**MEET MICHAEL**

*Michael is 15 and repeating the ninth grade. He’s in your world history class and habitually tilts his chair back and drums annoyingly on his desk with a pencil. This morning, he was doing it—again—while you were trying to teach.*

**WHAT WOULD YOU DO?**

**A punitive response** might mean taking away the pencil, kicking Michael out of class, or even referring him for disciplinary action.

**A trauma-informed response** would shift the reaction in important ways. It would mean adopting a social emotional lens and shifting thinking to consider what might be **causing** the behavior, rather than simply reacting to the behavior itself.

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**DIRECTIONS**

In small groups, think through examples of trauma-informed responses to Michael’s behavior.

Identify a recorder and a spokesperson to report back.

Section A has been filled in for you as an example.

**A. TYPE OF BEHAVIOR: Verbal Disrespect**

Michael is defiant and uses inappropriate language when verbally redirected.

**PUNITIVE REACTION:** Argue with Michael, kick him out of class or refer him for disciplinary action.

**TRAUMA-INFORMED RESPONSE:**

1. **Adopt a social-emotional lens:** How can I address Michael’s feeling of powerlessness so he is less defensive when I redirect him?
2. **Know your students and develop your cultural competency:** How might my words, tone, and body language make Michael feel respected or disrespected?
3. **Plan and deliver effective student instruction:** How can I differentiate my instruction to better meet Michael’s needs and tap into his strengths?
4. **Move the paradigm from punishment to development:** How can I use direct and gentle communication to demonstrate empathy, explain disappointment, and set expectations for changed behavior?
5. **Resist the criminalization of school behavio**r**:** What are the consequences for Michael if he misses class or gets suspended?

**B. TYPE OF BEHAVIOR: Dress Code Violation**

Michael comes to class without a belt on, pants sagging.

**PUNITIVE REACTION:** Lecture Michael about the dress code in front of classmates, kick him out of class or refer him for disciplinary action.

**TRAUMA-INFORMED RESPONSE:**

1. **Adopt a social-emotional lens:**
2. **Know your students and develop your cultural competency:**
3. **Plan and deliver effective student instruction:**
4. **Move the paradigm from punishment to development:**
5. **Resist the criminalization of school behavio**r**:**

**C. TYPE OF BEHAVIOR: Lateness or Truancy**

Michael is frequently absent from or tardy to his first-period class and is failing.

**PUNITIVE REACTION:** Lock the door after the bell rings and give Michael zeros with no make-up option for work he missed.

**TRAUMA-INFORMED RESPONSE:**

1. **Adopt a social-emotional lens:**
2. **Know your students and develop your cultural competency:**
3. **Plan and deliver effective student instruction:**
4. **Move the paradigm from punishment to development:**
5. **Resist the criminalization of school behavio**r**:**

**D. TYPE OF BEHAVIOR: Aggressive Physical Behavior**

Michael shouldered his teacher out of the way when she blocked the classroom door as he tried to leave.

**PUNITIVE REACTION:** Argue with Michael, call the school resource officer, bar him from class or press assault charges.

**TRAUMA-INFORMED RESPONSE:**

1. **Adopt a social-emotional lens:**
2. **Know your students and develop your cultural competency:**
3. **Plan and deliver effective student instruction:**
4. **Move the paradigm from punishment to development:**
5. **Resist the criminalization of school behavio**r**:**

**E. TYPE OF BEHAVIOR: Fighting**

Michael got into a fight in the hallway during first period. There were no serious injuries.

**PUNITIVE REACTION:** Avoid involvement or request that Michael not be allowed back in class because he poses a threat.

**TRAUMA-INFORMED RESPONSE:**

1. **Adopt a social-emotional lens:**
2. **Know your students and develop your cultural competency:**
3. **Plan and deliver effective student instruction:**
4. **Move the paradigm from punishment to development:**
5. **Resist the criminalization of school behavio**r**:**