



Federation for Community School November 2013 Forum

## **How to Help Children and Youth with Childhood Trauma**

Any time you work with children and youth, there is the possibility that one or more may be dealing with childhood trauma. It make no difference to the child whether you are a teacher, counselor, therapist, scout leader, coach or any number of other roles adults play in a child's life. If you remember the following 5 Ss, you can help the children you are working with that may also have childhood trauma.

The 5 Ss:

### **Safety**

Make sure that the child feels safe whenever she is around you.

Can the child see what is happening all around them in the space where you meet? This child may not do well with her back to the doorway.

Be Predictable. Keep routine when working with children and work hard at informing when the routine may change.

### **Self-Soothing/Self-Regulation**

Children and youth dealing with trauma often have 2 speeds, high and low, and can go from one to the other in a matter of seconds. They have not learned how to help themselves stay calm. It is important for you to stay calm when they overreact and to be there for them. It is even more important for you to help them identify (through your observations) what seems to help them stay calm or get calm.

### **Supportive Adults**

Be the adult protective shield, but maintain appropriate boundaries. Some of these youngsters may be particularly sensitive about being touched because of what they have experienced. These are the kids who need a cheerleader and often times you can fulfill that role.

### **Strengths**

Children and youth dealing with trauma can be very challenging and while it may take a little time and observation, it is important that they know they have strengths and what some of those strengths are. You might start by focusing on what seem like easy or general things (It's great you arrived on time) before moving on to more individual strengths.

### **Self-Care**

Clients have endless needs and you cannot help others unless you are rested and ready to go. Take the time to care for yourself whether that's through exercise, reading, writing, the arts or even riding roller coasters!