



Mental Health America Maryland

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Trauma-Informed Essentials for
Educators

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Alliance for
**Inclusion &
Prevention**

Center for Trauma Care in Schools



NATIONAL CENTER FOR
SCHOOL MENTAL HEALTH



NCS3 Partnership



Objectives

1. Reflect on how student behavior is connected to their emotions and unmet needs.
2. Review trauma-informed principles and strategies for creating safe and supportive classrooms.
3. Consider how educators can implement best practices in the classroom, including supporting their own well-being



Our Vision

For every student and
educator to feel safe and
supported in school.



Check-in (Connector)

What is one thing that
people in your
community do that helps
you cope when you are
facing distress?





Individual Reflection



Share in the chat!



NCTSN Trauma-informed Schools System Framework

Tier 1

Safe Environments and Universally Healthy Students / Creating and Supporting a Trauma-Informed School Community

Schools transform on a number of levels to create and support safe environments that promote healthy and successful students and staff. This foundational work is Tier I of the MTSS pyramid and necessary to support strategies across the entire pyramid.

Tier 2

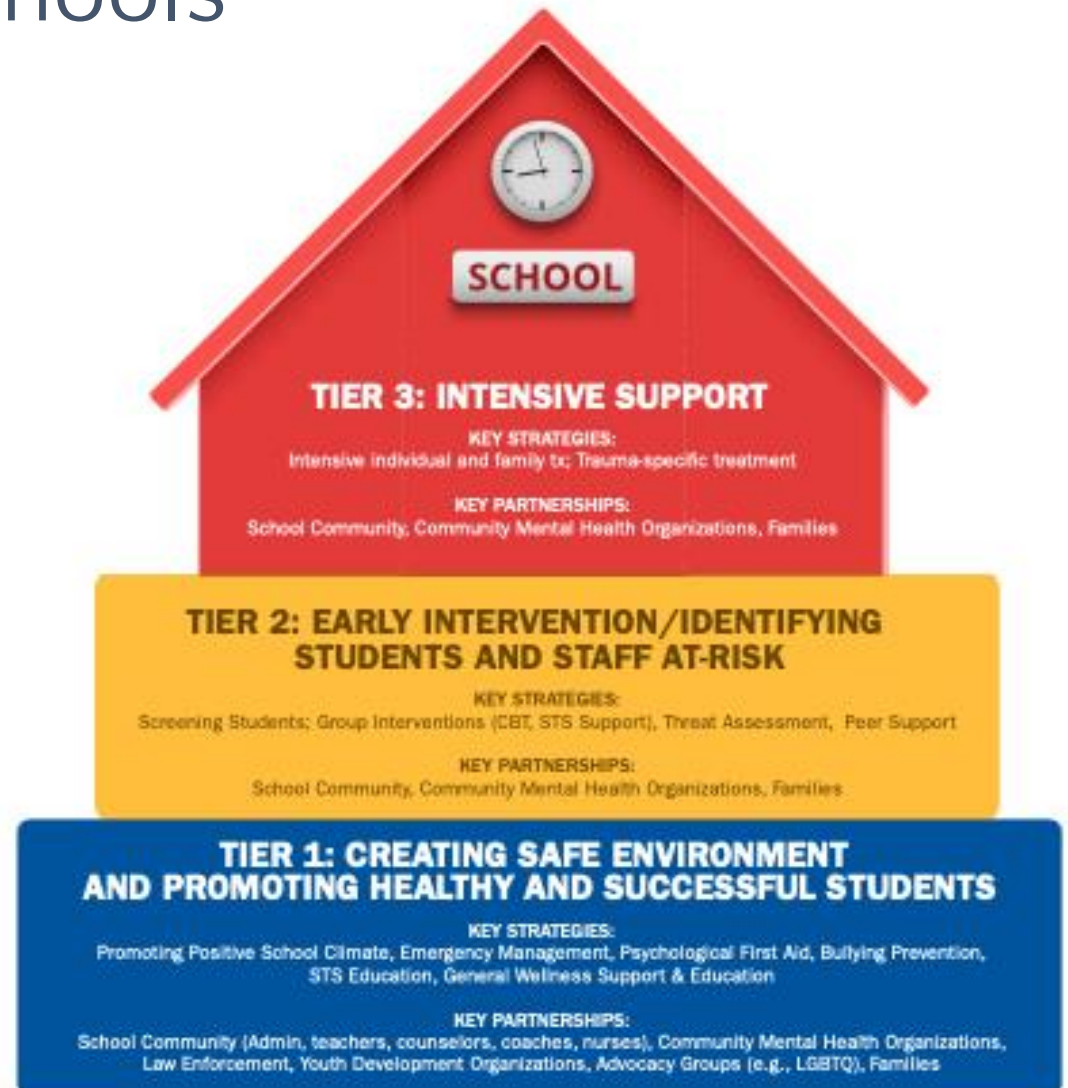
Early Intervention/Identifying Students and Staff At-Risk

Schools identify and respond to students and staff who are at-risk or have been exposed to trauma and/or loss in ways that meet their unique exposures, experiences, developmental, and personal needs.

Tier 3

Intensive Support

Schools provide support to those students whose behaviors and experiences necessitate intensive interventions and aim to meet their unique exposures, experiences, developmental, and personal needs.





What is Trauma?

The 3 Es

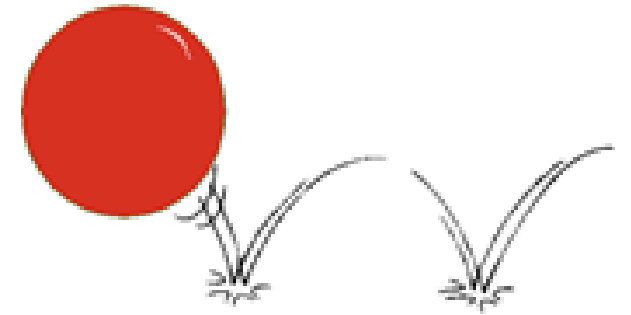
- An emotionally painful or distressing event
- The experience of the event induces an abnormally intense and prolonged stress response
 - The event and experience of the event result in lasting physical & mental effects



Resilience

Capacity to cope with stress and life problems or endure difficult situations.

- It's dynamic. Changes over time, place, and resources.
- Resilience doesn't preclude the need for help. Supports matter!
- Resilience can be modeled, learned, and practiced





Secondary Traumatic Stress & Educator Well-Being

The stress reactions that can come from repeated exposure to students' traumatic experiences – also called compassion fatigue or vicarious trauma.

- Common signs: emotional exhaustion, reduced empathy, irritability, and trouble leaving work at work.
- Taking care of your own well-being is what makes it possible to keep showing up for students.
- Helpful strategies: peer consultation, clear boundaries, regular breaks, and staying connected to your support system.



Tier 1: Universal Mental Health Promotion and Prevention

Strategies for Every Student





Relationships

Intentional learning experiences

Skills development

Environments that are emotionally safe and promote belonging



「 All learning is social.
All learning is emotional. 」

Building relationships

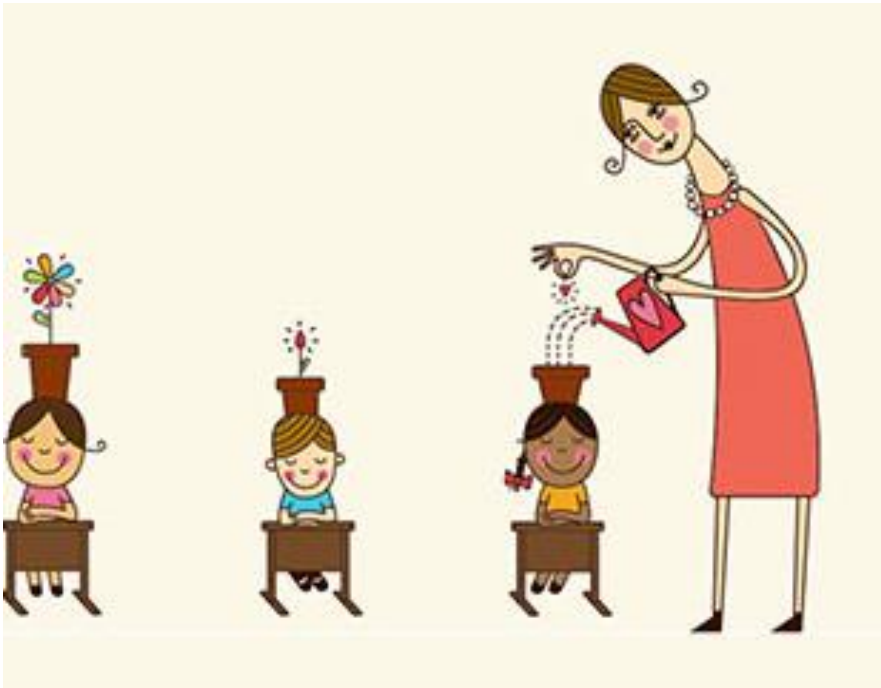


Video: Every Opportunity





Relationships



- Ask students about their interests.
- Greet students by name.
- Use praise often.
- Do positive "shout outs".
- Share about yourself.
- Model kindness.

"Every child deserves a champion – an adult who will never give up on them, who understands the power of connections and insists that they become the best that they can possibly be."



Relationships: Student-to-Student

- Peer-to-peer connection
- Promoting prosocial behaviors
→ reduced bullying
- Addressing teasing, bullying, & conflict with restorative practices



Skills development

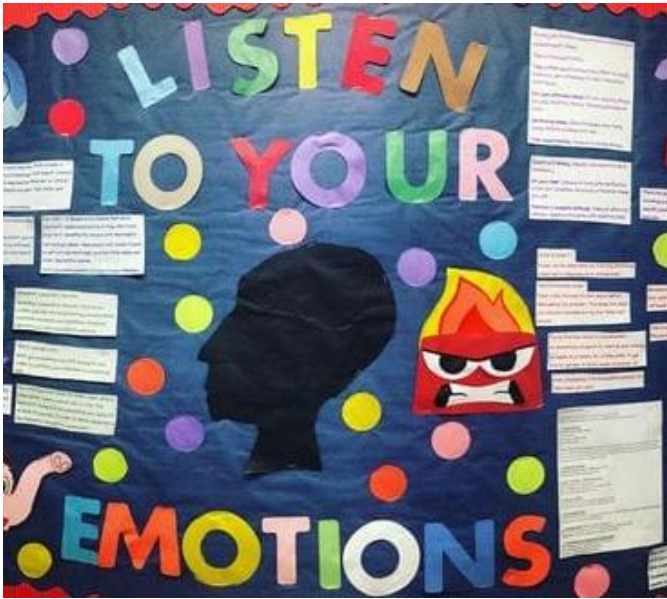
- Self-awareness
- Self-management
- Social awareness
- Relationship skills
- Responsible decision-making





Mental Health Literacy

- **Mental health promotion:** Learning daily habits like stress management, feeling identification, good sleep that keep the mind healthy.
- **Disorder awareness:** Recognizing early signs and symptoms of common conditions like anxiety and depression.
- **Stigma reduction:** Replacing judgmental attitudes with empathy, respect, and acceptance for people facing struggles.
- **Help-seeking skills:** Knowing when, where, and how to access professional care, support systems, or self-help tools





Building environments that are emotionally safe and promote belonging

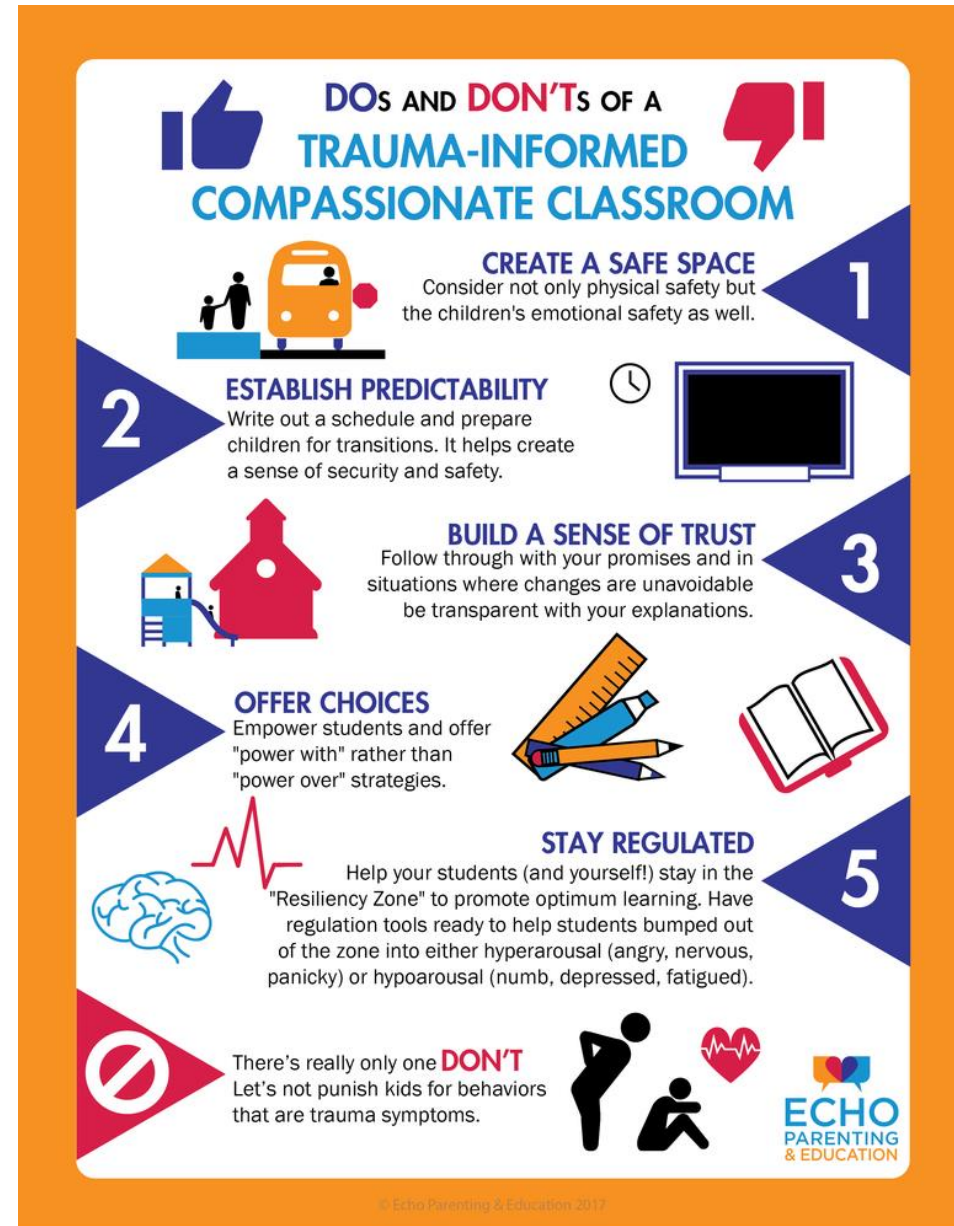
Four Key Settings:

- Classroom
- Schools
- Families & Caregivers
- Communities





Trauma-Informed Schools Approach





Classroom Strategies to Support Students Experiencing Distress Due to Mental Health Concerns, Trauma or Adversity





Opportunity to Respond with Compassion

Youth impacted by trauma and other mental health difficulties often display behaviors that can be challenging.

Sometimes educators respond with punitive or exclusionary discipline when a mental health response is more compassionate.

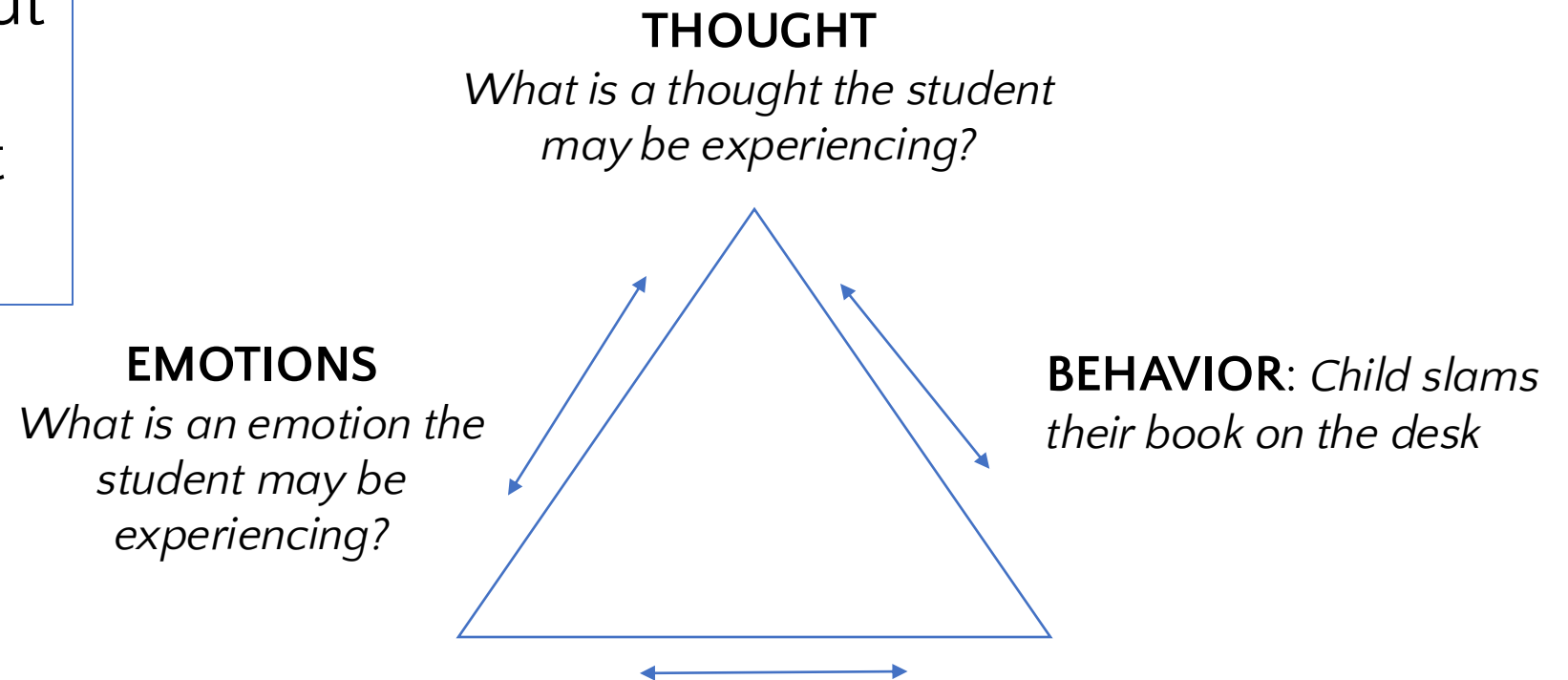
Compassionate responding helps us better meet student needs.



Consider student thoughts & emotions underlying their behaviors



Example: child raises their hand to ask a question, but the teacher can't call on them right away.





Examples of what behaviors could signify



Yelling

"My needs have been ignored, and I feel stuck."

Hitting or fighting

"I feel unsafe. I'm worried something terrible is going to happen."



Throwing objects or property damage

"I feel rejected and unloved by my peers and teachers."



Making verbal threats

"I feel unseen or unheard, and I want to be cared for."



Compassionate Reflection Questions

A large blue thought bubble with a black outline and three smaller blue circles at the bottom left.

How is the student feeling?

A large yellow thought bubble with a black outline and three smaller yellow circles at the bottom left.

What potential need could be currently unmet for this student?

A large blue thought bubble with a black outline and three smaller blue circles at the bottom left.

What can I do to help the student feel safe and supported right now?



Tips for De-Escalating



Take a deep breath.



Be "Curious not Furious".



Validate upset feelings.



Reassure the student that you care about their feelings and want to help them problem solve.



Give student time to follow through on directions.



If needed, have another adult step in to provide support.

Reflect in Chat: What de-escalation strategies or programs does your district offer to educators?



Creating a Safe Space for Students

SAMHSA's 6 Principles of a Trauma-Informed Approach

1. Physical and Emotional Safety
2. Trustworthiness and Transparency
3. Peer Support
4. Collaboration and Mutuality
5. Empowerment, Voice and Choice
6. Cultural and Historical Considerations





1. Physical and Emotional Safety

Ensuring both the **environment** and **interpersonal interactions** feel safe to staff and students.

Examples:

- Make inclusivity and acceptance classroom norms
- Cue students before change to the environment
- Restorative practices





2. Trustworthiness and Transparency

Ensuring behavioral expectations and routines are clearly communicated, consistent, & predictable.

Examples:

- Obtain student input on routines
- Review classroom expectations daily
- Address unsafe behaviors





3. Peer Support

Ensuring well-being supports and mutual self-help are offered to everyone, including youth impacted by trauma.

Example:

- Classroom discussions focus on how students support each other
- Students have opportunities to practice asking for help





4. Collaboration & Mutuality

Support healing through safe and supportive relationships, and adults sharing power and decision making with youth.

Examples:

- Ask students how they prefer to be supported
- Offer empathy and understanding
- Students help establish coping resources in classroom





5. Empowerment, Voice and Choice

Empower student voices and offer choices when possible.

Examples:

- Invite students to share their diverse opinions
- Allow students to choose from options
- Offer student-led activities that build leadership skills





6. Cultural & Historical Considerations

Understand the healing value of traditional cultural connections and discuss and act against discrimination.

Examples:

- Create safe space for unique strengths and backgrounds
- Acknowledge and address acts of unfairness or injustice





Supporting Student in Distress

- Healthy Emotional Expression
- Executive Functioning
- Social Skills
- Use Safe Behaviors





Module 6: Classroom Strategies to Support Students

Upon completion of this module, the educator will be able to:

- understand factors that contribute to student behaviors
- practice co-regulation and self-regulation
- identify classroom strategies to support students experiencing distress



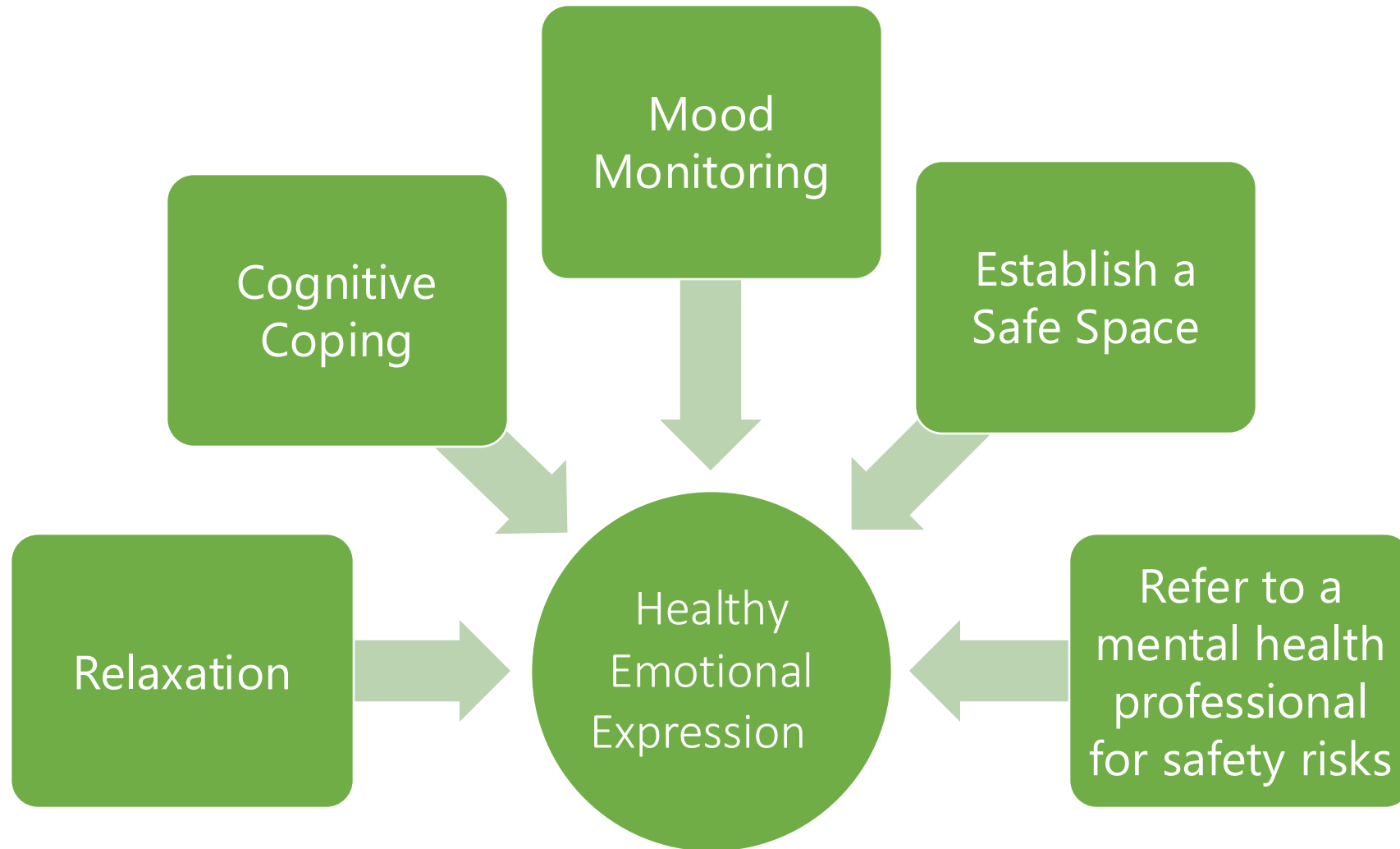
Classroom
WISE

Well-Being Information and
Strategies for Educators

www.classroomwise.org

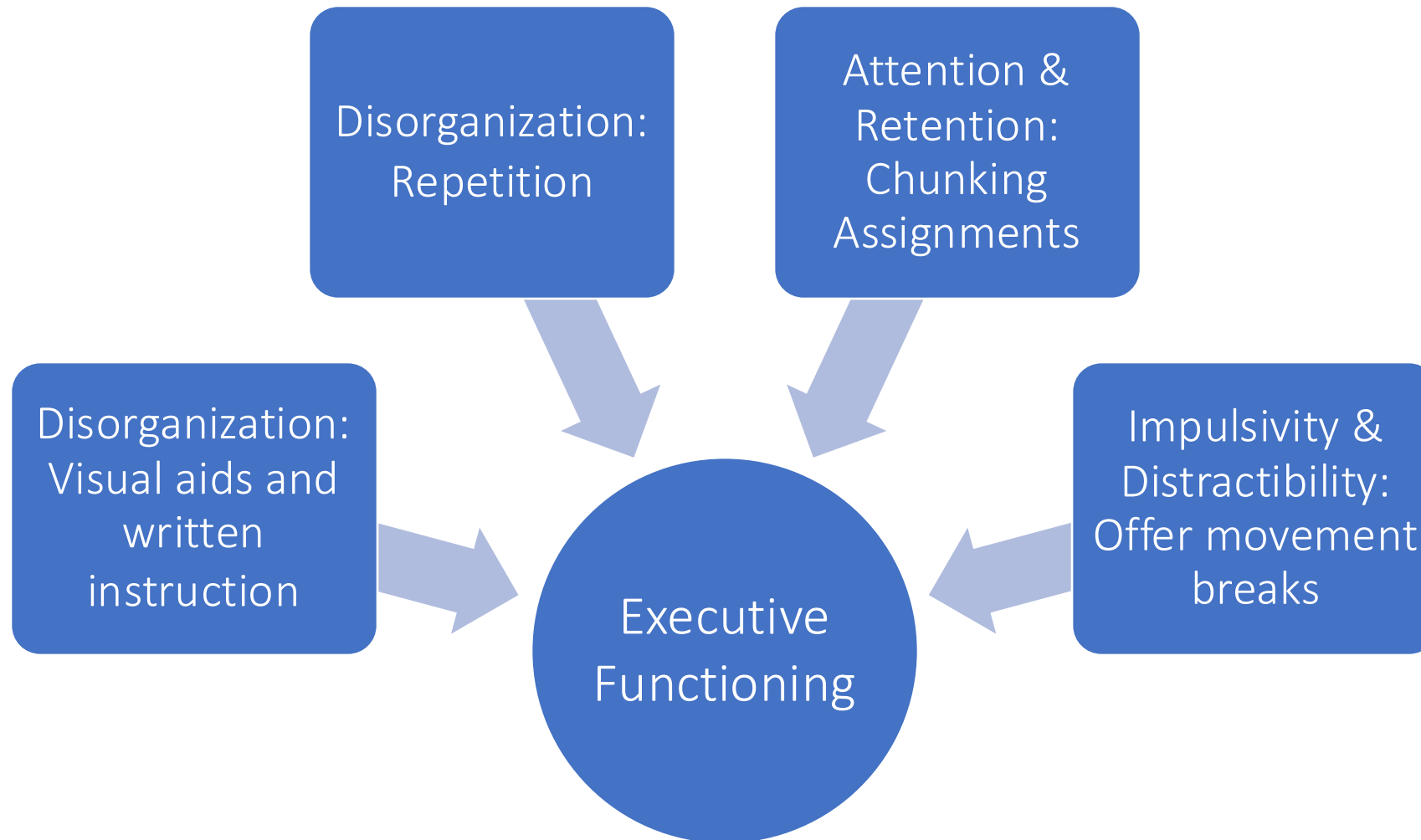


Healthy Emotional Expression Strategies



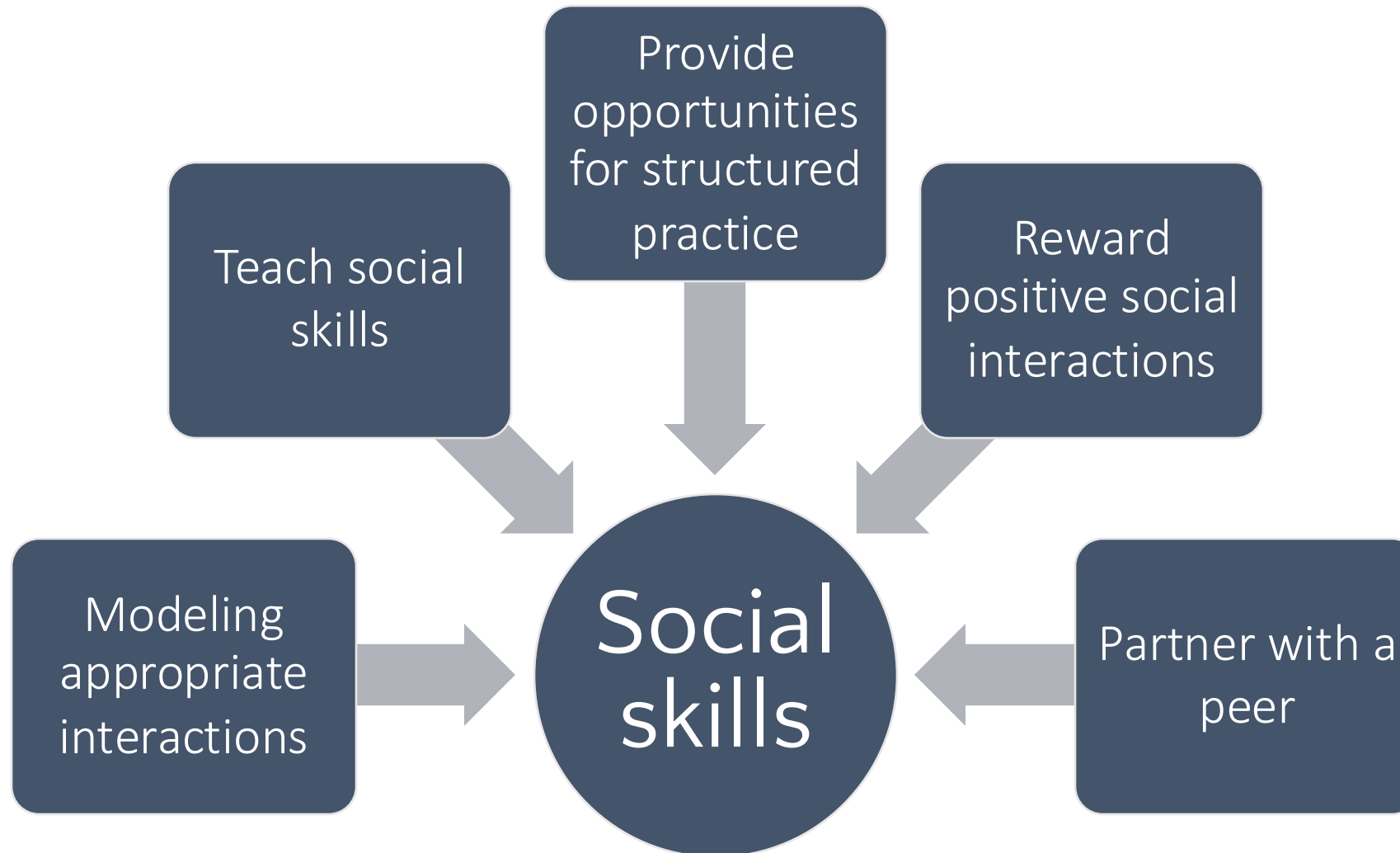


Executive functioning Strategies



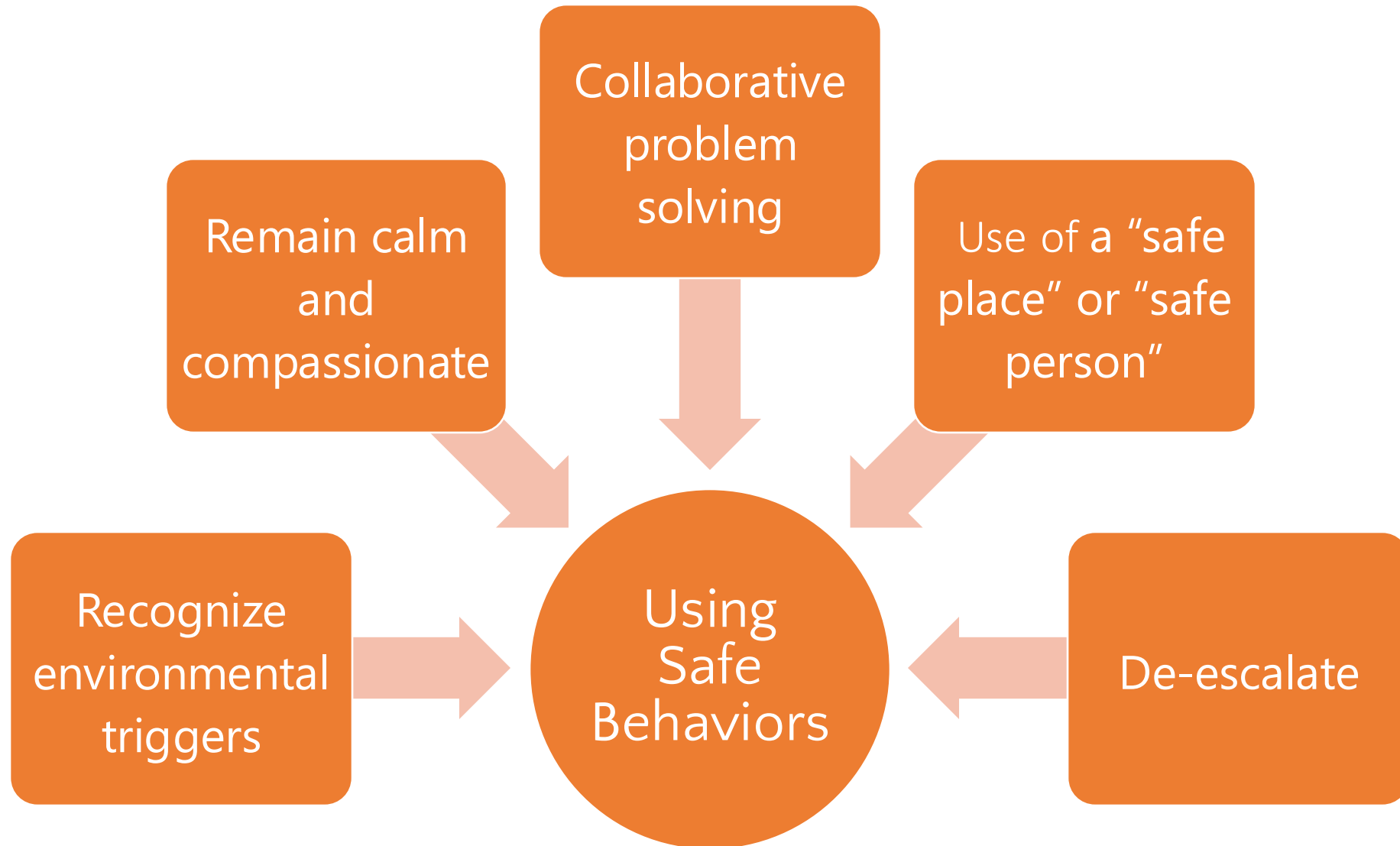


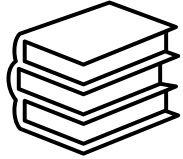
Social Skills Strategies





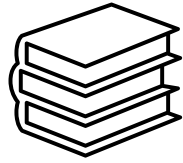
Safe Behaviors Strategies





Resources for Further Learning

- [Classroom WISE](#) is a FREE 3-part training package that assists K-12 educators and school staff in supporting the mental health of students in the classroom. Check out Module 6 on Classroom Strategies to Support Students
- [Youth Suicide Prevention: A Resource for Teachers, Staff and Administrators](#) provides guidance for educators on how to prevent student suicide for school students.
- [Skills for Psychological Recovery \(SPR\)](#) is an evidence-informed modular intervention that aims to help survivors gain skills to manage distress and cope with post-disaster stress and adversity.



Resources for Further Learning

- [Psychological First Aid: Listen, Protect, Connect \(PFA-LPC\)](#) is an evidence-informed five-step crisis response strategy that guides teachers and staff members in helping students with dealing with the aftermath of trauma.
- Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. [SAMHSA's Concept of Trauma and Guidance for a Trauma-Informed Approach](#). HHS Publication No. (SMA) 14-4884. Rockville, MD: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2014.



References

- Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. [SAMHSA's Concept of Trauma and Guidance for a Trauma-Informed Approach](#). HHS Publication No. (SMA) 14-4884. Rockville, MD: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2014.



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Question & Answer

