

Introduction

Well, good morning, everyone. I'm Dean Shareski and I'll be your host and moderator for this webinar. And we are all coming today from all corners of the province. And I'd like to thank... And not only all provinces, but I come to you from Treaty 4, in Saskatchewan, the land of the Cree and Saulteaux First Nations people in my home province of Saskatchewan. And I'm grateful for them for welcoming me and allowing me to live and work and play on their traditional territory. I just want to invite all of you for a moment to consider the indigenous peoples of the land, where you're currently sitting. Consider these peoples who for thousands of years lived in reciprocity with the land, who have stories about the places nearby. With gratitude and respect in your heart. I invite you to consider the original people of the place you're currently calling in from.

So today we are inviting and we'll be joined by Dr. Kimberly Schonert-Reichl, Dr. Linda O'Neill and Monique Gray Smith, which is apparently the first time that these three experts have been together on a panel, which is kind of surprising to me because as we've been preparing for this event, the three of them are just like sisters in the way they interact with one another, which is really kind of unique in the sense that oftentimes panelists are not familiar with one another, and it creates a, I don't want to say awkward, but not as natural a conversation as we hope is going to happen today.

So that's really something that we're excited about. It's our intention that this panel leaves you all with a feeling of hope and joy and inspired about the possibilities and opportunities that have come with this Restart Plan. So as much as all of you are facing lots of challenges and questions and anxiety, I know those are obviously going to be acknowledged, but we kind of are leaning towards a more hopeful conversation as well. So our speakers are going to speak to the large idea of fostering wellness and thriving with three specific perspectives, that is social and emotional learning, resilience and the indigenous lens, and trauma-informed practice. So what's going to happen is each of our speakers is going to take about eight to 10 minutes sharing kind of the things that they're seeing around mental health, throughout our province, their own experiences, and certainly giving you some practical strategies.

Now, normally in these things, I would read a script to introduce one another, but it was so great to see each of our panelists know each other so well. So I thought it'd be a great idea to have them introduce one another.

Dr Kimberly Schonert-Reichl: A New Kind of Fitness

Part 1

I'm so excited to introduce, if she needs any introduction, Kim, who's like a powerhouse and a world leader in the field of social emotional learning. And we always talk about social emotional learning, the most important piece ever because it saves kids. But getting back to Kim, she's an applied developmental psychologist and professor at UBC in the Faculty of Education. So we know she understands stress. She brings with her a strong understanding of the educational landscape in BC. And she was an advisor to the Ministry of Ed on the development and implementation of the redesign of the curriculum and assessment framework with, as educators, you notice that focus on the promotion of students' personal and social competencies. And educators, as you know, she knows this from the inside out. She started her career as a middle and alternate school teacher working with at-risk youth. And Kim's research really focuses on understanding the processes that foster positive human qualities, such as empathy we know, compassion, altruism, resiliency in children and youth. And her projects include studies that examine the effectiveness of SEL programs, including Roots of Empathy, MindUP and

Kindness in the Classroom and other social emotional learning efforts in school. And she also has focused on adult social emotional learning and well-being, kind of critical right now. So I'm so excited. Kim, there you go.

Oh Linda, thank you so much. That's such a wonderful introduction to me. So I first wanted to start just two things. Well, three, really just to really acknowledge the territory in which I am presenting today of the Squamish, Musqueam and Tsleil-Waututh Nations. I'm very grateful to be here on their land to learn and to work and to play. I also want to acknowledge our Ministry of Education. It says quite a lot that this first webinar to open up this school year is focused on thriving and well-being. Our province, our Ministry of Education really has put a large focus on things like social emotional learning, trauma-informed practices and mental health in schools. And really, with the leadership of many out of there, have really put this as a focus. So this is so amazing.

And then the third thing I want to say, just how honored and humble I am to be with such an illustrious panel of Linda and Monique. I am truly honored. And so to be in your company and to learn from you as well. And so I think people have a lot to learn. So I've just put together some slides. I'm timing myself so I'll make sure I don't go over. There's lots of resources I put in here, but I tried to think about, if I had to sit with you and have a cup of coffee, and you asked me, Kim, what are some things we should really think about as we go back into schools? I thought I put these few things down.

One, some key messages that really the promotion of students' social and emotional learning and well-being is vital for the future of our society. I heard one teacher say, as we went to lockdown, SEL is not another thing on our plate. It is the plate. So again, really foundational. We know also that it's teachable and should be a priority of classrooms, schools and communities. And first and foremost, I start with the end, is how important that, for SEL to be effective, the well-being of administrators, teachers, and students needs to be promoted in the context of compassionate, caring, and supportive context. So why now? I'm just going to guess you're going to know that we know that this current context is one, like no other time, of focusing on our students' health and well-being. That all children and youth and their families, but particularly those that are more vulnerable are at risk of experienced increased challenges.

And I would say both educators, all the adults that surround people. And then I really do believe it's a time to take this opportunity to hear from students themselves about their self-reported well-being and the assets in their lives that will be valuable as they navigate through this unprecedented time. As you get back into schools, I really think this idea of asking kids, how are they? Asking everyone, how are you doing today? How can we help support you? What are things that are going really well in those? Some of the recent, actually as we went to lockdown, the one thing to think about, we are at this unprecedented time in our society. And it might be an opportunity. Often we know these times where it's increased stress but a window for growth.

So we know one thing for moving schools in a positive direction could be more social and emotional learning for our students in more intentional ways, a higher priority on teacher well-being, more coaching and mentoring role for teachers and more autonomy for schools and teachers and fewer top-down demands and actually more student choice and autonomy. We also need to recognize that this is a time to really recognize stress contagion. We know that happiness is contagious, I have to say that, but we also know that stress is contagious. And that research shows us that in fact, that times where even if you're not stressed and you're around a small group of people who are highly stressed, you will actually have the negative physiological consequences of that. And our research has really shown that when students are in classrooms where teachers report high levels of stress and burnout, those students also experience high stress as measured by their cortisol or their physiological stress or the stress hormone.

So this idea that if we're... And we don't know which direction it is, but we know that if we focus on the well-being of students, we also really have to focus on the well-being of educators. I want to just keep on saying that, how important that is. So what now do we need to do? We know that social and emotional learning is a growing movement. British Columbia is a leader in the world in this. As many of you might not realize, there are few jurisdictions in the world in which social and emotional learning is embedded within the K to 12 curriculum. And people from all over the world have come to BC and look to BC to learn how to integrate SEL in the way it is in such an intentional way. We know we're moving away from a focus on just waiting for kids to have lots of problems and intervention to one of prevention and giving students the social and emotional skills that will help them weather these risky times.

So things like having optimism, being able to self-regulate, being able to have supportive adults, those factors can prevent future problems. CASEL, or the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning has identified five dimensions of social and emotional learning. Some of you might be familiar with the CASEL framework or the wheel where they talk about self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making

Part 2

If we want to address social and emotional learning, it's not just about the students. You actually have to create a systemic approach which encompasses paying attention to the learning context, safe, supportive school, classroom environment, involvement of parents and caregivers, connection to the community, a focus on SEL the educators, and SEL the students. So this infographic, I think, is really central because it really illustrates the multiple dimensions of SEL. So it's not just about giving students a program. That was kind of the first generation of SEL. This really is a systemic approach.

So what we know from CASEL, here's two great resources that were just released from the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning that's in Chicago, talked about four things you need to do: take time to build partnerships, design opportunities for adults to connect and heal and cultivate their own social emotional competencies, create emotionally and physically safe, supportive, engaging, learning environments that promote students' social and emotional development, and use data also as an opportunity. And here again, in BC, we have a lot of opportunity for data. For example, with the Early Development Instrument, the Middle Years Development Instrument, the Student Learning Survey, lots of ways to understand how students are doing. So some scientific findings I just wanted to highlight, just a couple for you to know. One, we know that students with strong social and emotional skills in their early years are more likely to thrive as adults.

And this one study found that particularly those students in kindergarten who had strong prosocial skills of helping, caring, cooperating were more likely to graduate from high school, earn a college degree and find stable employment. We also know from the neuroscience and how the brain works that these social and emotional skills are malleable. They can be taught. You can teach things like empathy, like compassion, like resiliency as well. We also know that social and emotional learning programs that they promote pro-sociality, well-being and school success. So programs like the MindUP program or programs like Roots of Empathy have shown really benefits to things such as social and emotional competencies, positive attitudes, increased kind behavior, decreased aggression as well as emotional distress, but they also lead to increased academic achievement as well. So what to do now? So I have a few minutes just to talk about a couple of strategies.

We know, I would say if you really have to address SEL implement SEL system-wide evidence-based programs, build securing relationships and caring communities that are inclusive and participatory,

include students in creating that positive classroom and start with promoting adult SEL and well-being. CASEL has a school guide, a whole resource on how to do school-wide SEL that's a treasure trove of lots of resources. Number two, again, did I say this before? I don't know. To reach the students, care for the educators. I just love this picture. It might even be that one on the right is how you're starting the school year, not the end of the school year, just after getting ready for this. So really to think about this idea that it's like that on the airplane, although none of us have been on airplanes for a while, is if you're going to help someone else that you need to start with the adult.

So what are some suggestions? You can start each staff meeting with a check-in. Have time in each day to take a self-compassion or self-care break. Affirm your values and strengths. What matters most to you? Where do you want to place your attention right now? What feeds you? Sending good wishes to others and seeking social support and connection. We also need to show you care, to really reach out to people about your own caring. And we know how important this is. Every child deserves someone in his or her life who is simply crazy about them, or that one stable relationship of a supportive adult. That is so important, these relationships, and how are you going into schools? Making sure that every child is seen, every child feels that connection. The fourth strategy is promoting resiliency. And I came up with this acronym, tell me what you think of it.

I was trying to think of what would it be... Well, I'd love to hear from Linda and Monique and others as well. I talked about this idea of building resilience through CARE. And when I talked about CARE, it actually is an acronym for creating consistency and structure so that people kind of know what to expect, having autonomy, including the voices of everyone, adults, and all students, and even all adults in the building. Having relationships should be at the core where there's caring, support, and authentic listening. And there should be really a focus on equity as well as evaluation, meaning really using regular check-ins to see how you're doing, collecting data in all sorts of ways. Different ways to promote resiliency would be connect with students for two minutes a day for 10 days in a row, being outside in nature and connecting with nature, gathering together.

I know we can't share food. So finding other ways to gather together and be authentically present with each other. Number four, taking brain breaks or these mindful pauses, these three breaths and then sort of talking circles. So make sure... I would actually recommend that everyone start the day with talking circles. And finally promote kindness and just so you know, kindness equals happiness. Being kind to others promotes your own happiness and well-being. There's lots of opportunities for resources. Kindness in the Classroom has free K to 12 lessons, and you can engage students in activities that help you and others demonstrate caring and kindness through your own actions and talk about kindness and the good feelings that arise when doing things for others. And of course, Dr. Bonnie Henry says "Be kind. Be calm. Be safe." So I want you all to think forward and I'm going to make you take out a piece of paper and a pen and think about what are two actions that you're going to do to promote your own well-being? And what are you going to do to promote your students' SEL? Thank you very much.

Monique Gray Smith: Love is Medicine

Part 1

I'm figuring Monique, we've known each other for over 15 years. Does that sound right?

Oh, sure, yeah.

Yeah. And so, and I've met Monique years ago. actually around the Roots of Empathy program with Mary Gordon, when Monique was doing her amazing work. And Monique, I think I've told you, but

maybe not enough, of how much I love you and how much I learn from you. And I feel such gratitude for having met you and you inspire me all of the time. And every time I see you present, you're such an inspiration.

And I know you're so well known. So it is in some ways, I'm not sure you need the introduction, but I guess I'll go ahead and try it. So Monique Gray Smith is well known for her storytelling, her spirit of generosity and belief that love is medicine. And it is for me. Monique is an award winning and bestselling author of books for children, youth, and adults. Including, *My Heart Fills With Happiness*, *You Hold Me Up, Tilly: a Story of Hope and Resilience*, *Tilly and the Crazy Eights*. And soon to be released, *When We Are Kind*. Oh, I can't wait, Monique.

Monique is also a proud mom of two teenage twins. And I met you when I think they were just little ones. They were really little at that time. And also Monique is of Cree, Lakota and Scottish ancestry, and feels blessed to live on the traditional territory of the *WSÁNEĆ* territory, also known as Victoria, Canada.

So without further ado it is my pleasure to present Monique.

Thank you, Kim. [First Nations language].

So good morning, friends and relatives. My English name is Monique. My traditional name is *mistikwaskihkos*, which means Little Drum. And I am thrilled to be with you today. And I look out my window here on my house, sits on the territory of the West Saanich people, but Victoria is also the home of the Lekwungen speaking people as well.

And I look out to incredible shades of green, and I'm grateful to those who have been stewards of this beautiful land and the water for generations. And those who are stewards today, and those who will be the stewards to come. So I offer thanksgiving for the privilege to be with you. I'm going to start by reading a little story and talking about the importance of love as a form of medicine.

So this comes from my book, *Tilly: A Story of Hope and Resilience*. Right near the beginning of the book, when we meet Tilly, who's 11, and we get a sense of the relationship she has with her grandma, who she's named after. Both, when grandma comes to visit in Kamloops, and when grandma goes home to her community in Saskatchewan.

In this reading, I referenced party lines. So some of you who are of a younger generation, you may not know that context, or at least not in this way. Years ago in our communities across this country, there were party lines. So we all had phones often in our homes, but there was one line that connected us. So if Linda and I were on the phone visiting and Kim picked up the phone in her house to call somebody, she could hear our conversation. I think it was like the first form of social media. And we were ahead of our time actually. So that's the reference to party line in this reading.

During her visits, grandma Tilly taught me about being generous. About telling the truth and always treating other people with dignity and respect. Every night after dinner, she and I would sit outside and she'd pull out her pipe bag and load her pipe for her evening smoke. "Come here, little Tilly, gather under my wing, and let's talk about the day."

With me tucked up close to her, we'd review our escapades and she'd ask me, "What did you learn today? And what was the best part?" I missed her so much when she got home, but grandma Tilly made a point of staying in touch by phone. She was on a party line in her community and it was common to be on a call with her and have someone cut in.

"Who's on the line?" The person would ask. "It's Tilly and I'm on with little Tilly, and we going to be awhile." Once when I called her to talk about some things I was upset about at school, she told me "What you got to remember, Tilly, is that everyone's born with love in their hearts. Sometimes life takes

that away, but we're all born with it. So whenever you enter a room in your imagination, fill it with love. And make enough room for everyone else to fill that room with love too. That my girl is when good things happen." I always felt better after my talks with grandma Tilly. Her teachings, words and sayings were like medicine to me.

So I read that little, short piece to remind us that when we enter the spaces where we are contributing, whether that's a classroom, those of you who are watching, who might be the receptionist, the space the students walk into. Or if you're in a community center, the space people walk into, if you're a principal or a vice principal, your office setting, are you sitting across from a desk? And how intimidating is that? Could you not sit side by side?

Those of you who are custodians, who are watching, you have such an incredible, powerful influence, to say hi and to connect with students. And you know, grandma Tilly asked those two questions. "What did you learn today? And what was the best part?" So that practice of thinking about, what did I learn today? And then calming the brain and calming the neuro system about, what was the best part of my day?

And so to start the day, I'm going to go into my share screen, but I really encourage you to think about, and Kim spoke about this really beautifully, is how do you, so love is medicine was really that teaching that grandma Tilly gave in that reading about filling the space with love, and how do you start the day? How do you start the day for yourself, so that you can enter that space and fill it with love? Because if you're working with students who have or are experiencing trauma. And we are in a climate where there isn't necessarily a perceived threat anymore, there is a real threat. And so we need to enter those spaces as full as possible.

And so I can encourage you to think about in the morning, what fills your heart with happiness? And how are you going to generate that today? And to think about what am I grateful for?

And as Kim said, starting the day in circle, these can be a question you ask every morning, what fills your heart with happiness? What are you grateful for today? On a scale of one to 10, how are you? One wishing you were still in bed 10 you're thrilled to be here. And stand, because then not only do you who perhaps might be the adult or adults in the room, have a sense of how everyone is, but so do the students. Their classmates, their friends, and then they know how to hold each other up. Who needs a little extra holding up today?

Part 2

Because our work, our way of contributing to the wellness of the world is all about relationships. And yes, it is about our relationships with each other as human beings. But in a much broader worldview perspective, it is about our relationship with all living things.

So this is right near my house. It's this beautiful park called P'kols, also known as Mount Doug. And here you can see the trees that have been watching those who walk, those who crawl, those who fly. For years and years and years, they've been witness. Imagine the stories that are in those trees, in the ground. The tears people have left on the ground as they've walked. The laughter between friends as they've walked together and shared stories.

So to think about our relationships, yes, with each other, and how do we create and continue to foster thriving relationships? But also the thriving relationships with the land, with the water and with the stars. Those that fly, those that crawl, those that swim. Those who have come before us and those who have yet to come. It's really important to think about that. And Kim talked about getting students outside. If you really want to wake up students, and I don't just mean cognitively, but I mean, wake

them up, go outside. And not have a structured way that that has to be outside but let them explore for a bit of time. And then come back and do whatever educational component curriculum piece needs to happen.

But we're in this time right now where I really think if we don't connect, and not just with each other, but again, with the land and the water and the stars and ourselves. Whatever curriculum you've created, no matter how masterful it is, it will not land in the same way if students and yourselves are not connected. And if relationships are not strong and powerful.

And it makes me think about, in my language, in the Cree language, there's this word, tapwe. And what it means is, everyone's welcome. You say to people when they come into your home, "Tapwe". It means, welcome.

And that tapwe means, there's always room. And when we think about our ways of contributing to the wellness of the world, when we make space, when there is always room for everyone, then we will thrive. And so I encourage you to think about that in your room. How are you making space for everyone, including yourself?

So as we think about relationships, and I always think about, what are the emotions that you want students or community to feel in your presence? Because if we went through Q&A, and I asked all of you to respond about when you were growing up an adult who influenced you really powerfully. It would likely be somebody who, they may have taught you something for sure, likely about being a healthy, vibrant human being. But often we remember those people because of how we felt with them. That we felt seen, we felt valued, we felt important, we felt heard. They may have seen a gift that nobody else had ever said for us before.

I was working in Kamloops as a psychiatric nurse, I know so many of you heard this story, about 28 years ago. And I applied to the university of Victoria for the school of social work. And one of the things was I had to write a personal statement. And then I got invited down for my interview. And went through the interview, and as I was leaving, I had my hand on the door ready to leave. And one of those five women said, "I look forward to reading your book one day." And I didn't think she was talking to me because I didn't graduate from high school, I had to go back to get my grade 12. At that point, I was only six months sober. I had started to drink when I was 11. I drank till I was 22.

And so I continued talking that door and she said, "No, wait, Monique, I'm talking to you. I look forward to reading your book one day." Well, I got out of that room as fast as I could, because what she was saying was so far out, but my body got warm and I felt tingly. And what happened was something inside of me woke up. Yes, it wasn't till over 20 years later that I started to write. But what she did was she spoke my future. And in her presence, I felt seen, I felt valued in a way that had never happened before.

And we have that opportunity every single moment, when we're with people. To think about what are the emotions I want them to feel in my presence. So that one day they may think of you as a cookie person. This is a term that I came up with years ago, that I think about those people in our lives, who, when we're in their presence, it's like, we've just had one of the warm baked favorite cookies. For me, my daughter, Sadie, she makes the most amazing chocolate chip cookies, just like my aunty Ellen did. And my aunty Ellen was one of my cookie people. She was a psychiatric nurse. So no wonder when I got my grade 12, I went into psychiatric nursing.

And so I encourage you to think about, how can you be a cookie person? Somebody who holds up the dignity, the respect, who sees the gifts, that those who you're with. And you speak them, that you honor them, that you play with them, that you speak what you see inside of them, that diamond inside of them.

And when their behaviors are out of line, you call them on that. You don't shame them. That is really out of integrity for all of what we're talking about, but it happens. You call out the behavior in as gentle way as possible. And then you invite them to think about how they might behave differently.

So these cookie people are people who really help us transform. And for me, a number of my cookie people have been educators and coaches, people who have really helped me in really beautiful, profound ways that I don't think for sure I would not be who I am today, without having had cookie people.

And so I encourage you as a little bit of homework, over this next week, to take some time to pause and to send a letter. Email, phone, please don't text. But really connect with a cookie person who has been in your life and send them that love, send them that joy. Send them that gratitude. And fill their heart with happiness. If they have passed on to the other side, there's lots of ways to still connect. To go sit outside by a tree, to write something and put it in a fire or bury it or put it in the river. To spend some time just as you're about to fall asleep and have a visit with them. There's lots of ways to still connect.

So as we embark on this year with many unknowns, there are a few things we can know. The importance of relationships. The importance of honoring and holding up the respect and dignity of each other. The importance of laughter. The importance of happiness and making time to ensure you're doing and being with people who create happiness, who foster happiness and do activities that fill your heart with happiness.

So thank you for the privilege of being with you this morning. All of you calling in from wherever.

So thank you. All my relations [First Nations language].

Dr. Linda O'Neill: ACES-Informed Schools during COVID-19

Part 1

I want to just start by laughing because that's often what happens when I'm with Dr. Linda and not laughing just out of ease, but her humor allows us to take very difficult conversations and very difficult concepts and allow us to absorb them at a cellular level, through the laughter and through the stories. Dr. Linda O'Neill is a practicing counselor and trauma specialist working with children, youth and young adults in Prince George and in Northern British Columbia. She is an associate professor in counseling program at the university of Northern British Columbia. She's developed customized trauma and informed training. She fills a room with love, curiosity, zest. That's one of my favorite words to describe your Linda is zestful and laughter. So fasten your seat belts folks, welcome Dr. Linda O'Neill.

Thank you so much, Monique. I think zest might be the word hey? Something like that. And I'll just get this little screen up, make sure that we have something to look at. Because what would we do if we couldn't look at something? That's what always comes to mind. And thank you so much everyone for being here on one of the busiest days of your school year and one of the most stressful days. Just having the time to join us is amazing. And I'm up in my little messy office up at UNBC and I'm speaking to you from the unceded territory of the Lheidli T'enneh in our part of British Columbia. And I'd really love to dedicate this to all of you that do this work.

I know that sometimes Kim and Monique and I are presented as subject matter experts, but we're just facilitators of information and knowledge and it's really you who live it every day, that really understands how difficult this can be right now. So let's just go to an ACES-informed kind of way of dealing with it. And I know most of the time it's talked about is trauma-informed, but the word trauma-

informed doesn't sit with a lot of people because it kind of came from the US, nothing against US, but it doesn't really fit as broad as we need it to fit. So adverse childhood events informed might a little better way of seeing it and the core principles right now if we ever needed these principles we need them now in terms of what's going on out there in community.

But safety and how do you establish safety when Monique says, we're in a world of not just perceived threat, but some threat and how do we help children with psychological safety? And it's usually through us, like Kim was saying and we might get back to that. But emotional safety, recognizing what kids might be feeling right now and what you're feeling, cultural safety is paramount and the physical safety, we've got a COVID plan, we've got the little masks and the physical distancing, we're doing everything we can in that area. So trustworthiness, do you always follow up on what you promise to do? That is so important to children who have experienced some adversity. And choice, having a little bit of power and control over your world is so important, right? For children, for you as educators and for your families.

But collaboration to me right now is critical. Who do you have who you can work with? Who do you have who can help you in areas? Because right now education is taking such a brunt of responsibility for a lot of what's going on and you need help, you need help. And empowerment, how do we help empower little ones and youth who have been out of school for a while and might need a little bit of time and patience to get back into the swing of things? But identifying the strengths, and we'll really hit on that I think, what do you think? And it was so wonderful, a couple of years ago the ministry got a hold of me and said, would you help us with some trauma-informed resources? And I was like cool, this is awesome. But I thought, how do you do that in a way that honors that every school is different, every community is different, right? Your families all are so unique.

So I went big and broad and Monique and Kim had been talking about all this throughout their presentations it's understanding the behaviors you're seeing right now when little kids have been out of school for quite some time, a lot of them. And a lot of stuff has happened out in their world as it always does. But the relationship that Monique has just done a beautiful job of presenting, we know that relationship is everything right? And looking at your ability to help kids as far as you can but knowing what you can control and what you can't and we kind of are going to go back to that. And connection to family because families are so worried, right? Connection to community, every community has amazing people that can provide, sharing ideas and mentorship and it's incredible.

And I love capacity, right? Looking at children's strengths because right now we have little ones who have been anxious way before the pandemic. And they got a toolbox with them, we can say to them, hey little one who's been anxious for all your life, got these strategies for us? Right? And they can share what they do and what they know, it's so cool. So the big questions, and I think we've got a few big questions, is how do we meet the needs of children, youth, families, right now who are experiencing... yes in a pandemic, but other adverse events in their environment? And in the school environment, how do we meet the needs of staff? Some who have experienced adversity and some who have not. And right now some who are fearful and some who are not. So it's always that compassionate lens that we kind of get back to.

And good old basic ACEs-informed trauma-informed whatever you want to call it. 30 years ago, we didn't call it ACEs-informed or trauma-informed, we were like, hey be nice. Right? Maybe this is best practice. What? I know, what if we saw all the kids and staff and parents right now as if they've experienced adverse events? And we interact with them at that level, and we'll never go wrong. And we understand brain response, right? A little bit of neurobiology never hurt anybody. It's like oh my gosh, can he hear me right now? No, he can't. So I'll just back up a bit, I'll just take a breath. And understanding that right now with school starting up, chances are we're going to see some really interesting coping, right? Because the little ones cope with just what they got at hand and little ones

cope, if it's a stressful situation, I think what I'll do right now is run. Here's a stressful situation, I think I'm going to punch another kid right in the nose and physical distancing really doesn't matter to them in that moment, right?

So understanding brain response, understanding that everything you see is just their current coping, we just got to help them shift their coping. And we're trying really, really, really hard not to retraumatize children and staff to the best of our ability and that's not an easy thing to do.

Part 2

So down to basics, everything that kids are going to present when they come back to school, it's just a little way, their younger way of coping with all this stress, right? These are not bad kids; they just have some high-end coping going on. And understand how you're coping, as Kim said, we're going back to social-emotional learning for adults. And the primary goal is, let's figure out right today what's the best way that we can promote some growth. How can we honor the resiliency that they already show and a little bit of life skill development, without adding more trauma to the best of our ability?

And we opened it up now, all this coping that we see, sometimes it comes out of a really abusive neglectful environment, but it can come from all kinds of different situations. And right now the pandemic is not helping, right? That's kind of where we sit. So complex trauma if that's what we're looking at, maybe some issues with attachment, big issues with the ability to regulate emotion. So social-emotional learning saves kids, I could say that all day long. Dissociation, your little ones who check out, that's how they're coping, they're like I'm out of here. And right now we have amazing educators that would really like to just check out, right? And the sacrifice that you make every day to be there. The biology, the physical effects of adverse events, high levels of cortisol like Kim was talking about and self-concept, how they see themselves, as a good worthy person we hope, but that's not always the case.

So the main areas of concern right now is the ability to regulate emotion. If you can't regulate your emotion, how do you learn? Right? Because you're running, over here on the right hemisphere you're just about survival and this is how it feels. And back to relationship, what? Are Kim and Monique and I all talking about the same thing? What? This is incredible. How did that happen? And draw this brain, draw this brain all day long. Little ones need to know your kids need to know, am I safe? To the best of our ability we will try, right? Am I loved? Monique's favorite area, do you like me? Do I... Felt sense that Kim was talking about and Monique, felt sense, not talked but how does it feel to be with you in that classroom today? And then eventually we'll get to the thinking, we're not there yet. So where do we start? Relational repair. Oh, I knew you'd love that Monique, relational repair. If we could get every physician and psychiatrist and BC to just use the term relational repair, we got it, right? So improving affect regulation, improving interpersonal skills, model for them, right?

Capacity, what is he good at today? What is he good at right now? And by doing that we change self-concept, how they feel about themselves. But we need a co-regulator, I know that would be us. And we have to be able to co-regulate children who are struggling in that area. So it goes back to all staff regulation, right? What experiences do you hold? What's your current ability to regulate? And how do we sustain our good co-regulators? They need support, they need lots of support from admin. So working as co-regulators we're fighting the fear with everything we have right now, whatever we got. And the acknowledgement, I think it's so important for us and for kids what you can control and what you cannot right now. So each day, well this is what we can do today and here's the things that we don't have a lot of control over. But hearing each other out validating when people are concerned and stressed and worried, right? And providing as much safety as we can for each other, right? And connecting is like whoa.

And we're acknowledging this whole little person in front of us and we validate. Whoa little buddy, running out of the school right now makes perfect sense considering how you're feeling. And for staff that's running out of this school right now, makes perfect sense for how you're feeling, right? And educating, right now in this classroom, I work hard to make this as safe as I can for you. And we're going to have today, we're going to bring some stability. We're going to bring some ways to regulate and we're going to make this a really good day, that's our hope. So for all of you I hope, hope, hope that you have someone that hears you out, right? Listening to how you feel. I hope you have friends wouldn't that be cool or at least a dog, right? So finding support, getting those connection, anything you can to feel less isolated.

So we're back to compassion and I know some people don't like that warm, fuzzy compassion thing, but it takes a ton of compassion in balancing these life roles, a ton of compassion understanding that we all mess up, nobody's got the answers for this right now, we're just going day by day, right? Hey, mindful practice, Kim, I know, right here right now and compassion for those who are experiencing more adversity and some degree of secondary trauma, whatever level.

So looking at all the resources that we have connected and that you have access to, looking at... It helps I think if you organize them looking at interventions under the ARC, A for attachment or attunement, R for the ability to regulate and C for competency, let's go strength based here. Oh my gosh, roots of resiliency. Somebody understand me, somebody understand what it's like for me as a classroom teacher right now, or as administrator, somebody understand what it's like for kids and for some of them coming back to school is the most wonderful thing ever, right? The safety, the stability, the care. Oh, there it is Kim, your care. So here's a little link to the resources. I'm out of time. This is a first time ever. I've talked on this topic for sort of 10 minutes. Thank you so much.

Closing Remarks

We just want to do a final check in just to see if there's sort of that last thing like, oh, here's the thing I would love you to take away. And maybe it's from something that you didn't say as well or you want to reemphasize, or maybe it's something you heard from one of your colleagues. So just one thing, I'll start with you, Linda. What's one thing you want folks to take away from our time together today?

Oh my goodness. One thing, that's a hard thing, but I just want people to be well and to really acknowledge their own strength in this. And we just fight fear. We just fight fear every day and today is all we've got.

Kim, what's the one thing?

There's so many I agree, Linda. But I'm going to cleave with compassion, let's go back to this, because I think how we use a lens of compassion when we see how other people are behaving. So there might be that colleague of yours who's usually friendly, who doesn't say hello, or there might be some people who act in ways that doesn't seem caring, but we have to look at their behavior through a compassionate lens to think about, this is how we all respond differently in these stressful situations, and even children's behavior that are misbehaving.

So we have to use that lens of compassion and related to that, is our own self compassion, teachers and educators out there, helping professions, the hardest on yourselves, more so than anyone else. And so really leaning in with that self-care, that self-compassion to realize you're doing your best efforts. And just to actually be able to reflect on that, what are you doing every day to take care of yourself?

Last word, Monique?

All right. I'd say seek and generate happiness and get outside.

Wonderful. So I'm just going to finish with my own thought, Monique's question about what emotion do you want people to have in your presence? I have one word for each of you, and I don't know, they're not necessarily all the emotion, but they're adjective. So Kim, you made me feel insightful. I thought so many of the ideas that you shared with that were just brilliant in that way. Monique, I would say you've made me feel cared for, which was powerful. And Linda, I just wrote the word delightful. I don't know why that just the word that comes to mind when I think of you.

Thank you so much for all of that you do, take care of yourselves, take care of each other. Thank you to each one of you for what you do to supporting students across British Columbia, have a great day and we'll all be here for you. Cheers, everyone.