

Hi, my name is Cait Kirby.

I'm a graduate student studying biology
with a strong interest in
understanding how to support students
both inside and outside the classroom.

I have a particular interest in
helping students with trauma and unmet needs.

I am making this video for you
to help you support your students
and your children in this challenging time.

Enjoy!

In this video I will discuss
frameworks for thinking about trauma
describe the ways trauma may manifest in the classroom,
and close out with some suggestions
for trauma-informed teaching practices
including self-care for you, the instructor.

When I think about principles of trauma-informed teaching

I think about this phrase: Maslow first, then Bloom.

This phrase "Maslow first, then Bloom"

references two pyramids commonly used in educational practice
Maslow's hierarchy of needs and Bloom's taxonomy of learning objectives

As a teacher, you may already be familiar with Bloom's taxonomy,
which is a somewhat hierarchical depiction
of learning objectives

ranked in order of complexity of the learning objective.

I will quickly remind you that a learning objective is
an expected goal that a student will achieve
by an instruction or an activity.

The bottom level of this pyramid is made up of
remembering facts or concepts.

The highest level of this pyramid
requires creation of new knowledge.

The key here is that
without remembering facts
it is not possible to create new knowledge.

The lower level is required for achievement of the higher level.

These might sound like familiar learning objectives
that you use in the classroom
to promote student learning and success.

Maslow's hierarchy of needs is a psychological principle
developed by Abraham Maslow

and describes the fundamental needs that must be met
for an individual to achieve success and strive to be a better person

As a teacher, you likely agree

that education is a pursuit of betterment and achievement
So let's dig into what needs must be met
before a student can enter your classroom
ready to achieve the learning objectives
outlined in Bloom's taxonomy.
Like Bloom's taxonomy
Maslow's hierarchy of needs is also in the shape of a pyramid.
Lower needs must be met
to provide the opportunity for higher needs to be met
The most basic and fundamental needs in this pyramid are
physiological: food, water, shelter, clothing, and warmth.
As you might imagine,
it is difficult for a hungry student to focus on
Marxist theory or DNA replication.
Their stomachs are rumbling.
Related to physiological needs are safety needs.
Your students must feel safe within their own bodies
their classrooms, their homes, and all the places they enter along their day.
Uncertainty plays a huge role in feelings of safety.
So even when a student has a full belly,
if they do not know when they will have a full belly again,
they may struggle with feelings of safety and security.
Physiological and safety needs form the base of the pyramid
as physical wellbeing is required to engage emotionally or intellectually
and emotional engagement is required
for the next two levels of Maslow's hierarchy.
Students must feel a sense of belonging and love
whether it be with family, friends, or other close relations, including teachers.
In fact, some students will not have close relationships with family and friends
This next level is esteem
which is characterized by feelings of pride, accomplishment, and status.
Students need opportunities to see themselves as accomplished experts.
Research suggests that accomplishments that are acknowledged by a trusted expert
like a teacher, and peers, promote belonging
further emphasizing the importance of the belonging and love need.
Finally, at the top of Maslow's hierarchy is
the self-actualization need.
This level is realized as:
morality, creativity, acceptance of facts, motivation, and achievement of one's full potential.
These are all skills required in the classroom to succeed.
When students do not exhibit these traits,
it's pretty common for teachers to interpret it as a moral failing in a student
Perhaps the framework of Maslow's hierarchy will provide you with the understanding that
an unmotivated student likely has unmet needs and perhaps underlying trauma.
Here I will outline some trauma-informed practices
and concrete suggestions for you to use in the classroom or at home with your kids

It's important to recognize that while we're all stuck at home, home may be a safer place for some than others.

In the past, your classroom may have been a safe space where a child was able to escape an unsafe situation that really scared them.

You likely employed some form of check-ins before.

Now that we're all isolated, these check-ins should become more regular and these check-ins don't have to be one-on-one if you don't have the time to interact with each student.

You can use polls and surveys.

Further, you can encourage your students to do self-check-ins by counting their breathing or journaling for a few minutes.

This provides your students an opportunity to look inward and not share that information with you, as the instructor, but this opportunity signals to the students that you, as the instructor, care about their wellbeing. A sense of consistency and normalcy is often soothing to those experiencing or recovering from trauma.

Since this is not a normal time, it can be useful to promote normalcy and predictability in your classroom.

Family life may be chaotic and not at all consistent so scheduling a check-in at the beginning of every class promotes predictability that students can rely on.

Importantly, some students will want you to acknowledge that this is not normal and predictable.

How can you know who wants the crisis to be acknowledged and who wants normalcy?

Ask your students. (Depending upon their ages, of course.)

How does trauma manifest in the body and in the classroom?

Trauma can make individuals hypervigilant.

So they're always looking for threats and interpreting everything you say as negative.

They're on high-alert because they want to protect themselves from danger.

So these students might respond poorly to criticism.

These students might be missing out on the belonging and love need or the esteem need.

Knowing this, you can help them meet those needs

so that they can reduce their hypervigilance and sensitivity to criticism.

One way to resolve a belonging or love need is by listening to and remembering things that your students tell you.

If you have a bad memory, ask your students to fill out a survey about some non-essential information, like their favorite sport or tv show.

Bring those up in your check-ins.

Trauma can also make students very distracted.

Do you have a student you just "know" has ADHD?

That might actually be trauma and all your ADHD suggestions won't help.

These distracted and antsy behaviors can exist because trauma makes it really hard for people to sit in their own bodies.

Intrusive thoughts can wind their way in while students try to do math problems.

One way to push out an intrusive thought is to do something, anything to avoid thinking that intrusive thought.

Students may say something out loud,

play a game, toss a toy, hum to themselves, rock back and forth,
All of those are pretty basic soothing techniques
that students might use to soothe themselves
to help regulate big emotions
like when they're having intrusive thoughts or flashbacks.
In addition to soothing techniques,
students might want to use grounding techniques
that bring them back to this space or place
when they're having intrusive thoughts or flashbacks.
Grounding and soothing techniques can promote a sense of safety in students.
Importantly, the soothing and grounding techniques that students might use
are often prohibited in the classroom and students may be penalized for using them.
One useful thing that you can do as the instructor
is to identify acceptable coping tools in your classroom
and encourage students to use them.
For example, depending upon the age range of your students,
you can make it clear to them that they can feel free to get up and leave the classroom
if they need to to ground themselves.
You can teach them about different breathing techniques,
including counting their breath,
the 4-7-8 method, the 5-2 method, and more.
You can easily Google those to figure out exactly how they work.
You can give them an item or have them find an item of their own
that they can gently turn over and over in their hand.
to ground them back into their space of learning.
You can teach your students about other grounding techniques
like counting all the blue items in the room or all the hats.
Especially during challenging times like these,
taking time to teach your students a few techniques now will pay dividends in the long run.
Especially because your students will trust that you care deeply for them.
contributing to that crucial belonging need that many of your students may be missing out on.
Earlier I described promoting normalcy and predictability with scheduled check-ins.
You can also employ scheduled grounding exercises during class.
such as those I just mentioned.
For younger children, this could mean starting the day with a dance party to the same song,
watching the same movie after lunch, or reading the same book before bed.
Yes, a couple of these are aimed at those home teachers
the parents who maybe haven't thought about these things before.
I recognize that watching the same movie or reading the same book,
these small acts of normalcy will probably feel very boring to you.
but they can really ground your child in predictability
and promote a real sense of normalcy in these very, very abnormal times.
So this has not been an exhaustive list, by any means.
of all the best practices or all the ways trauma can play out in the classroom.
The purpose of this video is just to introduce you to some concepts,
draw a connection between trauma and classroom behaviors,

and push you to reflect on your own teaching practices,
and consider how you might change your practices
to promote safety and belonging in your own classroom.

I hope that you will agree

that in order for your students to be able to achieve self-actualization
and approach the classroom with an open mind and a receptivity to learning and problem-
solving,

that their lower Maslow's hierarchy needs must be met.

Those needs are required for the classroom.

The consistency, the predictability, the normalcy, can all promote these feelings of belonging,
and safety in the classroom that they require.

I could easily make an entire video on self-care and coping.

but I'm just including this at the end to emphasize how important it is that you take care of
yourself so you can take care of your kids and students.

So I'm just going to briefly touch upon one method of approaching self-care and coping.

The method we're going to use here is creating a coping kit.

So we want to generate a kit filled with items

that focus on each of your senses

to make you feel better and ground you in the space that you are in.

The five senses are: sight, touch, taste, smell, and sound.

I've given you an example or two for each on the slide here.

For example, with sight, you just want to look at something that looks nice to you, like a
wedding album, or pictures of your kids when they were little.

For touch, you want something like a soft or heavy blanket or a warm compress.

For taste, maybe peppermint gum or chamomile tea.

For smell, maybe lavender essential oils or just an orange peel you have in the kitchen.

Finally for sound you can use soothing classical music, or energizing rap music, or just simple
white noise.

You can pack all of this up into a kit

then, if you're feeling overwhelmed or stressed out or like you really just want to get out of the
house,

being able to jump into this coping kit and trying out these things

that can make you feel a little bit better and safer in your own body and space can be very, very
useful.

I also strongly encourage you to make a coping kit with your children for your children

that way when they're feeling overwhelmed, they have all of their safe and comfortable items all
in the same place.

Thanks for listening.

Again, my name is Cait Kirby. I'm a grad student interested in promoting student success, safety,
and belonging.

You can check out some of my resources at my website: caitkirby.com

check me out on Twitter at [caitskirby](https://twitter.com/caitskirby)

and you can reach out with any questions at caitskirby@gmail.com.

Be safe!