EXAMPLES OF TRAUMA-INFORMED TEACHING AND LEARNING IN COLLEGE CLASSROOMS

Janice Carello, PhD, LMSW

https://traumainformedteaching.blog/resources/

Physical, Emotional, Social, & Academic Safety	Efforts are made to create an atmosphere that is respectful of the need for safety, respect, and acceptance for all class members in both individual and group interactions, including feeling safe to make and learn from mistakes. *For example: scaffolding or integrating low-stakes assignments that provide opportunity to receive feedback and learn from mistakes prior to evaluation; adopting an authoritative teaching style; modeling assertive, non-violent communication skills; providing content warnings prior to viewing discussing sensitive material*
Trustworthiness & Transparency	Trust and transparency are enhanced by making course expectations clear, ensuring consistency in practice, maintaining appropriate boundaries, and minimizing disappointment. *For example: articulating clear policies and implementing them consistently; providing detailed assignment sheets and grading rubrics; responding promptly to email; avoiding all-or-nothing or zero-tolerance policies that are difficult to enforce consistently; creating class routines or rituals*
Support & Connection	All class members are connected with appropriate peer and professional resources to help them succeed academically, personally, and professionally. *For example: providing referral information for campus and community resources such as counseling, health, and tutoring services; announcing campus and community events; facilitating peer groups and peer workshops; inviting guest speakers*
Collaboration & Mutuality	All class members act as allies rather than as adversaries to help ensure one another's success. Opportunities exist for all class members to provide input, share power, and make decisions. *For example: weighting grades to emphasize learning objectives rather than individual instructor preferences; implementing policies and practices that foster success rather than "weed out" weak students; involving students in creating or revising policies, assignments, and grading; doing with rather than doing for students (e.g. editing papers for students); facilitating student-led discussions and activities*
Empowerment, Voice, & Choice	All class members emphasize strengths and resilience over deficiencies and pathology; they empower one another to make choices and to develop confidence and competence. *For example: building in choices where possible (e.g. seating, lighting, readings, paper format); integrating authentic assignments and active learning; implementing realistic attendance policies; allotting late days students can use to submit work past the due date without question and without penalty; facilitating large and small group discussion so students have multiple opportunities and modes to speak*
Social Justice	All class members strive to be aware of and responsive to forms of privilege and oppression and to respect one another's diverse experiences and identities. *For example: using correct pronouns; addressing microaggressions; being aware of personal and disciplinary biases and how they impact teaching and learning (e.g. privileging or disparaging certain dialects, writing styles, or research methods); using progressive stacking during discussion, employing alternative grading methods*
Resilience, Growth, & Change	All class members recognize each other's strengths and resilience, and they provide feedback to help each other grow and change. *For example: providing both formative and summative assessments; pointing out what was done well; assigning multiple drafts; holding one-on-one conferences; facilitating peer feedback; rewarding success rather than punishing failure; soliciting feedback from students to improve the current course; conveying optimism*

(Principles adapted from Fallot & Harris, 2009; SAMHSA, 2014)

Updated March 2020