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Fostering Resilience through Essential Skill Building

Colchester School District Training/ 2017-2018 School year

Joelle van Lent, Psy.D.

This training is designed from current research on the key components and protective factors that foster resilience in children who are contending with a wide variety of stressors including mental health challenges, intellectual and learning variations, developmental disabilities, and chronic adversity within their environment. Dr. van Lent will identify key elements and approaches for creating environments in which children can thrive. The training will include an in-depth discussion of the impact of early neglect and trauma on a child's development, specifically the child's ability to form healthy relationships, respond to context, engage in learning, and develop a positive self-concept.

Participants will learn specific strategies and interventions that will create intentional opportunities for the development of essential skills within the realms of emotional regulation, social competency, and executive functioning. This training will highlight how participants can positively influence a child's development and offer specific ideas to put into practice.

In an effort to also support the resilience of the educational provider, this training will also address the risk factors and vulnerabilities for negative influence on those in helping professions. Participants will develop an increased awareness of individual, work place, and cultural factors that could contribute to compassion fatigue. The focus will be to highlight factors that promote compassion satisfaction and renewed commitment to self-care, connection, and health within a professional's work life.

Course objectives:

- 1.) Participants will learn about various forms of stress and current research relevant to fostering resilience in children. The presentation will focus on the protective factors and key elements that improve a child's ability to prevail in context of ongoing stressors of a wide variety.
- 2.) Participants will explore the impact of chronic exposure to trauma on child development, specifically focusing on attachment capacity, neurological functioning, affect regulation, and executive functioning.
- 3.) Participants will learn strategies and interventions that foster the development of essential skills that improve a child's engagement and functioning. The training focuses on the realms of

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emotional regulation, social competency, and executive functioning. Specific examples and modeling of such skill development will be included.

- 4.) The participant will develop an understanding of the concepts of Compassion Fatigue and Compassion Satisfaction, as well as increased awareness of the associated risk factors and environmental vulnerabilities. The participant will be actively engaged in developing ideas for self-care and effective professional collaboration.

Dr. Joelle van Lent is a licensed psychologist with over 20 years of experience working with children, families, and child serving agencies. Dr. van Lent has expertise as a therapist, clinician, evaluator, consultant, and trainer. Her work focuses on child and adolescent mental health, family therapy, trauma, and Autism Spectrum Disorder. Dr. van Lent's approach is geared toward fostering resilience and creating communities that support healthy development. She is currently in private practice based in the northwestern part of Vermont and works across the state with schools and agencies. Dr. van Lent has worked specifically in the Colchester School District for over 15 years and continues to provide evaluation, training, and consultation to all schools within CSD.

This is a 7-session course that will meet in conference room at the Colchester Police Department. Participants are expected to actively engage in discussion and application of the concepts to their school environment and interweave resiliency efforts into academic instruction and other school community initiatives.

We will run 2 Sessions one from 8:15-10:45 and one from 11:30-2:00.

The session dates are:

October 9

November 13

December 11

January 8

February 12

March 12

April 9

Please contact Heather Finelli to sign up for the course

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Creating Trauma Informed School Communities Fostering Resilience through Essential Skill Building

Joelle van Lent, Psy.D.

Resilience is “a process of, capacity for, or the outcome of successful adaptation despite challenging and threatening circumstances.”

(Cloitre, Morin, & Linares, NYU Child Study Center)

Healthy communities are those in which the members of that community foster a sense of belonging for all, naturally share supports and resources in a reciprocal manner, and bring closer rather than send away vulnerable community members. A community that is focused intentionally on the resilience of all members thrives. A community that strives to improve trauma-informed practices recognizes that this endeavor is not a concrete task achieved at a certain point in time. Rather, this endeavor is an effort that is relevant to all members of the community and requires intentional effort as part of the daily culture in an ongoing manner.

A community can guide intentional efforts and improve trauma-informed practices through conducting self-assessment, acquiring consultation, defining an action plan, and providing training. The goals are to increase awareness in all members of the community of the impact of stress on the system and its' members ability to thrive, build the skill and expertise within that system to improve the protective factors and essential skills of resilience, and offer explicit intervention to those who are most vulnerable.

The leaders in a community can seek consultation to coordinate efforts in this realm through first assessing where their system is on a road map, reinforce already existing resources and strengths, and develop an action plan to address identified areas of need or weakness.

The Road Map

A recommended Implementation approach for school communities.

1. The effort and the associated leadership team could be referred to as focused on “resilience” rather than “trauma.” Resilience is directly relevant to all community members and is a hopeful frame that increases engagement, instills a sense of agency, and reduces despair.

2. The school leadership team could conduct an assessment or survey of their system in relation to trauma-informed practices with input from all community members or representatives from all aspects of a community.
3. The leadership team can then use the survey results to develop a strategic plan in which noted strengths and resources are reinforced and action steps are planned to improve areas of weakness.
4. In-service trainings can then be provided to faculty/staff to increase awareness of the impact of toxic stress on student development, the science of resilience, and strategies to promote protective factors and essential skills.
5. A core team is identified to receive ongoing consultation from an expert in this field. This team can include administrators, special educators, school counselors, school based clinicians, behavioral specialists, school nurses, and teachers. *It is essential for the leader of the community to be an active and consistent part of this team.*
6. The core team develops expertise to gradually assume the role of consultant to the school community to sustain progress in systemic efforts, specialized services, and individual case consultation. This team will provide annual training to newly hired faculty and staff to sustain progress through staffing changes.
7. Consultation occurs following training in an ongoing manner during faculty meetings, professional development time, or grade level meetings to provide opportunities for discussion and application that will diminish interference, facilitate coherence, and deepen learning through key topic discussion.
8. Individual student consultation and psychological evaluations are provided as appropriate to support complex cases and the process of implementation and generalization of approaches to target areas of impact.
9. Shorter informational discussions occur with all adults in the school community who interact with children and may not be included in the in-service trainings. (Ideally to include bus drivers, food service staff, coaches, custodial staff, after school care providers, substitute teachers, etc.)
10. A resource library is created in the staff resource section of the school website and in the school libraries to provide reference for books, articles, and tools related to each training component. Student resources are also developed within the school library. The librarian creates a student committee to determine if "every child can find their story" in the library and expand the book selections accordingly.
11. Parents and students are informed of the intentional effort to foster resilience through high interest format, such as showing the movie Resilience at a community dinner or having a table at Open House.
12. Data collection occurs in an ongoing manner to measure progress and direct efforts. Options can include:
 - a. Conduct follow up assessment through the annual distribution of the initial trauma-sensitive schools survey.

- b. Use already existing data to measure progress. This effort would review attendance, on time arrival, behavior referrals, nurse visits, discipline incidents, out placements, and special education referrals.
- c. The school leadership team sends out a survey after each in-service to obtain evaluation and feedback to guide the training process.
- d. Conduct focus groups with parents and students to obtain input and inform the process.

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Training Description and Objectives

Dr. van Lent's training is designed from current research on the key components and protective factors that foster resilience in children who are contending with a wide variety of stressors including developmental trauma, mental health challenges, intellectual and learning variations, developmental disabilities, and chronic adversity within their environment. Dr. van Lent will identify key elements and approaches for creating environments in which children can thrive. The training will include an in-depth discussion of the impact of early neglect and trauma on a child's development, specifically the child's ability to form healthy relationships, respond to context, engage in learning, and develop a positive self-concept.

Participants will learn specific strategies and interventions that will create intentional opportunities for the development of essential skills within the realms of emotional regulation, social competency, and executive functioning. This training will highlight how participants can positively influence a child's development and offer specific ideas to put into practice. In an effort to also support the resilience of the educational provider, this training will address the risk factors and vulnerabilities for negative influence on those in helping professions. Participants will develop an increased awareness of individual, work place, and cultural factors that could contribute to compassion fatigue. The focus will be to highlight factors that promote compassion satisfaction and renewed commitment to self-care, connection, and health within a professional's work life.

The goal of this consultation approach is to build competency and increased self-reliance within the school system for implementation of trauma informed approaches. The approach has an emphasis on offering relevant concepts and specific strategies that can be used universally within the classroom primarily through the use of already existing resources.

Training objectives:

- 1.) Participants will learn about various forms of stress and current research relevant to fostering resilience in children. The training will focus on the protective factors and key elements that improve a child's ability to prevail in context of ongoing stressors of a wide variety.
- 2.) Participants will explore the impact of chronic exposure to trauma and toxic stress on child development, specifically focusing on attachment capacity, neurological functioning, affect regulation, and executive functioning.
- 3.) Participants will learn strategies and interventions that foster the development of essential skills that improve a child's engagement and functioning. The training focuses on the realms of relational health, emotional regulation, social competency, and executive functioning. An emphasis is placed on the use of co-regulation as a tool to help de-escalate students and improve their ability to regulate. Specific examples and modeling of such skill development will be included.
- 4.) The participant will develop an understanding of the concepts of Compassion Fatigue and Compassion Satisfaction, as well as increased awareness of the associated risk factors and environmental vulnerabilities. The participant will be actively engaged in developing ideas for self-care and effective professional collaboration.