



Miss Kendra: A Creative Approach to Addressing the Mental Health Needs of Students

Melony Williams, LCMHC

Purpose

- Our main purpose is to support the students in learning.
- Trauma interferes with learning, but if we are trauma informed in our approaches, we can support the students' social emotional well being and ensure they are able to take in the information being offered.
- Miss Kendra is one way of being trauma informed.

Trauma-Informed: What Does it Mean?

- We have a deep understanding of trauma and its impact on the whole child and caregivers.
- We recognize trauma and help students deal with the effects in a sensitive way.
- Our organizations employ trauma-sensitive practices (teachers are supported in implementing trauma informed principles).

The Basics

- **Everyone has a story, even children.**
- We want to hear the story if they want to share it and to help them cope with the effects of their experiences so they can feel safe enough to learn.



What is a traumatic event?

- *Exposure to actual or threatened death, serious injury

- *which results in intense feelings of helplessness, fear or horror and

- *the re-experiencing of this event that interferes with normal functioning.

The 3 E's: trauma is the sum of the **event**, the **experience**, and the **effect** (SAMHSA)

The Functional Impact of Traumatic Exposure

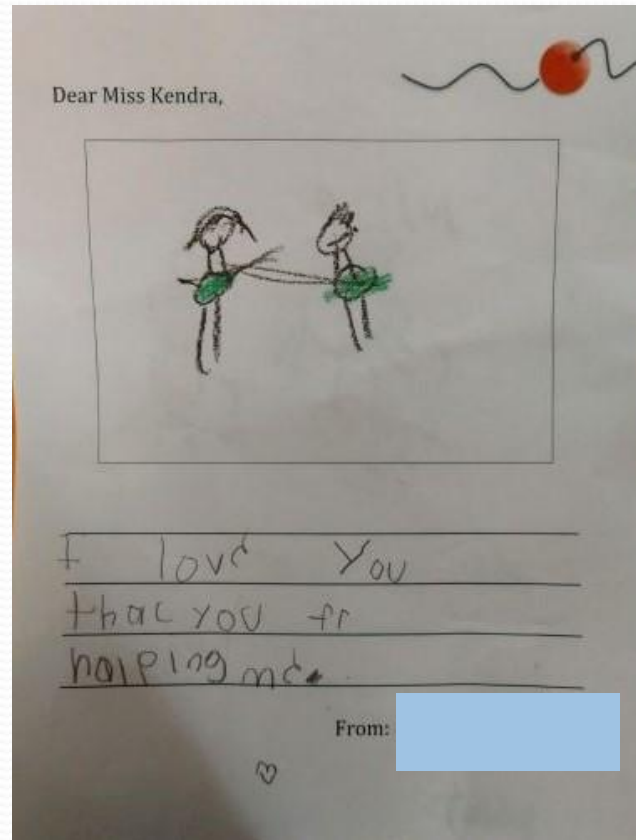
Trauma impacts...

- Play
- Emotions/Mood
- Social/Relationships
- Language/Communication
- Cognition/Executive Functioning
- Self-Concept
- Biology/Physical Development

Why Does this Matter for Schools?

- Students with past trauma and/or current trauma are in our classrooms.
- If we understand how trauma affects children then we can create environments that help them feel safe.
- Understanding what might trigger children and how to help when they are triggered can help that child and the whole class.
- Teachers can be the one person who believes in a child.

Miss Kendra is a Tool that can Help!



Development of Miss Kendra

- Alive! New Haven, CT
- David Johnson at Posttraumatic Stress Center noticed the need to get involved earlier and to go where the kids are.
- Connected with local school and Miss Kendra was developed. Miss Kendra was inspired by a clinician who supported the kids in the school.
- Implemented with children from K-5th grade (though variations of curriculum used all the way through community college).

Traumainformedschools.org

Contact Us | 203-624-2146 | 

ALIVE

WHAT IS ALIVE? ▾ WHAT WE DO ▾ NEWS & PUBLICATIONS ▾ DONATE



Founders of the Famous Miss Kendra Program

Featuring The Legend of Miss Kendra, a powerful story that teaches children about resilience and how to cope with toxic stress.

[Learn More](#)

traumainformedschools.org/miss-kendra-program/

ABOUT ALIVE



The Alive Philosophy

- **ALIVE**'s vision is to create schools that support open conversations about the truth in our students' lives, and thereby liberate their energies and spirits for the important work of learning. By attending to students stresses **before** they break down with symptoms and negative behaviors, **ALIVE** helps the entire classroom and school to maintain calm.



The Miss Kendra Motto

- **We SEE** you are upset.
- **We KNOW** that this for a good reason.
- **We ASK** what is happening or what has happened.
- **We CAN** help you feel better and succeed in school.
- **We WILL** keep checking in with you!

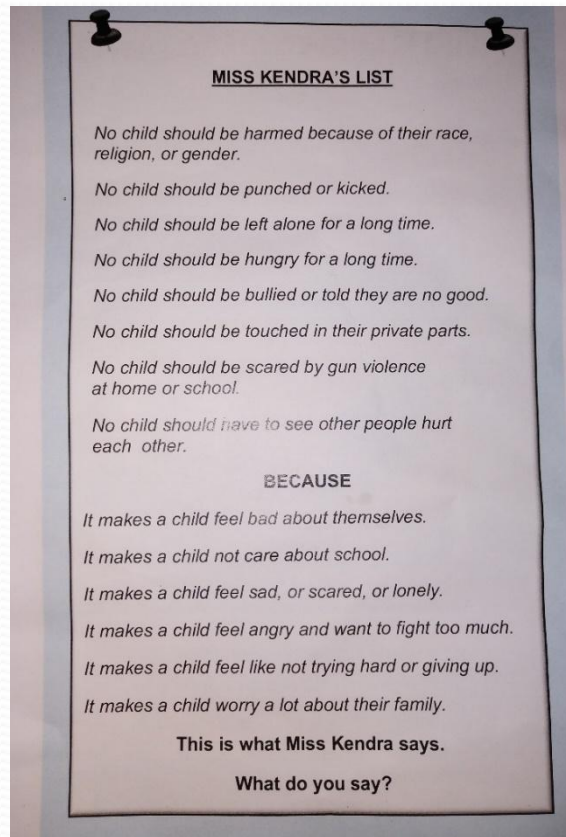
12



Goals of Miss Kendra

- Share the norms of child safety
- Encourage conversations about trauma and toxic stress
- Helping teachers to gain increased understanding of the lives of their students
- Help the children to reduce the stress and anxiety they feel as a result of their experiences so that learning is more possible.

Miss Kendra's List



The details of the Process

- Activities happen in 4 week cycles (class writes to Miss Kendra, ½ letters back, other ½ letters returned, expressive arts week).
- Groups start with understanding what a worry is.
- We then move to sharing the legend (bring Miss Kendra alive).
- This is followed by exploration of each item on the list.
- During remaining weeks, we look at topics pertinent to each class.
- Red Beads are handed out throughout.

The Role of Classroom Teachers

- Teachers will help to get the students to the space where group will happen and then will support the students and add to the discussions as they wish.
- Teachers can hear the stories the children share, understand their students worries and support them outside of Miss Kendra time.
- Teachers can help on letter writing days, the task is challenging at first but the children become more independent as the year progresses.
- Teachers can help observe the responses of students, determine who might benefit from a Stress Reduction Session.
- Lines of communication are always open. Email is a great way to stay in touch with your Miss Kendra facilitator.

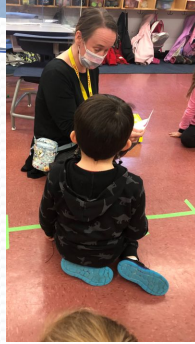


Classroom Activities

- Miss Kendra staff will be prepared to lead the group for 30 minutes each week.
- Dramatic activities will bring the list to life
- Children actively participate in conversations
- Students learn about sharing the talking space.
- Children practice supporting one another and cultivating an empathic classroom environment.
- We are always linking students back to teachers (and family) for ongoing support.

Experiencing the Worry Board

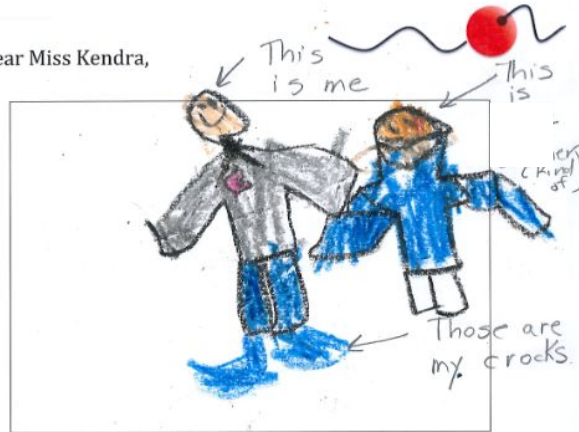




Letters

- They want to share their worries in letters.
- A connection to Miss Kendra grows with each letter.
- Receiving a letter and being heard is powerful.
- Children take pride in accomplishment of writing.
- So enjoyable to see their ability to communicate with words growing throughout the year.
- Listening to the letters written to friends develops empathy and understanding.

Dear Miss Kendra,



I likes my family.

From: _____

Dear Miss Kendra,



I have a dog who
makes safe. I do not
feel safe when mom &
dad fight.

From: -

Dear Miss Kendra,



I feel a little scared that there
is a real monster under my bed,
H A + T + H H + B B
K A L A A + H + X H H H H

From:

Dear Miss Kendra,



I am worried that while I am at
the store with my mom and my sister,
that a robber will come and my
mom will only have one dollar.

From:

from
Miss Kendra



Hello

Thank , - - - - taking the time to write to me again. I am so glad you shared your worry with me about someone taking your family's money when you go to the store. That seems like a big worry to have and I hope that sharing it made you feel better. Have you told your mom about this worry? I bet she has some ideas to help you feel better about this and I am sure she would love to hear your worries. What do you think about that idea? I hope you give it a try and you write back to tell me how it goes. I am going to send three red beads to you....one for you, one for your sister and one for your mom! I hope you all can remember how strong you are. Look forward to hearing from you again soon.

Love,
Miss Kendra

Dear Miss Kend



X passed away, I felt sad when
my mum and dad brought a
leash home without X.

From: _____

from
Miss Kendra

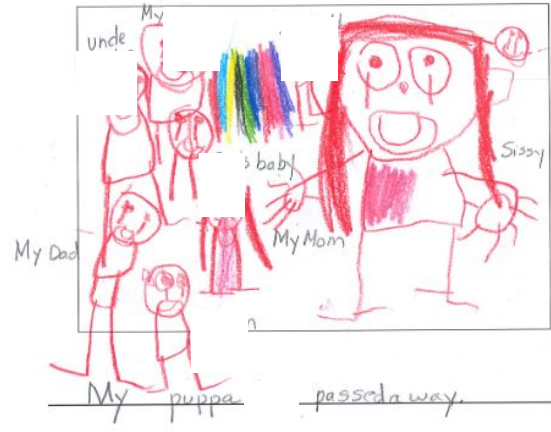


Dear

It was so nice to hear from you again. I am so sorry though that you are still feeling sad about your dog X who died. It must have been so hard when your parents came home with just a leash and no X. Do you have pictures of X at home? Sometimes those can help us feel better. Do your parents miss X too? It sounds like X was a really special dog. What kinds of things did you enjoy playing with X? I bet you had so many fun times together. Sometimes, thinking about those fun times helps us to feel a little better too. I am sending you a red bead to remind you that you are strong even when something hard happens, like losing a very special pet. Hope to hear from you again soon!

Love,
Miss Kendra

Dear Miss Kendra,



From:

from
Miss Kendra

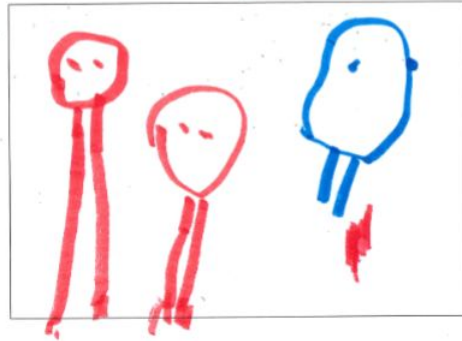


Dear _____

I am so sorry to hear that your Pappa passed away!
I see in your picture that your family was there with you.
Did you tell them that you felt very sad. You can tell
your teacher too that you will miss your grandpa. I bet
your family felt sad also. I could see the tears on
everyone's faces on your drawing and I felt sad too. I
am glad you told me about it. I am sending a red bead to
remind you that you are strong even when sad things
happen. I will be thinking of you and I hope you will
write to me again.

Love,
Miss Kendra

Dear Miss Kendra,



Every day my stomach hurts at
School and at home. I don't know
why.

From: _____

from
Miss Kendra



Hello

Thank , -----uch for taking the time to write to me again!
I just love hearing from you and seeing your drawings. I am
so curious about who the three people were in your drawing
this time. Two of them were red and one was blue. That is so
creative. I wonder if that was a picture of your family.
I am so sorry to hear that your stomach has been hurting
you. I am sure that is not fun at all. It is hard to focus on
school when you are not feeling well. Have you talked to
your parents about this? I hope so because I am sure they
have some ideas that can help. Sometimes a doctor can help.
I also know that worries can cause stomachaches for some
kids. Do you have anything you are worried about? I would
be glad to listen to any worries you have and I am sure your
teachers and your family would love to hear them too. I hope
your stomach feels better soon and in the meantime, I am
sending you a red bead to remind you that you are strong!

Love,
Miss Kendra

Dear Miss Kendra,



I like to et pesa.
I like to et askaen.

From: _____

Worries

- Death of loved ones (family members, pets)
- Conflict at home
- Separation from family
- Illness
- Power outages

“Miss Melony has your Dad ever been to jail?”

Discussion Time is Important

- “My Dad ran away. I am not sure if he is coming back.”
- “My sister passed.”
- “I had a bad dream.”
- “My brother was bullied.”
- “My Dad has no money.”
- “I used to live in the scary house. Do you live there now?”
- “My mom is sad. She cries a lot of times”

Miss Kendra Remains in Class

- Miss Kendra's List
- Worry Boards
- Mailbox
- Book



Parent Involvement

- Newsletters
- Red Bead Clubs
- Open communication encouraged

Red Bead Clubs

- Parents are invited to Miss Kendra time twice a year (November and April).
- Groups are scheduled at the end of the school day if possible to try to have as many parents as possible present.
- Invitations are sent home and followed up by a call.
- One hour period that describes Miss Kendra and provides an opportunity to celebrate family strength.
- Letters are written to one another (caregiver □ □ child).
- Parents are also invited to write letters to Miss Kendra at this time.

Newsletters



Welcome to Miss Kendra Programs!

Dear Parents, Caregivers, Family, and Loved Ones,

We are so excited to connect with you! We would like to introduce you to our child centered, strength and safety program called the Miss Kendra Program. Through storytelling about children who overcome worries, students will learn empathy, problem solving skills and share ideas on how they can be safe. We know that safe conversations like these foster resilience!

Teachers, parents, caregivers, and families can use the topics on Miss Kendra's list as a guide to teach children different ways to stay safe, ask for support and to empathize with other kids who deal with various kinds of worries or stress.

~ The Miss Kendra Team



Activity Ideas for at Home



The Feelings Mailbox

- Decorate an old box or tin as a family!
- Find a spot that is accessible to everyone!
- Use this box to write encouraging notes to each other and remind yourselves that you can get through things as a family!
- Pick a day each month to read the letters out loud to each other!

Family Strength Story time



- Take a moment to look through family albums or photographs that you have.
- Remind yourselves of family members who were loving, caring, and supportive.
- Tell your child(ren) the story of their life and how they inspired you and kept the values of your family alive! Did they overcome an adversity? Did they spread kindness? What life lessons did they teach you?



Keep In Touch!

Dysregulation

- We don't ignore it, we note it and recognize that it is a form of communication
- We meet it with wonder, allow space for it and encourage empathy from peers.

Being With

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GgQBPSECgZg>



Stress Reduction Sessions

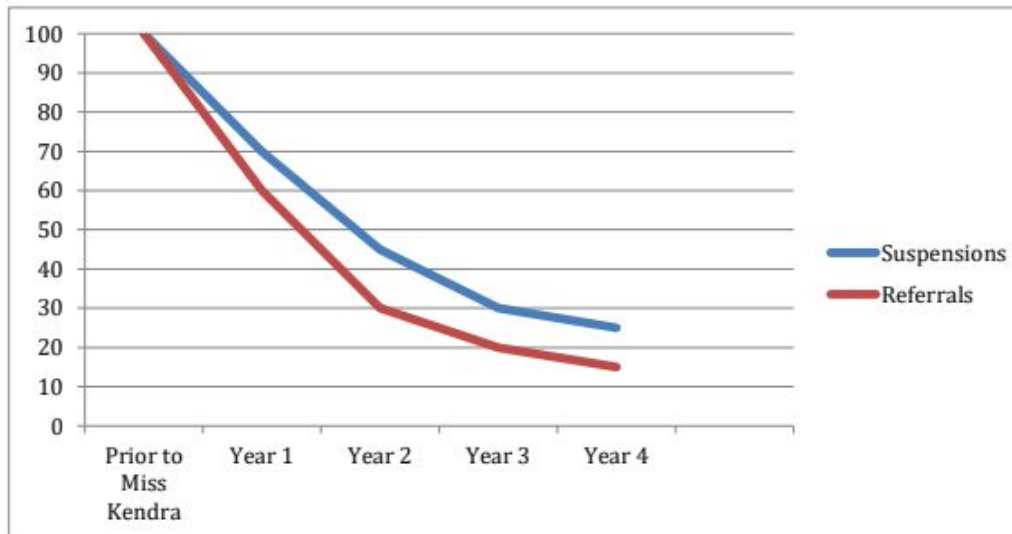
- 15 minute 1:1 time for students activated by Miss Kendra time or students the teacher refers
- Play based activities to release energy and process feelings to help children be able to learn
- Not therapy but they are therapeutic

Outcomes

Outcome Data for the Miss Kendra Program

Percent Reduction in Suspensions and Office Referrals

Aggregate of 12 Schools Implementing Miss Kendra Programs



Teacher Support of Miss Kendra Programs

Aggregate of 22 Schools (400 teachers)

- 95% Recommend Miss Kendra Programs to other teachers**
- 90% Miss Kendra Programs calm down my students**
- 100% Miss Kendra Programs make my classroom truly trauma-informed**
- 90% Helped me build closer relationships with my students**

What about reporting concerns to DCYF?

- Common worry is that reports will increase, but that has not been the experience.
- Concerning topics are brought up and often result in a phone call home to parents to check in and see if the Miss Kendra staff can offer support.
- Reports are not made based just on a letter. Protocol is to read all letters before leaving the school building and to follow up with students about any suspicious letters. If concerns remain, then Miss Kendra staff will follow up.

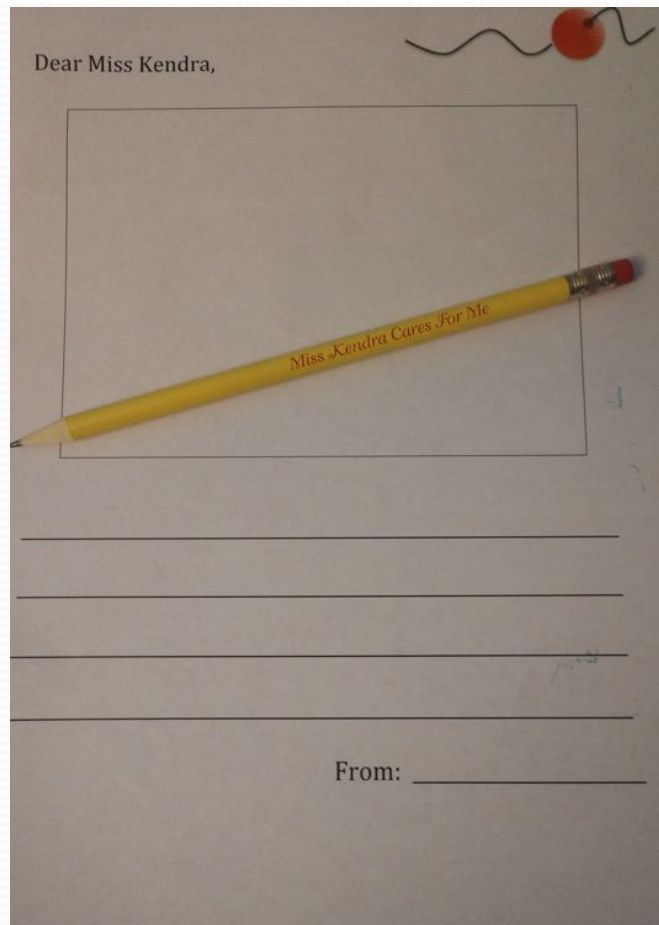
Thank you to funders

- Miss Kendra programs at several NH schools as well as the Upper Valley Facilitator's group, are currently funded by the Better Behavioral Health Outcomes project, a HRSA-RCORP (Rural Communities Opioid Response Program) grant held by a team at Dartmouth Health. You can learn more about all the initiatives of the Better Behavioral Health Outcomes by visiting: <https://www.dartmouth-hitchcock.org/psychiatry/better-behavioral-health-outcomes>

Thoughts, Worries, Comments, Questions



Experience letter writing



Contact Information



Melony Williams, LCMHC
Clinical Consultant

603-558-7465

mjwilliamslcmhc@gmail.com