

Thrive 365

Dragonfly: Impact Education



Did you know?

Any form of abuse, neglect, accident or injury that is sufficiently serious to adversely affect progress and enjoyment of someone's life is classed as significant harm. Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) are potentially traumatic events that happen in childhood and can result in significant harm.

Supporting children with ACEs is one of the many points of connection between the work of the DSL and the mental health lead in schools. Research links ACEs to poor outcomes in later life because of an increased risk of developing health harming behaviours.

② Non-demanding talk

Secure and stable relationships are centrally important to children with ACEs. One way of establishing such a relationship is to make time – even just 5 minutes at transition time, break or lunch – to allow for some non-demanding interaction where 100% attention is given to child without criticising, asking questions, or making suggestions. For children who don't like to engage directly, working side by side on tasks such as packing away, wiping tables etc provides an opportunity for this type of interaction. It's nothing revolutionary to us – but target this at the right children and it could be revolutionary for them!

① Be ACE aware

The toxic stress caused by ACEs can lead to changes in the way the brain develops, affecting organisational skills, the processing of information, dealing with transitions and working with others.[i] Simply by being ACE aware, staff are better equipped to support children with the 'hidden' or social curriculum in schools.

Seemingly small things such as having support to help children who struggle with personal organisation, such as recording homework and when it's due, or packing bags can make a big difference!

③ Create safe spaces

Knowing that there is a physical place they can go to if things feel too much can provide a psychological safety net. This can be a separate room that children access via a 'time out' card or a corner of a larger space such as a library - the physical nature of a corner feels safe as we have an evolutionary need to be able to protect ourselves from the back. It's important to have guidelines for the use of 'safe spaces', a regular time-limit, and routines surrounding activities to be done there (for example journaling or breathing exercises) and the transition to and from the space.

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[i] <http://www.healthscotland.scot/media/1517/tackling-the-attainment-gap-by-preventing-and-responding-to-adverse-childhood-experiences.pdf>