



BECOMING A TRAUMA-SENSITIVE EDUCATOR

The Online Course and Workbook for Creating Safe, Supportive Learning Environments

SAMPLE ACTIVITIES



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Critical Questions for Trauma-Sensitive Educators

Trauma-sensitive educators engage in critical thinking in relation to all aspects of their professional role. They think critically about their own decisions too. In this lesson, Ms. Jen suggests four questions, one for each of the Four Essentials, that can help you make decisions as a trauma-sensitive educator. When you're considering any action, progress through these four questions to help you decide if the decision is a sound one for your student(s) right now.

1. *Safety*: "Could this decision cause harm?" If the answer is yes, then there's no need to go through the rest of the questions. If there's even a potential for harm, then you know that the decision you're considering isn't one with which to follow through.
2. *Connection*: "Will this decision tend to people's right-here-right-now feelings and needs?" If so, then it's worth continuing consideration; move on to the next question.
3. *Regulation*: "Is it just right for promoting regulation and a readiness for teaching and learning?" If it is, then it might be beneficial.
4. *Learning*: "Will this help students learn?" If yes, then it's aligned with trauma-sensitive practices.



Important Note:

Everyone has the right to change their mind. If you start doing something with students (or staff) that has unintended consequences you didn't foresee, then it's okay, necessary even, to say, "I thought this would be helpful, and it's not. Let's stop. This isn't what's best right now."

Applying Ms. Jen's Four Trauma-Sensitive Questions

In this activity, you'll practice applying Ms. Jen's four trauma-sensitive questions. First, select one of the following scenarios or choose an example related to experiences in your own role. Apply the four trauma-sensitive questions to your selected scenario and jot down how the answers may influence your decision to move forward with what is proposed, advocate against it, or negotiate in response to the proposed idea.

- A colleague is suggesting a simulation activity related to the Trail of Tears as part of a social studies unit.
- Your district has an opportunity to apply for a grant that would lead to utilization of a schoolwide mental health screener throughout your district, but local mental health providers have cautioned that you may not have enough support to respond to the immediate needs of students reporting concerns.
- Someone in your school community has died by suicide and students are wishing to lead a series of activities related to awareness and prevention of suicide, including offering a place for youth to come together to give and receive support with one another.
- Some colleagues have been utilizing get-regulated areas or items in the classroom, but materials are being misused. Some folks are suggesting a consequence of removing them altogether.
- Some parents are complaining that books in your school's library include characters who are part of the LGBTQIA+ community. They have created a petition for them to be removed.
- Several teachers are concerned about the emotional well-being of both staff and students; they've suggested that an emphasis on academic learning should be put on hold until everyone is doing better so as to decrease stress and pressure.