Three Pillars of Trauma Informed Care

1) Safety:
According to theorists such as Erik Erikson, who developed the Attachment Theory, one of the primary necessities of child during development is their need to feel safe and establish trust. Many times traumatized children will become cautious and feel unsafe around adults.

2) Connections:
Establishing secure connections, or healthy relationships, is also extremely important for the development of children. Traumatized children can often associate adults with several negative emotions. Through trauma informed care (TIC), care providers can change these negative associations in order for the child to develop more positive emotional responses, such as cheerfulness and joy.

3) Managing Emotions and Impulses:
Some traumatized children haven’t had the help from their parents to learn how to effectively calm themselves down when they’re feeling upset, nervous, or anxious. Care providers who use TIC techniques can help traumatized children learn how to control their emotions of distress in new and supportive ways.

Ways to Apply Trauma Informed Care

TIC care providers should not be afraid to ask traumatized children about their experiences, yet should be aware and respect that traumatized children can feel very vulnerable and sensitive when talking about or re-living their incidences. TIC care providers can effectively and respectfully help children talk about traumatizing events by assuring children that they can talk about these events whenever they are ready to and at whatever pace they feel comfortable doing so. TIC providers let children know that they will be asked questions about their traumatic experiences, but they do not need to answer any questions they don’t feel comfortable answering. Finally, TIC providers sincerely and genuinely listen to the children and provide them support during as well as after they speak about their traumas.

Peace of the City

Peace of the City was founded in 1992 as an institution for children and teens attending schools in the western side of downtown Buffalo. Peace of the City offers many programs that help children and adolescents develop skills, tools, and values “needed to succeed educationally, break the cycle of poverty, and lead meaningful, productive lives.” One of the many goals of Peace of the City is that the children and teens who attend their programs can use the skills and values they learn to become future role models and leaders in their communities.

The program that I am familiar with at Peace of the City is the Peace Club, or Homework Club. In this program, children from ages 5-12 work on their homework, read books, and play games with staff members and volunteers. Most children arrive right after school and stay at Peace Club until 5:30. During the time that they’re at Peace Club, children work on their homework, practice additional reading skills, and play games with other children as well as the adult volunteers.

Since Buffalo has the second highest poverty rate for children in the Unite States, Peace of the City wanted to create a space in which the children and teens that attend their programs could call their “home away from home.”

Techniques Used by Peace of the City

The staff and volunteers at Peace of the City ensure that they uphold and apply the three pillars of trauma informed care around the children and teens who attend their programs. The staff have also come up with several ways in which they can use TIC successfully with children of their organization.

Peace of the City has an “open-door” policy in all of their classrooms in which their programs take place. By using this technique, the children and teens are aware that they aren’t trapped or confined to one space. Instead, the children are free to leave if they feel uncomfortable in certain situations or if they feel like they need time to away from all the other children to destress. In the Peace Club program, the children are free to go out in the hallway to get their homework from their backpacks without asking for permission. The children can also leave the classrooms to use the restrooms or ask other volunteers for help at their leisure without having to ask permission. This again reassures the children that they have the power to remove themselves from situations whenever they feel the need to.

Staff members and volunteers at Peace of the City who work in Peace Club often have one-on-one interactions with the children at this program to help them focus on improving their education. These one-on-one interactions also help the children form emotional connections with the volunteers and staff members in ways that feel comfortable and safe for them.

BIBLIOGRAPHY
