

# PLC/Book Study Guide for Responding to Student Trauma: A Toolkit for Schools in Times of Crisis

**Stephanie Filio, M.Ed.**

This study guide is designed as a professional development resource that can be used to facilitate a book study, to guide teacher or counselor workshops, or to support a professional learning community (PLC). Facilitator notes are provided for additional support and explanation in planning and facilitating your school's or group's study sessions or workshops. We recommend that the training facilitator read the entire guide and the book before beginning the study.

For each session, participants will be asked to read chapters of the book. They may also be asked to bring particular materials or create or implement sometime *prior* to attending a session. Each chapter description includes guiding questions and suggested tasks that can be used as group activities during the session.

Please note that the preparation work is noted at the beginning for each session. Before you dismiss participants from each session, look ahead to the next chapter and review and clarify what must be done before the next meeting. Reach agreements if suggested tasks are going to be adjusted or modified.



# Introduction

## To be completed before the first book study session:

- Read the book's introduction.
- Have a check-in with yourself. What traumatic events have you experienced? How did they feel in the moment, and in the time after? What was helpful for you as you processed your emotions and began to self-regulate?

**Facilitator Note:** Use figure 1.0 to better understand the sources of trauma for students.

1. What challenges and major life changes have students experienced in the last five months in their city and/or country?
2. What might students be feeling as a result of recent large-scale trauma?
3. On a scale of 1–5, how cohesive is your school or educational group's trauma protocol? What questions do you have about how you should handle crisis situations with students?

# Chapter 1

## The Self/Home: Latent Trauma

**To be completed before the chapter 1 book study session:**

- Read chapter 1.
- Reflect on students you have worked with in the past who have experienced trauma.
- Bring any current emergency or crisis protocols that are established at the school.

***Facilitator Note:** Begin filling in the Trauma Response Preparations Worksheet for School Planning on page 60. It may be useful when answering questions and then shared when the group constructs cohesive protocols.*

1. What opportunities do staff at your school have for professional development in trauma response protocol?
2. Considering your school's population, location, and specific needs, what professional development do you think would be beneficial?
3. What student data would be helpful to determine possible trauma exposure in your students?
4. In groups or individually, list your knowledge of the following pieces of your school's trauma procedures: protocol for calling home with trauma-related information, opportunities for relationship building (students, families, teachers, and district), community emergency numbers, and data collection used for at-risk behaviors.
5. Fill in the Trauma Protocol section of the Trauma Response Preparations Worksheet for School Planning on page 60. What areas need to be reconsidered or instituted?

# Chapter 2

## The School: Incorporated Trauma

**To be completed before the chapter 2 book study session:**

- Read chapter 2.
- Make a list of possible sources of trauma within the school.
- Bring your list of crisis team members if your school has one.

**Facilitator Note:** List your crisis team members on the Teacher Quick Sheet for Trauma Response (page 58). If the crisis team is in the session, workshop the Crisis Team Planning section of the Trauma Response Preparations Worksheet for School Planning (page 60).

1. How can students be traumatized within a school setting, and by whom?
2. Discuss the harmful effects of racism (both explicit and implicit) on a school community and student body.
3. Identify tools you can use to ease student emotions when they are in crisis (long-term or momentary strategies).
4. How might encouraging student voice help students process their feelings, and what opportunities do you provide your students to talk about their opinions?
5. Using the list of possible sources of trauma within a school (from question 1), discuss and record examples of conversation starters you could use when calling home about students involved in those incidents.

# Chapter 3

## The City: Sizeable Trauma

**To be completed before the chapter 3 book study session:**

- Read chapter 3.
- Create a list of community-based resources and assistance in your city.
- Determine where student information will be centralized if there is a school closure, per school policy.

***Facilitator Note:** If time allows, have the group construct a lesson plan for engaging students in creating a community map.*

1. How have crises in your city created systemic issues with standard operations (such as schools, Child Protective Services, mail, waste management, construction, etc.)?
2. In what ways does your school partner with the community? How do these partnerships enrich students?
3. How does the geography of your city impact your school when there is a crisis in the city?
4. How can we reframe our community partnerships to assist with trauma response needed for injustice and racism crises?
5. What role does the school play in bridging student trust in their city?

# Chapter 4

## The State/Country/World: Mass-Scale Trauma

**To be completed before the chapter 4 book study session:**

- Read chapter 4.
- Review Devin’s case study and figure 4.1, then note any changes you would have made to the plan or challenges your school in particular would have had.
- Make a list of ways your school supports students with SEL.

***Facilitator Note:** Participants can use the second page of the Trauma Response Preparations Worksheet for School Planning to create backup plans for school operations and SEL.*

1. How does large-scale trauma impact trauma occurring in the home?
2. How does the supportive and engaging presence of school staff help students feel more secure?
3. Combine the lists of SEL strategies your school uses (created in preparation for this meeting) and determine how each strategy would need to be restructured for a remote learning or altered schedule situation.
4. What information would you need to be able to work outside of your classroom or office (master schedules, student lists, staff contact information, etc.)?
5. In a group, brainstorm opportunities to teach students about practicing mindfulness.

# About the Author

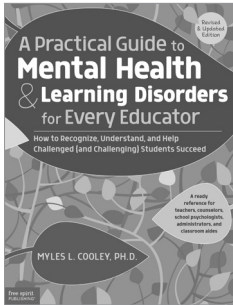


**Stephanie Filio** is a middle school counselor for Virginia Beach City Public Schools. As a young mom, she was empowered by her high school counselor to continue pursuing her dreams, and she received her undergraduate degree in interdisciplinary studies from the University of Virginia and her M.Ed. in counseling from Old Dominion University. In a discussion with one of her UVA professors about her desire to stay in school forever, her mentor responded, “If you want to be a lifelong learner, go into education,” and so she found her place. Prior to her eight years as a public school counselor, Stephanie

worked in private education, specializing in standardized tests, test preparation, and future planning. She writes about SEL and educational topics for the Free Spirit Publishing Blog and about her career and hobbies at her blog Weekend Therapy ([weekendtherapy.wordpress.com](http://weekendtherapy.wordpress.com)), and she can be found on Twitter @steffschoolcoun. Stephanie also enjoys spending time with her books, crafts, and family.

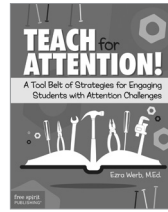


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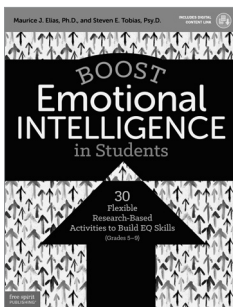
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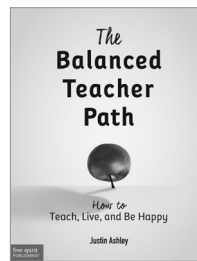
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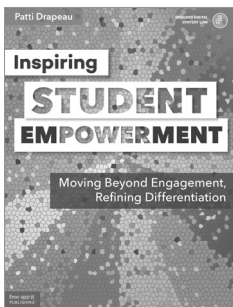
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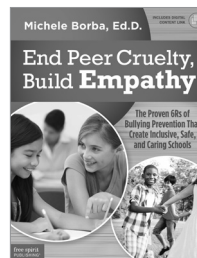
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# TEACHER QUICK SHEET FOR TRAUMA RESPONSE

Observe Students	Obvious Signs of Trauma and Stress	Less Obvious Signs of Trauma and Stress
<p>Report non-emergency signs of stress to:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Swift drop in grades</li> <li>• Despondency</li> <li>• Detachment from peers</li> <li>• Sleepiness or lethargy</li> <li>• Abrupt attendance change</li> <li>• Skipping meals</li> <li>• Mood changes/emotional outbursts</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lingering around the counselor's office</li> <li>• Less interest in hobbies</li> <li>• Bouts of daydreaming</li> <li>• Increased requests to call home</li> <li>• Loitering in the bathrooms</li> <li>• Increased obsession with order</li> <li>• Constant questioning/ double-checking</li> </ul>
<p><b>Call Home</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Begin with a general check-in with the parent.               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› Express concern.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Discuss something you love about their child.               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› Personalize your knowledge of the student.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Check in with your own feelings as you discuss the behavior in question.               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› Generalize problem behaviors in the classroom.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Let the parent know you are concerned and why.               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› Avoid "why" questions; use "we" instead of "he/she/you."</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Listen.               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› Do not interpret their frustration as criticism.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Ask the parent how they feel.               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› Sense when a parent is overwhelmed and note sources of stress in the home.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Make a plan that includes solicited advice from the parent.               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› Take the weight off of their shoulders and refer them to specialists.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	



**TEACHER QUICK SHEET FOR TRAUMA RESPONSE (CONTINUED)**

<b>Reach Out</b> Child Protective Services Hotline #: <hr/> Non-Emergency #: <hr/>	<b>Crisis Team Member Name and Contact Information</b>	
	1.	
	2.	
	3.	
	4.	
5.		
<b>Prepare Materials</b>	<b>Materials Provided from School</b>	<b>Materials for Trauma Kit</b>
	Trauma procedures	Master information binder or digital file
	Community resources and map	Stress relief manipulatives
	Master copies of trauma handouts	Notebooks and coloring materials
	Drafts of emergency correspondence scripts	Office supplies ready to go
<b>Teach Mindfulness</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Check-ins/check-outs with students</li> <li>• Lunch bunches and other social opportunities</li> <li>• Reserved time for student discussion on current events</li> <li>• 4x4/box breathing practice</li> <li>• Meditative quiet brain breaks (can use soft sounds in the background)</li> <li>• Gratitude reflections</li> <li>• Observe nature and environmental sounds/sights</li> <li>• Projects centered on advocacy</li> <li>• Repetitive counting for relaxation</li> <li>• Tactile tracing of hand, desk, or provided designs</li> </ul>	