

The Regulated Classroom: “Bottom-Up” Instruction

Trauma-Informed Teaching That Begins with YOU

One of the greatest challenges facing educators today is disruptive and disengaged students in the classroom. A primary reason for these challenging behaviors has been a long standing, unrecognized epidemic – childhood trauma.

Childhood trauma or ACEs (Adverse Childhood Experiences) occur at alarming rates. Childhood traumatic experiences activate the body’s nervous system stress response which is responsible for survival reactions – in particular, fight, flight, and freeze reactions.

ACEs (Adverse Childhood Experiences) were once mitigated by strong community connections, extended family support, and ample opportunity for imaginative play and movement. With the weakening of these and other protective factors, more and more students overdevelop “fight, flight, and freeze” stress reactions that are activated with the pressures of social circumstances and academic performance in public school settings.

Fight, flight, and freeze stress reactions can look like aggression, hyperactivity, hypervigilance, non-compliance, inattention, and oppositional defiance behaviors. Many of these stress reactions have long been diagnosed and treated as behavioral disorders – ADHD (Attention Deficit, Hyperactivity Disorder), Anxiety, RAD (Reactive Attachment Disorder), ODD (Oppositional Defiance Disorder), etc.

The Regulated Classroom: “Bottom-Up” Instruction is an approach to creating a connected classroom environment by understanding the human nervous system and its role in human behavior. Educators experience their own stress reactions when they encounter challenging student stress reactions. This dynamic human experience undermines connection between educators and their students.

The Regulated Classroom helps educators develop self-awareness about stress activation in their nervous system. The underlying premise is that if educators are regulated in their own stress response, they can assist students in regulating theirs as well. Educators learn to bolster nervous system resilience with sensory tools and exercises. A regulated nervous system makes way for academic learning, impulse control, and social connection.

Description

The Regulated Classroom consists of sensory tools and four kinds of classroom practices that are incorporated into classroom routines as a means of stress regulation for educators and their students.

The four kinds of classroom practices are Connectors, Activators, Soothers, and Affirmations.

CONNECTORS are exercises that build relationships in the classroom. They are rooted in principles of group development.

ACTIVATORS are exercises that energize the classroom learning environment and promote educator and student connection.

SOOTHERS are exercises that calm the body's stress response and create a peaceful classroom atmosphere.

AFFIRMATIONS are exercises that encourage reflection and compassion for self and others.



About

The Regulated Classroom: “Bottom-Up” Instruction is an educator-centric approach developed by Emily Read Daniels. Daniels developed the approach after spending more than 20 years fine tuning her capacity for self-regulation in order to support vulnerable youth as a counselor and educator. The approach is informed by the principles of Somatic Experiencing™, Responsive Classroom®, Project Adventure®, and Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction®.