

# Bringing students to balance

Christine Preece, B.A., M.H.S., MCHES, CTE

# Activity

- ▶ Let's check in

# Some foresight maybe not taken into account?

“What we do to our children now in society it will happen back in years to come in tenfold”.

Dave Foote, Demographer, 1997.

# Have we been stuck in moving forward?

Can we support our children and youth in a different way?

# Why do we need to get unstuck?

- ▶ Teachers turn over in 5 years = not always prepared for what the “true” job
- ▶ Goal of leadership in schools is for academic learning
- ▶ Students have invisible back packs they come to school with.
- ▶ To have a healthy school or classroom does not mean you need to know the entire story of the child- just need to build trust and help them feel safe

<https://www.facebook.com/kidswhynotcampaign/>

# What all adults and schools need to move forward with?

PLAY= do not use recess takeaway as a punishment

SUCCESSFUL ENVIRONMENTS = adults, physical, students and parents are environment

CHILDREN ARE THEIR OWN RESOURCES= help them to help themselves

CHILDREN MERIT CONFIDENCE AND TRUST = help them learn this

PROBLEMS ARE OPPORTUNITIES= ways to move forward

EVERY ONE HAS A RESPONSIBILITY TO HELP AND NO ONE HAS THE RIGHT TO HURT=  
this means all adults including other parents in school setting

# Four needs for wellbeing in school

- ▶ Belonging is connection - either to family, peer, classroom, school, or caring adult (we must have someone)
- ▶ Mastery - being able to do things well - need mentors - achieve one potential so they can give back to greater community - caring for each other build safety
- ▶ Independence- need healthy level of independence that is age appropriate
- ▶ Generosity- sacrificing of oneself for benefit of others- role model and provide opportunities - involves self sacrifice and hurts a little= helping others builds self esteem - helps us understand our power of making the world a better place - most important virtue- builds empathy

# Circle of Care in our schools

- ▶ What are the core values of our work in schools ?
- ▶ Circle of Courage - what is it that students need
- ▶ Belonging, Mastery, Independence and Generosity- we are born with these- if needs are not met the circle is broken
- ▶ All human beings need these 4 things to be well



# Four needs for wellbeing in school

- ▶ “Developmental needs of all children and youth are universal”. Dr. Martin Brokenleg
- ▶ Look at needs of students and ask if they have it developed and if they have gaps in one area then it is our responsibility to help develop it
- ▶ “Belonging, mastery, independence, generosity are inborn brain programs that we can develop or hinder”.  
Noam Chomsky

# What about behaviour?

- ▶ Problematic behaviour is a system of unmet needs
- ▶ Broken circle creates bad behaviour
- ▶ Your tough children always show up - kids loved at home come to school to learn, your kids who are not loved at home come to school to be loved
- ▶ Biggest form of neglect is being developed by technology - how do we positively hand this in schools?
- ▶ What is going on the inside is pain. Very sympathetic who lashes out at self but we are not sympathetic who lashes out at others.

Every student needs a champion

# Helping our students balance

- ▶ “Habitualization” reduces brain activity - knowing and seeing violence everyday - we become immune to it- it reduces the emotion in our brains - thus creating a less empathetic society
- ▶ Can we rewire our brains for empathy? Yes for all
- ▶ What do our students need?
  - Support rewiring their brains- gratitude exercises, generosity
  - Someone who listens
  - Someone who cares
  - Someone who notices when something is not the same
  - Someone who welcomes them at the door
  - Non punitive policies
  - Less suspensions/less exclusions= more inclusion
  - Small movement breaks every 15 minutes <https://smh-assist.ca/emhc/skills/coping-skills/>

# Language and Words Matter

- ▶ Words like “grow up”, don’t act so childish, etc. is important language that we need to reflect on
- ▶ How we speak to and about our students is important = language matters
- ▶ Changing the word problem to opportunities, change the word anxious to excitement
- ▶ Four finger affirmation activity

# Motor Cortex System: Importance of Movement

- ▶ Connected to core - middle of body
- ▶ Get up and change positions is key
- ▶ Helps them unstick their motor cortex
- ▶ Brain needs a break every 15 minutes from academics - better for learning and behaviour
- ▶ Spell activity

# Understand the Vagus Nerve and its importance to learning/wellbeing

- ▶ **Singing.** You can also use singing, humming, and gargling to activate your vocal cords and the muscles in the back of your throat, which are connected to the vagus nerve. Incorporating these activities into your daily routine can help increase your vagal tone.
- ▶ **Exposure to cold.** Exposing your body to **cold conditions** such as taking a cold shower or splashing cold water on your face, increases stimulation of the vagus nerve. While your body adjusts to the cold, sympathetic activity declines, while parasympathetic activity increases.
- ▶ **Deep breathing.** You can indirectly stimulate the vagus nerve by taking deep belly breaths. Deep breathing activates specific neurons that detect blood pressure. These neurons signal to the vagus nerve that blood pressure is becoming too high, and the vagus nerve in turn responds by lowering your heart rate.

# Helping students understand their bodies are a resource

- ▶ Self reflection - repeat as much as possible
- ▶ Learning who am I?
- ▶ Developing their own strategies not ones we tell them to do
- ▶ Practice with them - mirror neurons
- ▶ Have fun = builds trust

We ALL can make a difference

Just takes a bit of kindness



# References

- ▶ Christina Keyers, Neuroscientist, Amsterdam, Roots of Empathy Conference, 2018.
- ▶ National Institute of Trauma, Certified Trauma Practitioner, Dr. Calen Soma & Derek Allen, July 2017.
- ▶ School Mental Health Ontario, [www.smho-smso.ca](http://www.smho-smso.ca)