



“Trauma-Sensitive Approaches to Daily School Life: Self-Regulation and Stress Management”

Professional training for teachers and students at Berlin elementary schools, middle schools, and high schools

Traumatic experiences and stressful life realities faced by children take many forms. They are not only recognizable in major life-changing events, such as after experiencing flight and displacement or in clearly identifiable forms of violence, but also manifest in small, often subtle and overlooked moments of everyday life.

In the classroom, they not only affect students' learning but also influence their own well-being, their sense of safety, and the relationships they form with other children.

If these signals are recognized early on by educators and addressed with empathy, school can become a safe place that provides support and fosters development.

The “Heinke Sofka Foundation for Trauma Therapy” is committed to shaping schools into such places and to embedding an understanding of trauma and how to address it in the learning and living environments of children and teachers.

To this end, it supports practical half-day workshops at Berlin schools aimed at teachers and students. These workshops provide in-depth knowledge about trauma dynamics and develop concrete strategies for self-regulation and stress management.

The goal is to create learning spaces where children feel seen, safe, and empowered.

At the same time, teachers and students are to develop a deeper understanding of how traumatic experiences influence learning and behavior, and learn how they can actively help shape a supportive and nurturing learning environment through self-regulatory and body-oriented approaches.

These goals are implemented through coordinated workshop formats for teachers and students.



1. Professional training for teachers:

This workshop focuses on teachers. They will gain the knowledge necessary to recognize trauma dynamics in students, strengthen their own self-regulation skills, and create a classroom environment that is safe and supports learning.

The workshop provides an understanding of the neurobiological processes of stress and trauma, particularly those of the autonomic nervous system, as well as their effects on children's behavior.

Building on this foundation, participants learn to identify traumatized students more effectively, better understand their feelings and needs, and thus gain greater clarity in challenging situations.

A particular focus is placed on teachers' own self-regulation skills, because only when they are contextually confident and steadfast can they act as reliable caregivers in everyday school life and provide students with the necessary stability and support they need.

The workshop is designed to last one to two days and can be adjusted accordingly, depending on time constraints, for example, to two half-days.

Contents:

Recognizing Trauma and Its Consequences:

How do trauma-related disorders manifest, and what behaviors indicate traumatic stress?

"Trauma Is Embedded in the Body"—The Neurobiology of Trauma and Stress:

How traumatic stress alters the brain and body and influences physical reactions and behavior.

Self-Protection and Self-Regulation for Teachers:

Exercises for self-regulation and fostering personal resilience and stress management.

Practical Exercises:

Case studies for practical application to gain greater confidence in handling challenging situations in the classroom..

Peer Supervision (optional):

An opportunity to share experiences and solutions for difficult situations.



2. Workshop for students:

In this workshop, students learn—in a way that is pedagogically adapted to their age—what “stress” is and how it manifests in the body. They explore how to recognize when they are excited, overwhelmed, or tense, and what happens in their bodies and minds as a result.

Through simple, playful, and body-oriented regulation exercises, they’ll learn to calm themselves down and regain their ability to concentrate. In the process, they’ll also learn how our “brainstem” works, why learning can sometimes be difficult, and what can help in those situations.

Another focus is on working together: Students practice recognizing emotions in themselves and others, developing understanding for one another, and supporting each other.

Interactive exercises help reinforce what they’ve learned and build confidence in their own abilities.

The workshop is designed to last two days and can be adapted to meet specific needs, for example, into two half-days.

Contents:

What is stress, and how does it affect me?

How can I tell when I’m stressed, and how does my body react to it?

Self-regulation—How can I manage my emotions?

Practical exercises to calm the nervous system that students can incorporate directly into class.

My brainstem and learning:

Teaching simple methods to counteract learning blocks and improve concentration.

Stronger Together – Learning from One Another:

The importance of community and how we can support one another.

Interactive Exercises:

Creative and movement-based methods help reinforce what has been learned and build confidence in one’s own abilities.



3. Supervision for Teachers and Students

Depending on needs, we can offer a half-day of supervision for both teachers and students. This provides a valuable opportunity to reinforce what has been learned, optimize practice, and ensure that both teachers and students can effectively integrate the techniques into their daily lives over the long term.

Speakers:

- Corinna Kärnbach (speaker/supervisor for teachers): social pedagogue, Gestalt and trauma therapist (shock and developmental trauma), trauma consultant in universities and educational institutions
- Angela Adhikari (speaker/supervisor for students): German-DaZ (German as a second language) and religion teacher, secondary level 1 teacher, trauma therapist and speaker, editor and co-author of the guidebook 'Body-oriented stress management. Eliminating classroom disruptions, overcoming learning blocks, increasing concentration

Costs:

The foundation covers the costs, except for a €300 copayment. Upon request, the program can be tailored to the school's specific needs.

Contact and application:

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