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Trauma informed pedagogy: A STAT order needed for nurse educators

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Trauma-Informed Pedagogy: A STAT Order Needed for Nurse Educators

Trauma is currently a buzzword in education, but for many students is a personal reality and a complicated phenomenon (Yielding, 2022). The world experienced collective trauma as the global COVID-19 pandemic unfolded, morally burdening healthcare providers while caring for clients and families (Sherwood et al., 2021). A nation watched in horror as George Floyd was murdered at the hands of police, reigniting protests in communities across the United States. Individuals may currently or have previously experienced trauma in their own lives. Therefore, nurse educators must acknowledge these personal, local, and global challenges to optimally support student nurses throughout their educational journey.

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) states that trauma is “a result of violence, abuse, neglect, loss, disaster, war and other emotionally harmful experiences” (SAMHSA, 2014, p. 1). Worldwide, over 70% of adults have experienced a traumatic event, with 30% of individuals experiencing four or more (Benjet et al., 2016). Although anyone may experience trauma, some populations are at greater risk, including youths of color, individuals of lower socioeconomic status, and vulnerable populations (Crosby, 2015).

Nursing students are not immune and may experience individual, interpersonal, institutional, organizational, or community trauma during the school curriculum (Mayer et al., 2022). In a study by Kameg et al. (2021), more than 50% of nursing students experienced exposure to at least one traumatic event in childhood. A history of trauma can lead to an inability to cope with daily stressors, a decreased ability to trust others and benefit from relationships, increased internalizing behaviors such as anxiety and depression, and exhibiting externalizing behaviors including the inability to regulate actions or control the expression of emotions (SAMHSA, 2014). Nurse educators may observe these student behaviors but often lack the language, tools, and strategies to support these individuals. Furthermore, nursing school can be a traumatic experience and have the potential for retraumatization for students who have experienced adversity during childhood (Mayer et al., 2022).

To combat the trauma that nursing students may experience and nursing school may elicit, educators can be guided by a trauma-informed pedagogy. Building on the principles of trauma-informed care developed by SAMHSA (2014), trauma-informed pedagogy incorporates “practices that recognize and center the impact of trauma on individuals and communities” (Thompson & Carello, 2022, p. 175). Nurse educators can apply the principles of trauma-informed pedagogy to their class content, policies, and teaching practices to support students who have experienced trauma, prevent retraumatization, and develop as trauma-informed practitioners (Carello & Butler, 2015).

Through the use of presentation and small group discussion, this session will provide nurse educators in all settings, knowledge about trauma and trauma-informed pedagogy, the ability to recognize students at risk, and holistic strategies to respond and prevent retraumatization. Participants will gain skills to implement trauma-informed pedagogy into their nurse educator practice and influence practices and policies at their institution.

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