

# Brain Science Training Institute Community Training

## Introductions



### **Kiera McGillivray, LMFT**

Kiera McGillivray is a Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist and the Chief Program Officer for School-Based Initiatives with Children & Families First. Kiera is trained in several trauma focused modalities including Eye Movement Desensitization Reprocessing (EMDR), Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (TF-CBT), Trauma-Informed Yoga, Trauma Focused Expressive Arts Therapy, and Child-Centered Play Therapy with Neurorelational Emphasis. She is published in internationally peer-reviewed journals on the topics of trauma and children, and has presented to military personnel, clinicians, educators, law enforcement, and victim service professionals on trauma, children, resilience and ethics. Kiera McGillivray is also a clinical supervisor and co-chair of the Brain Science Training Institute.



### **Shannon Fisch, LCSW**

Shannon Fisch is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker in the state of Delaware and is the Compliance & Accreditation Manager for Children & Families First. Shannon Fisch received her post graduate certification in trauma from Widener University and her non-profit management certification from University of Delaware. Shannon is an avid volunteer in her profession, currently serving as secretary and previously serving as the treasurer and president for the National Association of Social Workers - Delaware Chapter. Shannon Fisch is also a clinical supervisor and co-chair of the Brain Science Training Institute.



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## Activity Instructions

### Materials for Activities

**Neuroplasticity Activity:** paper and pen

**Window of Tolerance Activity:** empty cup and filled cup/bottle of water

**TIS Principles Worksheet:** see attached document

**Self- Care Worksheet:** see attached document

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### Trauma Informed Supervision Scenario

There is a new initiative that the state has introduced. You have heard some feedback that one of your direct reports has been derailing the launching of this initiative. They are denigrating the idea in side-bar conversations with peers and stating that it is a waste of time and that it will fade away like all “new” initiatives. However, you and your manager are excited about this new opportunity for your unit. You need to deliver this feedback to your report.

#### Question

1. What trauma-informed principle(s) would you use to best address this scenario, and why?



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## Brain Science & Trauma Awareness

### Key Terminology

**Trauma** is a threat or series of threats that overwhelms our nervous system, and impacts our mental, physical, social, emotional, and spiritual well-being.

**Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)** refers to serious childhood traumas that cause toxic stress, and are linked to mental illness, chronic disease, depression, and violence.

**The Upstairs Brain** is our rational, logical, planning brain. It is still developing at birth, and isn't finished developing until our mid to late twenties. Inside our upstairs brain is our "watchtower."

**The Downstairs Brain** is the oldest, most primitive part of our brain; consisting of the limbic region and brain stem. It is in charge of our most basic functions and fear responses (fight or flight). Inside our downstairs brain is our "smoke alarm."

**Our Sympathetic Nervous System** houses our fight and flight responses. It is the idea of protection through action. Our body releases adrenaline and cortisol to mobilize.

**Our Parasympathetic Nervous System** wears two hats; regulation and dysregulation. When regulated we experience rest, digestion, safety, and connection. When dysregulated we go into freeze and protect ourselves through disappearing.

**Resilience** is the ability to adapt well in the face of adversity, trauma, or significant life stressors. It is the means to "bounce back."

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## The Impact of Trauma on Our Children

More than **50%** of Delaware children have experienced **1 or more ACEs**.

Children with **4 or more ACEs** are:

- 32x more likely** to have **learning and/or behavior problems** in school
- 7x more likely** to end up in **prison**
- 12x more likely** to **attempt suicide**.

4 factors to "tip the scale" towards positive outcomes include:

- **A supportive adult-child relationship**
- **Building a sense of self-efficacy and perceived choice and control**
- **Opportunities to strengthen self-regulation**
- **Mobilize sources of faith, cultural traditions, and hope**



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## Supporting Traumatized People

What are some ways I can build resiliency in the children and adults around me?

How can my organization begin to reframe the idea of “What is wrong with you?” to “What happened to you, and how can I help you?”

What are a 1-2 trauma-informed strategies I can use right away that will help me in my interactions with others?

## Resources

National Child Traumatic Stress Network: <https://www.nctsn.org/>

Sesame Street in Communities: <https://sesamestreetincommunities.org/>

CDC ACEs: <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/aces/index.html>

SAMHSA’s Guidance for Trauma-Informed Approach:  
[https://ncsacw.samhsa.gov/userfiles/files/SAMHSA\\_Trauma.pdf](https://ncsacw.samhsa.gov/userfiles/files/SAMHSA_Trauma.pdf)

PACEs Connection: <https://www.acesconnection.com/>

Center on the Developing Child: <https://developingchild.harvard.edu/>

*The Whole Brain Child* by Dan Siegel

*The Body Keeps the Score* by Bessel van der Kolk

*Self-Compassion* by Kristin Neff



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## Community Training

### Resources continued...

*Trauma Stewardship* by Laura van Dernoot Lipsky

*The Deepest Well* by Nadine Burke Harris

*The Resilient Practitioner* by Thomas Skovholt and Michelle Trotter-Mathison

*Self-Nurture: Learning to Care for Yourself as Effectively as You Care for Everyone* by Alice Domar

### Regulation and Relaxation Skills

#### Box Breathing

*In a comfortable position, breathe in for 4 seconds, hold for 4 seconds, breathe out for 4 seconds, and hold for 4 seconds before repeating 3-5 times.*

#### Compassion Exercise

*In a comfortable position, begin by taking a few deep breaths. Then begin by placing one hand over your heart. Noticing the feeling and sensations. If comfortable, you can place another hand over your heart and begin rubbing gently. Notice the heaviness, the calming sensations, and how it feels to provide love and compassion towards yourself.*

#### Grounding Activity

*Identify 5 things you can see, 4 things you can feel, 3 things you can hear, 2 things you can smell and 1 thing you can taste.*

#### Gratitude Journaling

*Journal daily on things you are grateful for. Examples could be a strength, something money can't buy, something comforting, something funny, something in nature, a memory, a challenge, something beautiful.*

