

TITLE | TRAUMA INFORMED PRACTICES

CATEGORY | Garden Educator Training

SUB-CATEGORY | Learning & Teaching Outdoors

OVERVIEW | Education Outside contracted with Dr. Martha Merchant, licensed clinical psychologist and consultant with UCSF HEARTS (Healthy Environments And Response to Trauma in Schools)¹, to lead a training on trauma informed practices for garden educators. We suggest contacting someone in your school district or city to lead a similar training. If this is not possible, we suggest using the training resources listed as a starting point for discussions.

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Training Rationale:

During annual feedback surveys, Education Outside garden educators consistently wrote that trauma informed practices trainings were highly relevant to their jobs and critical to their success. This topic is important for all garden educators to better understand student behavior and support students and school communities that have experienced various forms of trauma (i.e. abuse, neglect, societal oppression, natural disaster, violence, poverty, etc.)

Suggested Time of Year:

November/December, with additional training(s) throughout the school year. It is helpful to touch on this topic multiple times throughout the year for two reasons. First, as instructors gain more teaching experience they'll have more "hooks" on which to hang the workshop information. Second, in subsequent trainings, the trainer can ask instructors for scenarios that have arisen during their classes and spend time discussing how to handle these scenarios in future classes.

The Trauma Informed Practices Training is related to the **Restorative Practices** and **Behavior Management** trainings within this PDF, as well as the Diversity Equity and Inclusion trainings, which are available in *Leadership for Community Engagement* linked in the Table of Contents. We recommend leading separate trainings for each of these topics, allowing instructors to build on the knowledge gained in each. Please see the *Training Calendar Scope and Sequence*, available in the Table of Contents, for a recommended scope and sequence for the aforementioned interrelated trainings.

Suggested Workshop Length:

3 hrs for the first training, with additional 2-3 hr trainings throughout the school year.

Training Objective:

Educators will learn how trauma and stress affect the brain and how this can manifest in students/classrooms and in themselves. They will also learn techniques for de-escalating situations that arise in the classroom and supporting all students so that they feel safe and are able to learn.

Training Overview:

The following list outlines some of the questions to address during a trauma informed practices training.

1. How do trauma, chronic stress, and the “fight, flight or freeze” response affect the brain and body?
2. How can we shift our perspectives from “What is wrong with you?” to “What has happened to you?” How does this shift in perspective foster connection and compassion between instructors and students?
3. How can we prevent escalation in ourselves and in students when students become triggered or agitated?
4. How do societal oppressions cause trauma, and how does stress exacerbate implicit bias?
5. How do we ensure students feel physically, socially and emotionally safe so that they are able to learn?
6. How can we promote resilience in students, and how can we help students develop a sense of agency?
7. How can we help students build skills in self-management, self-awareness and social awareness?

Activity Ideas:

- Practice “brain breaks” and other mindfulness practices, including belly breathing, yoga/stretching, and playing with play-doh or other tactile objects.
- Make cool-down/peace corner kits to incorporate into the outdoor classroom. (For more on this, reference *Building Culturally Responsive and Inclusive Outdoor Classrooms*, available in the Table of Contents.)
- Have instructors complete a self-care assessment and write a personalized self-care checklist to use in the future.

Assessing Understanding:

- Exit Ticket: Ask instructors to write about a real or hypothetical situation during which a student became triggered or agitated in class. How did/would they have responded previously, and how would they respond after this training? What’s one strategy or tool they will try to implement in their outdoor classroom?
- *Education Outside’s Best Practices for Teaching*, available in the Table of Contents, includes sections on behavior management and student relationships. We suggest using the best practices rubric as a tool during lesson observations to assess whether or not the instructor is using trauma-informed practices and creating a space where all students feel safe and able to learn.

References:

1. *About Martha Merchant, Psy.D., Clinical Psychologist*. Retrieved May 22, 2019, from <https://www.docmartha.org/about>

Additional Resources:

- There are many additional books, websites and video resources recommended by Dr. Martha Merchant on her website.¹ The following is a short list:
 - *Assessing and Treating Youth Exposed to Traumatic Stress*, by Victor Carrion
 - *Culturally Responsive Teaching & The Brain*, by Dr. Zaretta Hammond
 - *Reaching and Teaching Children Who Hurt: Strategies for Your Classroom*, by Susan Craig
 - *The Boy Who Was Raised as a Dog: And Other Stories from a Child Psychiatrist’s Notebook--What Traumatized Children Can Teach Us About Loss, Love, and Healing*, by Dr. Bruce Perry and Maia Szalavitz

Education Outside does not specifically endorse any particular resource or contractor. We share this information to illustrate our approach to this topic.