

Teachers as Responders to Trauma: Their Own and that of their Students

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Abstract

Adverse childhood experiences impact approximately 64% of Americans. These traumatic events include direct or witnessed violence, abuse, and neglect, as well as exposure to instability in the home as a result of parental imprisonment, substance abuse, and mental health problems (CDC, 2024). This means that not only can we anticipate children coming to school with the stress of current or past trauma, but that teachers are entering the classroom as survivors of similar experiences. The mental health of teachers has been discussed at length, especially in recent years (ie: Agyapong, Obuobi-Donkor, Burback, & Wei, 2022). While these studies provide an understanding about the burdens of teachers, they do not produce many strategies for increased coping. Yet to be explored, is how teachers might actually learn to heal their own primary trauma while simultaneously supporting a child in their classroom. The use of bibliotherapy, the practice of using books to produce therapeutic effects, has been shown to alleviate stresses held by both children and adults from varying experiences (Gualano et al., 2017; Yuan et al., 2018). The research at hand asks, "Can teachers seek their own healing of primary trauma with professional development aimed at the use of bibliotherapy with their students?" Findings suggest 87% of the 84 participants of the professional development offering felt the exploration of bibliotherapy for students was one with which they themselves could then benefit from an unhealed trauma.

Keywords

Bibliotherapy, Education, Trauma.