

## 6 Principles to Guide Interactions with Students Who have Experienced Trauma

1. **Always empower students.** Trauma-informed educators avoid struggles with students; classroom discipline is necessary, but it should be done in a way that is respectful, consistent, and nonviolent. Students who have experienced trauma often seek to control their environment to protect themselves, and their behavior will generally deteriorate the more helpless they feel.
2. **Express unconditional positive regard.** Trauma-informed educators, as consistently caring adults, have the opportunity to help students build trust and form relationships. Even if a student acts out and expresses hatred for or cruel judgments of the educator, the response must always be unconditional positive regard: “I’m sorry you feel that way. I care about you and hope you’ll get your work done.”
3. **Maintain high expectations.** Trauma-informed educators set and enforce limits in a consistent way that provides high expectations for all students. Maintaining consistent expectations, limits, and routines sends the message that the student is worthy of continued unconditional positive regard and attention. In addition, consistency in the classroom helps students differentiate between the arbitrary rules that led to their abuse and the purposeful ones that assure their safety and well-being.
4. **Check assumptions, observe, and question.** Trauma-informed educators talk to students and ask questions instead of making assumptions, as trauma can affect any student and manifest in many ways. Trauma-informed educators also make observations to students about their behaviors and then fully engage in listening to the response.
5. **Be a relationship coach.** Trauma-informed educators assist traumatized students of all ages in developing social skills and help them cultivate positive relationships.
6. **Provide guided opportunities for helpful participation.** Trauma-informed educators model, foster, and support ongoing peer “helping” interactions, such as peer tutoring and support groups, to provide traumatized students with the opportunity to practice academic and social-emotional skills.