

Punctuality

Vs. Tardiness

Character... It starts with me!

LOOKING AT PUNCTUALITY THROUGH THE EYES OF TRAUMA

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- Be at the right place at the right time.
- Prepare for unexpected delays.
- Do my work ahead of time.
- Plan a daily schedule and keep it.
- Not fall into the trap of "just one more".

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Showing esteem for others by doing the right thing at the right time

By Jodi Landers

Tardiness is often looked upon as a disregard for others' time or an act of rebellion. It is viewed as disrespectful and irresponsible. Children who have suffered trauma often have difficulty being on time and holding up their end of the bargain, so to speak. If they witness domestic violence at home, they may be fearful of leaving their parent during the school day. Sometimes students refuse to come to school or "fake" illnesses to avoid coming to school at all. Tardiness often has nothing to do with school or teachers for children of trauma. Even if they enjoy coming to school, children may be tardy because they must get themselves to school with minimal parental support. Or, they may oversleep due to being kept awake the night before.

Often, older students will put on a "show" when they are tardy as if to say, "Yeah, I'm late. What are you going to do about it?" When a student saunters into your classroom late, like he doesn't have a care in the world, try not to take it personally. The behavior he is displaying may be the most he can muster up at that moment. His perceived arrogance doesn't mean he hasn't just left a home full of yelling, cursing and violence. It may be the furthest thing from his mind to apologize politely for being tardy.

Another thing to consider is whether or not events at school are contributing to tardiness and absenteeism. Certain events in school such as fights, raised voices, loud noises or even school programs that talk about violence can cause heightened levels of stress in children of trauma. This can result in negative behaviors, emotional outbursts, and even flashbacks



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of events experienced at home. If this occurs, consider removing the student from the situation to a calm, relaxing area, with a trusted adult.

A daily check-in procedure is a strategy you could try to decrease tardiness and absenteeism. It can be just a short meeting each morning to check in with students, all students or only certain students. You may ask about how the previous evening went, if they got enough sleep and if they've had breakfast. This serves several purposes; first, a teacher can get an idea of how a students' behavior might be for the day; second, it allows a student to talk with a trusted adult. Finally, and most importantly, it provides a foundation for a caring relationship between the child and another adult.

Remember, if you keep doing what you've been doing, you'll keep getting what you've been getting.

Peace-
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