

# Creating Trauma- Sensitive Schools: The Role of School Counselors



# Developing Trauma- Informed Systems of Care

## 3 Key Elements:

- **Realize** the prevalence of trauma
- **Recognize** how trauma affects all individuals involved with the program, organization, or system, including its own workforce
- **Respond** by putting this knowledge into practice

## 3 Ways of Intervening:

- Trauma-informed care/approach
- Trauma-specific interventions
- Trauma specific services

# Key Principles of Trauma-Informed Approach

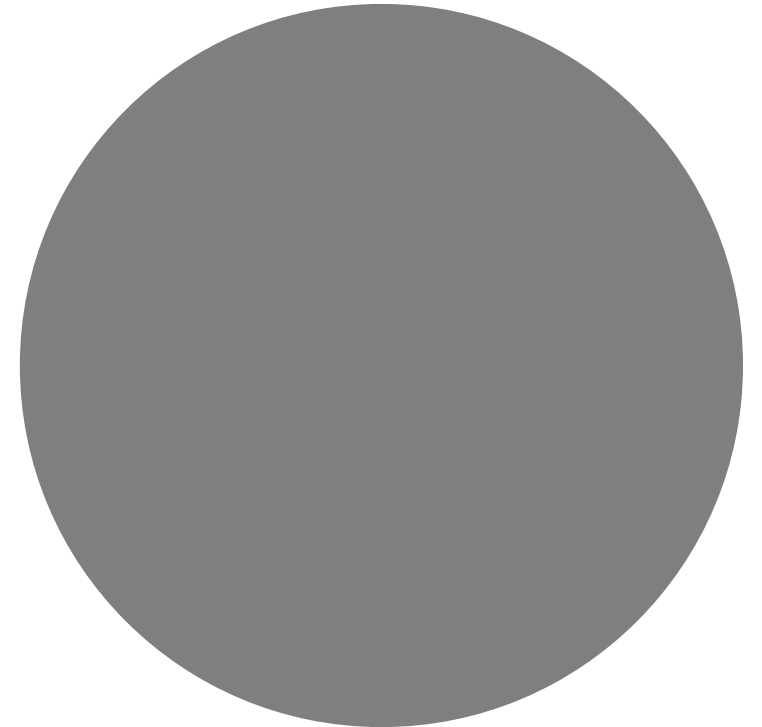
1. Safety
2. Trustworthiness and transparency
3. Collaboration and mutuality
4. Empowerment
5. Voice and choice
6. Resilience and strengths based



“Once schools understand the educational impacts of trauma, they can **become safe, supportive environments where students make the positive connections with adults and peers they might otherwise push away, calm their emotions so they can focus and behave appropriately, and feel confident enough to advance their learning**—in other words, schools can make trauma sensitivity a regular part of how the school is run. Trauma sensitivity will look different at each school. However, a shared definition of what it means to be a trauma-sensitive school can bring educators, parents, and policymakers together around a common vision. “ (Trauma and Learning Policy Initiative)

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## Trauma Sensitive Schools



# Is it within your role to:

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Screen for traumatic exposure and symptoms?

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Talk about trauma with students?

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Have conversations with caregivers about adverse experiences?

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Provide trauma intervention individually?

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Conduct groups for traumatized children?

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Advocate for a trauma-informed lens in meetings?

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Provide training and consultation to teachers about trauma?

# Whose Role Is It To Ask About Trauma?

- “It’s not my job”
- “I’m not qualified”
- “I’m not comfortable”
- “That’s not my role”
- If you don’t do it, who will? May be that child’s only chance to be heard and get help
  - May never get to mental health
  - Sometimes mental health doesn’t ask
- What message does it send if we don’t ask?
- All of us!



# What about therapists?

- The Partners for Change project: An Example
- The limits of time
- The nature of the relationship
- Pressures to change behavior and COWs



# Typical Fears & Concerns

- It will be traumatizing to bring up past experiences of trauma
- The youth will “fall apart”
- “I won’t know how to react”
- The person you are asking is sometimes the one who caused trauma





# The College Student Study

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College students who report  
traumatic experiences

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Screening for PTSD symptoms

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Random assignment to 1 of 4  
conditions

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Re-screening at the 3-month period

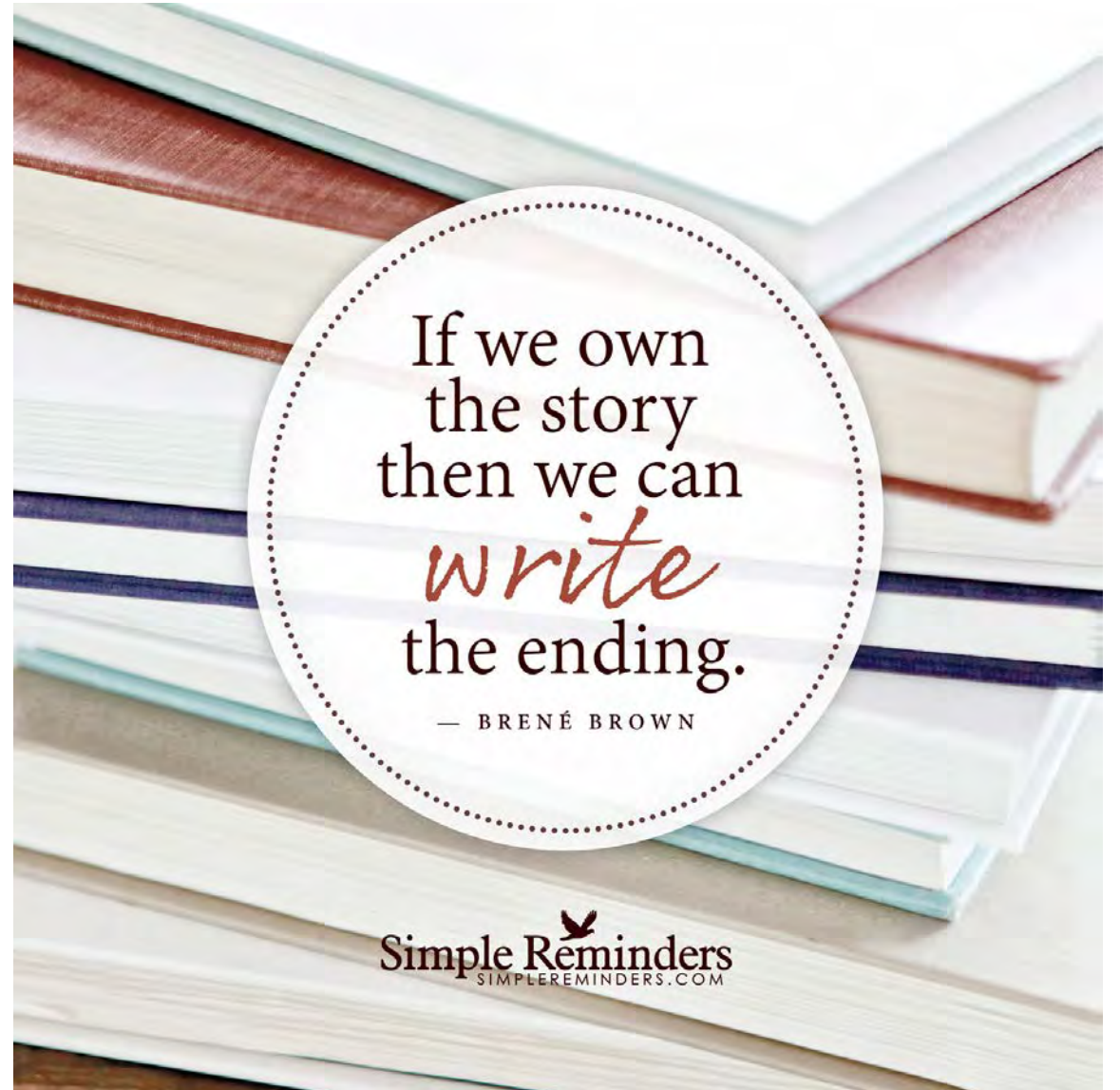
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The results – what do you think?

# Owning Your Story

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#metoo



Simple Reminders  
SIMPLEREMINDERS.COM

# Why Talk About Trauma?

- It helps with healing
- Reduce shame
- Normalize behavior
- Change the perceptions and behaviors of others
- You might be the only one who asks
- It can change brains!



WHY? why? why? why? WHY?

# Do No Harm: What is Our Ethical Responsibility?



## **Addressing Trauma**

- Distress & discomfort
- Reactions of caregivers
- Professional role limitations

## **Focus on Behavior**

- Development of the internal working model
- Child is the problem
- Diagnosis and TAU

# Child Abuse Reporting

- How is your role best described
- Frequency of reports
- Administration's support for reporting
  - Ever asked not to call?
- Level of anxiety and/or indecision while contemplating reporting

## THE 3 R'S OF REPORTING CHILD ABUSE



**RECOGNIZE**



**RESPOND**



**REPORT**

# ASCA: Position Statement on the Role of School Counselors in Trauma-Sensitive Schools

“School counselors can be key players in promoting a trauma-sensitive environment at their schools. They are in a unique position to identify students affected by traumatic events and can provide the support and resources these students need. Certified school counselors implementing a data-driven comprehensive school counseling program addressing academic, career and social/emotional development can have a positive impact at all levels of education.”

# Specific Roles Identified by ASCA

- Recognize the signs of trauma in students
- Understand traumas need not predict individual failure if sufficient focus on resilience and strengths is present
- Avoid practices that may re-traumatize students
- Create connected communities and positive school climates that are trauma-sensitive to keep students healthy and in school and involved in positive social networks
- Implement effective academic and behavioral practices, such as positive behavioral interventions and supports and social and emotional learning

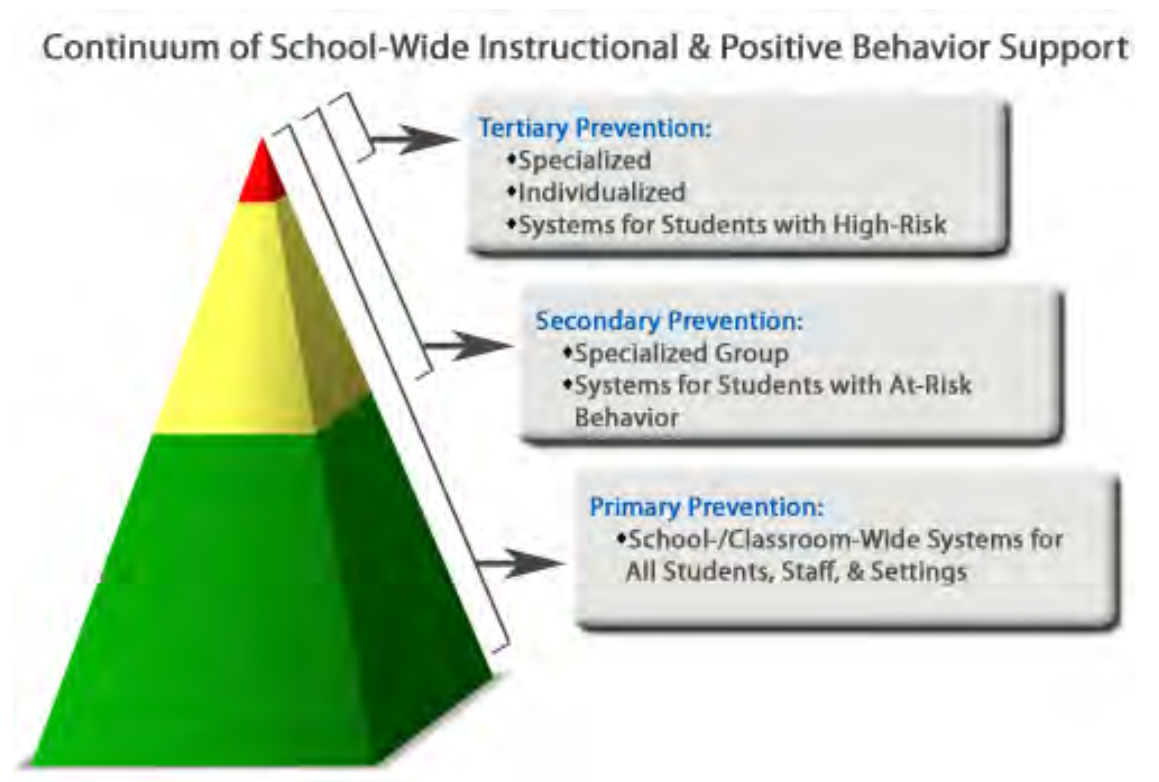
# Specific Roles Identified by ASCA Cont.

- Promote safe, stable and nurturing relationships. Research shows this is critical in helping students succeed even in the face of deprivation and adversity (The Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning Act of 2015).
- Provide community resource information to students and families dealing with trauma
- Educate staff on the effects of trauma and how to refer students to the school counselor
- Collaborate with community resources to provide support for students
- Promote a trauma-sensitive framework for policies, procedures and behaviors to entire staff
- Recognize the role technology can play in magnifying trauma incidents for students



# CTSS Implementation Grid: Levels of Intervention

- Level 1: Primary
  - Trauma-sensitive approaches
- Level 2: Secondary
  - Trauma-specific intervention
- Level 3: Tertiary
  - Trauma treatment



# CTSS Implementation: Intervention Domains

- Staff/Relationships
- Classroom Strategies (Instruction & Management)
- Specialists
- Family/Community Partnerships
- Policy/School Safety Climate

change  
be the

# Thank You!

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