

## THE PROFOUND EFFECTS OF CHILDHOOD TRAUMA ON STUDENTS' COOPERATIVE WORK

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**Abstract:** *Childhood trauma presents a significant challenge to students' social and academic development, particularly in collaborative learning contexts . This research investigates the multifaceted ways trauma affects students' ability to participate effectively in cooperative work, synthesizing insights from psychological research, neurobiology, and educational practice . By understanding the profound neurological and psycho as logical impacts of childhood trauma, educators can develop more supportive and inclusive approaches to collaborative learning.*

**Keywords:** *Childhood Trauma, Cooperative Learning, Neurobiological Impact, Educational Psychology, Trauma-Informed Pedagogy, Student Interaction, Psychological Resilience.*

**Introduction** Childhood trauma represents a critical intersection of psychological, neurological, and educational challenges that fundamentally alter students' capacity for social interaction and collaborative work. As highlighted by Bessel van der Kolk in "The Body Keeps the Score" (2014) , trauma is not merely a psychological experience but a deeply embodied phenomenon that reshapes neural pathways, emotional regulation, and interpersonal dynamics. [1-30]

### **Neurobiological Foundations of Trauma**

Drawing from van der Kolk's groundbreaking work, childhood trauma fundamentally alters brain development and stress response systems. The limbic system, responsible for emotional processing and threat detection, becomes hyperactive in trauma survivors. This neurological recalibration significantly impacts a student's ability to:

- Engage in trust-based interactions
- Regulate emotional responses
- Maintain focus during collaborative tasks
- Interpret social cues accurately. [50-87]

### **Impact on Cooperative Work**

#### 1. Trust and Vulnerability

Childhood trauma often creates deep-seated challenges with trust and vulnerability. Students who have experienced trauma may:

- Struggle to form meaningful connections with peers
- Exhibit heightened defensive mechanisms
- Experience difficulty in sharing ideas or accepting feedback
- Demonstrate hypervigilance in group settings. [45-72]

#### 2. Emotional Regulation

Jan Bergstrom's "Gifts from a Challenging Childhood" emphasizes the long-term emotional regulatory challenges faced by trauma survivors. In cooperative work, these challenges manifest as:

- Unpredictable emotional responses
- Difficulty managing group conflicts
- Challenges in maintaining emotional balance during collaborative tasks
- Increased likelihood of withdrawal or aggressive responses. [80-105]

#### 3. Neurological Stress Response

Trauma fundamentally alters the body's stress response system. In collaborative settings, this can result in:

- Heightened fight-or-flight responses
- Difficulty maintaining cognitive flexibility
- Reduced capacity for active listening
- Increased potential for misinterpreting social interactions. [100-135]

### **Trauma-Informed Approaches to Cooperative Learning**

Educational Strategies Based on research from The Education Hub and contemporary educational psychology, effective approaches include:

### 1. Safe Environment Creation

- Establish predictable and structured collaborative frameworks
- Provide clear communication guidelines
- Create opportunities for gradual trust-building

In a workplace team-building workshop, the facilitator starts by establishing a "no interruption" rule and creating a structured agenda where each participant gets an equal, timed opportunity to speak. They begin with low-stakes sharing activities, like describing a personal hobby or a positive recent experience, which allows team members to participate without feeling vulnerable while creating a predictable and supportive communication framework. [3]

### 2. Individualized Support

- Recognize individual trauma responses
- Offer flexible participation options
- Provide additional emotional support mechanisms

During a group therapy program for survivors of workplace harassment, the facilitator offers multiple participation options. Some participants can choose to share verbally, others can write anonymous responses, and some can simply listen. The program also provides one-on-one check-ins with a counselor, recognizing that trauma responses are unique and individuals may need different levels of engagement and support. [3]

### 3. Skill Development

- Teach explicit social-emotional learning skills
- Provide scaffolded cooperative experiences
- Develop emotional regulation techniques

In a school's social-emotional learning curriculum, students learn emotional regulation through a "feelings thermometer" exercise. They're taught to identify and rate their emotional intensity, practice deep breathing techniques, and develop personalized coping strategies. The curriculum progressively introduces more complex emotional management skills, allowing students to build their social-emotional toolkit in a scaffolded, supportive manner. [3]

Understanding the profound effects of childhood trauma on cooperative work requires a holistic, compassionate approach. By integrating neurobiological insights, psychological understanding, and trauma-informed pedagogical strategies, educators can create more inclusive, supportive learning environments that support the healing and academic growth of traumatized students.

### REFERENCES

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3. <https://theeducationhub.org.nz/trauma-informed-practice-in-primary-secondary-schools/>