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Lessons from the Pandemic

Trauma-Informed
Approaches to College,
Crisis, Change

Edited by

Janice Carello

Phyllis Thompson

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Lessons from the Pandemic

“This book is a gift to higher education. The authors acknowledge the agonizing pain of trauma, especially for those who are on the margins, but center healing and resilience through community, creativity, flexibility, and kindness. Each chapter is rich with practical examples that showcase and celebrate the different ways of knowing. Throughout, we are invited to reflect, to grieve, to celebrate, and above all, to grow.”

—Mays Imad, PhD, Professor, Pathophysiology and Biomedical Ethics,
Founding Coordinator, *Teaching and Learning Center, Pima Community
College, USA*

“Global pandemics don’t have silver linings, but they do provide materials for grinding new lenses of perception. In this curated collection of essays, the editors lend us a view of higher education through both a trauma lens sharpened by the COVID-19 pandemic and a pandemic lens sharpened by recognizing diverse trauma histories. There is something here to inform practitioners of every academic discipline.”

—Wallace E. Dixon, Jr., PhD, Chair and Professor, Psychology, Founding
Director, *ETSU/Ballad Health Strong BRAIN Institute, East Tennessee State
University, USA*

“*Lessons from the Pandemic* represents an urgent invitation for all stakeholders in higher education to consider vulnerability, disruption, and loss in our communities, and just as importantly testifies to diverse and resilient interventions. Particularly valuable as colleges and universities transition post-pandemic, this deeply thoughtful collection envisions this moment as opportunity: out of crisis, to discern and build upon what we have learned about individuals, communities, and practices, and as Carello and Thompson affirm, ‘reimagine ourselves as educators.’”

—Jeanie Tietjen, PhD, Professor, English, Founding Director, *Institute for
Trauma, Adversity, and Resilience in Higher Education, Massachusetts Bay
Community College, USA*

Janice Carello • Phyllis Thompson
Editors

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This book is dedicated to all teachers everywhere. You make a difference.

FOREWORD

The first time I ever heard the words *trauma-informed care* and learned about the Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) study was in the summer of 2014. At the time, I was working for a local Police Department in East Tennessee as the Director of a project aimed at reducing drug-related and violent crime. Of the many program goals, one was to develop a rehabilitative probation program for felony offenders with addictions in order to lower recidivism rates. Though I've lived in this region for decades, I had no idea how deeply the drug epidemic was impacting our community. Now for the first time I was viewing overcrowded prisons, hospitals delivering staggering numbers of babies whose mothers were addicted, foster care service providers with placement shortfalls, and public-school systems where I heard phrases like *cradle to prison* and *school to prison pipeline*. As a mother and grandmother, I wondered what has happened that puts so many Appalachian children at risk of being sent to prison?

ACEs research offered a scientific explanation for the opioid crisis and, I hoped, could provide new tools for addressing it. I reasoned no one picks where they start in life, and for some the hardship and abuse experienced was due to no fault of their own. Instead of communities focusing their efforts on addressing the drug problem (which efforts don't seem to be winning), we should shift our focus to addressing trauma. So, with a sense of urgency, I decided to take action and educate professionals in my town.

It was in that journey that Phyllis Thompson, Director of Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies at East Tennessee State University (ETSU), attended one of my trainings. Phyllis didn't need to hear this information

twice. She was convinced it was critical science capable of making an impact for both students and faculty at ETSU. Moving forward, this knowledge has influenced her work advocating for women's health and well-being to bring a trauma-informed approach to prevention and education on gender-based violence across campus and to provide trainings on trauma-informed practices to faculty and staff. Phyllis and I both serve as members of the ETSU Ballard Health Strong Brain Institute.

Janice Carello is also a professional committed to bringing a trauma-informed approach to her work as university faculty. As an Assistant Professor and MSW Program Director at Edinboro University, her research and advocacy focus are on retraumatization in educational settings and on bringing a trauma-informed approach to higher education. In 2019 she co-edited *Trauma and Human Rights: Integrating Approaches to Address Human Suffering* with Lisa D. Butler and Filomena Critelli. In January 2021, Janice was the lead facilitator of a two-day online institute "Trauma Informed Strategies for Teaching and Learning: Creating a Culture of Belonging, Fostering Retention, and Increasing Degree Completion" held at ETSU. This institute featured evidence-based approaches and modeled best practices geared to the specific needs of ETSU.

Together these two seasoned faculty members have teamed up to deliver an insightful compilation of wisdom gleaned by their own experiences as well as that from several colleagues in *Lessons from the Pandemic: Trauma-Informed Approaches to College, Crisis, Change*. In March 2020, as the world began shutting down around the global pandemic of COVID-19, no one knew that it would provide an unexpected learning lab. As the world came to a standstill, it was soon realized that "life must go on." Yet, there was no textbook written by which to chart these unknown waters. University faculty and administration across the nation had to make broad decisions, hastily move courses to virtual learning, and distance themselves from students and associates in order to "carry on." As the chapters in this book illustrate, educators met this challenge head on. By doing what they do best, they kept on learning and discovering ways to effectively communicate and connect with students. The result of their labors is now transparently shared in *Lessons from the Pandemic: Trauma-Informed Approaches to College, Crisis, Change*. This blending of insight penned in essay style offers possibly a first reflection of its kind from this unexpected "learning lab." In my work as member of the National Trauma Campaign core strategy team, and as an international

presenter on the topic of trauma and the Adverse Childhood Experiences study, this pioneering work will possibly ignite others to make similar reflection. It is no surprise that educators like Phyllis, Janice, and the authors included in this book have welcomed the opportunity to reflect and, in doing so, teach others. Without hesitation, I recommend you share in their learning journey.

Author, Speaker, Trainer
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