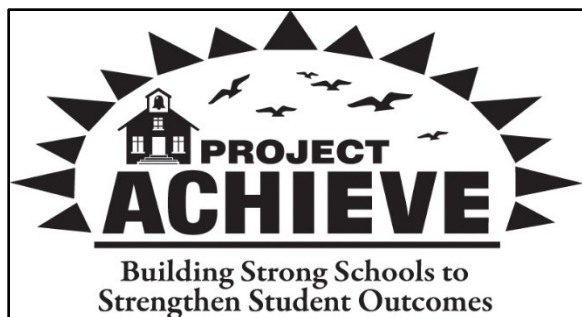




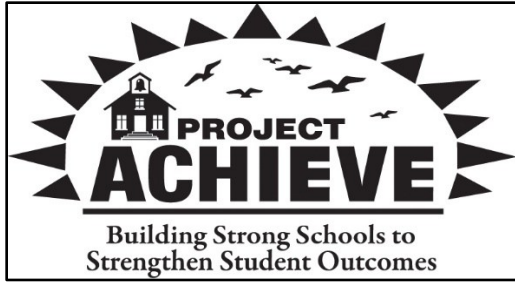
Coping with Stress in a Stressful World: Teaching Students How to Manage Their Emotions, Thoughts, and Behavior

Web-Course Syllabus

Howard M. Knoff, Ph.D.

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Educational Solutions

Fort Myers, FL
USA



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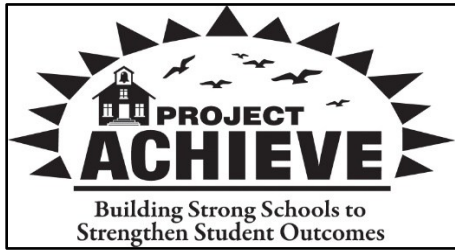


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About the Course Leader/Presenter

Howard M. Knoff, Ph.D. is an internationally-known innovator and hands-on practitioner in the areas of:

- School Improvement and Turn-Around, Strategic Planning and Organizational Development
- School Discipline, Classroom Management, and Student Self-Management (PBIS/PBSS/SEL)
- Differentiated Academic Instruction and Academic Interventions for Struggling Students
- Social, Emotional, and Behavioral Instruction and Strategic and Intensive Interventions for Challenging Students
- Multi-tiered (MTSS/RtI) Services and Supports
- Effective Professional Development and On-Site Consultation and Technical Assistance
- AI Applications to the pre-K to 12 School and Schooling Process

Howie is the President of Project ACHIEVE Educational Solutions which has implemented his nationally-known school effectiveness/school improvement program—an evidence-based model prevention program [through the U.S. Department of Health & Human Service’s Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)]—in thousands of schools or districts over the past 40 years. An international expert on school safety and discipline, classroom management and school-wide SEL systems, student engagement and achievement, and interventions with behaviorally challenging students, Dr. Knoff was a university professor (22 years at the University of South Florida and SUNY-Albany), and Director of the federally-funded State Personnel Development/State Improvement Grant for the Arkansas Department of Education from 2003 to 2015.

As Director of the Arkansas State Improvement/Personnel Development Grant (SIG/SPDG), Dr. Knoff was directly responsible to the Director of Special Education for the state of Arkansas, and involved in many Departmental policy and procedure discussions and deliberations. In addition to administering the \$12 million received from the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs to implement these grants, he and his staff scaled-up critical Project ACHIEVE components across Arkansas focusing on:

- Statewide implementation of Positive Behavioral Support (PBIS) Systems;
- Literacy and mathematics interventions for at-risk, underachieving, and students with disabilities;
- Response-to-Instruction and Intervention (RtI²) and Multi-Tiered Systems (MTSS) of support to help close the achievement gap, reduce disproportionality, and speed essential academic and behavioral interventions to needy students; and
- Sustained and real school improvement for Priority, Focus, and other schools or districts

Significantly, Project ACHIEVE (through the SPDG grant) was written into Arkansas’ approved Elementary and Secondary Education (ESEA) Flexibility process as the school improvement model for all Focus schools in the state of Arkansas from 2010 to 2015.

Over the past decade especially, Dr. Knoff has partnered with school districts across the country helping them to write federal grants that also fund his on-site services. Between 2015 and 2024, he helped five different district collaboratives (two in Michigan, as well as in Oklahoma, New Jersey, and Kentucky) receive separate five-year multi-million dollar School Climate Transformation Grants from the U.S. Department of Education. These grants allowed Dr. Knoff to work with these districts for up to 40 days per year. These grants have also supported the development of on-line/on-demand courses in critical areas of school psychology, multi-tiered services and interventions, and student stress and trauma.

At the end of 2025, he helped the Midwest (OH) Regional Education Service Center (MRESC) receive a four-year multi-million dollar U.S. Department of Education School-Based Mental Health Grant to increase the number of trained and expert school psychologists in 11 school districts across four counties. Supported by training provided by Dr. Knoff over the four years, these school psychologists (and others) will provide direct early intervention and Tier 2 and 3 supports to students with significant mental health needs, while addressing the school psychology gaps in these districts.

Dr. Knoff received his Ph.D. degree from Syracuse University in 1980, and has worked as a practitioner, consultant, licensed private psychologist, and university professor since 1978. Dr. Knoff is widely respected for his research and writing on school reform and organizational change, consultation and intervention processes, social skills and behavior management training, Response-to-Intervention, and professional issues. He has authored or co-authored 25 books or monographs, published over 100 articles and book chapters, and delivered over 5,000 presentations, papers, or workshops internationally. His publications include the Stop & Think Social Skills Program (Preschool through Middle School editions) and the Stop & Think Parent Book: A Guide to Children's Good Behavior both through Project ACHIEVE Press.

Dr. Knoff has a long history of working with schools, districts, and community and state agencies and organizations. For example, he has consulted with a number of state departments of education, the Department of Defense Dependents School District during Desert Storm, and the Southern Poverty Law Center. He has also served as an expert witness on ten federal court cases, in addition to working on many other state and local cases—largely for legal advocacy firms who are representing special education and other students in need. Specific to school safety issues, Dr. Knoff was on the writing team that helped produce Early Warning, Timely Response: A Guide to Safe Schools, the document commissioned by the President that was sent to every school in the country in the Fall of 1998; and he participated in a review capacity on the follow-up document, Safeguarding our Children: An Action Guide.

A recipient of the Lightner Witmer Award from the American Psychological Association's School Psychology Division for early career contributions in 1990, Dr. Knoff is a Fellow of the American Psychological Association (School Psychology Division), a Nationally Certified School Psychologist, a Licensed Psychologist in Florida, and he has been trained in crisis intervention, mediation processes, and trauma-based interventions. He has received over \$40 million in external grants during his career—most recently the School Climate Transformation Grants and School-Based Mental Health Grant—from the U.S. Department of Education—described above.

Dr. Knoff wrote a popular bimonthly Blog for over ten years (www.projectachieve.info/blog) addressing critical national school and schooling issues, and this Blog was accompanied by a podcast, Improving Education Today: The Deep Dive (<https://iet.bepodcast.network/>) on a dozen blog platforms for its last three years. Frequently interviewed in all areas of the media, Dr. Knoff has been on the NBC Nightly News, numerous television and radio talk shows, and he was highlighted on an ABC News' 20/20 program on "Being Teased, Taunted, and Bullied." Finally, Dr. Knoff was the 21st President of the National Association of School Psychologists which now represents more than 25,000 school psychologists nationwide.

Dr. Knoff is constantly sought after for his expertise in a wide variety of school, psychological, and other professional issues. He also has extensive experience as an Expert Witness having testified in many federal and state court cases across the United States since 1993. These cases have focused on IDEA and Special Education Procedures, School Psychology Assessment/Intervention Disputes, Psychological Misdiagnoses and Mental Health Services, 504 Accommodations and Disability Rights, Title IX Sexual Harassment Violations, Disproportionality and Racial Discrimination/Equity, Emotionally Disturbed and Autistic Students, Seclusion and Restraints, Educational Malpractice, School Safety and Violence, Social-Emotional Learning and Positive Behavioral Supports, Multi-Tiered Systems of Support, Bullying and Physical Aggression, Discipline and Corporal Punishment, IEP Disputes and Due Process Hearings, FAPE and LRE, Dispute Resolution and Mediation, Learning Disabilities and ADHD, Stress and Trauma.

Contact Information

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Coping with Stress in a Stressful World: Teaching Students How to Manage Their Emotions, Thoughts, and Behavior

Howard M. Knoff, Ph.D.

Overview

The recent pandemic aside, there are more students experiencing high levels of stress than ever before. Significantly, however, stress is more prevalent among school-aged students than trauma—even though the popular press typically uses the latter over the former term. Moreover, recent research reviewing over 7,000 school-related studies over the past decade has found that there are no Trauma-Informed School Programs that have been effectively evaluated such that they have demonstrated any efficacy in addressing student trauma.

This means that (a) many districts and schools, nationwide, have wasted time, training, resources, and staff in programs that have no empirical support; and (b) these programs have likely delayed appropriate services, supports, and interventions to students in need, or they have potentially made these students' challenges worse because the wrong services were attempted.

Given all of this, schools and staff need, first and foremost, to be stress-sensitive and stress-responsive to their students. This means that educators need to understand how the interactions between students' physiological and psychological processes affect their classroom and school behavior and interactions.

Systemically, this begins with safe schools, positive relationships, prosocial interactions, and teaching students, from preschool through high school, interpersonal, social problem-solving, conflict prevention and resolution, and emotional control, communication, and coping skills. These skills help students develop the resilience and protective strengths that they need to make them both stress-resistant and stress-responsive.

This four-session video-course will differentiate between anxiety, stress, and trauma, and discuss how students' emotional “triggers” result in fight, flight, or freeze responses. We will talk about ways to teach students emotional self-regulation in the classroom so that they learn how to prevent and prepare for stressful situations. And, we will address how to analyze why some students still have difficulties, and what cognitive-behavioral interventions our mental health professionals may need to consider. All of this will be adapted for both general and special education classrooms.

This video-course is for administrators, general and special education teachers, related service professionals (counselors, educational/school psychologists, social workers), and other interested educators or clinicians.

Learning Objectives

During this course, participants will learn about and discuss:

1. The characteristics of stress, anxiety, and trauma, and how the interaction between students' physiological and psychological processes translates into classroom and school behavior and interactions.
2. How to design and implement a psychologically-based, multi-tiered, stress-sensitive and stress-responsive system to address students' emotional needs in schools and classrooms (as relevant to at-school, hybrid, and on-line/virtual school attendance models, as well as in classrooms with mainstreamed students with disabilities).
3. Preventative approaches to teach students how to prevent and prepare for emotionally stressful triggers and conditions through emotional self-regulation skills and strategies.
4. Ways to analyze and understand why some students continue to have frequent or significant stress-based classroom and school difficulties.
5. Strategic cognitive-behavioral intervention approaches for students with significant stress-based classroom and school difficulties.

Training Schedule and Content

Introduction to the Course [12 minutes]

Session 1 [1 hour/7 minutes]

Anxiety, Trauma, Stress and Social, Emotional, and Behavioral Self-Management

- Introductions
- Defining and Discussing Self-Management
- The Differences between Anxiety, Trauma, and Stress
- Why We Want Stress-Sensitive and Informed Schools

Session 2 [1 hour/8 minutes]

De-Stressing Our Schools

- Goal 1- Relationships
- Goal 2- Responsibilities
- Goal 3- Routines
- Goal 4- Reassurance

Session 3 [1 hour/42 minutes]

Teaching and Nurturing Emotional Control and Self-Regulation

- The Interdependent Components of Self-Management
- The Physical, Emotional, Cognitive, Behavioral Connection
- Teaching Students Social, Emotional, and Behavioral Self-Management Self-Regulation Skills

Session 4 [2 hours/6 minutes]

Understanding and Addressing Students with Significant Emotional Needs

- Teaching Students Social, Emotional, and Behavioral Self-Management/ Self-Regulation Skills (Continued)
- Data-based Root Cause Analyses
- Strategic or Intensive Services, Supports, Strategies, or Interventions
- Adult-Directed Strategies for De-escalation

TOTAL Continuing Education Credit Time:

Contact Time (through presentations): 6 hours
Independent Reading/Preparation Time: 6 hours (estimated)

TOTAL: 12 hours of CEU

Brief Description of Each Session and Resources to Read

Session 1 Description [1 hour/7 minutes]

Anxiety, Trauma, Stress and Social, Emotional, and Behavioral Self-Management

- Introductions
- Defining and Discussing Self-Management
- The Differences between Anxiety, Trauma, and Stress
- Why We Want Stress-Sensitive and Informed Schools

Session 1 provides an introduction to this course which focuses on teaching students how to manage their emotions, thoughts, and behavior in the context of stress, anxiety, and trauma. We initially discuss how students' emotional control (or self-regulation) helps them handle the stresses in their school and out-of-school lives, and how these stresses impact the ultimate goals of education: To facilitate the academic and social, emotional, and behavioral learning, progress, and self-management of all students.

We emphasize that social, emotional, and behavioral self-management is the goal of an organized preschool through high school Health, Mental Health, and Wellness (or SEL) district/school initiative. We define "self-management," and explain how it relates to students' social, emotional, and behavioral interactions through their interpersonal, social problem-solving, conflict prevention and resolution, and emotional control, communication, and coping skills.

With so much focus on student trauma (especially during the COVID-19 pandemic), we then differentiate between the clinical, psychological entities of anxiety, stress, and trauma. We critically note that trauma occurs under very specific circumstances with many significant and long-term effects, and that many more students experience different stress than trauma. We conclude that schools and educators need to be Stress-Informed and Stress-Sensitive—implementing prevention and early response approaches in these areas first, and that they then can address the more specialized issues related to trauma as embedded in stress.

Resources to Read. The following resources for this session are posted and available on the course website:

Knoff, H.M. (August 8, 2020). Why Stress-Informed Schools Must Precede Trauma-Informed Schools. Fort Myers, FL: Project ACHIEVE Press. [www.projectachieve.info/blog]

Knoff, H.M. (September 21, 2024). Research Teases Out the Impact of Adverse Childhood Experiences... But Many Educators Still Don't Understand Social-Emotional Screeners, and the Limitations of ACEs-Only Assessments. Fort Myers, FL: Project ACHIEVE Press. [www.projectachieve.info/blog]

Cantor, P. (2020). Stress and the brain. New York: Turnaround for Children.

Rosenzweig, J. M., Jivanjee, P., Brennan, E. M., Grover, L., & Abshire, A. (2017). Understanding neurobiology of psychological trauma: Tips for working with transition-age youth. Portland, OR: Research and Training Center for Pathways to Positive Futures, Portland State University.

Eklund, K. & Rossen, E. (2016). Guidance for trauma screening in schools. Delmar, NY: The National Center for Mental Health and Juvenile Justice.

Homework: Please read the following article in preparation for the next session:

Knoff, H.M. (April 16, 2022). Using Effective Practices to Screen and Validate Students' Social, Emotional, and Behavioral Status (Part I). Fort Myers, FL: Project ACHIEVE Press. [www.projectachieve.info/blog]

Knoff, H.M. (April 30, 2022). Using Effective Practices to Screen and Validate Students' Social, Emotional, and Behavioral Status (Part II). Fort Myers, FL: Project ACHIEVE Press. [www.projectachieve.info/blog]

Quiz: Available on the Course website.

Session 2 Description [1 hour/8 minutes]

De-Stressing Our Schools

- Goal 1- Relationships
- Goal 2- Responsibilities
- Goal 3- Routines
- Goal 4- Reassurance

Session 2 describes the four essential areas that schools need to consider—through planning, implementation, and evaluation—when developing Stress-Informed and Stress-Sensitive schools.

Significantly, none of these areas involve “another thing” for schools to do as they are all equally-essential in establishing and sustaining positive and safe school and classroom climates and interactions, effective classroom instruction and management, and engaged and socially and academically successful students. But, in the context of this class, these areas help schools to prevent or minimize student stress, and help staff and students learn how to effectively respond to the stresses that still exist in their school and out-of-school lives.

To this end, the presentation discusses—at a pragmatic and function level—the science-to-practice elements and activities needed to (a) establish positive and proactive relationships—from staff to staff, staff to students, students to students, and staff and students to parents and community; (b) describe, define, and teach the social, emotional, and behavioral responsibilities for students in their classrooms—across a continuum that also identifies specific intensities of inappropriate classroom behavior, and how teachers and administrators will respond to still hold students accountable; (c) describe, operationalize, and teach the classroom and common school area routines and interactions that keep these settings predictable, organized, and safe; and (d) help teachers and other school staff to effectively interact with and reassure students—especially when they encounter stressful situations or are demonstrating elevated levels of stress.

Resources to Read. The following resources for this session are posted and available on the course website:

Center on Great Teachers & Leaders. (2020, July). Building trust and well-being through stress-reduction activities at school. Washington, DC: American Institutes for Research.

Lesley University Center for Special Education. (Undated). Trauma-sensitive school checklist. Cambridge, MA: Trauma and Learning Policy Initiative of Massachusetts Advocates for Children and the Legal Services Center of Harvard Law School.

Homework: Please read the following article in preparation for the next session:
Knoff, H.M. (August 24, 2024). Students’ Health, Mental Health, and Well-Being Worsens Over the Past 10 Years: Summary of the August 2024 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Report (Part IV). Fort Myers, FL: Project ACHIEVE Press. [www.projectachieve.info/blog]

Knoff, H.M. (November 25, 2023). Too Many Schools are Teaching Students to Control their Emotions... the Wrong Way! Because They Don’t Understand the Science, They Won’t Succeed in the Practice. Fort Myers, FL: Project ACHIEVE Press. [www.projectachieve.info/blog]

Quiz: Available on the Course website.

Session 3 Description [1 hour/42 minutes]

Teaching and Nurturing Emotional Control and Self-Regulation

- The Interdependent Components of Self-Management
- The Physical, Emotional, Cognitive, Behavioral Connection
- Teaching Students Social, Emotional, and Behavioral Self-Management Self-Regulation Skills

Session 3 revisits the definition and interdependent components of students' social, emotional, attributional, and behavioral self-management. It then describes the elements that help students to be (a) physically or physiologically healthy; (b) emotionally aware and in control from a neurological and brain-behavior perspective; (c) able to recognize how their expectations, beliefs, attitudes, and attributional thoughts affect both their emotions and behavior; and (d) motivated to learn and use their interpersonal, social problem-solving, conflict prevention and resolution, and emotional communication and coping skills.

The Session continues with an overview of the Emotional Control Paradigm which is grounded by the need to teach students emotional self-awareness, emotional self-control, and emotional coping skills and strategies. This Paradigm recognizes that most emotional behaviors are neurologically and classically conditioned, and that ineffective emotional reactions (science-to-practice) need to be unconditioned, re-conditioned, or counter-conditioned.

The Paradigm is then further operationalized by showing the importance of and how to guide students' identification of their emotional triggers and physiological cues. The goal of the Paradigm—and its instruction in the classroom—is to teach students how to stay in emotional and physiological control when in the presence of emotional triggers; how to shift their thinking from negative or reactive to positive and proactive thoughts, beliefs, or expectations; and how to demonstrate appropriate, prosocial behaviors to address or respond to their emotional triggers.

Resources to Read. The following resources for this session are posted and available on the course website:

Therapist Aid, LLC. (2017). Common triggers of teen stress. Jacksonville, FL: Author.

Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction. (Undated). My emotional regulation plan. Madison, WI: Authors.

Homework: Please read the following article in preparation for the next session:

Knoff, H.M. (July 27, 2024). Are Schools Really Prepared to Address Educators' Biggest Behavioral Student Concerns Right Now? "We've Got Serious Problems and We Need Serious People" (Part II). Fort Myers, FL: Project ACHIEVE Press. [www.projectachieve.info/blog]

Knoff, H.M. (September 6, 2025). Students' Mental Health Challenges: What They Say, What Schools and Adults Miss, and Why AI Isn't the Answer. Fort Myers, FL: Project ACHIEVE Press. [www.projectachieve.info/blog]

Quiz: Available on the Course website.

Session 4 Description [2 hours/6 minutes]

Understanding and Addressing Students with Significant Emotional Needs

- Teaching Students Social, Emotional, and Behavioral Self-Management/
Self-Regulation Skills (Continued)
- Data-based Root Cause Analyses
- Strategic or Intensive Services, Supports, Strategies, or Interventions
- Adult-Directed Strategies for De-escalation

Session IV reviews the Emotional Control Paradigm, and then provides two videotaped examples to demonstrate how students can be taught and use the Paradigm to prevent and prepare for different classroom- or school-based stresses.

The discussion then moves to the use of a data-based, functional assessment problem-solving process for students who demonstrate persistent or significant stress-related challenges above and beyond the preventative instruction related to the Emotional Control Paradigm. The importance of linking the results of the data-based functional assessment to strategic (Tier 2) or intensive (Tier 3) services, supports, strategies, and interventions is emphasized, and specific examples of these interventions are provided.

Session IV concludes with descriptions of four specific trauma-related therapies (two of them are highlighted in the Resources provided), and an overview of specific de-escalation strategies that can be used by educators when students are experiencing an emotional or behavioral crisis.

Resources to Read. The following resources for this session are posted and available on the course website:

Hendricks, A., Cohen, J.A., Mannarino, A.P., & Deblinger, E. (2019). Dealing with trauma: A TF-CBT workbook for teens. Pittsburgh, PA: Center for Traumatic Stress in Children and Adolescents.

Jaycox, L.H., Langley, A.K., & Hoover, S.A. (2018). Cognitive behavioral intervention for trauma in schools (2nd Ed.). Santa Monica, CA: The RAND Corporation.

Quiz: Available on the Course website.

Class Readings (In Addition to Cited Resources)

For Session 1 (See the Course Webpage)

Knoff, H.M. (August 8, 2020). Why Stress-Informed Schools Must Precede Trauma-Informed Schools. Fort Myers, FL: Project ACHIEVE Press. [www.projectachieve.info/blog]

Knoff, H.M. (September 21, 2024). Research Teases Out the Impact of Adverse Childhood Experiences... But Many Educators Still Don't Understand Social-Emotional Screeners, and the Limitations of ACEs-Only Assessments. Fort Myers, FL: Project ACHIEVE Press. [www.projectachieve.info/blog]

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Knoff, H.M. (April 16, 2022). Using Effective Practices to Screen and Validate Students' Social, Emotional, and Behavioral Status (Part I). Fort Myers, FL: Project ACHIEVE Press.

[www.projectachieve.info/blog]

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Knoff, H.M. (August 24, 2024). Students' Health, Mental Health, and Well-Being Worsens Over the Past 10 Years: Summary of the August 2024 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Report (Part IV).

Fort Myers, FL: Project ACHIEVE Press. [www.projectachieve.info/blog]

Knoff, H.M. (July 27, 2024). Are Schools Really Prepared to Address Educators' Biggest Behavioral Student Concerns Right Now? "We've Got Serious Problems and We Need Serious People" (Part II).

Fort Myers, FL: Project ACHIEVE Press. [www.projectachieve.info/blog]

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Myers, FL: Project ACHIEVE Press. [www.projectachieve.info/blog]

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