

Becoming a trauma informed school: Reflections of a trauma-informed consultant.

Just saying ...

It's not rocket science – those other colleagues are right. It's rocket engineering!

Those staff who '*instantly get*' the agenda when I work with them on developing trauma-informed schools often say '**it's not rocket science**'. Having a background in Physics I have pondered this on numerous occasions and half-heartedly thought '*yeah they're probably right*'. However, throughout all aspects of my life (both personally and professionally) I have always reflected and challenged my own and other people's mind-sets. According to some scientists rocket science is easy, but rocket engineering is hard! My point being? It depends on your point of view *and mind-set!*

If you have a growth mind-set around being a trauma-informed practitioner then the whole process of alleviating suffering and supporting the learning of troubled children will seem quite straight forward – and '*makes sense*'. So therefore you '*get it*'. You haven't had to take yourself out of your comfort zone and are excited when the senior leadership team announce that their vision is to become a trauma informed school. However, if you have a fixed mind-set when this is announced or don't accept your responsibility as a class teacher/member of staff or don't fully understanding the impact of chronic stress on learning then it is understandable that barriers are put up and there is resistance to change.

When reflecting on how you become a trauma informed school/educational setting it is so important that this is recognised.

Those colleagues are right, it's not rocket science – that's easy. It's rocket

engineering! It is hard, **BUT** not impossible. Everyone (*schools/public sector/private sector/government*) has a responsibility and **must not** put it on the '*too hard to do pile*'.

Becoming a trauma informed school involves changing culture. When culture is changed the resistance to change needs to be challenged. Barriers need to be broken down, growth mind-sets need to be developed, expectations need to be high and people's thinking challenged. *Most importantly, support needs to be given.*

We have to challenge comments like the one I recently heard from an experienced teacher '*we're not social workers*'. Yes, funding cuts to CAMHS and increasing pressure on social services does have a significant impact on schools. However, as expected, a key focus for any school is having a safe learning environment for all learners. Chronic stress, resulting from Adverse Childhood Experience (ACES) and other traumatic events do have an impact on the brain development of young people and this can subsequently impact their learning. Knowing how to respond to and support a child who can't self-regulate in a classroom *is* a teacher's responsibility. Becoming a trauma-informed school is not an initiative. A trauma-informed school is every child's entitlement.

It would be *boring* if it was easy.

EmBRACE the challenge!

EmBRACE (Emotionally and Brain Resilient to Adverse Childhood Experiences) is a consultant led approach to becoming a trauma-informed school.

Further information about EmBRACE and trauma-informed school/educational setting can be found on

www.sueirwin-education.co.uk

