

# Trauma-Informed Schools

## Shifting Judgement to Curiosity

When working towards building trauma-informed schools, it's important to be able to shift judgement to curiosity. At the heart of this concept is a call to approach students' behaviour with openness and interest. For example, instead of thinking, *What is wrong with this person?* when responding to a challenging behavior, ask yourself, *What has happened that might be leading to this behaviour?*

Understanding how trauma impacts the developing brain (and behaviour) provides a new perspective on student misconduct. A caring teacher-student relationship is also crucial to overcoming the negative impacts of trauma.

The table below shows some challenging behaviours and common judgemental beliefs or judgements. Practice shifting judgement to curiosity by filling in your own trauma-informed understanding of each behaviour. On the other side of this handout, you'll find a blank table that will help you create a safe, supportive, and trauma-informed school for your students and colleagues.

Behaviour	Common Belief/Judgement	Trauma-Informed Understanding
Student skipping class	Refuses to follow the rules: challenges authority	Youth is overwhelmed; needs additional support
Acts disinterested, does not pay attention, or is disobedient and defiant	Has become stubborn and likes to challenge authority	
Youth has head on desk or is falling asleep in halls	Being disrespectful; needs to "look me in the eye"	
Colleague quickly gets defensive in staff meeting; feels "attacked"	Personality problems, too reactive and hard to work with	
Young person showing self-harm injuries to other students	Attention seeking; trying to shock others	
Recurring crisis with violence, addiction, or suicidality	Lacks will power; just wants attention; lacks morals	

# Examples From Your Setting

Behaviour	Common Belief/Judgement	Trauma-Informed Understanding