

## Trauma-Informed Response Principles

Dr. Mark Sloane of the Western Michigan University Trauma Assessment Clinic shared the following principles to support the students, families, and staff during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Using trauma-informed principles, maintain a calm demeanor with those around you. We encourage you to keep in mind these research-based, trauma-informed principles:

1. **Stress weakens our immune system**, making us more susceptible to illness. In the midst of all our hand-washing, we can pay attention to the tone of our voices and word choice.
2. **A dehydrated brain is an irritated brain**. Drinking water is a great way to flush our system and is an infection-preventing practice. We also know hydration is an effective intervention for aggression.
3. **Connection helps regulate emotions**. This is a great opportunity to use discretionary time and establish connections with close friends and family.
4. **Families stick together**. Let children know if one person in your household is sick, that they will not be alone.
5. **A regulated parent helps inform a child's response** in any new and unsure circumstance. Staying calm when talking about the situation is critical.
6. **Maintaining routine increases perceived safety**. We should do all we can to keep activities predictable, so children sense stability.
7. **Carefully explain changes**. Make sure children have warning and explanation on what to expect, whether it is about school, vacation, or childcare.
8. **Be fully present and actively listen to one another**. It is important to take the time to hear your child's concerns and answer their questions with developmentally appropriate answers.
9. **Limit your children's viewing of the media coverage**. Children may not understand what they see or hear, so let their information come from you.
10. **Offer your family choices**. At a time when some things in life may feel out of our control, offering our family members choices can help. What will you have for dinner? Will you eat it at the table or picnic style in the living room?