

Trauma & Resilience Basics

Trauma 101



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Trauma Defined

Trauma refers to experiences that cause intense physical and psychological stress reactions. It can refer to a single event, multiple events, or a set of circumstances that is experienced by an individual as physically and emotionally harmful or threatening and that has lasting adverse effects on the individual's physical, social, emotional, or spiritual well-being.

SAMHSA 2014



Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)

ABUSE



Physical



Emotional



Sexual

NEGLECT



Physical



Emotional

HOUSEHOLD DYSFUNCTION



Mental Illness



Incarcerated Relative



Mother treated violently



Substance Abuse

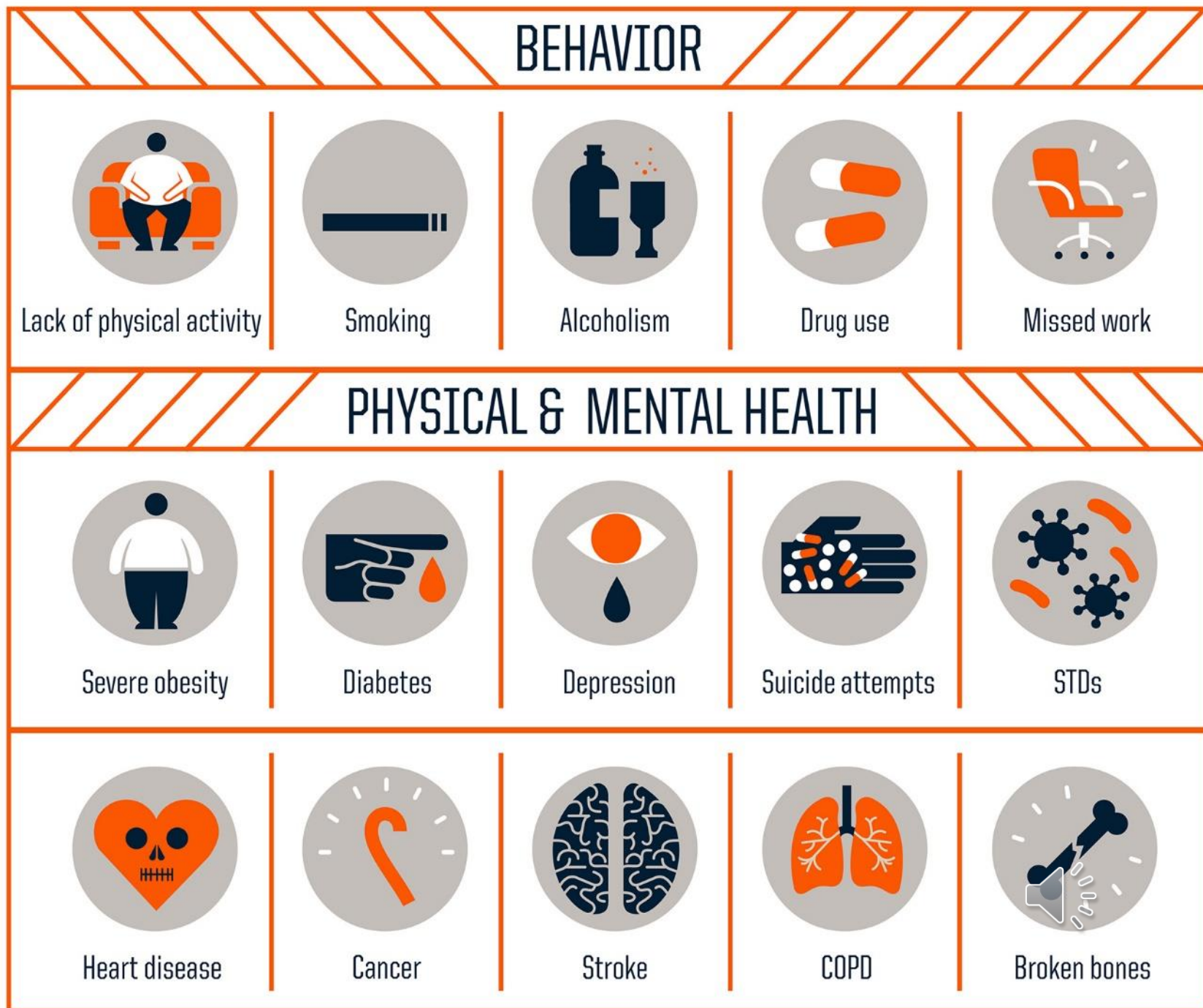


Divorce



Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)

Robert Wood Johnson Foundation
www.rwjf.org/aces



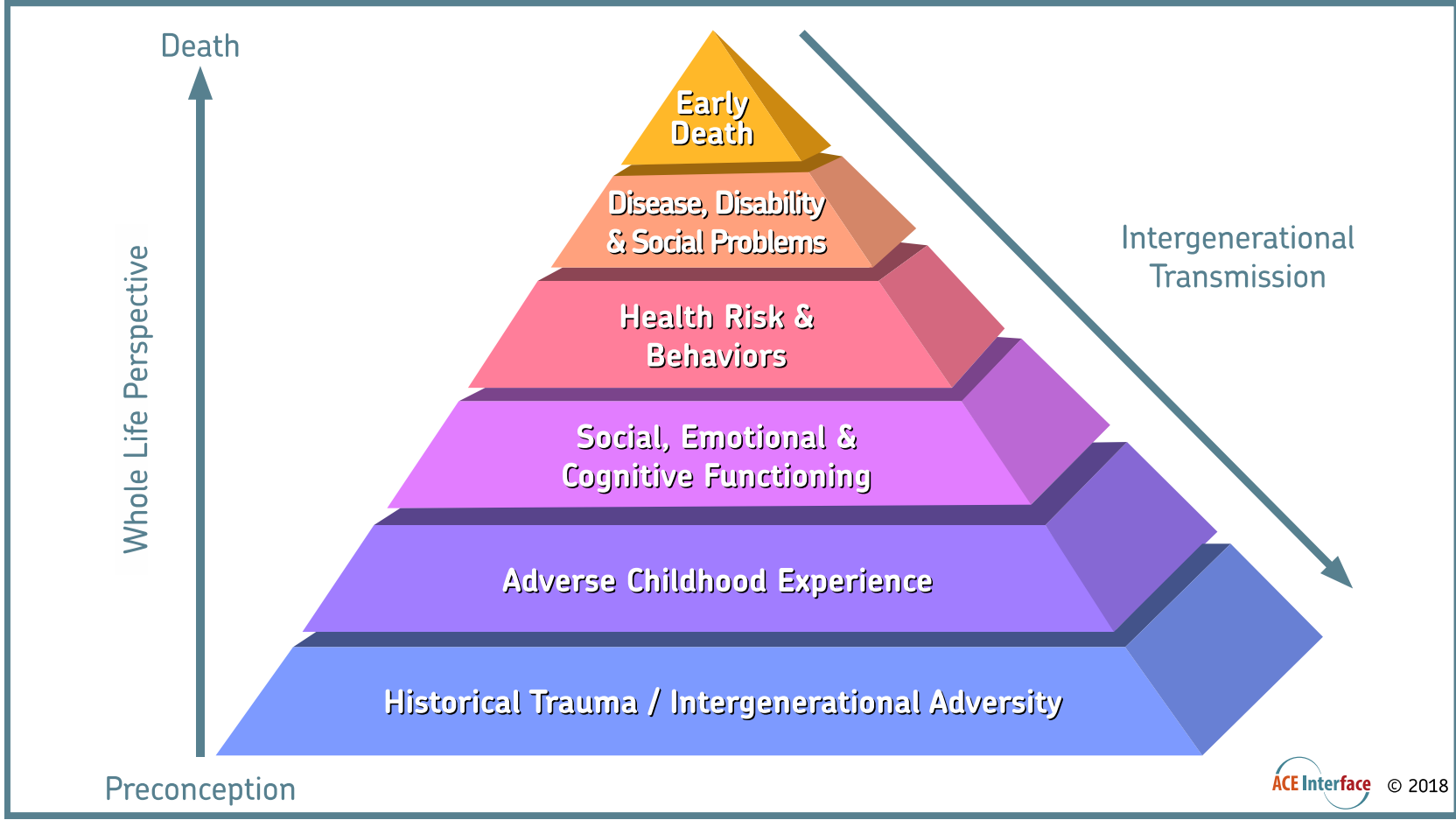
WHAT IMPACT DO ACEs HAVE?

As the number of ACEs increases, so does the risk for negative health outcomes



Possible Risk Outcomes:

BEHAVIOR				
Lack of physical activity	Smoking	Alcoholism	Drug use	Missed work
PHYSICAL & MENTAL HEALTH				
Severe obesity	Diabetes	Depression	Suicide attempts	STDs
Heart disease	Cancer	Stroke	COPD	Broken bones



ACEs = Adverse Childhood Experiences



What are some other types of trauma?

Chronic Illness

Natural Disasters (fire, flood, hurricane)

Sudden loss/traumatic grief

Military Experiences

War Zone/Refugee Experiences

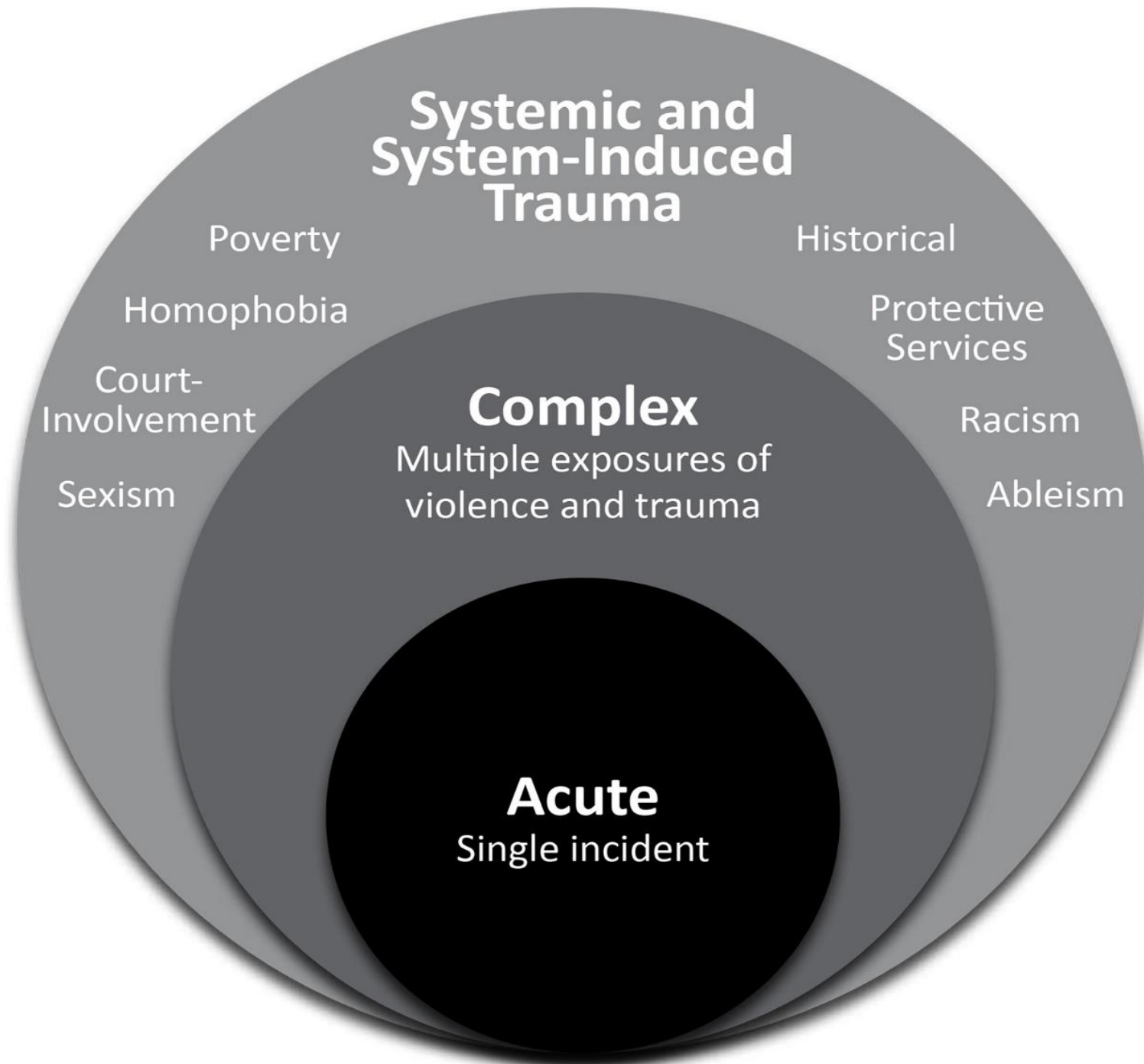
Immigration/Forced Migration

Terrorism

Global Pandemics

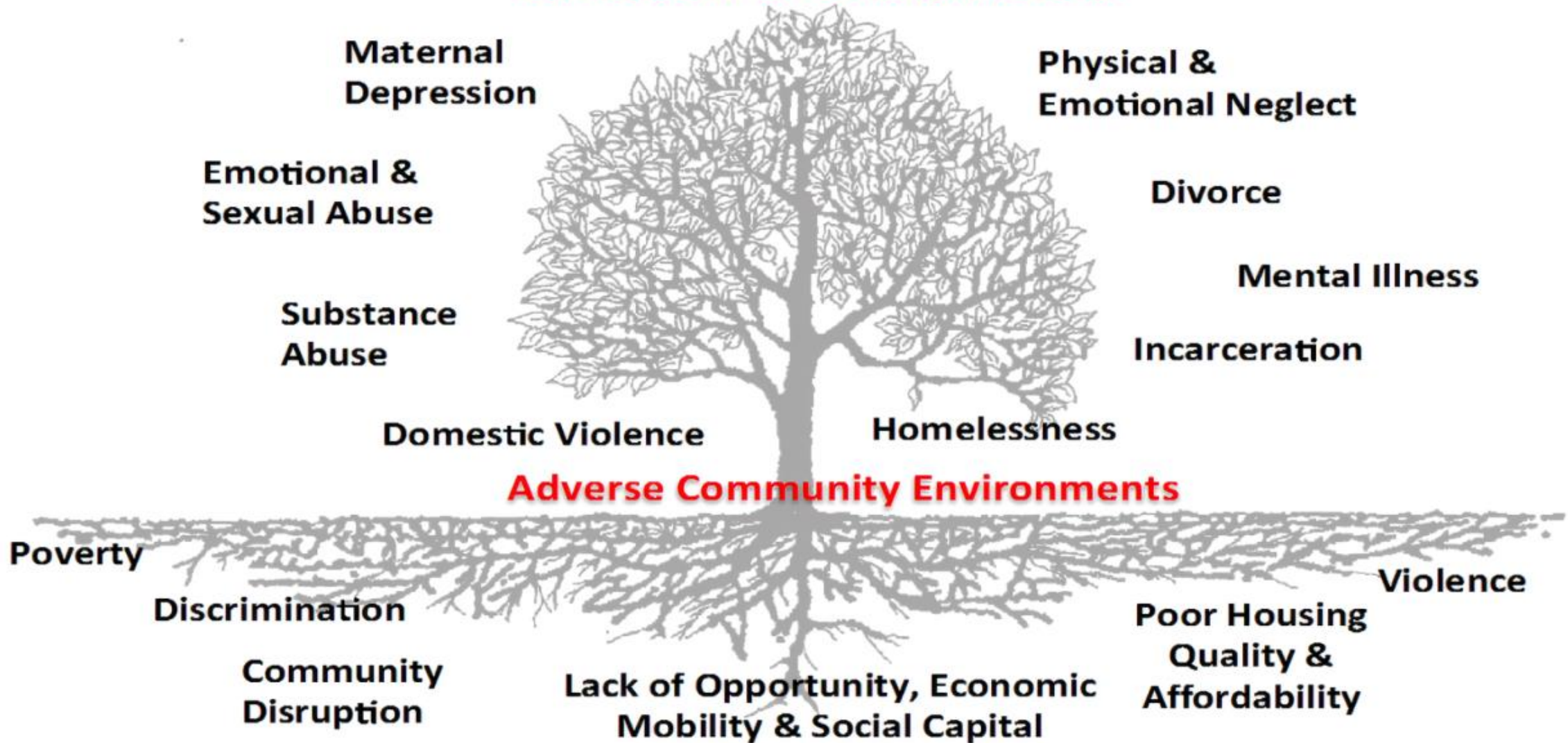
Social Unrest





The Pair of ACEs

Adverse Childhood Experiences



Equity and Opportunity Structures: Identifying and Addressing Barriers to Equitable Opportunity

EQUALITY



EQUITY



Consider the access that community members have to these critical community and environmental resources. How can we boost access or remove barriers to these opportunity structures?

- Recreation and Community Centers
- Communication/Technology/Wifi Access and Training
- Positive Guidance/Community Support System
- Early Childhood Education
- Health, Mental Health, and Substance Abuse Prevention/Treatment Services
- Healthy Food Access—Food Insecurity & Food Deserts
- Education
- Transportation
- Environmental— Clean air and water, pollutant/lead-free
- Affordable Housing
- Safety
- Justice

Trauma Symptoms

Reaction to trauma (or a trauma trigger) can be Short Term or Long Term, and can include:

- **Emotional:** Identification, Expression, Regulation [overwhelmed]
- **Physical:** Physiological response [Survival Mode—Freeze, Fight, or Flight (can't sit still)]; Somatic complaints [stomach aches]
- **Relational or Social:** Attachment, ability to connect, trust, friendships
- **Spiritual:** Hopeless
- **Behavioral:** Hyper, aggressive, impulsive (risk taking, “defiant,” or acting out behavior), withdrawn (“compliant”)
- **Cognitive:** Brain development, memory loss, confusion, inability to concentrate
- **Self-Concept:** Sense of self, self-worth, self-esteem



Why does this matter to us?

Children and families that are visiting your sites, participating in programming, and seeking connection to services and resources are very likely to have experiences of trauma in their past. Many are likely dealing with current traumas. Exposure to trauma is VERY COMMON in our population.

The way we view and understand others impacts the way we treat them.

The way folks are treated when they interact with us impacts their perception of and satisfaction with county, agency, and partner services.



What can we do?

Demonstrate empathy and compassion

Be a stable, neutral, calming presence in all interactions

Convey a warm, welcoming and inviting manner

Be helpful and understanding

View behavior challenges displayed by others as adaptations that make sense given what they have experienced



Trauma Lens

Changing our thought process from: “What's wrong with that person?” to “Something must have happened to that person.”

Using a universal approach of kindness, respect, and compassion in response to challenging behaviors.



What does it mean to be trauma-informed?

A program, organization, or system that is trauma-informed:

- *Realizes* the widespread impact of trauma and understands potential paths for recovery;
- *Recognizes* the 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; and
- Seeks to actively resist *re-traumatization*

A trauma-informed approach can be implemented in any type of service setting or organization.

*SAMHSA (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration)



What does it mean to be trauma-informed for human services staff?

When someone experiences a traumatic event, there is almost always a feeling of powerlessness and a perceived loss of control.

Factors that might be creating instability for children and youth (divorce, eviction, etc.) might bring up some of those very same feelings.

Consider how the barriers (transportation, language, intellectual/developmental/physical disability) that folks might be experiencing related to accessing resources on their own might bring up those same feelings of powerlessness and lost control.

Why might folks already be triggered when they enter our facilities?

Stress of traffic and parking

Difficulty with directions and finding a new place

Discomfort with asking for help from the service providers and partners operating out of our buildings

Fear of judgement from others

Power differential – the folks in the building have something they need – they are not in control

What if someone discloses a traumatic experience?

Validate & Normalize

We want to provide opportunities for folks to talk safely about their experiences and to receive some assurance that that their reactions are normal.

“It makes sense that you are feeling this way.”

“I’m sorry that happened. This is not your fault.”

“How can I help?”

How else can
we help?



Intervention Techniques

Instilling Hope

- Help children and youth set and achieve personal goals
- Provide opportunities for them to assist others and to “give back” in their communities
- Provide age-appropriate opportunities to be a “kid” / have fun
- Help youth become engaged with school and provide supports to improve school success
- Offer opportunities for success and restored feelings of competence
- Focus on strengths



Intervention Techniques

Developing a Sense of Connection & Supportive Relationships

- Know your role
- Know when to refer
 - If a youth experiences symptoms which significantly impair their ability to function over a period of several months, connection to a mental health professional experienced in trauma treatment is recommended.
- Factors that can increase resilience include:
 - A strong relationship with at least one competent, caring adult
 - Feeling connected to a positive role model



Resources in Fairfax County

Domestic & Sexual Violence Services Hotline - 703-360-7273

Coordinated Services Planning – 703-222-0880

CSB Emergency Services – 703-573-5679

Suicide and Crisis Lifeline – 988 or 703-527-4077, text CONNECT to 855-11



Resilience

re·sil·ience

noun

noun: **resilience**; noun: **resiliency**; plural noun: **resiliencies**

1. the capacity to recover quickly from difficulties; toughness

Resilience is the process of adapting well in the face of adversity, trauma, tragedy, threats or significant sources of stress — such as family and relationship problems, serious health problems or workplace and financial stressors. It means "bouncing back" from difficult experiences.

- American Psychological Association

Resilience

Individual strengths + environmental resources



Protective Factors that build

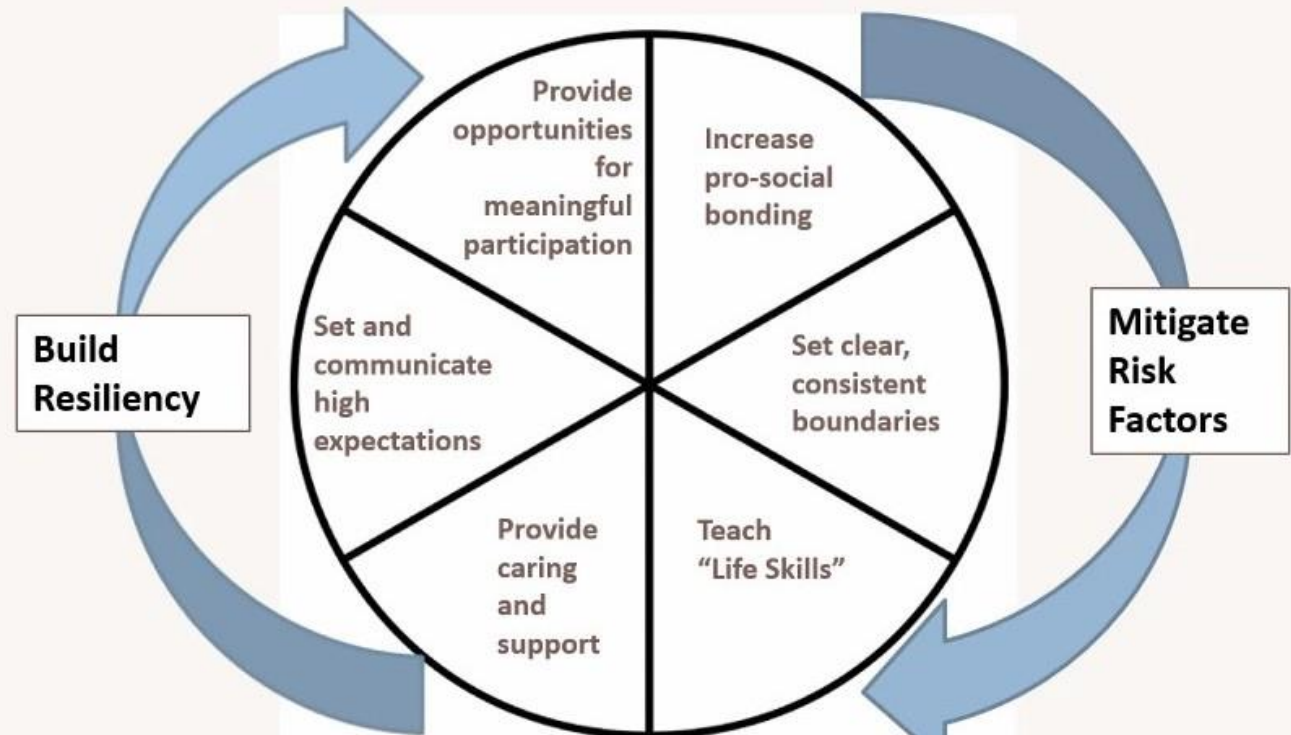


Coping Skills that



Enable us to deal with adversity and overcome threats to healthy development

THE RESILIENCY WHEEL





Building Resiliency in Trauma Survivors – what do folks need to move forward?

A Sense of Safety

Information and Healthy Coping Skills

Hope and Optimism

A Sense of Connection / Supportive Relationships





Being resilient means feeling:

Safe

Capable

Lovable

Experiencing and overcoming adversity builds resiliency in survivors. It is important to recognize that people who have experienced trauma and adversity can come out on the other side of their experiences stronger and more resilient than they otherwise might have been.



How Do Trauma-Informed Practices Work with the Kids at Hope Philosophy?



We agree with the Kids at Hope
philosophy....



All Children
Are Capable
of Success...

NO EXCEPTIONS



www.kidsathope.org

Yet we know that many of the youth we serve have experienced **trauma**, which can have powerful, long-term effects...



What can a traumatic experience do to the brain?

Fight, Flight or Freeze

If trauma is prolonged, extreme, or repetitive, it can physically injure the brain.

The Amygdala ("*The Body Guard*") can become STUCK!! in an alert state. The Body continues to sense danger when there is none and sends out Stress Response Signals!

The person who experienced the trauma keeps living "*IN THE MOMENT!*"

Long after the trauma ends, the person may become unable to separate "NOW/SAFE" FROM "THEN/DANGER!"





It's true that traumatic experiences create challenges for the survivor. But they also create new neural pathways, a different perspective on life, and coping skills...that can be positive!



Words are everything. The words we use for behaviors affect how we perceive the behaviors.



We can reframe the "negative" behaviors of traumatized youth (and adults), develop a growth mindset, and focus on assets for all, regardless of trauma history

Hope is the
KEY



We can put
the
spotlight
on Hope...

FIXED MINDSET		GROWTH MINDSET
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• SOMETHING YOU'RE BORN WITH• FIXED	SKILLS	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• COME FROM HARD WORK.• CAN ALWAYS IMPROVE
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• SOMETHING TO AVOID• COULD REVEAL LACK OF SKILL• TEND TO GIVE UP EASILY	CHALLENGES	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• SHOULD BE EMBRACED• AN OPPORTUNITY TO GROW.• MORE PERSISTANT
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• UNNECESSARY• SOMETHING YOU DO WHEN YOU ARE NOT GOOD ENOUGH	EFFORT	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• ESSENTIAL• A PATH TO MASTERY
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• GET DEFENSIVE• TAKE IT PERSONAL	FEEDBACK	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• USEFUL• SOMETHING TO LEARN FROM• IDENTIFY AREAS TO IMPROVE
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• BLAME OTHERS• GET DISCOURAGED	SETBACKS	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• USE AS A WAKE-UP CALL TO WORK HARDER NEXT TIME.



More importantly, we can be the “Aces” that that help traumatized youth recognize the tools and life skills they may have gained from their ACEs, such as:

- Adaptability
- Creativity
- Empathy
- Resilience
- Resourcefulness
- Gratitude
- Passion



What are some other ways we are already “trauma-informed” in our work?

Trauma-Informed Spaces

- *Calming Corners
- *Sensory Rooms
- *Safe-Zones for LGBTQ youth
- *Spaces that are created to be accessible to ALL

3-to-Succeed

- *Applying and promoting what we know from data in our own community about what helps kids be more resilient

Best Practices for Out of School Time

- *Focus on relationships
- *Linkages to SEL curriculum



Preventing Challenging Behavior

Focus on building **positive and caring relationships**. Even a very brief interaction can have an impact on someone's day.

Remember that everyone has **strengths and assets** that can be built upon through relationships with caring people like YOU. Every interaction matters.

Create predictable **structure**. Everyone should know what to expect. **Be consistent**.

Offer choices whenever you can. Consider what options are appropriate based on the age and developmental stage of the youth you are working with. Avoiding power struggles is KEY!

If appropriate for your setting, devote program time to teaching children and youth skills to identify and manage their emotions. Kids need to learn **coping skills** to manage situations that become overwhelming.

Managing Challenging Behavior

Have a game plan for how you can offer children and youth a **safe place to calm down** if they need it.

Offer water and/or snacks, and share some basic **relaxation** techniques (e.g. deep breathing) to help youth regain composure and return to the moment.

Validate thoughts/feelings. Offer choices for appropriate ways to resolve the situation. Calmly request that they choose from one of several clear, easy options.

Be aware of your own physical presence, tone of voice, volume and body language. Avoid physical touch and work hard to maintain an **even tone of voice and neutral body language.**

Managing Challenging Behavior

Avoid passing judgment, offering advice, or becoming overly reassuring.

Focus on **PROBLEM SOLVING** over taking control and being directive. Model taking deep breaths and keeping an even tone of voice.

Use active and reflective listening. **Don't interrupt**

Remember that the behavior in question is not driven by logic. When someone is in **flight, fight or freeze mode**, survival responses are taking over. Try some de-escalation techniques to help them manage their aggression and calm down.

Don't forget to take care of yourself!

This work is difficult. It is important to acknowledge and accept the challenges of the work and of being exposed to sensitive content and challenging behaviors repeatedly.

Trauma and adversity are just as common in the workforce as they are in the populations being served. Some of your own “stuff” may come to the surface.

Develop self-awareness about your own triggers and physical/psychological responses. Learning to recognize when your own stress responses are activated – and practicing ways to sooth and calm your own systems are important skills to develop.



Start with Self-Care Basics

Sleep

Hydration

Nutrition

Exercise

Mindfulness & Meditation

Connection with nature

Connection with others

Gratitude & Optimism



Questions?

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