



Lecture Series on Trauma-Informed Education

Creative and Reflective Practices for Healing

Supporting Ukrainian Students Through Trauma-Informed
Education



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From Resilience to Creative Expression



Building on Previous Knowledge

In our previous lecture, we explored resilience and post-traumatic growth—the profound idea that people can discover strength and meaning after experiencing hardship.

Today's Focus

We now examine how creative and reflective practices can actively support this healing process—particularly for students who struggle to articulate their pain through words alone.

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"Creativity helps us express what language cannot."




Art, writing, and movement offer gentle pathways to release emotions and reconnect with a sense of wholeness.



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Understanding Embodied Trauma in Ukrainian Students

For many Ukrainian students, grief and trauma manifest not only as psychological experiences but as deeply embodied ones—felt physically through the body in ways that traditional talk therapy may not address.

 <p>Tension Physical tightness and holding patterns</p>	 <p>Silence Inability to verbalize experiences</p>	 <p>Fatigue Chronic exhaustion and depletion</p>
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How to Support Someone Who Has Experienced Trauma



Why Creative Approaches Matter: When trauma lives in the body, healing must also engage the body. Creative practices bypass the need for verbal processing, offering alternative channels for expression and release.



CHAPTER 2

Creative Practices for Healing

Four gentle approaches that offer pathways to release emotions
and reconnect with a sense of wholeness



Art Journaling



Music &
Rhythm



Photography



Movement



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Art Journaling: Visual Expression Without Judgment



What is Art Journaling?

Art journaling combines drawing and writing in a personal, non-judgmental space. It allows students to externalize internal experiences through visual and textual expression.

The focus is on expression, not artistic skill. There are no "right" or "wrong" ways to create.

Prompt Examples

- ✓ "Depict what safety looks like to you"
- ✓ "Illustrate what gives me strength"
- ✓ "Create a visual representation of hope"



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Music and Rhythm: Connection Through Sound



Music-Based Interventions

Group singing, drumming circles, and guided listening sessions can foster connection and emotional regulation. Music accesses parts of the brain that verbal communication cannot reach.



Group Singing



Drumming



Listening

Cultural Relevance

Ukrainian folk songs often carry profound themes of loss, resilience, and hope. Incorporating culturally familiar music can deepen emotional connection and provide comfort through shared heritage.

Figure 2: Group music therapy activities promote connection and emotional regulation






Photography Projects: Externalizing Experience

The Power of Visual Storytelling

Photography allows students to capture and externalize their internal world through images. The camera becomes a tool for exploring themes that may be difficult to articulate verbally.


Theme Suggestions

-  Resilience — What helps me endure?
-  Belonging — Where do I feel connected?
-  Memory — What do I want to remember?

Sharing in Small Groups

When students share their photographs in small, safe groups, they can:

- ✓ Externalize emotions safely through the image rather than direct self-disclosure
- ✓ Receive witness and validation from peers
- ✓ Build narrative coherence around their experiences

 Implementation Tip: Provide disposable cameras or smartphone access. Allow students to choose whether to share their images verbally, in writing, or simply through silent viewing.



Movement and Body Awareness: Reconnecting with Self

Why Movement Matters

Trauma often disconnects us from our bodies. Movement practices gently guide students back into embodied presence, helping release stored tension and restore a sense of safety within the physical self.

"The body keeps the score" — trauma lives in physical sensations, posture, and movement patterns.



Gentle Stretching

Release physical tension




Dance

Express through motion



Mindful Walking

Ground in the present

 Important: Always offer choices and modifications. Some students may have physical limitations or discomfort with certain movements.

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“Movement allows students to reconnect with their bodies—which trauma often disconnects us from.”

Through gentle, intentional movement, students can begin to reclaim their physical selves as safe and trustworthy.





CHAPTER 3

Reflective Practices for Integration

Helping students make sense of experiences and integrate them
into their life story



Free Writing



Guided
Questions



Peer Sharing



Mindfulness



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Core Reflective Practices

1 Free Writing

Set aside five minutes at the end of a workshop or class for students to write about something that resonated with them. No grammar checks, no structure—just flow.

 Time: 5 minutes | Frequency: End of each session

2 Guided Questions

Use thoughtful prompts to deepen reflection:

- > "What have I learned about myself through this challenge?"
- > "Who has supported me most, and why?"






The Educator's Role: Creating Safe Containers






Your Role: Create the Frame

As tutors or educators, your role is to create the frame, not to interpret the content. You provide the structure and safety; students provide the meaning.

DO

-  Let students decide what to share
-  Focus on appreciation
-  Offer empathy and validation

DON'T


-  Analyze or interpret their work
-  Push for more disclosure
-  Make assumptions



Example Response

"Thank you for sharing this—it feels very personal."

This simple validation reinforces trust and safety without demanding explanation.

 Key Principle: The goal is not to "fix" or "solve" but to witness and validate. Students are the experts on their own experiences.




Linking Reflection to Academic Learning

Integration with Course Content

Creative and reflective work can be meaningfully linked to academic learning. This integration serves dual purposes: supporting emotional health while deepening conceptual understanding.

Practical Example

After discussing psychological concepts (e.g., resilience, coping mechanisms, trauma responses), invite students to:

-  Illustrate how these ideas connect to their lived experiences
-  Write a brief reflection on personal relevance
-  Create visual representations of theoretical concepts

Dual Benefits

Emotional Health

Provides safe outlets for processing difficult experiences

Deeper Understanding

Personal connection enhances retention and comprehension

Implementation: Build reflection prompts into assignments, discussions, and assessments. Make it a regular practice, not a one-time activity.

Healing Through Creation and Connection

Creativity and reflection are powerful tools for recovery—accessible, human, and adaptable to diverse needs and contexts.

They remind students that healing is not only about talking, but also about creating, feeling, and connecting.



Creating

Art, music, photography, movement



Feeling

Embodied awareness and expression



Connecting

Peer support and shared experience

→ Next Lecture: We will explore how to design inclusive and safe university environments—spaces where such healing practices can flourish for everyone.