Application of Trauma Informed Teaching Pedagogy

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Introduction

I applied Trauma Informed Teaching Pedagogy in my Sustainable Banking module. The module is built on a workshop style setting where student's participation is the key for a successful workshop. I applied the principle of safety in my classroom.

Selection Rationale and Application Strategy

To implement a sense of safety in the classroom, I must first recognise trauma within myself and regulate my own emotional response (Imad, 2022). Once I have built emotional safety within me, I feel calmer and can easily form relationships and thus, become more approachable to students. Seeking a sense of safety drives behaviour (Hunter and Maunder, 2001), shifts physiological feedback systems (Juster et al., 2011) and impacts social connection (Porges and Carter, 2017).

To build emotional safety within myself, I do breath work for 20 minutes before entering class. It helps me to centre my emotions by letting go of what happened in the early parts of the day and be in the present moment. I often walk into the classroom with joy as a result. I even uttered the words *"Good afternoon everyone, how are we doing today?"*. Which is an unusual gesture for me.

I have built in 2 breath work sessions which last 2 minutes each into the 3-hour classroom itinerary. Every week I change how I conduct the breath work i.e. noting the cold air coming in and warm air leaving the nostrils; take 1 deep breath in and one deep breath out; just breathe normally 5 breaths in and 5 breaths out and head to toe body scanning). I explain to students the importance of this short exercise on building concentration and focus. Most importantly how letting go of the past thoughts and emotions and just being in the present moment can create a lot of joy. I urge them to try this exercise as frequently as they can while away from the classroom.

To ensure the breathing exercises were meaningful to students, students were shown the learning brain vs survival brain video. We then discussed the importance of reducing stressors and how a simple breath work can help in the classroom. Sceptics were encouraged to try.

At the beginning of each class the students and I reflect on how we are feeling at the beginning of the class with mood meter and acknowledge our feelings in *Polls everywhere*. I encourage students to put down how they feel and see it in the white board to register this feeling within themselves. We usually have a spectrum of

emotions. I tell myself and the students to acknowledge and respect how we feel and be kind and gentle with ourselves for the remaining hours and closely monitor the feelings to see if the feelings change and if they do toward a more positive or negative feeling. To then further reflect on why is that so.

Evaluation and Adaptation

One of my students told me that he was suffering from depression. He told me that what I do in my classroom works as he has personally applied these techniques. He also tells me that he feels happy to come to my classes.

For many years work has become the only activity that defines me. I often feel physically, mentally and emotionally worn out leaving no space for kindness. The trauma informed teaching pedagogy has taught me the importance of self-care. I realise that it is important to find time for self-reflection, exercise, eat well, take frequent breaks during workdays and meditate. I am kinder to myself and students in my classroom and enjoy going for my classes.

However, there are a few anomalies. Some students in the class have not engaged with the breath works or mood meters. I sometime hear them typing away unmindfully during the 2 minutes. Other students tend to just do other things in their computers.

The classroom design, a lecture style setting with a laptop in front of them encourages this, therefore, the future classroom could do with a semi-circle setting without tables for at least the first half of the workshop. This means students will need to leave their computers behind and this will encourage them to at least sit in quietness for a few minutes, if they do not wish to participate in the breathing exercise.

Group task has been a challenge. Students are less willing to speak to their peers.

A separate session called support and connection session runs for an hour weekly to help students to make friends and bond with each other, educator and study materials. This session is built into the timetable, but it is not a compulsory session as the workshop already runs for 3 hours.

In the support and connection sessions we conduct talks on stress and how to manage stress (given by stress management team from the university), go for class trips to the museums to learn more about the subject matter, conduct questions and answer sessions on assessment, various discussions on work life balance, working life in the banking industry, group work dynamics and how to navigate them and sharing ideas on what activities that we do at home to reduce our stresses.

Yet, number of students who attended these sessions were low and only a couple of students made friends outside their immediate groups. More encouragement and positive outcomes of these activities needs to be discussed and shared for students

to show appreciation and interest in them. However, the positives of this session was it helped students who constantly came for these sessions to make new friends, these students were also more cheerful in the classroom and were more vocal and unafraid to answer questions or participate in activities.

Conclusion

Trauma Informed Teaching Pedagogy facilitated a process for educators to create a comfortable environment for learning, growth, healing, reconnecting with life to happen in the classroom (Lynch, et. al., 2025). The pedagogy has brought joy into the classroom by fostering self-care, understanding and accepting our emotions and feelings as it is and learning to give kindness to ourselves while connecting with peers and enabling participation and learning to happen in the classroom.

References

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