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Specialist

MASTER CLASS

Social-Emotional Learning & Trauma-Sensitive Practices in English Language Teaching

- with Janine Darragh and Luis Javier Pentón Herrera -

Session 5 Supplementary Guide

Preparing for and Responding to Crises



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Summary

A crisis can be defined as a situation that causes psychological distress and is characterized by instability or the potential to deteriorate.¹ English teachers are frequently required to operate in crisis situations. These can include natural disasters, pandemics, wars, or situations involving refugees and displaced persons. Given these challenging contexts, TESOL professionals must be adequately prepared to offer necessary support during such crises.

In this session, Janine and Luis identify the unique considerations at play in a crisis context, using Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs as a model to understand human needs, behaviors, and emotions. Janine highlights the criticality of trauma-sensitive practices as support in such contexts, using her personal experience to illustrate the effect of each trauma-sensitive practice shared. Further, Luis illustrates key social-emotional skills that can help students, teachers, and communities preserve their well-being and overcome crises should they occur.

Session Takeaways

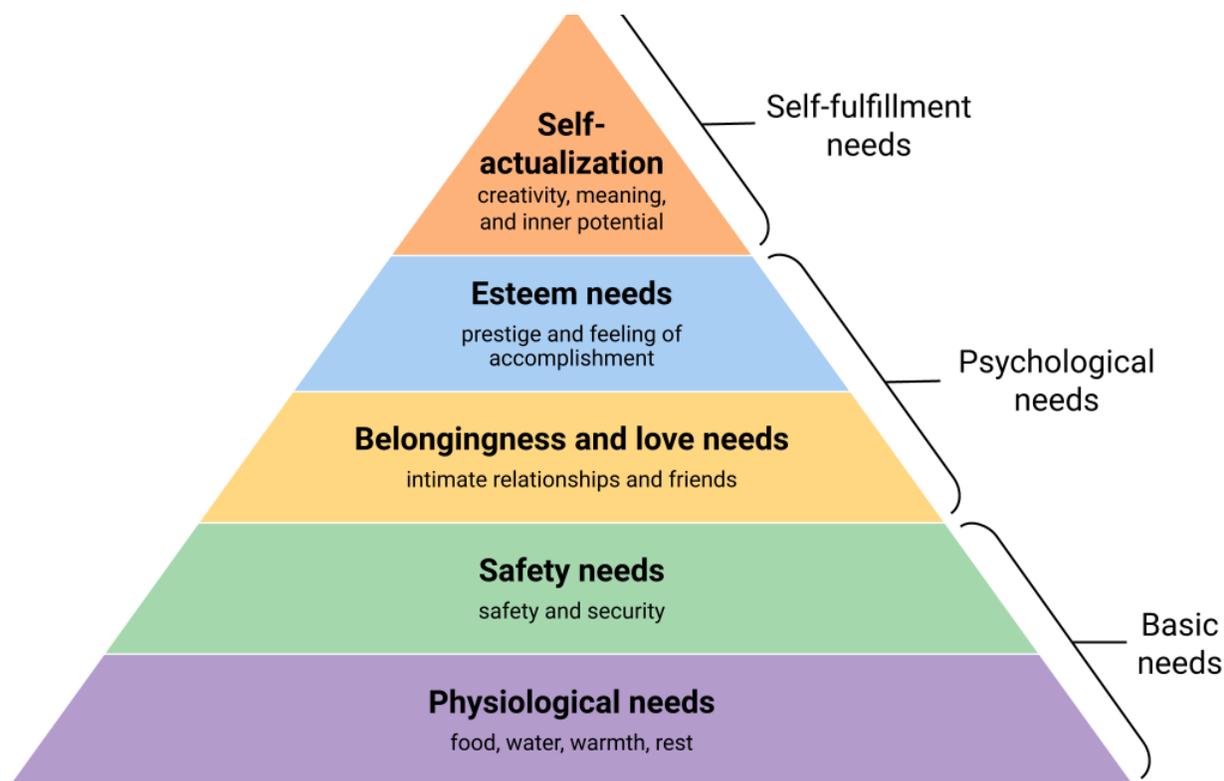
1. Teachers should consider learners' unique needs in crisis contexts.
2. Trauma-sensitive practices are essential in a crisis context.
3. SEL prepares learners to deal with crises.

¹ "Crisis." APA Dictionary of Psychology. American Psychological Association. Accessed October 2, 2023. <https://dictionary.apa.org/crisis>



Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

To identify the unique considerations at play in a crisis context, it is helpful to consider how and whether students' needs are being met. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs offers a model to understand human needs, behaviors, and emotions, placing human needs in a five-tier hierarchy. Needs lower in the hierarchy must be fulfilled before addressing needs higher on the pyramid. [Click here to learn more.](#)



Teachers should consider how they can support students whose basic needs are not met. [Click here for ideas.](#)



Examples from the Field

“Teaching English in Emergencies” Video Series: In 2023, [Eastern Washington University](#) produced videos for a course series titled “Teaching English in Emergencies,” sponsored by the U.S. Department of State’s [OPEN Program](#). The following videos offer practical activities for teaching English in contexts of crisis.

- [Preparing to Learn](#) - Self-care activity “Circle of Control”
- [English to Express It](#) - Expressing preferences in English
- [English to Express It](#) - Language to advocate for others
- [English to Express It](#) - Communicating boundaries in English

“SEL Integration in ELT” Webinar: This webinar consists of the following presentations related to implementing SEL practices in the context of the war in Ukraine:

- Teaching English in Emergencies: SEL+ Peace Education
- Classroom Drama for Healing Trauma: Techniques and Experiences
- Empowering SEL Through Digital Tools

[Global Brief, SEL in Crisis Contexts:](#) This resource by the International Rescue Committee describes SEL teaching practices as they have been applied in specific crisis contexts worldwide, including Sierra Leone, Lebanon, and Niger.

[Teachers in Crisis Contexts Working Group:](#) This web page gathers a wide variety of resources for teachers in contexts of crisis, including a useful [collection of case studies](#) from countries around the world.



Case Study: Ukraine

Janine: When I was working with teachers from Ukraine, they asked for suggestions regarding what to do when air raid sirens went off and they had to take their students into shelters. They said, as one would expect, that students often got very upset, and it was hard to calm them down, even though this was an almost daily occurrence. Moreover, the teachers wanted suggestions on what to do in the shelters. It was extremely difficult because they never knew how long they would be in there—from minutes to hours. So, I suggested that we think about two trauma-sensitive practices: routine and choice. We talked about having the students help to come up with what would be their "going to the shelter" routine—what they would take, what they would do, etc.—and having them practice it. These routines included:

- Each child grabs a designated comfort item, such as a smooth rock, toy, or blanket when they first hear the siren.
- The whole group sings a specific song when they walk to the shelter or does a simple dance or sequence of steps (e.g., left foot, right foot, hop hop hop).
- Give each student a job to do when they get to the shelter.

For Further Reading

Kim, Ha Yeon. "The road paved with good intentions: Is social and emotional learning (SEL) safe and effective for all children affected by crises?" UKFIET: The Education and Development Forum, March 30, 2023.

<https://www.ukfiet.org/2023/the-road-paved-with-good-intentions-is-social-and-emotional-learning-sel-safe-and-effective-for-all-children-affected-by-crises/>

"Nurturing the social and emotional wellbeing of children and young people during crises." UNESCO, 2020. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000373271>

"Social and Emotional Learning in Crisis and Conflict Settings." EducationLinks. USAID, October 22, 2018.

<https://www.edu-links.org/learning/social-and-emotional-learning-crisis-and-conflict-settings>

See [Course Bibliography](#) for additional sources related to this session.