

Trauma-Informed Care Checklist for Early Childhood Educators

Use this checklist to guide your efforts in creating a trauma-sensitive classroom environment that supports the emotional and psychological well-being of all children.

1. Create a Safe and Predictable Environment

- Establish consistent daily routines and schedules to provide stability.
 - Clearly communicate expectations and rules in a positive, developmentally appropriate manner.
 - Ensure the classroom is physically safe by childproofing hazardous areas and using calming, soft furnishings.
 - Designate a quiet, cozy area where children can go to self-regulate or take a break when overwhelmed.
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2. Build Trusting Relationships

- Greet each child warmly by name every day to foster a sense of belonging.
 - Maintain a calm and steady tone of voice, even during challenging interactions.
 - Respond consistently and empathetically to children's needs, emotions, and behaviors.
 - Encourage children to express their feelings and listen without judgment or interruption.
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3. Promote Emotional Regulation

- Teach and model emotion identification and regulation strategies, such as deep breathing or using words to express feelings.
 - Incorporate mindfulness or relaxation activities into the daily routine (e.g., yoga, guided breathing exercises).
 - Use visual aids, such as emotion charts, to help children communicate how they feel.
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4. Recognize and Respond to Trauma Triggers

- Be aware of potential triggers, such as loud noises, sudden changes, or physical touch, and minimize them when possible.
- Observe children for signs of distress and respond with understanding and support.



- Offer choices to empower children and reduce feelings of helplessness (e.g., “Would you like to sit at the table or on the carpet for storytime?”).
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5. Foster Positive Peer Interactions

- Promote collaborative activities that build teamwork and mutual respect.
 - Intervene promptly and constructively in instances of conflict or bullying.
 - Teach and reinforce prosocial behaviors, such as sharing, helping, and kindness.
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6. Empower Families as Partners

- Communicate regularly with families to understand each child’s unique needs and experiences.
 - Share resources with families about trauma and resilience-building strategies.
 - Respect cultural differences and incorporate diverse perspectives into the classroom.
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7. Reflect and Adapt Your Practices

- Engage in ongoing professional development on trauma-informed care and child development.
 - Reflect on your own triggers and biases to respond more effectively to challenging behaviors.
 - Solicit feedback from colleagues, families, and children to improve your trauma-sensitive practices.
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Final Note

Trauma-informed care is an ongoing process that requires patience, compassion, and commitment. Use this checklist as a starting point to support all children in your care, especially those who may have experienced trauma.

