

KEY PRINCIPLES OF DEVELOPING A TRAUMA INFORMED APPROACH

Presenter - Becky Haas

Learning Objectives – Section 1

- Shared Understanding
- Identification of Trauma
- Awareness of the Effects to Brain Development



Understanding Trauma



- **Underlying Question**
“Not What’s Wrong with You but What happened to you?”
- **Symptoms =**
Adaptations to trauma
- **Healing Happens...In**
nurturing relationships and positive childhood experiences

Berne Brown on Empathy

<https://youtu.be/1Ewgu369Jw>



Improved Outcomes

Topper Academy

Attendance up from
55%-90%

Credits earned
annually increased
from 200 -1,155

Graduations 8 - 65



What is Trauma? The 3-E's

Individual trauma results from an event, a series of events, or set of circumstances experienced by an individual that are physically or emotionally harmful or life threatening and that have lasting adverse effects on the individual's functioning and mental, physical, social, emotional, or spiritual well-being.

SAMHSA's Concept of Trauma and Guidance for a Trauma-Informed Approach

Potential Traumatic Events

Abuse

- *Emotional*
- *Sexual/Physical*
- *Domestic violence*
- *Witnessing violence*
- *Bullying*
- *Cyberbullying*
- *Institutional*

Chronic Stressors

- *Poverty*
- *Racism*
- *Invasive medical procedure*
- *Community trauma*
- *Historical trauma*
- *Family member with substance use disorder*

Loss

- *Death*
- *Abandonment*
- *Neglect*
- *Separation*
- *Natural disaster*
- *Accidents*
- *Terrorism*
- *War*

Experience of Trauma Affected by :

- **How**
- **When**
- **Where**
- **How Often**

It is an individual's experience of the event, not necessarily the event itself that is traumatizing.



Effects of Trauma

The effect of trauma on an individual can be conceptualized as a **normal response** to an *abnormal situation*.





We don't see things as they are. We see things as WE are.

Survival mode is supposed to be a phase that helps save your life.

It is not meant to be how you live.

Michele Rosenthal
Author, *Your Life After Trauma*

How to Identify Trauma

 Physical	 Emotional	 Behavioral	 Cognitive
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Low energy• Hyperarousal• Hypoarousal• Paleness• Lethargy• Somatic complaints• Lack of coordination or balance• Headaches• Digestive complaints	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Anxiety• Emotional numbness• Anger• Depression• Guilt• Shame• Fear• Avoidance	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Substance and alcohol use• Eating disorders• Compulsive behaviors• Changes in interpersonal relationships• Anger-related issues• Isolation and detachment from others	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Inability to concentrate• Memory lapses• Learned helplessness• Increased distraction• Intrusive thoughts• Dissociation• Cognitive errors• Flashbacks

Brain Development



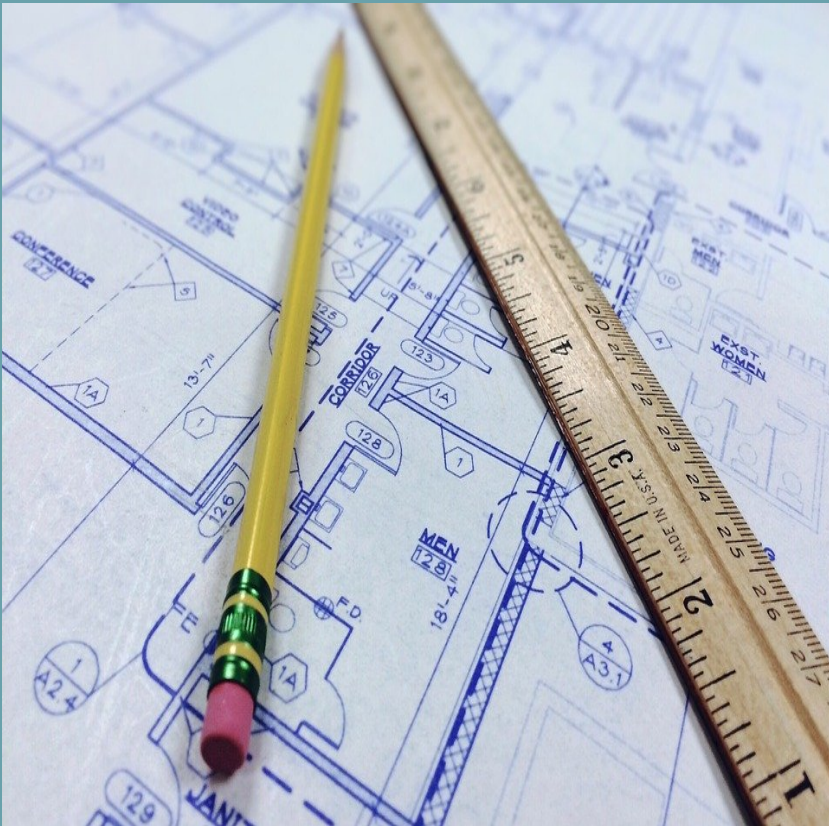
- The brain has a “bottom up” organization
- The bottom controls the most simple functions such as respiration, heart rate, and blood pressure
- The top areas control more complex functions such as thinking and regulating emotions

Brain Development Continued

- At birth, the brain is underdeveloped. Not all the brain's areas are organized and fully functional.
- During childhood the brain matures and brain related capabilities develop in sequence. For example, we crawl before we walk, babble before we talk.
- The process of sequential development is guided by experience.
- The brain develops and modifies itself in response to experience.

Brain Architecture

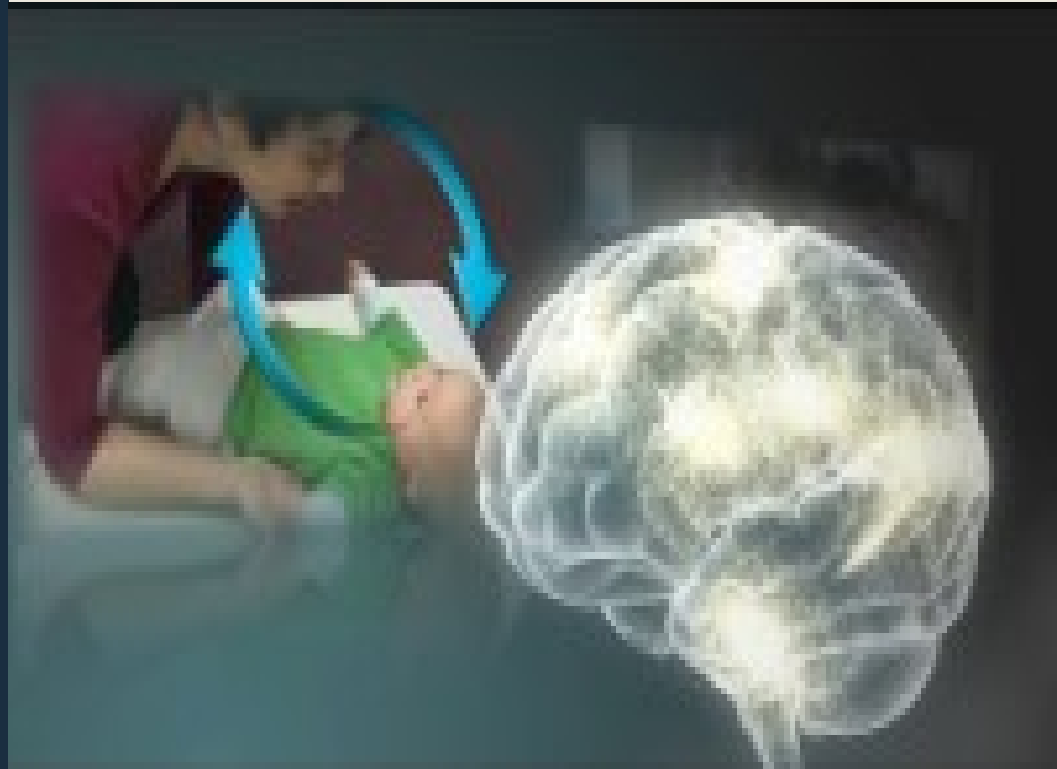
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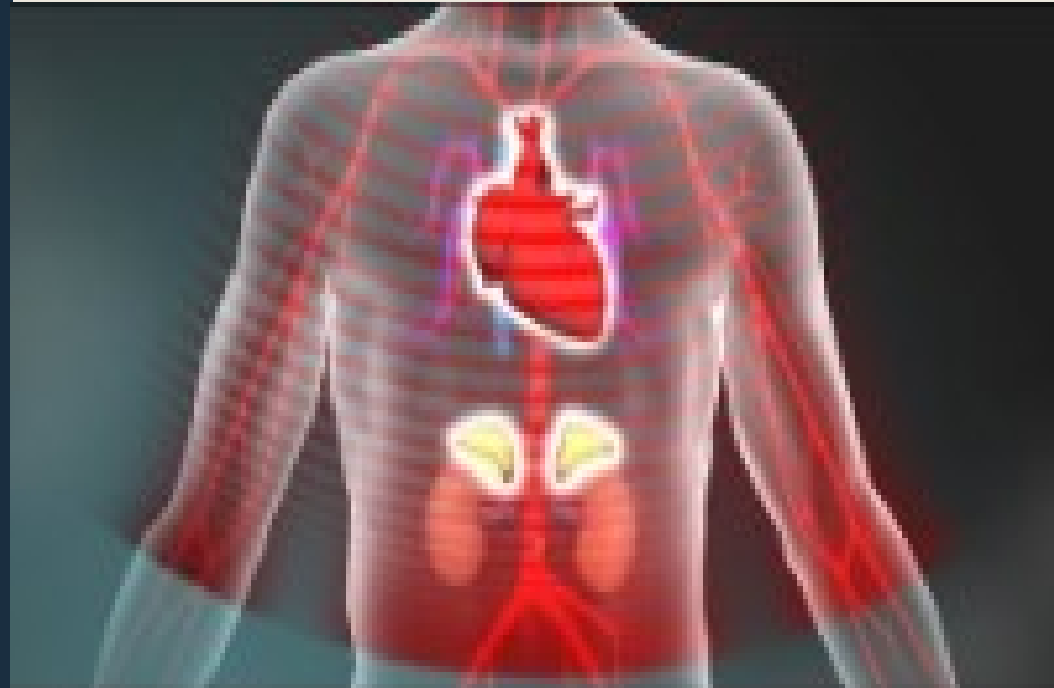
Serve and Return Circuitry



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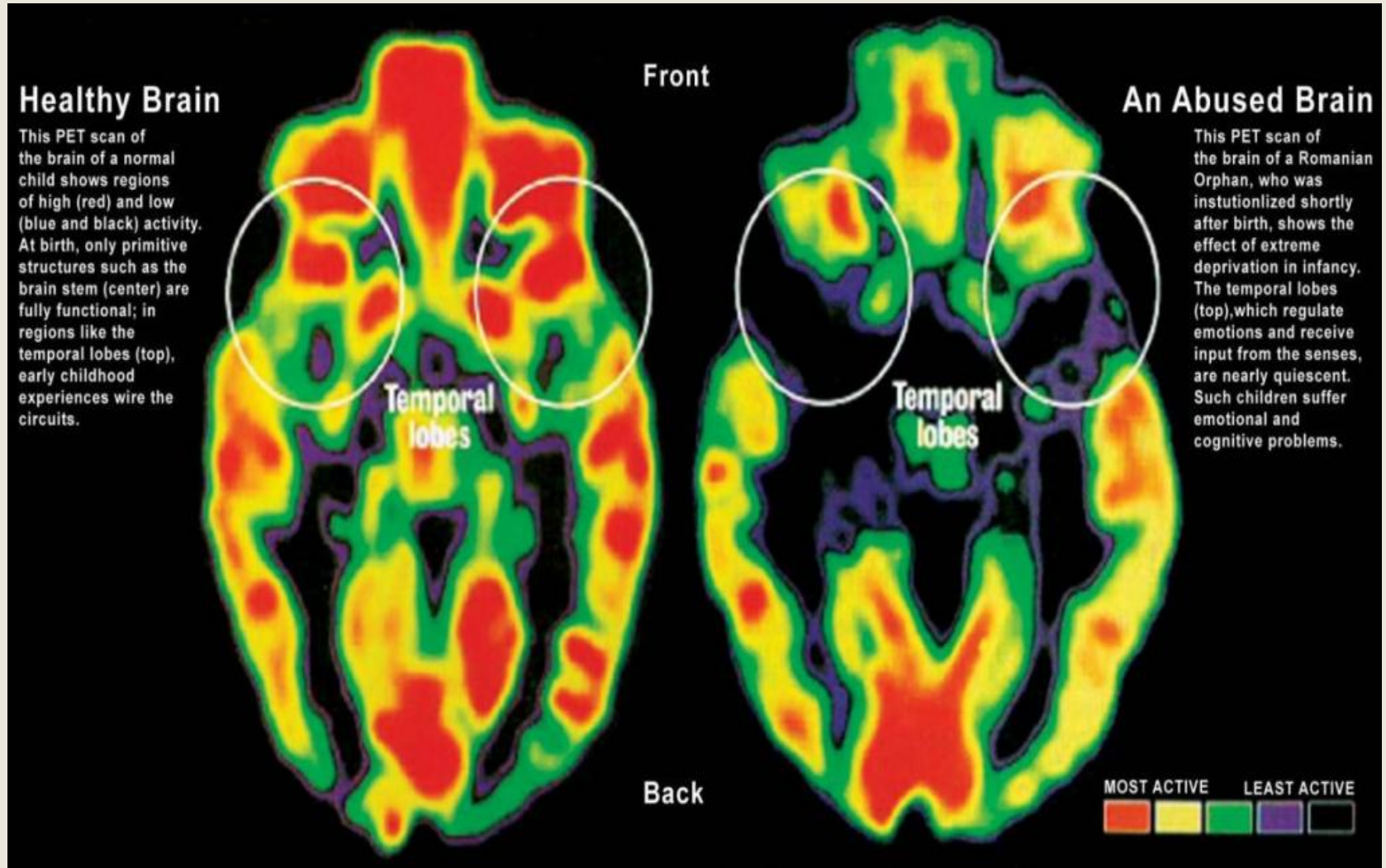


Toxic Stress Derails Healthy Brain Development

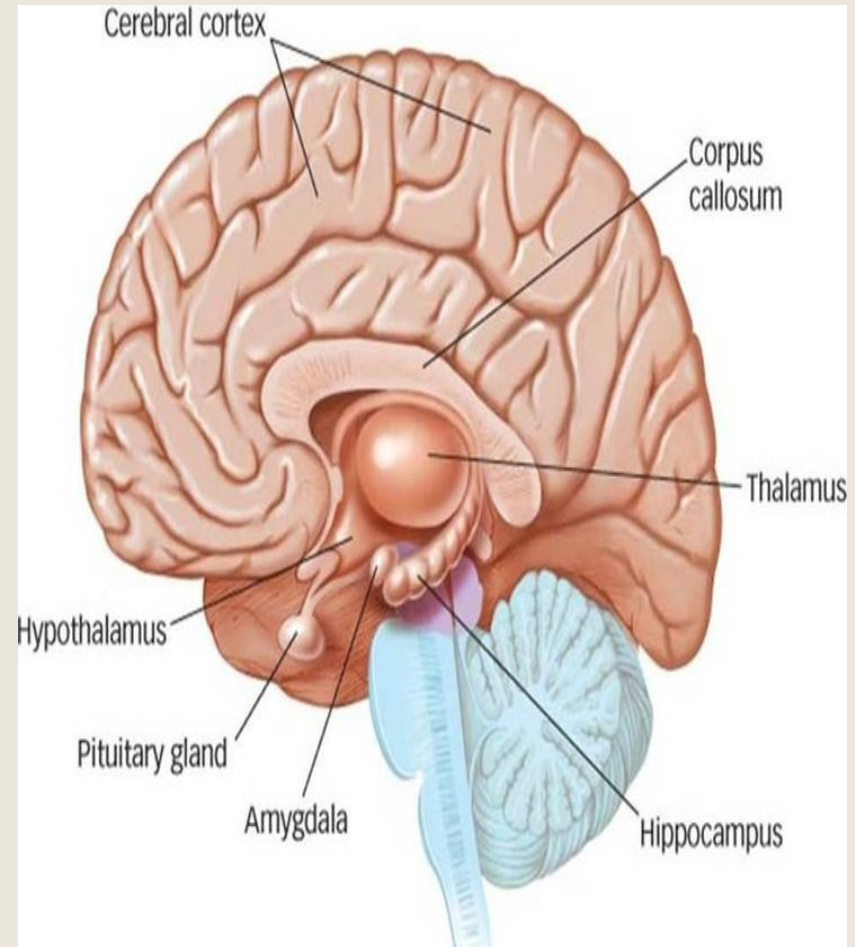


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How Trauma Affects the Brain



- The “fire alarm” of the brain is located in the **amygdala**.
- The frontal lobes of the cortex - at the top or the thinking part of the brain – shut down to make sure a person is focusing completely on survival.
- That’s why it’s hard to think when in a crisis.



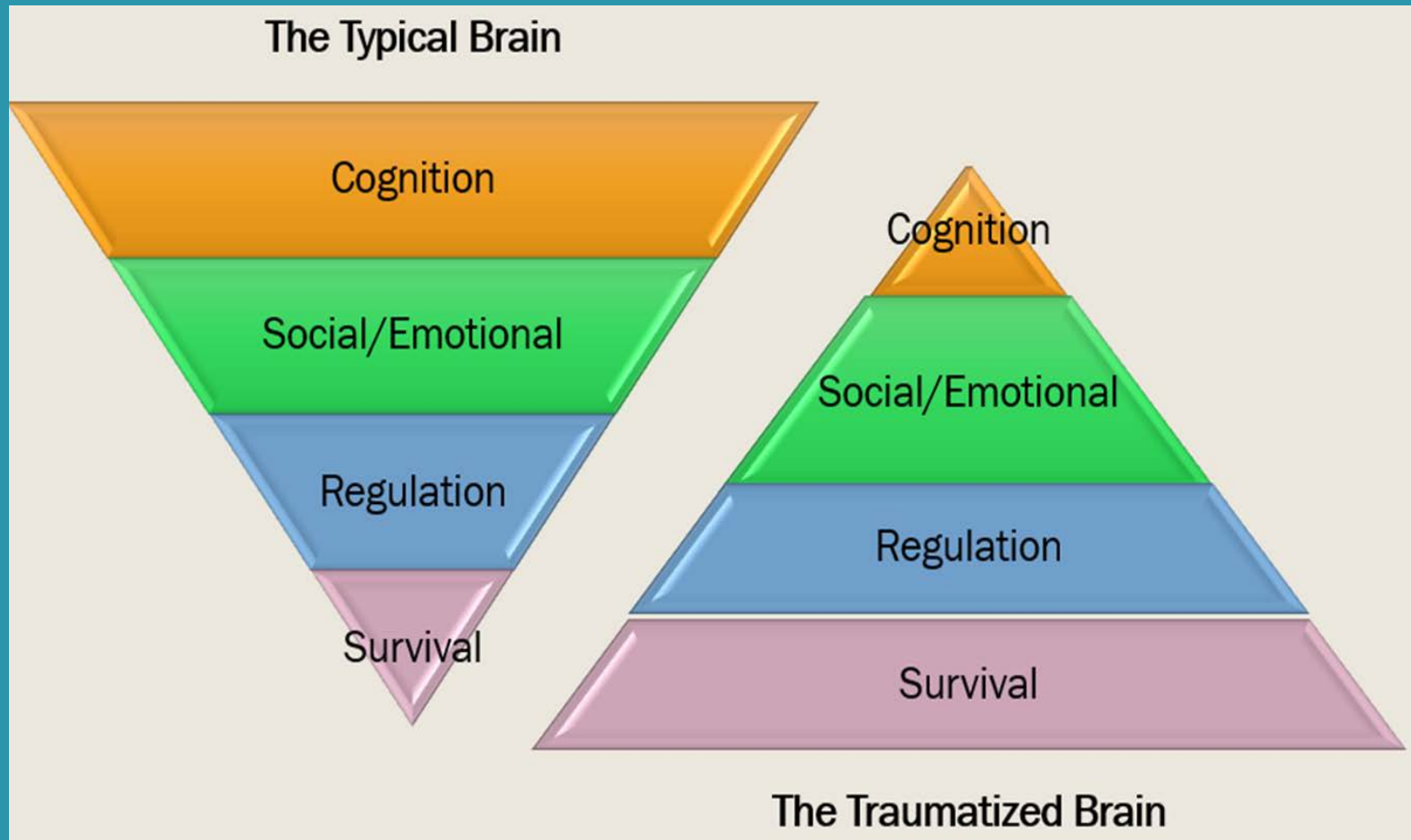
How Brains Are Built

How Brains are Built: The Core Story of Brain Development
Alberta Family Wellness

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LmVWOe1ky8s&t=11s>



Trauma and Brain Development



Positive Stress



Short, stressful events like meeting new people or starting the first day of school are healthy for brain development. They prepare the brain and body for stressful situations later in life.

Tolerable Stress



Tragic, unavoidable events like a natural disaster or losing a loved one aren't good for us. But if supportive caregivers are around to buffer the stress response, these events won't do lasting damage to the brain and body.

Toxic Stress



Ongoing, repeated exposure to abuse or neglect is bad for brain development. If no supportive adults are present to help buffer the stress response, stress hormones will damage developing structures in the child's brain. The result is an increased vulnerability to lifelong physical and mental health problems, including addiction.



Types of stress responses

POSITIVE



A normal and essential part of healthy development

EXAMPLES

*getting a vaccine,
first day of school*

TOLERABLE



Response to a more severe stressor, limited in duration

EXAMPLES

*loss of a loved one,
a broken bone*

TOXIC



Experiencing strong, frequent, and/or prolonged adversity

EXAMPLES

*physical or emotional abuse,
exposure to violence*



Factors Increasing Impact



- Early occurrence
- Blaming or shaming
- Being silenced or not believed
- Perpetrator is a trusted caregiver



Problems OR Adaptations?

- The **amygdala** responses are: fight, flight or freeze and these are activated by danger.
- Three sets of “problems” often attributed to children or adult clients we serve show how these behaviors may really be a survival mechanism.
- Recognize “symptoms” and “problem behaviors” as adaptations to trauma

FIGHT

- Non-compliant, combative OR struggling to regain/hold onto personal power

FLIGHT

- Resistant, uncooperative OR disengaged, withdrawing

FREEZE

- Passive, unmotivated OR giving in to those in power



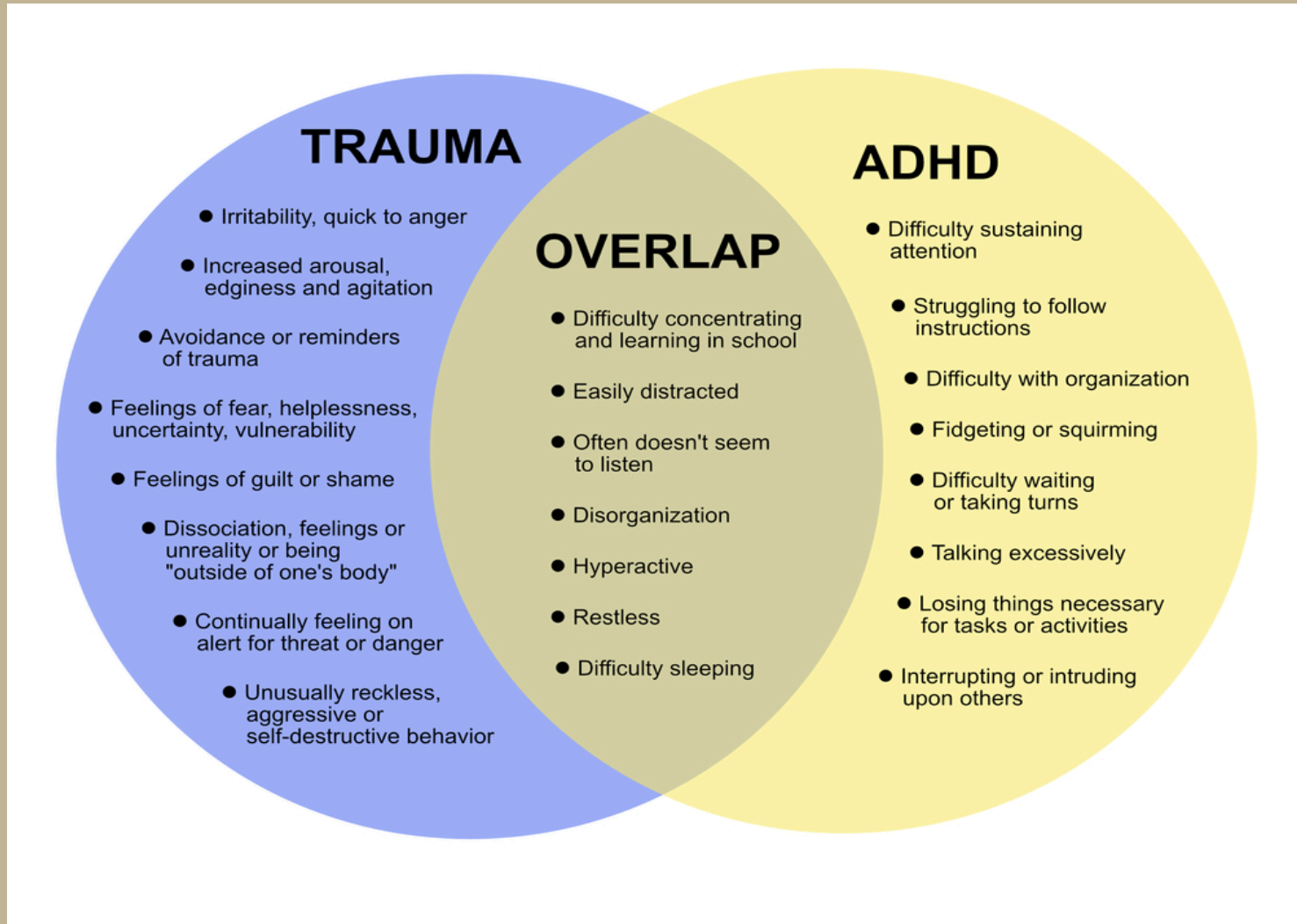
- Behavior is like an iceberg
→ we only see the small portion above the surface.
- Below the surface are the feelings and emotions driving the behavior.
- The misbehavior we see is often a child's attempt to solve another problem of which we are unaware.

What Does Trauma Look Like?



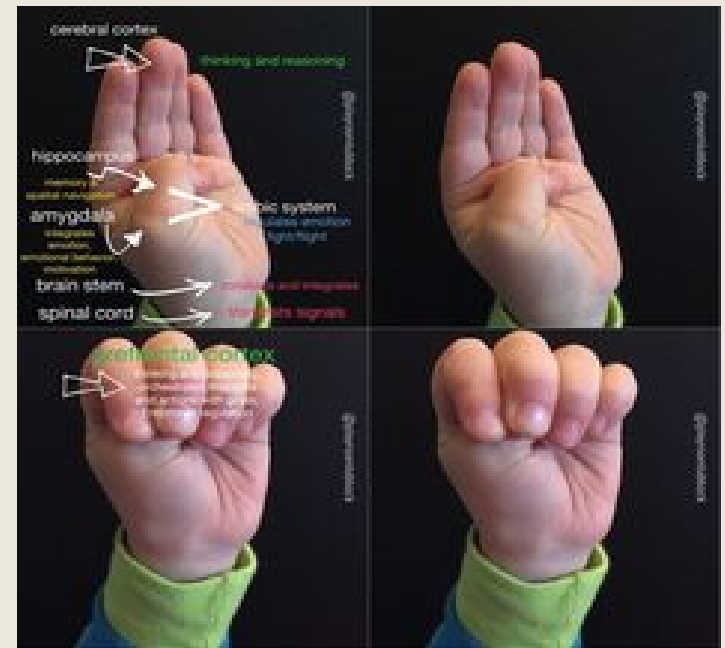
Trauma and ADHD


National Child Traumatic Stress Network



Understanding the “Whole Brain”

- Using a fist, you can teach how the brain works
- **Upstairs brain** – where you make decisions and do the right thing, even when you feel upset
- **Downstairs brain** – where BIG feelings come from. Like letting people know you love them or when you feel sad, mad or angry





**BUILDING RESILIENCE,
POSITIVE CHILDHOOD
EXPERIENCES AND
PROTECTIVE FACTORS**

Fostering Resilience

Negative Outcomes



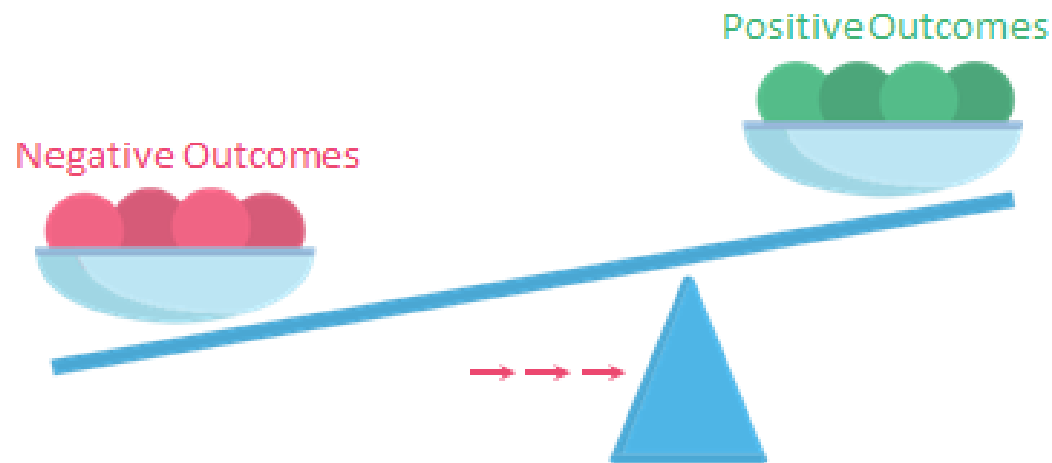
Positive Outcomes



When positive experiences outweigh negative experiences, a child's "scale" tips toward positive outcomes.



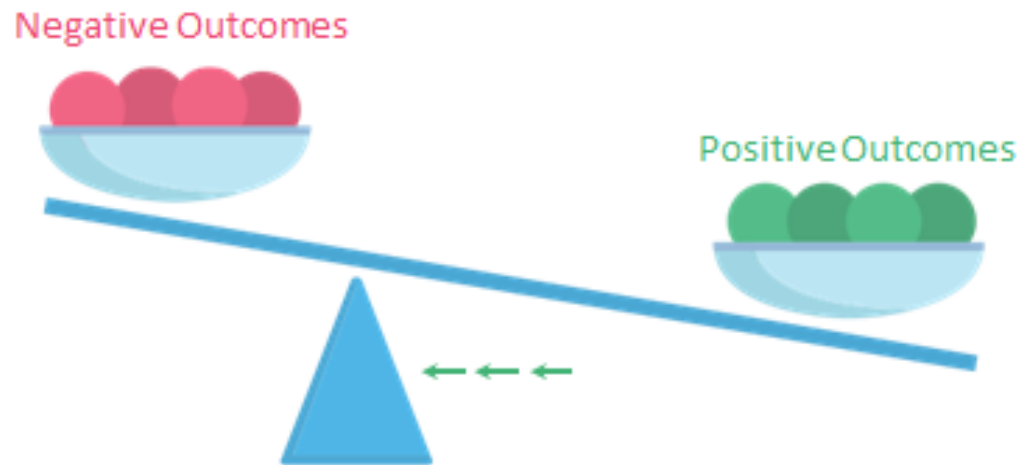
Fostering Resilience



The initial placement of the fulcrum affects how easily the scale tips toward positive or negative outcomes



Fostering Resilience



Overtime, the cumulative impact of positive life experiences and coping skills can shift the fulcrum's position, making it easier to achieve positive outcomes.



Resilience Case Study #1

Chad's Story



Resilience Case Study #2

Josh's Story



Increasing Positive Childhood Experiences

- In 2019 John's Hopkins published the "Protective Childhood Experiences" Study showing how positive experiences acted to counter traumatic childhood experiences
- Of 6,188 adults surveyed they identified 7 categories of childhood experiences that are connected to improved mental health and social connectedness in adults

https://positiveexperience.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/jamapediatrics_bethell_2019_oi_190057.pdf

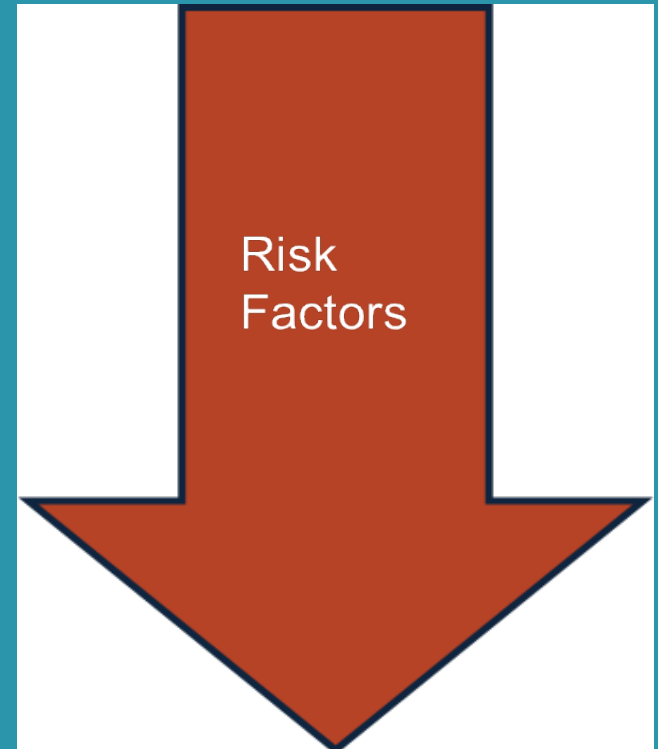
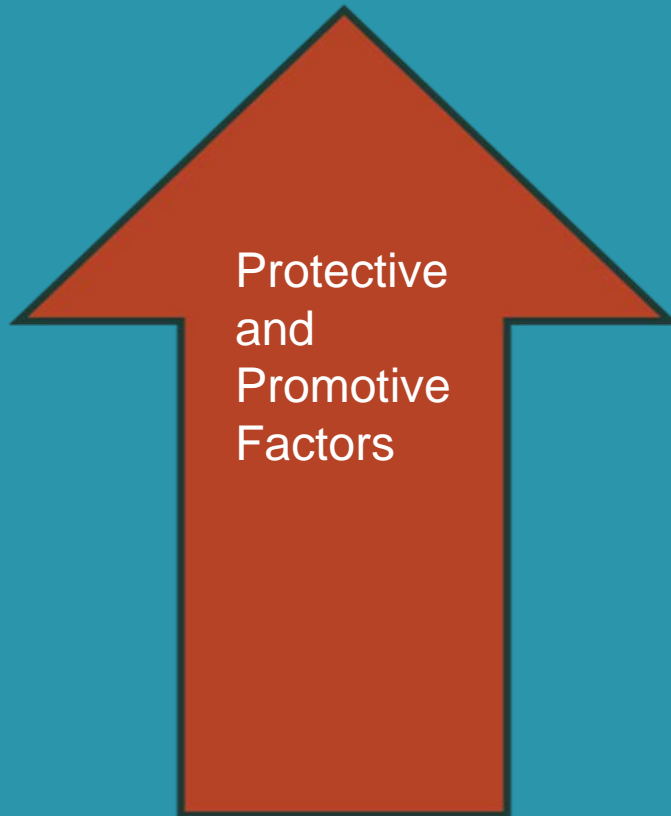
What Was Learned

- ACEs may be fact but are not fate
- Kids who experience many positive childhood experiences during childhood become adults who can seek support, get care – and adults who can seek support and get care have improved symptoms even if mental health is present.
- The relationship between positive experiences and good mental health is dose-responsive; that means the more PCE's a child has the better their adult mental health is likely to be.

7 Positive Childhood Experiences

1. Ability to talk with family about feelings
2. Felt experience that family is supportive in difficult times
3. Enjoyment in participation in community traditions
4. Feeling of belonging in high school
5. Feeling of being supported by friends
6. Having at least two non-parent adults who genuinely care
7. Feeling safe and protected by an adult at home

Focus on Protective Factors



We Can Prevent ACEs

CDC <https://youtu.be/8gm-INpzU4g>



Family Protective Factors

■ For Families

- *Concrete support in time of need*
- *Social connections*
- *Parenting skills*
- *Personal resilience*
- *Ability to help children develop social/emotional competence*
- *Ability to foster nurturing attachment with children*

- *Strengthening Families: A Protective Factors Framework. Center for the Study of Social Policy. <https://www.cssp.org/young-children-their-families/strengtheningfamilies/about#protective-factors-framework>. Accessed July 26, 2018*

Community Protective Factors

- Safe neighborhoods
- Safe schools
- Stable and safe housing
- Access to nutritious food
- Access to employment
- Access to medical care including behavioral health and mental wellness
- Transportation
- Access to safe, high quality and affordable child care
- Inclusion and equity related to race, ethnicity and disability

Handle With Care

- If a law enforcement officer encounters a child during a call, that child's information is forwarded to the school before the school begins the next day.
- The school implements a class and whole school trauma-sensitive approach so that traumatized children are "Handled With Care".
- If a child needs more intervention, school leadership make referrals for the child to see trauma-focused mental health providers.



Resilient Organizations and Communities Include

Having a trauma informed approach is the norm at every level of service. From providing program information, scheduling appointments to the actual delivery of services, efforts are made to not re-traumatize consumers



Mentoring and case management opportunities readily available in a non-judgmental fashion



There is clear access to clinical and behavioral health resources

Charging Stations

- Think of stress and resilience as a smart phone or iPad needing a “charging station”.
- Stresses drain our batteries, but resilience factors can recharge us.
- We all need *charging stations*. Young children have to be *charged* by those nurturing adults who know what they need.
- Charging stations will change over time and will be different for different people.
- These can be a supportive parent, grandparent, coach, exercise, your faith, a hobby.

Healing Begins

- Trauma can be overcome through resilient skills and the caring support from others.
- “Research shows that Positive Childhood Experiences (PCEs) buffer against the health effects of adverse ones. The proactive promotion of positive childhood experiences for children may reduce risk for adult depression, poor mental health and promote adult relational health.”

[JAMA Pediatrics, Positive Childhood Experiences and Adult Mental and Relational Health in a Statewide Sample](#)



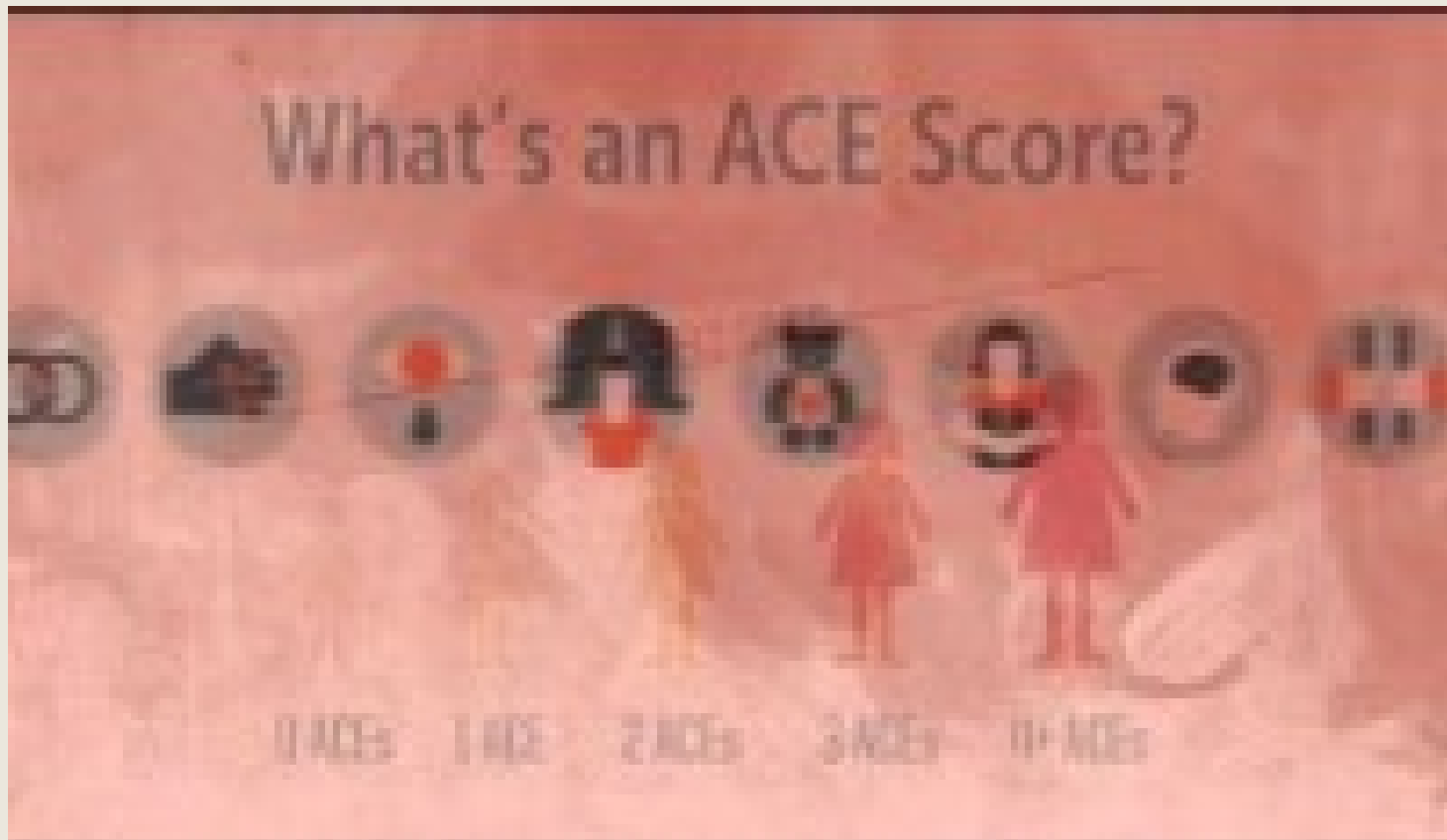
UNDERSTANDING ACES & THE PREVALENCE OF TRAUMA

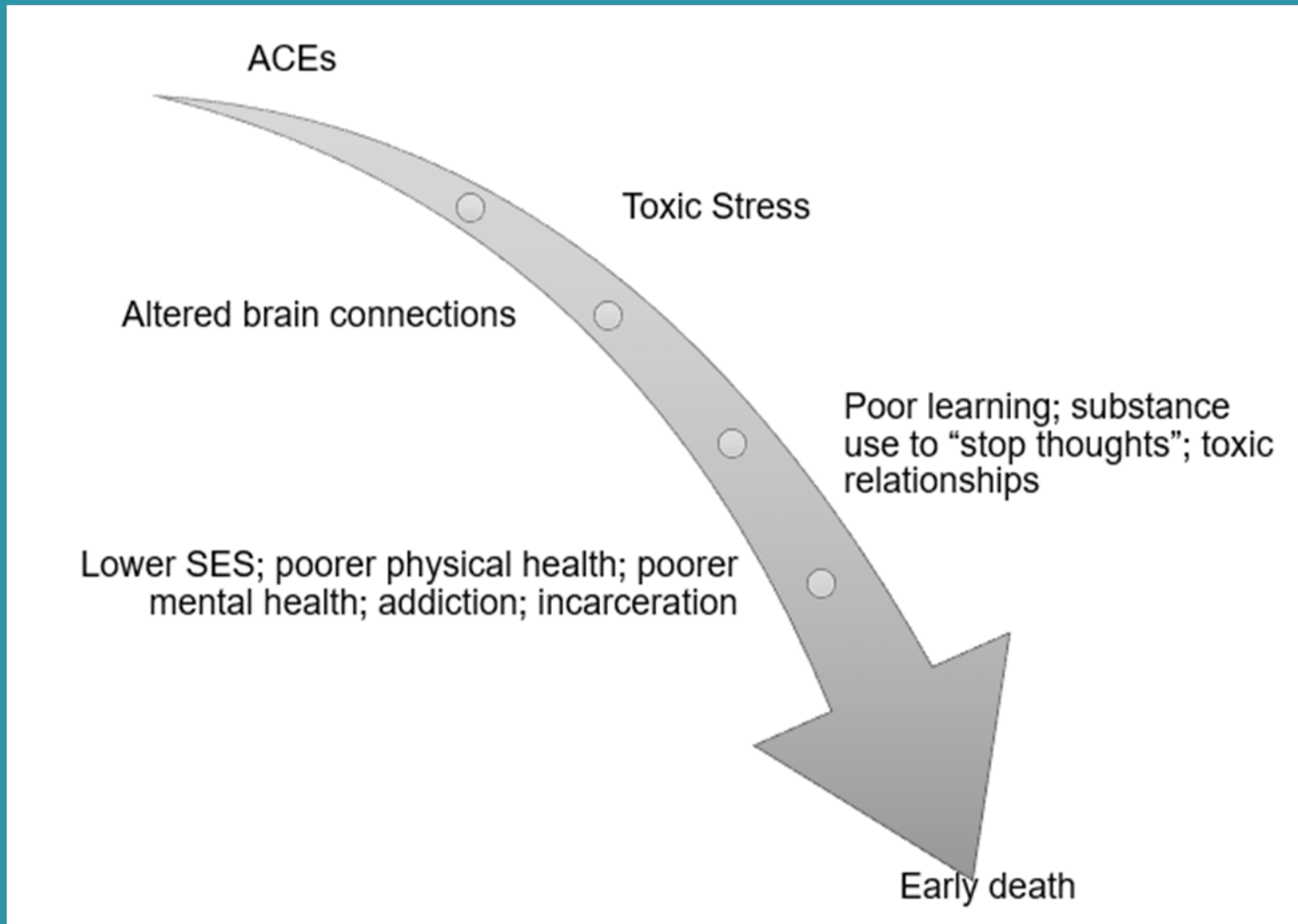
Learning Objectives – Section 3

- Understanding ACEs
- The Prevalence of Trauma
- A Trauma Survivor's Story



Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)





Awareness Needed on Impact of Childhood Trauma

- The ACEs study determined “that a male with an ACE score of 6 is 46 times as likely to become an IV drug user than a male with an ACE score of 0.”
- The American Heart Association says that individuals who do not exercise are 1.4 times as likely to have a heart attack.¹ If you are a smoker you are 1.6 – 2.1 times as likely.²
- Look at the amount of public education exists related to exercise and smoking cessation.
- An ACE score of 6 doesn't mean drug addiction is inevitable, but implies an individual could be quickly heading toward it!

¹Warren, T. Y., Barry, V., Hooker, S. P., Sui, X., Church, T. S., & Blair, S. N. (2010). Sedentary behaviors increase risk of cardiovascular disease mortality in men. *Medicine and science in sports and exercise*, 42(5), 879–885. <https://doi.org/10.1249/MSS.0b013e3181c3aa7e>

²Lubin, J. H., Couper, D., Lutsey, P. L., Woodward, M., Yatsuya, H., & Huxley, R. R. (2016). Risk of Cardiovascular Disease from Cumulative Cigarette Use and the Impact of Smoking Intensity. *Epidemiology (Cambridge, Mass.)*, 27(3), 395–404. <https://doi.org/10.1097/EDE.0000000000000437>

Trauma and Mental Health

- In the Mental Health area – a history of childhood trauma predicts:
 - *Earlier first admissions*
 - *More frequent and longer hospital stays*
 - *More time in seclusion or restraint*
 - *Greater likelihood of self-injury or suicide attempt*
 - *More medication use*
 - *Increased symptom severity*

Trauma and Substance Abuse

- Around 65% of all substance abuse treatment clients report experiencing childhood abuse
- Around 75% of women in substance abuse treatment report a history of trauma
- Around 92% of homeless mothers have severe trauma histories



Trauma Prevalence In Children

- 60% of American children are exposed to violence, crime or abuse in their homes, schools and communities
- 40% of children are direct victims of two or more violent acts
- One in ten children are victims of violence five or more times before 18
- In 2017, suicide was the second leading cause of death among children ages 10-17 (National Institute of Mental Health, 2017)
- 3.5-10 million children witness violence against their mother or stepmother
- In a study of juvenile justice settings, 94% of children had experienced trauma

Why Focus on Trauma In Children?

Eradicating child maltreatment in America could potentially reduce many things predicted by ACEs:

- Depression
- Alcoholism and drug use
- Suicide
- Domestic violence
- The need for incarceration



Survivor Story

- Tonier “Neen” Cain homeless for almost two decades after a childhood of abuse and neglect (ACE score of 10).
- Arrested over 80 times with 66 criminal convictions (substance abuse and prostitution).
- Offered TIC-related program when incarcerated and pregnant in 2004.
- Served on staff as a national spokesperson for the National Center for Trauma-Informed Care.

Healing Neen

Healing Neen





PRINCIPLES OF TRAUMA INFORMED APPROACHES

Learning Objectives – Section 3

- Why Trauma Informed Programs operate with the universal precaution that trauma has occurred
- The 4 “R’s” of a Trauma Informed Program, Organization, or System
- Understanding SAMHSA’s principles and why each is important
- Provide positive examples of each principle

A Trauma Informed Program's 4 R's

- **Realizes** widespread impact of trauma and understands potential paths for recovery.
- **Recognizes** signs and symptoms of trauma in clients, families, staff, and others involved with the system.
- **Responds** by fully integrating knowledge about trauma into policies, procedures, and practices.
- Seeks to actively **Resist** re-traumatization.

SAMHSA's Key Principles of a Trauma Informed Approach

- Principles that guide a trauma informed change process
- Developed by national experts, including trauma survivors
- Goal: Establish a common language/framework
- Values based
- Not a checklist, but a **way** of being

SAMHSA's Key Principles of a Trauma Informed Approach

1. Safety
2. Trustworthiness and Transparency
3. Peer Support
4. Collaboration and Mutuality
5. Empowerment, Voice and Choice
6. Cultural, Historical, and Gender Issues

#1 - Safety

Safety for Whom?

For those who use services:

- “Safety” generally means maximizing control over their own lives

For providers:

- “Safety” generally means maximizing control over the service environment and minimizing risk

#1 - Safety



What might safety look like?

- Welcoming people and environment
- Consistent and predictable
- Non-shaming, non-blaming, non-violent
- Respectful of privacy and confidentiality
- Clearly explanations of what is happening and why

#2 - Trustworthiness & Transparency

- Organizational operations and decisions are conducted with transparency with a goal of building and maintaining trust among clients, family members, staff and other involved with this organization
- Ensuring people really understand their options
- **Being authentic**
- Directly addressing limits to confidentiality – letting clients know if/when confidentiality can and cannot be promised

Trustworthiness & Transparency



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- Dignity
- Respect
- Validation
- Listening – be present in the moment
- Build safety and trust → the foundations of healing

#3 Peer Support

Peer support = a flexible approach to building mutual, healing relationships among equals, based on core values and principles:

Voluntary

Non-Judgmental

Respectful

Reciprocal

Empathetic

#4 - Collaboration and Mutuality

Partnering and leveling power differences between staff and clients (even kids) demonstrates that healing happens in relationships and in the meaningful sharing of power and decision making.

Everyone has a role to play; one does not have to be a therapist to be therapeutic.

Mindful of power differentials.

#5 – Empowerment, Voice and Choice

- Individuals' strengths and experiences are recognized and built upon; the experience of having a voice and choice is validated and new skills are developed.
- **The organization fosters a belief in resilience.**

Examples

Asking students: “What of value can you bring to the world around you?”

Activities designed and led by clients

Murals on walls and art for facilities painted by staff and clients

Activities designed to turn “problems” into strengths

The **Art Start Portrait Project** offers homeless and court-involved New York City teens, the opportunity to create empowering dreams of their future and show the world how they want to be seen.



#6 Cultural, Historical and Gender Issues

- The organization actively moves past cultural stereotypes and biases.

Treats all people as equally valuable human regardless of cultural, historical, or cultural differences.

Recognizes and addresses historical trauma of racism.
Ensure racial equity.

Makes use of traditions, proactively strengthen cultural connections, existing supports such as faith communities and social organizations

Cultural Example: Hawaii Women's Prison

- Used their island custom of refuge to modify the environment
- Gardens and outdoor spaces
- Floral painting on the walls

Cultural Example: Utilizing Churches of color and Mosques to Increase Health Services

- Enlisting leaders of color to incorporate health information into sermons
- Have health check ups at neighborhood churches and mosques rather than clinics
- Eliminates transportation barriers

Trauma Informed Services are...

- Focused on understanding the whole individual and context of his or her life experience.
- Infused with knowledge about the roles that violence and victimization play in the lives of survivors.
- Non shaming and non blaming
- Designed to minimize the possibilities of victimization and re-victimization.
- Hospitable and engaging for survivors.
- Designed to facilitate recovery, growth, resilience, and healing.



Resources

- [SAMHSA National Center For Trauma Informed Care](#)
- [Child Trauma Toolkit for Educators](#)
- [Helping Traumatized Children Learn](#)
- [Aces Too High](#)
- [Tennessee Building Strong Brains](#)

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