

THE REGULATED CLASSROOM: PRACTICAL STRATEGIES FOR REGULATION AND WELL-BEING

*Trauma-Informed Classrooms: Practical Strategies
for Student Regulation and Well-Being*

Presented by:

Karen DeOrian | Prince Marshall | Felipe Mercado, EdD

Introductions

**Karen DeOrian, Madera Unified
Director of School Culture & Climate**

Educational leader with more than 30 years of experience across general and, special education teaching, instructional coaching, and administration. Since 2019, work has centered on helping schools strengthen school climate by building systems and practices that promote student safety, connectedness, engagement, and well-being. Guided by the belief that positive relationships are the foundation of learning, with a commitment to ensuring every student feels valued, supported, and empowered to succeed.

**Prince Marshall, Madera Unified
Assistant Superintendent Student & Family
Support Services**

I am an educational leader with more than 20 years of experience serving students, families, and school communities throughout my career from the classroom to main office. I support in facilitating leadership around initiatives focused on student well-being, school safety, family engagement, attendance, and equitable systems of support. In addition to my district leadership role, I serve as an Associate Professor at National University, a Certified Professional Coach, and an author. I am passionate for the success of our students, staff, families and community.

**Dr. Felipe Mercado, Assistant Professor,
Dept of Social Work, CSU, Fresno**

Assistant Professor of Social Work, former principal/MTSS coordinator, founder of Wise Souls LLC, and six-time bestselling author. Brings 15+ years across education, behavioral health, and child welfare, advancing the Wise-Compassionate Framework, MTSS, adult wellness, and healing-centered systems change. healing practice, and measurable systems change.

Our Story: Why We Started and What We Built

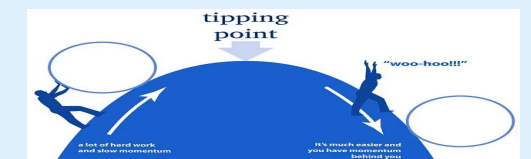
Karen DeOrion & Prince Marshall — Madera Unified School District

Why We Started

Traditional approaches weren't reaching our most vulnerable students. Trauma was showing up in classrooms every single day and we knew we had to respond differently.

What We Built

A Tier 1 program rooted in neurobiology and mental health partnership. A coalition of the willing focusing on educators committed to transformation in their classroom. Together, we created a foundation for healing.



"Coalition of the Willing" — educators committed to transformation.

The Shift That Changed Everything

01 The Original Plan

Implement trauma-informed practices district-wide, train staff on basic awareness, and create supportive classroom environments through traditional professional development. (CYBHI Grant)

02 What We Encountered

97% of adults carry their own trauma responses. Staff needed regulation support before they could support students. One-time trainings were not creating lasting change.

03 What the Work Became

Adult nervous system regulation first, then student support. A coalition of the willing. The Wise-Compassionate Framework as our guide for sustainable transformation.

The Adult Nervous System Is the Classroom



When adults regulate their own nervous systems, they create the conditions for students to feel safe, connected, and ready to learn.

Co-regulation is not a technique — it is the foundation of trauma-informed healing (safety, regulation, and insight).

Children's nervous systems mirror the adults around them. Safety is biologically contagious.

Healing the adult is the prerequisite, not a bonus.

Nearly 1 in 10 MUSD educators now carry these tools because we started with healing.

"Do our systems love them? Adults and children inside deserve the answer to be yes."



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The Wise-Compassionate Approach

Dr. Felipe Mercado, EdD, MSW — Wise Souls LLC

W Wisdom

Understanding trauma's impact on the brain and body. Recognizing how adverse experiences shape behavior, learning, and emotional responses in students and adults alike.

C Compassion

Responding with empathy and care. Meeting students where they are without judgment, creating safe spaces for healing, and building trusting relationships.

R Regulation

Supporting nervous system balance. Equipping educators and students with practical tools to move from dysregulation to calm, enabling learning and connection.

"Systems that measure but don't heal are not serving the people inside them."

What You Will Experience Today

This is not a lecture. It is a practice. Everything at your table is designed for you to take back to your classroom or bring back to your site.

1 Glitter Bottles Snow Globe Regulation

Create Your Calm
Glitter Bottle

HOW TO MAKE YOUR GLITTER BOTTLE

- Add glue:** Fill your bottle about $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ full with glue. The more glue you add, the longer it will take for the glitter to settle after shaking.
- Add Glitter:** Add glitter, start with a tablespoon or so. Add food coloring to give color if you'd like.
- Add warm water:** Fill the bottle the rest of the way with warm water, leaving a little space at the top. Cap it and shake to test. Add more glitter, glue, or water if needed.
- Seal it tight:** When the bottle is full up to the neck with water, glitter, and glue, cap it tightly. For extra security, use super glue to seal the cap closed.



Pause. Breathe. Refocus.
You've got this.

2 Color & Reflect Mindful Coloring Pages

Create Your Calm
Color Your Calm

HOW TO PRACTICE MINDFUL COLORING

- Choose a page:** Pick a coloring page that stands out to you or matches your mood.
- Select your colors:** Use crayons, colored pencils, or markers to create your design however you'd like.
- Slow down and focus:** Take your time coloring. Notice the shapes, colors, and movements as you work.
- Enjoy the moment:** There's no right or wrong way to color. Let yourself relax, breathe, and enjoy the creative process.



Pause. Breathe. Create.
You've got this.

3 Friendship Bracelets Soothing Repetitive Motion

Create Your Calm
Create & Connect

HOW TO CREATE & HAVE FUN

- Choose your craft:** Decide if you want to make a friendship bracelet or create something using pipe cleaners.
- Get creative:** Use the materials provided to twist, braid, bend, and shape your design however you'd like.
- Make it your own:** Try different colors, patterns, beads, and shapes to create something unique to you.
- Share the joy:** Give your bracelet to a friend, display your creation, or simply enjoy the process of creating something fun and calming.



Create. Connect. Share.
You've got this.

Classroom Calming Corner Examples


In the back are examples of how you might set up a desk in a quiet space of a classroom

4 **Busy Hands**
Fidgets

Create Your Calm
Busy Hands

HOW TO USE THE BUSY HANDS STATION

- Choose an activity:** Pick from Legos, fidgets, or a ring packet that interests you or feels calming.
- Keep your hands moving:** Build, twist, squeeze, click, or explore the activity in a way that feels relaxing and focused.
- Take your time:** There's no right or wrong way to use these tools. Focus on the movements, textures, or patterns as you use them.
- Reset and recharge:** Use this moment to pause, breathe, and refocus before returning to your day.




Pause. Focus. Reset.
You've got this.

2 **Mindful Moments**
Reflecting & Journaling

Create Your Calm
Mindful Moments

HOW TO PRACTICE MINDFUL MOMENTS

- Choose a mindfulness tool:** Pick a calming card, journal prompt, or mindfulness book that stands out to you.
- Take a quiet moment:** Find a comfortable space to read, reflect, or write without distractions.
- Focus on the present:** Take slow breaths and pay attention to your thoughts, feelings, or the activity in front of you.
- Use the resources mindfully:** Feel free to take one sample journal if available. Please return the calming cards and mindfulness books to the station so others can use them too.



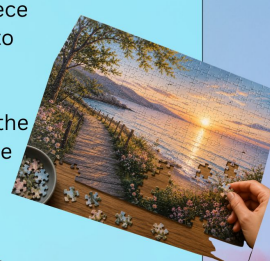
Pause. Reflect. Reset.
You've got this.

3 **Tactile Calming**
Puzzles

Create Your Calm
Puzzle Pause

HOW TO PRACTICE PUZZLE PAUSE

- Choose a puzzle:** Pick a puzzle that interests you and find a comfortable space to work.
- Take your time:** Focus on one section, color, shape, or piece at a time. There's no need to rush.
- Work together or independently:** Complete the puzzle on your own or invite someone to join you and collaborate.
- Leave it for others:** If the puzzle is not finished, leave the pieces and workspace organized so others can continue building too.



Pause. Focus. Piece It Together.
You've got this.

Reflection and Research Underpinning

Science is not separate from what you just experienced. The data lives in your own nervous system.

Reflection Questions

- What nervous system state do you most often bring to your classroom?
- How might your own regulation impact student behavior and learning?
- Which tool from today would most support you on a hard week?
- What small shift could you commit to making tomorrow?

Research Foundations

Polyvagal Theory:

Safety signals regulate the nervous system and enable learning.

Mirror Neurons:

Students co-regulate with adult emotional states continuously.

MTSS Tier 1:

Universal trauma-informed practices support all learners.

MUSD Data:

97.3% of participants recommended this approach.



Commitment to Action

You do not need to do all of it. You need to do one thing—and mean it.



My Commitment Pledge

One trauma-informed practice I commit to implementing this week:

One student or group who will benefit most from this:

One colleague I will share this with before next month:

The first day I will try this:



Small, consistent actions create lasting change. *Your commitment matters.*



Small, consistent actions create lasting change. Your commitment matters.

Tier 1 Regulation Toolkit

Everything you need to bring this back to your site — and keep doing it.

Activity Directions

Step-by-step guides for glitter bottles, coloring, and calming manipulatives.

Blackline Masters

Print-ready coloring pages, reflection sheets, and regulation logs.

Calming Corner Setup

Visual guidance for creating regulation stations in any classroom.

Primary Adaptations

TK–3 modifications: shorter cues, simpler manipulatives, visual anchors.

Secondary Adaptations

4–12 modifications: journaling, breath cards, movement options.

Rationale & Research

The science behind each tool — for your confidence and parent conversations.

[Trauma-Informed Resources](#)

**WE CAN DO BETTER.
WE MUST DO BETTER.**



*For our students. For ourselves.
For the kind of classrooms we know are possible.*



Karen DeOrian | Prince Marshall | Dr. Felipe Mercado

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THANK YOU

QUESTIONS?

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Reach Out

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