

What is Trauma?

Trauma is a scary event or a group of scary events that changes how a person reacts to stress. These types of events make people feel afraid or in danger. Trauma can also be when a person is abused by another person, in a physical, mental, or emotional way. Some examples of an event that may cause trauma are death of a family member, divorce, a fire, or abuse.

When a child has gone through trauma they may have trouble dealing with some situations for the rest of their life. Trauma can change a child's behavior, how they relate to others, and the way they react to everyday events. A child who has gone through trauma may have other health problems as they become an adult. But children can control their behavior better if they receive help.

Children who experience trauma may also experience negative impacts relating to their education. Trauma may lead to increased school absences, decreased reading levels and school performance.

Traumatic Events

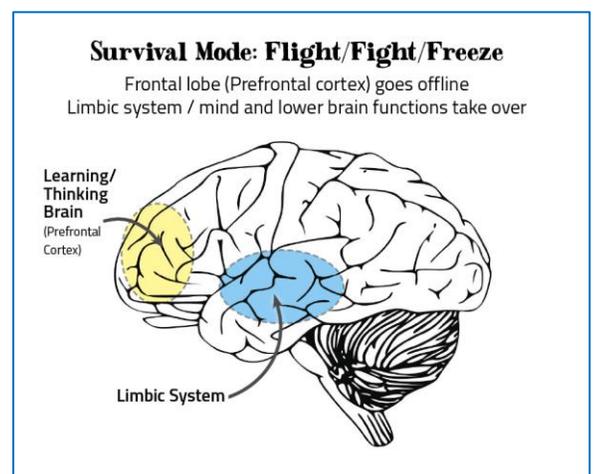
A traumatic event may be a single episode or could happen repeatedly over a period of time. The effects of trauma on a child usually worsen if they continually go through traumatic events. Some examples include:

- Sexual or physical abuse
- Neglect or abandonment
- Life-threatening illness or death of a family member or caregiver
- Family member in jail
- Victim or Witness of Domestic violence
- Homelessness or temporary housing
- Victim or Witness of violence in the community or at school

Signs of Trauma

A body's natural response to any stress is **fight, flight, or freeze** which causes the nervous system to go into an elevated state and then returning back to its natural state. When a child has experienced **toxic stress** (trauma) however, the body thinks the elevated state as normal.

Triggers, or "threat-cues", are situations that may set off a reaction by a child who has experienced trauma. Triggers may include loud noises, criticism, demeaning tone of voice, or activities that involve particular memories.



As a group leader, you may be able to notice **trigger warnings**, or situations that signal possible triggers. If a child is restless, short of breath, shaking, crying, laughing at inappropriate times, using aggressive language, or clenching their teeth or fists, they may be particularly prone to reacting to triggers.

Effects of Trauma

Students who experience trauma may show specific behaviors in the classroom. Trauma may affect the way a child develops. The effects of trauma can be different between students in lower and upper elementary grades.

Behaviors Indicative of Exposure to Trauma in Children, by Elementary Age Group	
<i>Preschool Students (Ages 3-5)</i>	<i>Elementary Students (Ages 6-12)</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Separation anxiety or fear caregiver will not return ● Regression of mastered skills (e.g. language, problem solving) ● Tiredness from difficulty sleeping ● Absenteeism ● Overreactions to loud noises, physical contact, sudden movements ● New fears ● Questions about death or dying 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Anxiety or worry for safety of self and others ● Decreased focus and concentration ● Withdrawal from activities ● Angry outbursts and aggression ● Absenteeism or declining school performance ● Inappropriate response to social cues ● Difficulty with authority

LOW and SLOW

When implementing strategies in the classroom, be mindful of:

Tone

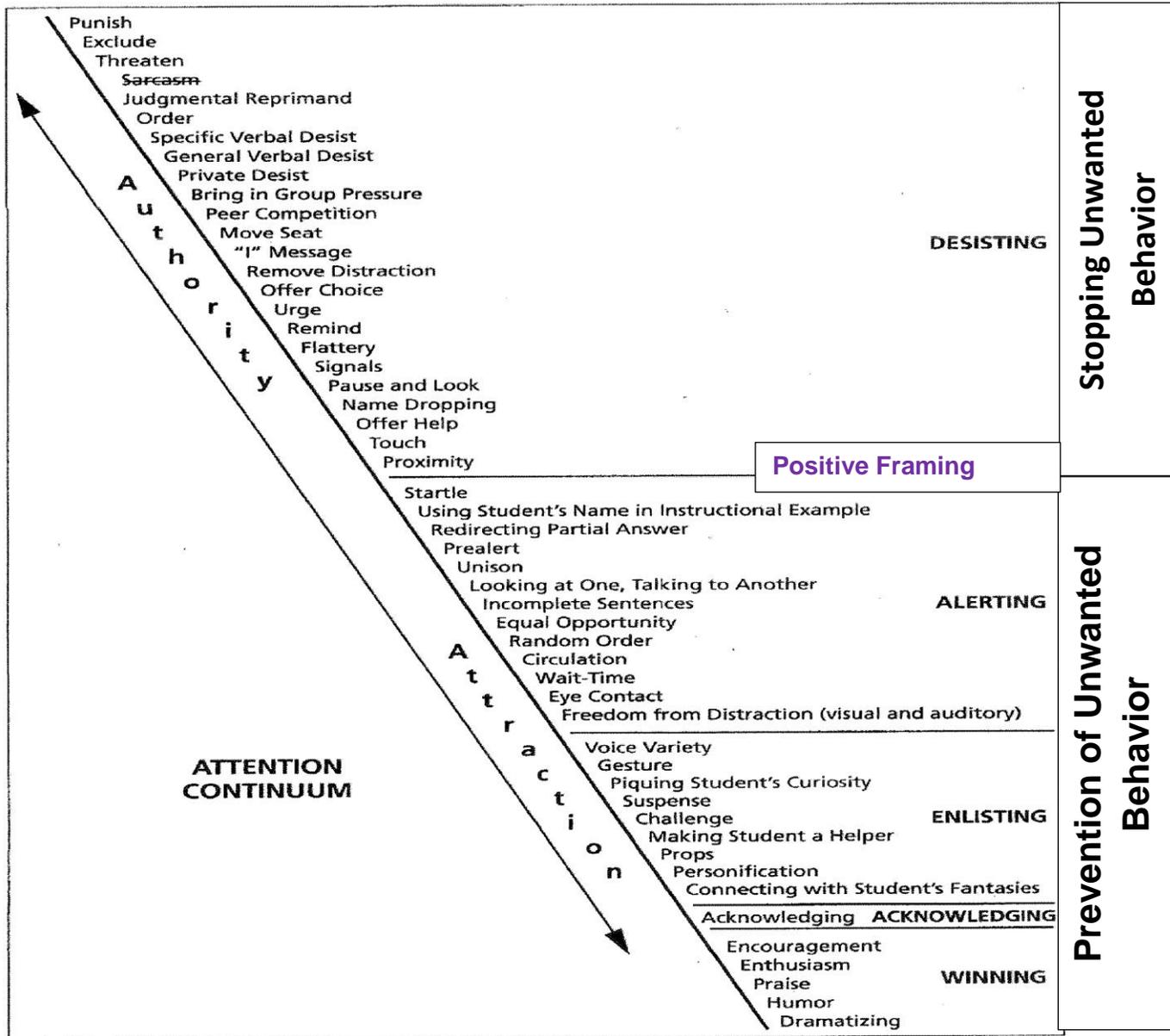
Body Language

Volume

Space

The Skillful Teacher (p.24)

Figure 3.1. A Repertoire of Attention Moves



POSITIVE FRAMING STRATEGIES

- **Live in the Now:**

Example: Show me your eyes, fifth grade.

Non-example: Fifth grade, some of us are looking out the window.

Example: Third grade, Tina is describing the setting. Our eyes should be on the speaker.

Example: Charles, Tina is describing the setting. Your eyes should be on the speaker.

Non-example: Charles I'm tired of asking you to track the speaker.

- **Assume the Best:**

Example: Just a minute, fourth grade. A couple of people were so excited to write about Roald Dahl that they went ahead before I told them to start.

Non-example: Fourth grade, none of us should be trying to sneak ahead of the rest of the class.

Example: A couple of people forgot our rules about tracking, Tina. Give them a second before you start.

Non-Example: Tina, please wait to answer until Jeffrey decides to join us.

- **Allow Plausible Anonymity:**

Example: Fourth grade, check yourself to make sure you're in your best SLANT with your notes page in front of you.

Non-example: Jason, I want to see you in SLANT with your notes page in front of you.

- **Build Momentum/Narrate the Positive:**

Example (Narrate the Positive): I see lots of hands. The left side of the room is really with it!

Example (Narrate the Positive + Build Momentum): I see five, six, seven hands. Now ten hands ready to start reading *Hatchet!*

Non-Example: (Narrating Your Weaknesses): I'm seeing the same few hands. A lot of you are not participating and it's going to show up in your participation grades.

- **Challenge!:**

Example: You've got the idea but let me hear you use the word "elusive" in your answer. Can you do it?!

Example: The sixth grade girls are *killing* it boys. Can you keep the pace?

- **Talk Aspiration:**

Example: (To a fourth grader) Good, Juan. Now let me hear you make it a fifth grade answer by using the word "product."

Example: Can you answer that in the words of a scientist? (Or historian/writer/musician)

WORKSHOP SURVEY

Thank you for taking part in our workshop! We would like your help in understanding how to improve the workshop, how much you learned, and if you think that you will apply what you learned in your work and life. Please take a few minutes to fill the following survey. Honest feedback is welcome!

1) What was the best part of the workshop?

2) What did you LIKE LEAST about the workshop?

3) How would you improve the workshop?

4) Please circle the number that best represents your knowledge and skills before and after this training:

Understanding the effects of trauma in the classroom:

BEFORE THE WORKSHOP					AFTER THE WORKSHOP				
Very Low	Low	Medium	High	Very high	Very Low	Low	Medium	High	Very high
1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5

Using trauma-sensitive strategy of Positive-Framing in the classroom:

BEFORE THE WORKSHOP					AFTER THE WORKSHOP				
Very Low	Low	Medium	High	Very high	Very Low	Low	Medium	High	Very high
1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5

5) How likely are you to use the knowledge and skills that you learned in the workshop? (Please circle)

Not likely at all	Not likely	Neutral	Likely	Very likely
1	2	3	4	5

6) What challenges do you think you will have in using what you learned?

7) Any other feedback?