



# Trauma-Informed Classroom Interventions



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# Overview of Trauma and ACES

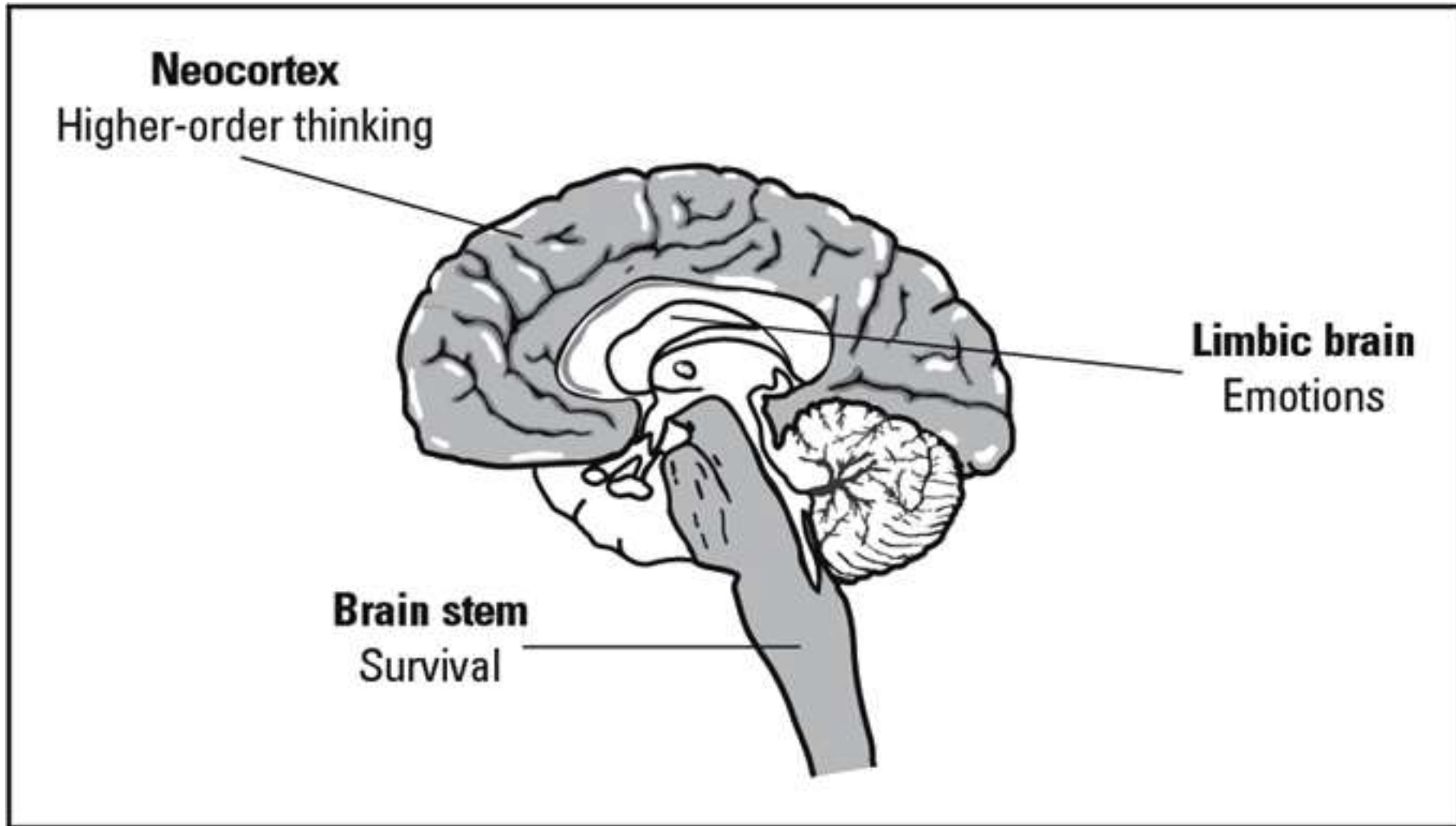


# What is Trauma?

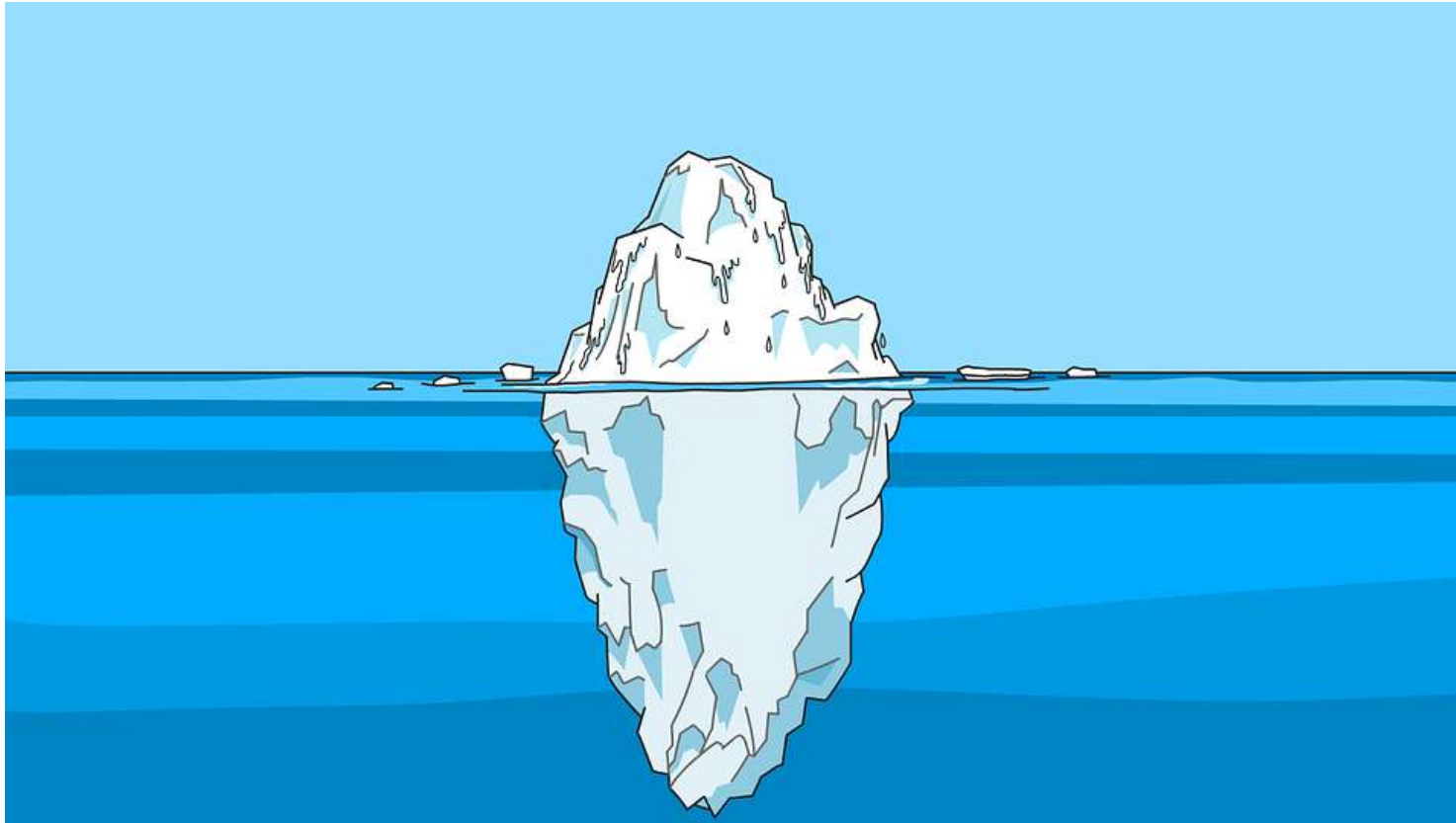
- Trauma is anything that changes the brain's development.
- Examples include:
  - Abuse, assault, natural disaster, death of loved one.
- Really, anything can lead to trauma depending upon the person and the circumstance.



# The Brain Basics



# Trauma in the Classroom



# Adverse Childhood Experiences

## Abuse

Physical

Emotional

Sexual

## Neglect

Physical

Emotional

## Household Dysfunction

Mental Illness

Domestic Violence

Divorce

Incarcerated Relative

Substance Abuse

# Classroom and School Application





# Multi-Tiered System of Support

**Tier 3:**  
1:1 or 1:2 ratio.  
The highest level  
of support  
offered outside of the classroom

**Tier 2:** Support provided in small groups.  
Where we identify “lagging skills” and develop  
plan to improve.

**Tier 1:** Typically, 85% of children will fall into Tier 1. This is  
where you will use educational best practices using  
children’s readiness level and positive behavioral supports.

# Steps to Trauma-Informed Schools

- Four critical steps to implementing trauma-informed instruction:
  - Allow the student to de-escalate and regulate before solving the issue at hand.
    - Problem solving cannot happen in the moment. Designate a quiet space a student can feel safe de-escalating.
- It's never about the current issue. It goes much deeper.
  - Think about what is really driving the student's behavior. Listen and value the student's voice, ask how you can help, and respond with empathy.



# Steps to Trauma Informed Schools

- It's a brain issue, not a behavioral issue.
  - My job is to help this student regulate, not simply behave. Incorporate regulatory activities into the culture of the classroom and support students in their ability to learn how to self-regulate.
- Discipline is to teach, not to punish.
  - Discipline should happen through the context of relationship. Use consequences that keep students in school and foster the building of trust and safety.



**Allow the student to  
de-escalate and regulate  
before problem solving.**



# Regulation

- Motivation is more about regulation than about making a choice to follow the rules.
  - For students who have experienced trauma the idea of “follow the rules and you will not get in trouble” or “follow the rules and you will get a reward” does not work.
- When a student who has experienced trauma is left to their own devices to regulate they enter survival mode.



# Calming Corner

- A calm room or center
  - Bean bag chair
  - Rocking chair
  - A swing
  - Music with headphones
  - Books
  - Bubbles
  - Chewing gum



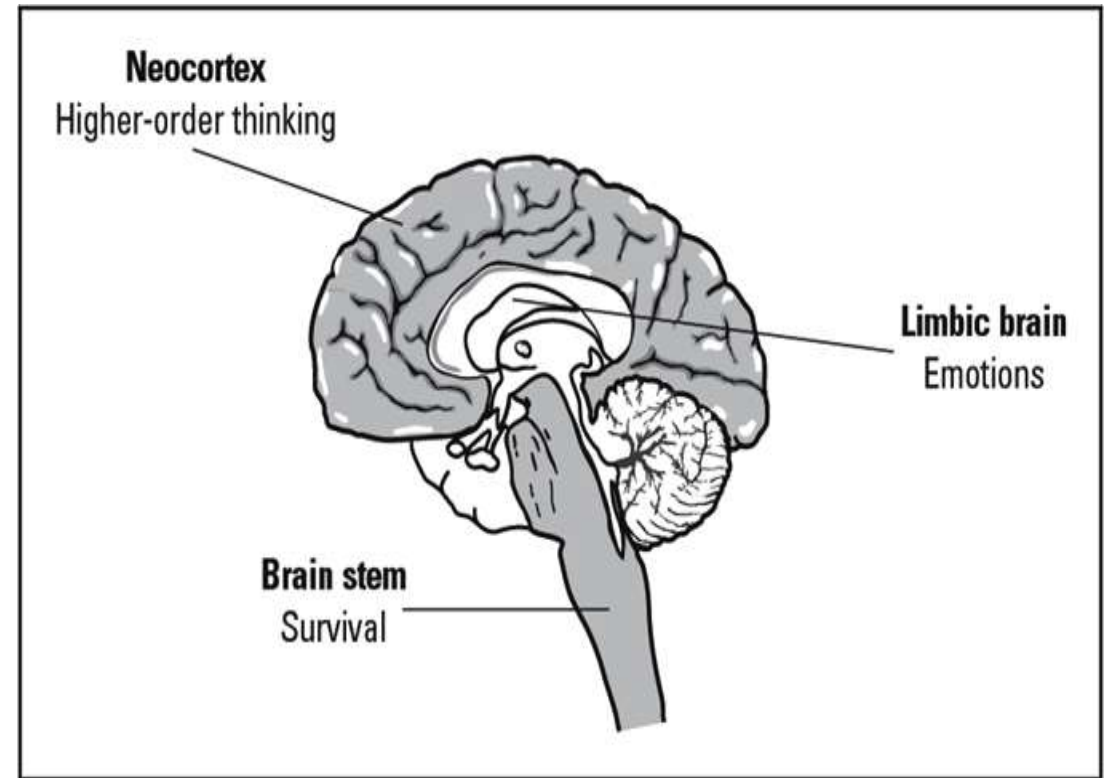
# Movement

- Repetitive movement can be key in helping students regulate
  - “Brain breaks”
  - Rocking
  - Pace
  - Standing exercises
  - Sitting exercises
  - Movement through space
  - Bilateral activities



# Music

- Instrumental music can be exceptionally calming
  - Change in brain wave patterns
  - Release cortisol from brain
- White noise machines





# Tap in/ Tap out

- Students:

- Buddy class
- Positively framed
- Before major misbehavior



- Teachers:

- Know your boundaries
- Have a back-up
- Prepare ahead of time

**It's never about the current issue. It goes much deeper.**

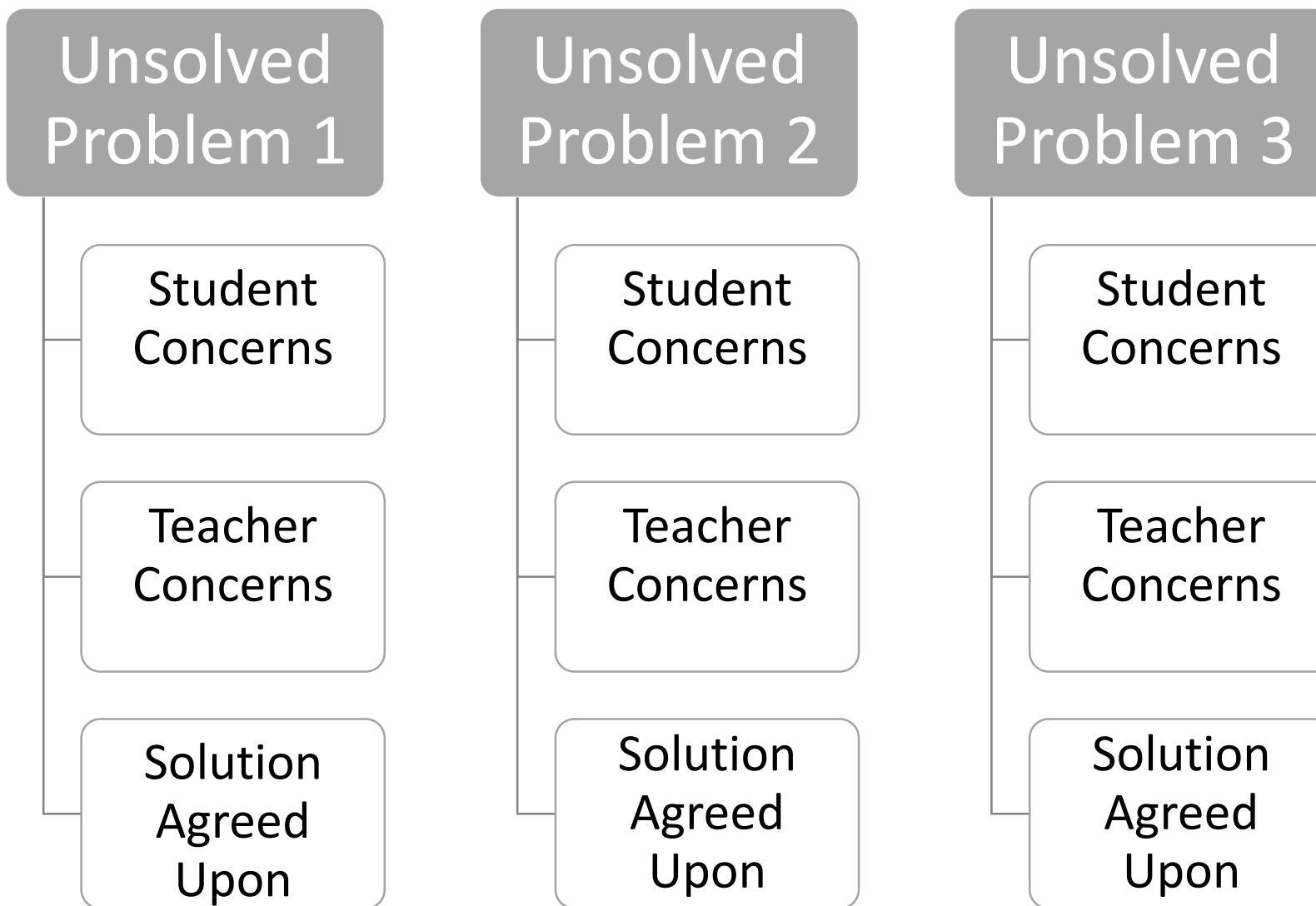


# Lagging Skills

- Lagging Skills and Unsolved Problems
  - Difficulty transitioning from activities
  - Poor sense of time
  - Difficulty maintaining focus
  - Difficulty expressing concerns or feelings
  - Chronic irritability
  - Difficulty deviated from rules or routine
  - Difficulty seeking attention in appropriate ways
  - Lacking basic social skills
  - Difficulty showing empathy



# Development of Skills Plan



# Check In, Check Out

- The program consists of students daily checking in with an adult at the start of school to retrieve a goal sheet and encouragement.
- Teachers provide feedback on the sheet throughout the day.
- Students check out at the end of the day with an adult, and the student takes the sheet home to be signed, returning it the following morning at check in.



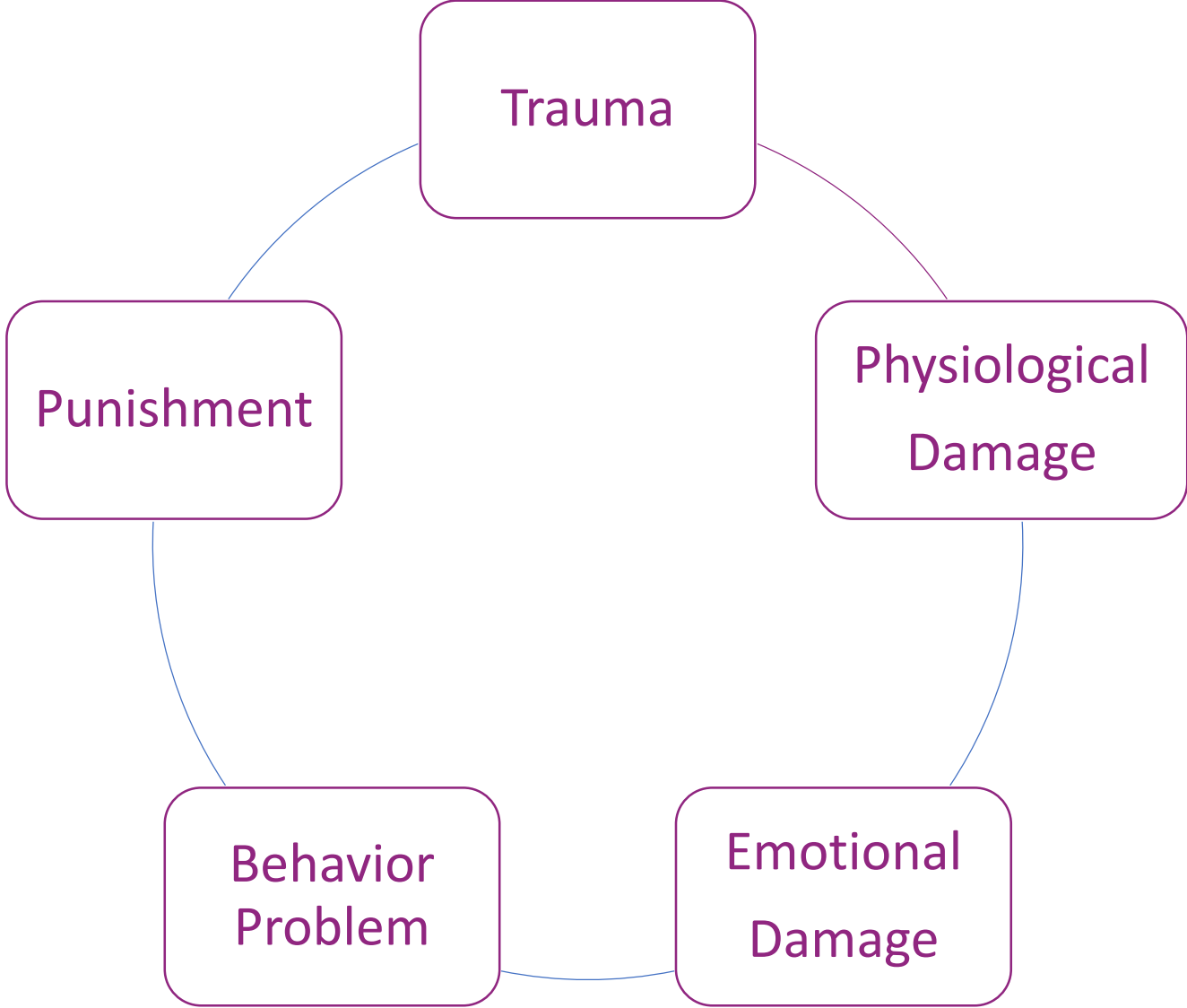
# De-Escalation

- Give space
  - Tone of voice and body language
  - Listen to student to identify trigger
  - Promote cooperation- do not block exit
  - Do not take as personal attack
- Does not promote de-escalation:
    - “Look at me”
    - “Put your phone away”
    - Touching student
    - Blocking exit
    - Raising voice
    - Adding a lot of people to the room



**Discipline is to teach, not to punish.**

# Cycle of Trauma





# Small Group Discussions



# Teaching New Patterns of Behavior

## Punitive

- Focus on action:
  - Verbal reprimand
  - Lose recess
  - No specials
  - Seclusion from other kids
  - Suspension

## Trauma-Informed

- Focus on behavior:
  - Find out what is going on
  - Allow student to take responsibility for actions
  - Consequences that teach new patterns of behavior

# Social Emotional Learning

- [Elementary Programs](#)
- [High School Programs](#)
- [PBIS World](#)

# Secondary Trauma

# Secondary Traumatic Stress

- Secondary traumatic stress is the emotional distress that results when an individual hears about the traumatic experiences of another individual.
- Distress may result from:
  - Hearing someone's trauma stories.
  - Seeing high levels of distress in the aftermath of a traumatic event.
  - Retelling a student's story for reporting purposes.
  - Seeing photos or images related to the trauma.



# Warning Signs

- Hypervigilance
  - Excessive alertness for potential threats.
- Poor boundaries
  - Lacking a balanced sense of your role, take on too much.
- Avoidance
  - Coping with stress by shutting down
- Inability to empathize
- Additions
  - Distractions to deal with emotions
- Chronic exhaustion
- Minimizing
  - Comparing to more severe situations
- Anger and cynicism
- Feelings of professional inadequacy



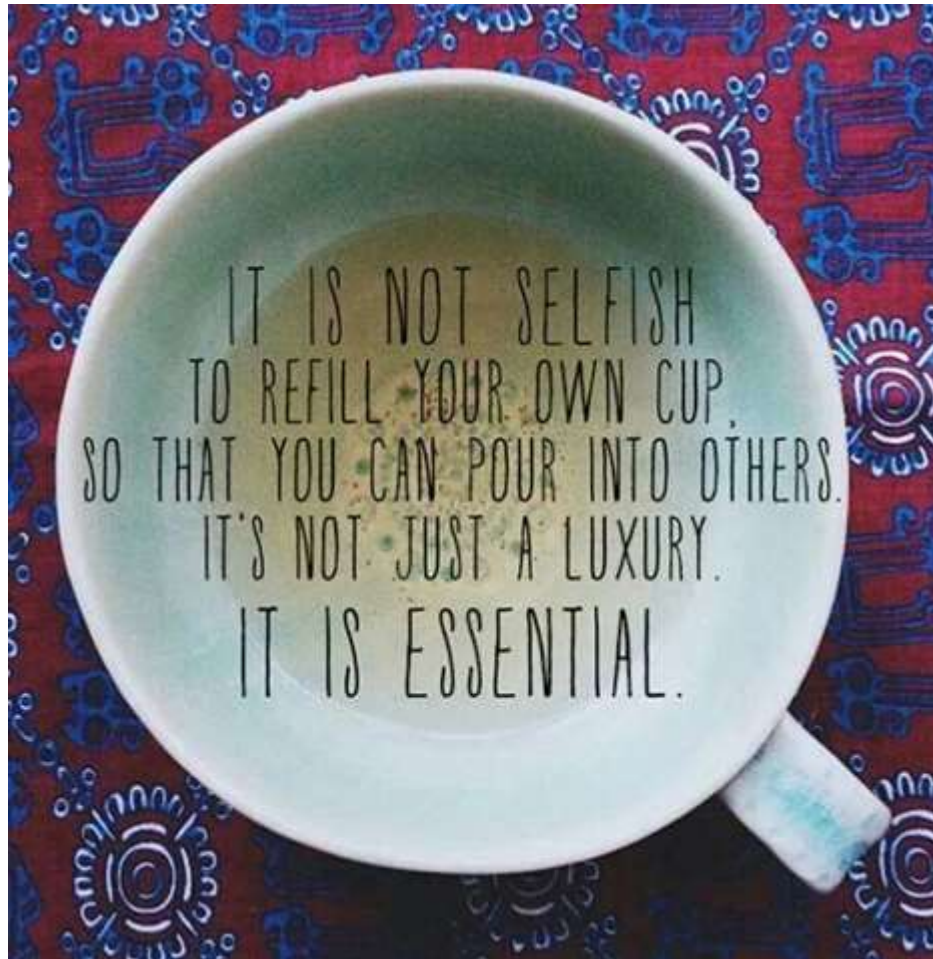
# What Can You Do?

- Increase knowledge of secondary trauma, warning signs, and effects.
- Assess your current level of compassion fatigue.
- Stay connected to a support system.
- Identify and incorporate self-care strategies that promote resilience.
  - Write down three things that inspire you and that you do to relax.





# Self-Care



*When you are in a better place, your kids experience a better place.”*





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