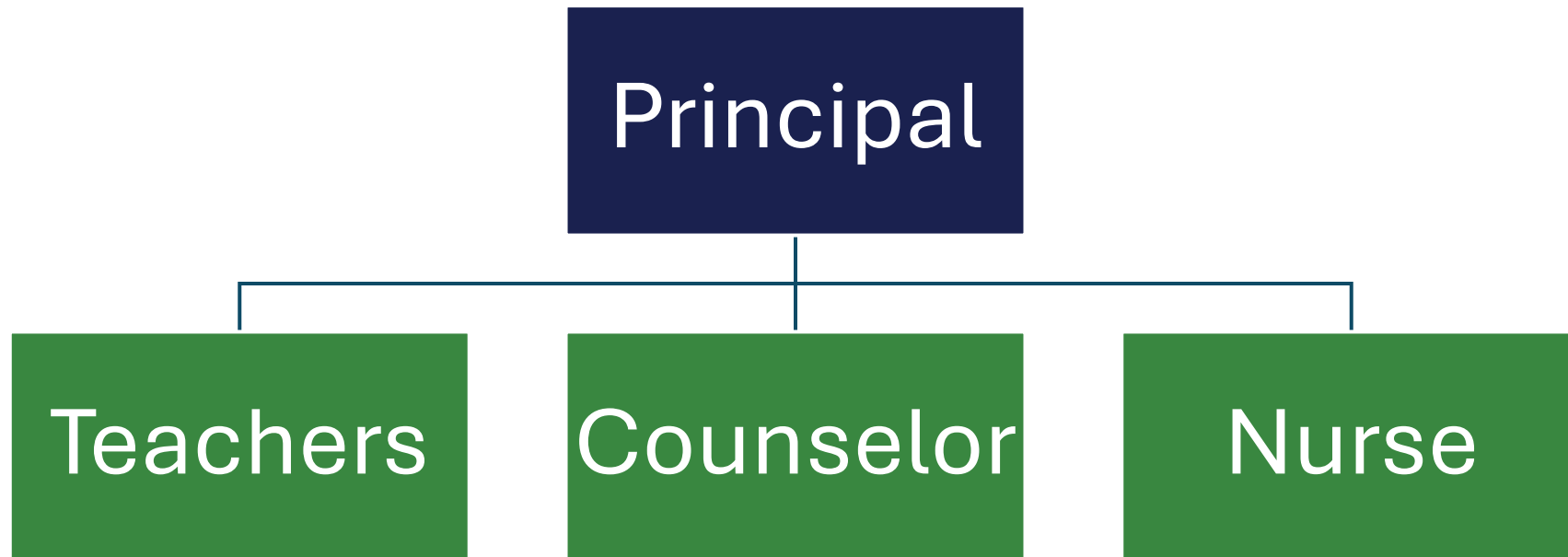
It does not mean you approach the child!

- There is no need to approach the student on the matter.
- This alert is for observation ONLY unless the student self-identifies and asks for support from you.
- There is no pressure “to do” anything.

DO NOT:

- Question the student about the incident further or pry, as that could retraumatize
- “Dig” for information about what happened
- Call the student’s parents/caregivers or do a home visit

Who Receives the HWC Notice at the School District?



What does a Dysregulated Child Look Like?

- Intense and frequent emotional outbursts
- Difficulty with impulse control
- Poor frustration tolerance
- Difficulty with transitions
- Sensory sensitivities
- Withdrawal or avoidance
- Cognitive difficulties



Trauma Informed Care

Realize

- Realizes widespread impact of trauma and understands potential paths to recovery;

Recognize

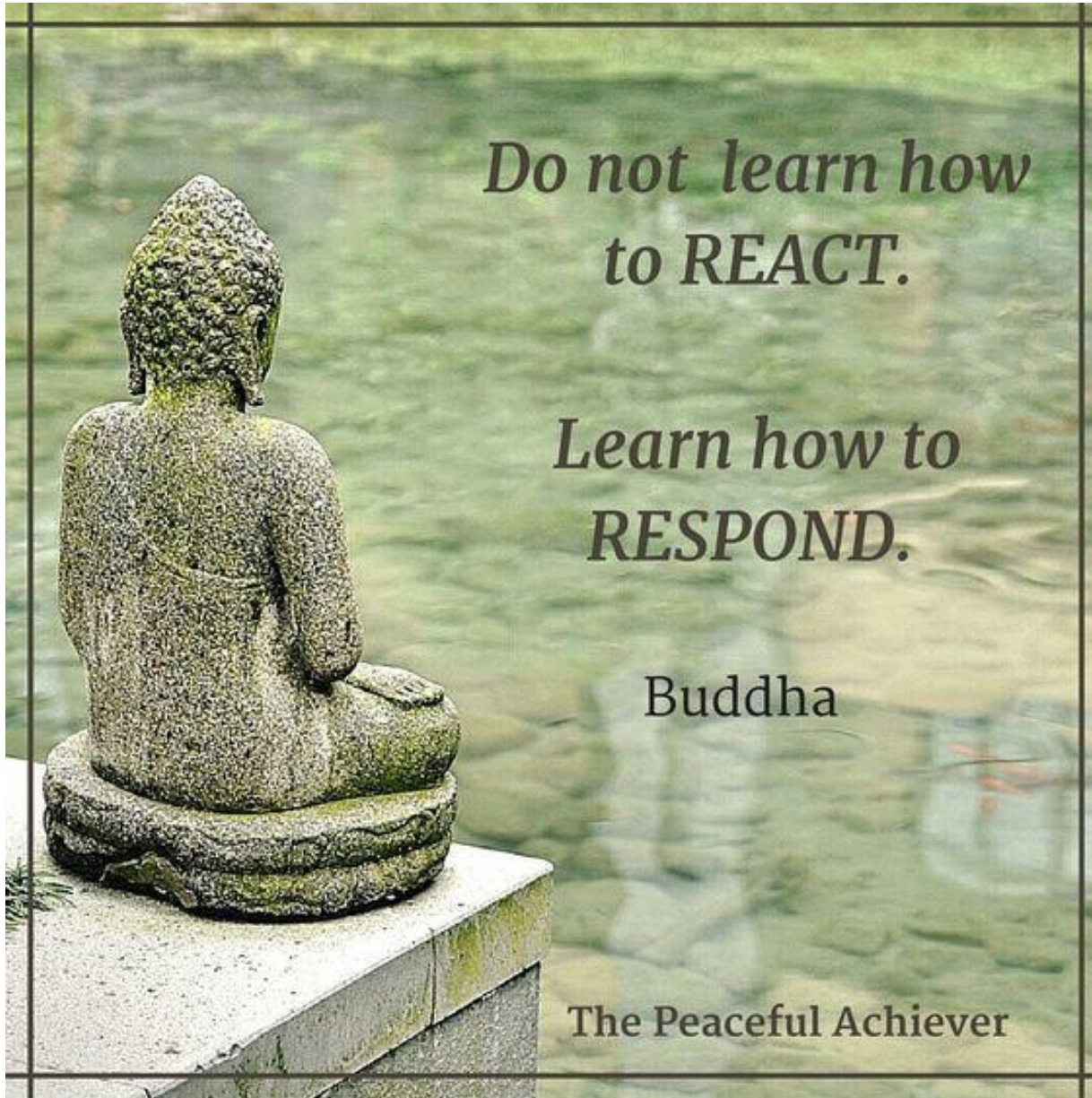
- Recognizes signs and symptoms of trauma in clients, families, staff and others;

Respond

- Responds by fully integrating knowledge about trauma into policies, procedures, and practices; and

Resist

- Seeks to actively resist re-traumatization



*Do not learn how
to REACT.*

*Learn how to
RESPOND.*

Buddha

The Peaceful Achiever

Handle with Care in Schools

Handle With Care sets schools up to be proactive, rather than reactive. With informed, caring personnel ready to share their calm, rather than contribute to the student's chaos.

Outcomes of traumatic situation can be minimized which:

- ✓ Reduces absenteeism
- ✓ Reduces disciplinary actions
- ✓ Builds students resilience and confidence
- ✓ Increases academic achievement

Trauma Informed Support for Children



A respectful and safe environment where children can build positive relationships with adults and peers, learn to manage their emotions and behavioral responses, and find academic success.

How we get there: Trauma sensitivity requires a whole school approach



Trauma Sensitive Schools

- Benefits all children
- Addresses trauma's impact on learning on a school-wide basis
- Looks at the child's behavior from a different perspective/mindset
- Provides teachers with the supports they need to address trauma's impact on learning



TRADITIONAL VIEW	TRAUMA INFORMED VIEW
Acting out child	Emotionally dysregulated child
Anger management problems	Scare/fight, flight, freeze response
Willful and naughty	Adaptive patterns of behavior
Manipulative	Seeking to get needs met
Uncontrollable	In need of skills to self-regulate
Off task/not paying attention adaptations	Hypervigilant or dissociative
Pushing buttons	Negative template or worldview
In need of consequences to motivate	In need of effective intervention to heal

School and Classroom Interventions

Food, sleep, and clean clothes

Safe, predictable and supportive environments

Connection to a caring adult

Clear expectations and boundaries

Choice to develop decision making skills

Empowerment for self confidence

Examples of Supports for Students

- Sending a student to the clinic to rest if the student is having trouble staying awake or focusing
- Allowing them or assisting them in getting food
- Allowing them to have some quiet time in a calming corner
- Re-teaching lessons
- Postponing testing
- If the student is struggling, you can refer them to counseling

How do Schools Respond with HWC?

Without a HWC Notice	With a HWC Notice
Didn't bring homework	
Got a Zero	Received extra time to complete
Fell asleep in class	
Lost recess	Sent to the nurse's clinic to rest
Got into a scuffle at lunch	
Received detention	There was no scuffle/student was rested and supported in the morning
Field trip permission slip not signed	
Had to stay behind	Received verbal permission/phone

Example of HWC in High school

This example was shared by the schoolteacher. The teacher received a HWC notice on one of her students in the morning, the notice showed the incident had occurred at 11:00pm the previous night. The student had an oral book report presentation that he was supposed to make to the class that morning. Being trauma informed, the teacher approached the student and asked him to present his report the following day, saying that another student needed to present that morning. She saw a huge look of relief on the child's face and knew she had made the right decision. Sometimes it's the little things that make a big difference.

Why Create a Trauma Sensitive School System?



Schools provide possibilities for traumatized children to forge relationships with caring adults and learn in a *supportive*, *predictable*, and *safe* environment.

Traditional Unforgiving Disciplinary and Expulsion Policies **Do Not Work with Children Experiencing Trauma**

- The brain cannot focus when it is not calm
- Children must feel safe enough to learn
- They do not understand “if this then this”

Safe and Supportive Schools are the Answer

What if School Interventions are not Enough



In Summary, HWC:



- Identifies the children who are the most vulnerable
- Provides teachers with a heads up
- Connects children with accessible mental health services if needed
- Strengthens and improves relationships in the community
- Improves academic, social emotional, and behavior outcomes for kids!

HWC Model of Fidelity



- ✓ HWC stakeholder/partner meeting
- ✓ Commitments from local agency heads/leaders
- ✓ Training for Law Enforcement on sending the notice
- ✓ Training for school staff on trauma sensitive schools
- ✓ Accessible mental health services
- ✓ Quarterly meetings to assess participation
- ✓ First Responders develop and improve positive relationships with students



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