Suggestions for supporting students

Research on teaching about potentially traumatic topics shows that there are strategies instructors can use to support students while engaging with these topics:

1. Introduce the idea of science and discovery as a tool for seeking justice.
2. Make sure that students -- all of your students -- know about relevant campus resources, including student counseling services and multi-cultural student support centers. You can list these on your course syllabus, and also mention them again at the beginning of this unit, acknowledging that the material may be challenging for some students. Include information about what services are provided and how to access them.
3. Normalize emotional reactions, in advance. Let students know that you understand that the context of this exercise may evoke powerful emotions for some people. Do not assume you know which students will be most impacted by the activity; you do not know who may be in a student's family or community, nor who will be most affected via empathy.
4. Make it clear in advance that any comments minimizing the harm of slavery or of residential boarding schools will not be tolerated, and be ready to challenge any such comments you hear. Silence on your part may be interpreted as agreement with the comments. Read Hollaback's [Guide to Bystander Intervention](https://www.ihollaback.org/guide-bystander-intervention/) to prepare yourself to respond to such comments.
5. Recognize and treat students, especially BIPOC students, as experts on their own families' and communities' trauma. If students choose to share stories from their communities, allow them to speak and thank them for doing so. However, do not put on BIPOC students the burden of educating others, particularly about racial trauma.
6. If a student approaches you for emotional support, recognize that you are not a trained counselor, but help them connect with campus support services.

References

Bedera, Nicole (2021). Beyond Trigger Warnings: A Survivor-Centered Approach to Teaching on Sexual Violence and Avoiding Institutional Betrayal. Teaching Sociology, 49(3), 267–277.

National Child Traumatic Stress Network, Justice Consortium, Schools Committee, and Culture Consortium. (2017). [Addressing Race and Trauma in the Classroom: A Resource for Educators](https://www.nctsn.org/sites/default/files/resources/addressing_race_and_trauma_in_the_classroom_educators.pdf). Los Angeles, CA, and Durham, NC: National Center for Child Traumatic Stress.

Rush, Jenna (2021). [Embedding Culturally Responsive Practices into Trauma-Informed Schools](https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/regions/appalachia/blogs/blog42_embedding-culturally-responsive-practices.asp). Regional Educational Laboratory Program.