

Fostering Resilience: Working with Marginalized and Traumatized Youth

The Consortium on Trauma, Illness, and Grief in Schools

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Objectives

1. Using a strengths-based approach (Resilience 101)
2. Positive Youth Development 101
3. Trauma Informed Care 101
4. Eliminating shame, building confidence
5. Not undermining confidence; Learning not to lecture
6. Giving control back to people who have lost control over their lives
7. Managing stress

Oh by the way, all my anecdotes
will be my best stories

How do we define success for
ALL Kids?

Problem Free . . .

. . . is NOT Fully Prepared!

Karen Pittman

The Balancing Act:

It is a Problem to Believe
Any Single Model Has All of the Answers



Core Principles of Positive Youth Development (PYD)

We Matter...

more than the buildings or the programs.



Kids come for the **content**, but the **context** is what heals youth.

Core Principles of PYD

Young people need to feel valued. When we see them as the experts on their own lives, youth learn to believe their opinions matter.

Youth are often the best teachers and role models for other young people.

Core Principles of PYD

Adults can be instructive and supportive, but children should choose and carry out activities as independently as possible. Nothing discourages mastery more than an adult who steps in and says: *“Let me do that for you.”*

Adolescents are still capable of healing and do so best when caring adults trust in their capacity to right themselves while offering appropriate support and guidance.

Core Principles of PYD

Most behaviors we fear serve as coping strategies that help youth manage uncomfortable stressors. If we help them (starting at very young ages) develop alternative coping strategies, we will diminish their need to turn to worrisome quick fixes.

Youth watch adult behaviors closely and how we model adaptive strategies to stress matters.

Resilience

- **The Ability To Overcome Adversity**
- **The Capacity to Bounce Back**

Resilience is a Mindset

Resilience

is

NOT

a temperament trait.

**It is affected by supports and
circumstances!!!**

Our youth are models of resilience,
but resilience has its limits.

Resilience

is

NOT

Invulnerability

When Resilience Reaches Its Limits

- Physical symptoms
- Fatigue
- Disinterest**
- Dropping grades
- Sad mood
- Irritability/anger**
- Substance use

Children are Sacred Beings

The Bottom Line

- Young People will be more resilient if the important adults in their lives believe in them unconditionally and hold them to high expectations
- Young People live up or down to the expectations we set for them

Covenant House Mission

... Dedicated to living out his covenant among ourselves and those children we serve, **with absolute respect and unconditional love** ...

The 7 C's of Resilience

Confidence
Competence
Connection
Character
Contribution
Coping
Control

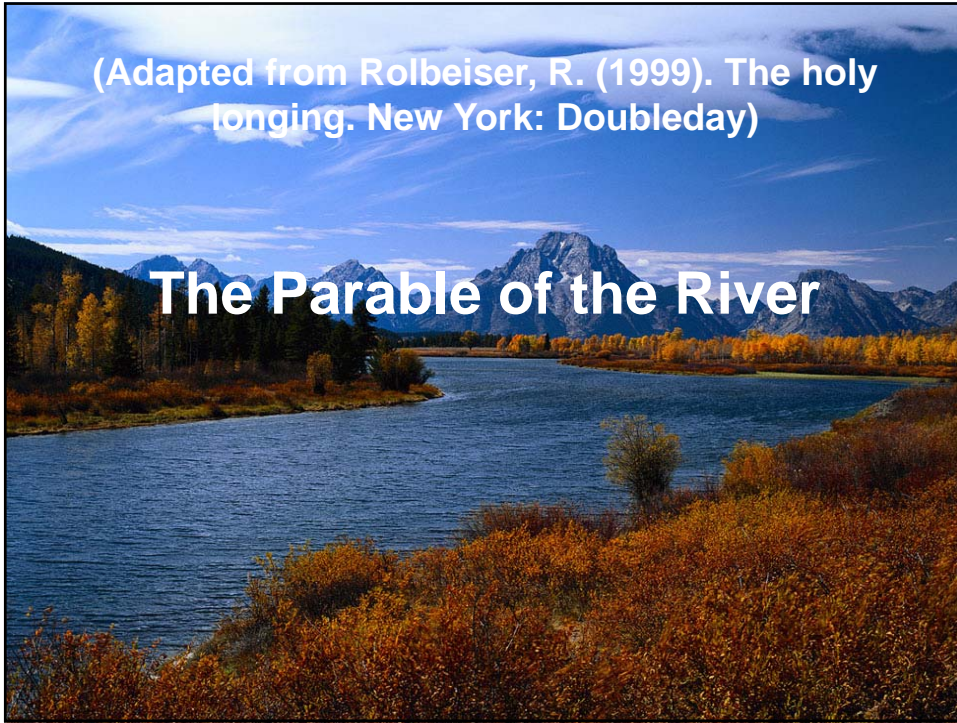


(Little, 1993; Pittman et al., 2003; Eccles and Gootman , 2002; Roth and Brooks-Gunn 2003; Lerner, 2004; Ginsburg, 2006; Frankowski, Leader & Duncan, 2009)

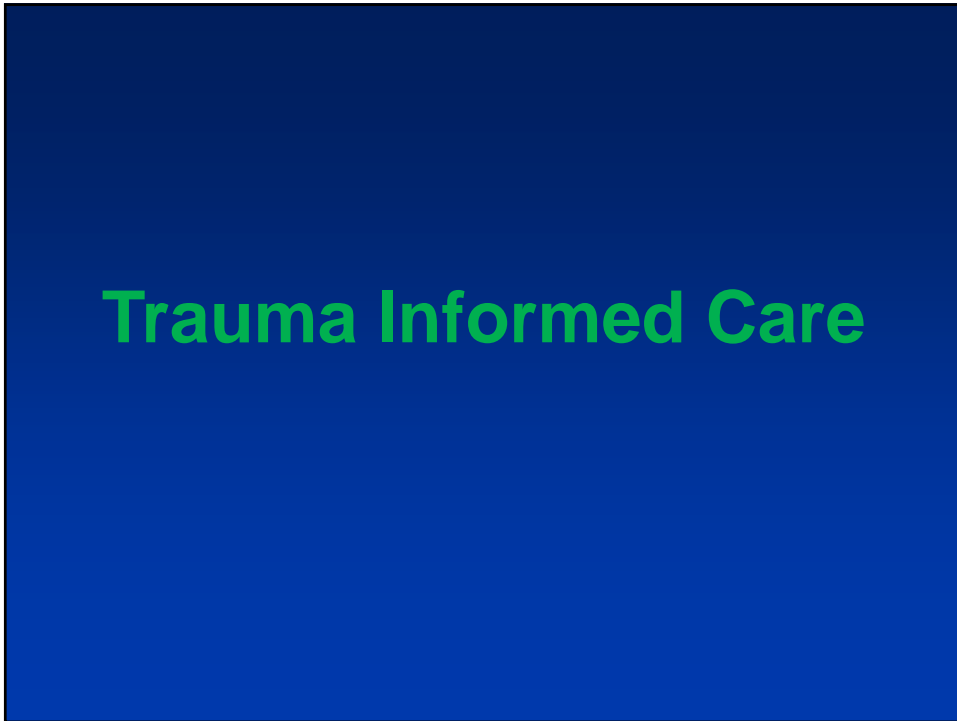
Breathe

(Adapted from Rolbeiser, R. (1999). The holy longing. New York: Doubleday)

The Parable of the River



Trauma Informed Care





The model is borrowed from
Camara Phyllis Jones, M.D., M.P.H., Ph.D.

Felitti VJ, Anda RF, Nordenberg DF, Williamson
DF, Spitz AM, Edwards VJ, Marks JS.
Relationship of childhood abuse and household
dysfunction to many of the leading causes of death
in adults: **The Adverse Childhood Experiences
(ACE) study**. *American Journal of Preventive
Medicine* 1998;14(4):245-258.

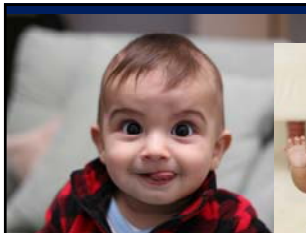
The Adverse Childhood Experiences

- Emotional Abuse
- Physical Abuse
- Sexual Abuse
- Neglected
- Exposure to Substance Abuse in Household
- Exposure to Mental Illness in Household
- Exposure to Domestic Violence in Household
- Parent(s) Sent to Prison
- Were Parents Divorced or Did You Experience Parental Abandonment?

UNLESS



UNLESS until when???



“The proper time to influence the character of a child is 100 years before he is born. In each of us lives our childhood and the values of past generations.”



Robert ten Bensele, pediatric psychiatrist, Mayo Clinic

The Effect of ACEs on the Brain



The Effect of ACEs on Behavior



How Do We React to Behavior



NOT Triggering Traumatic-based Behaviors

- Earning Trust
- Radical Calmness
- Listening
- Construct Rather than Destruct
- Body Language
- Understanding People Regulate Themselves Differently
- Knowing Your Own Buttons
- Physical Space and Touching
- Boundaries, Boundaries, Boundaries

Trauma Does Not Break Kids Nor Does it Cause Brain Damage

- Predictive is Not an Absolute Determinant
- A Different Kind of Credential
- Having a “Protector’s Brain”

Offer Radical Calmness Amidst a Chaotic Reality

- Key to de- escalation
- Critical to anticipation

**Recognize the credentials
youth who “have been through
it” bring to the world**

**Giving Kids Control Over Their
Decisions**

Being Trauma Informed is Healing (for Us and Youth)

But focusing on **trauma** or risk holds the potential to re-traumatize

To enable all young people, especially those who need us most, to reach their full potential as productive, caring, responsible citizens. (BGCA)

- Youth who need us the most are often those who push us away
- Youth who need us the most are often those who push our buttons
- Youth who need us the most, raise uncomfortable feelings in us
- Youth who need us the most withhold rewards from us.



**Tying it Together:
Addressing Risk, Acknowledging
Trauma but Developing Strengths**



Kids live up or down to our expectations, this means our attitude really matters

How do we portray youth?

Youth at Risk?????

Problems
or
Problem-Solvers

It is more than the words we say . . .

Finding your buttons



Body Language

Behavioral Change 101

(What they're missing)

The Five Steps of Behavioral Change

- 1. Awareness**
- 2. Motivation**
- 3. Skills**
- 4. Trial and error**
- 5. Maintenance**

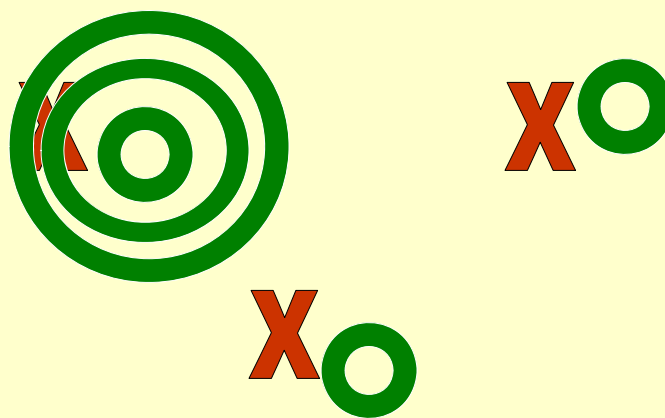
? Pre-contemplation ?

Confidence gets it started . . .

. . . and shame and demoralization prevent action

Finding Competence . . .

. . . Building Confidence



“Love is seeing someone as they deserve to be seen, *as they really are*, not through the lens of the behaviors they have sometimes needed to display.”

1. Heart
2. Belly
3. Brain
4. Hands

We are loving for reasons beyond spirituality; we are loving to initiate positive change

We are loving for reasons beyond spirituality; we are loving to mitigate shame and stigma.

- Not being broken
- Need versus deserve
- Strength versus weakness
- Empathy is not pity
- Counseling is guidance, not repair work

Do The Work It Takes To Love

The Second Sentence

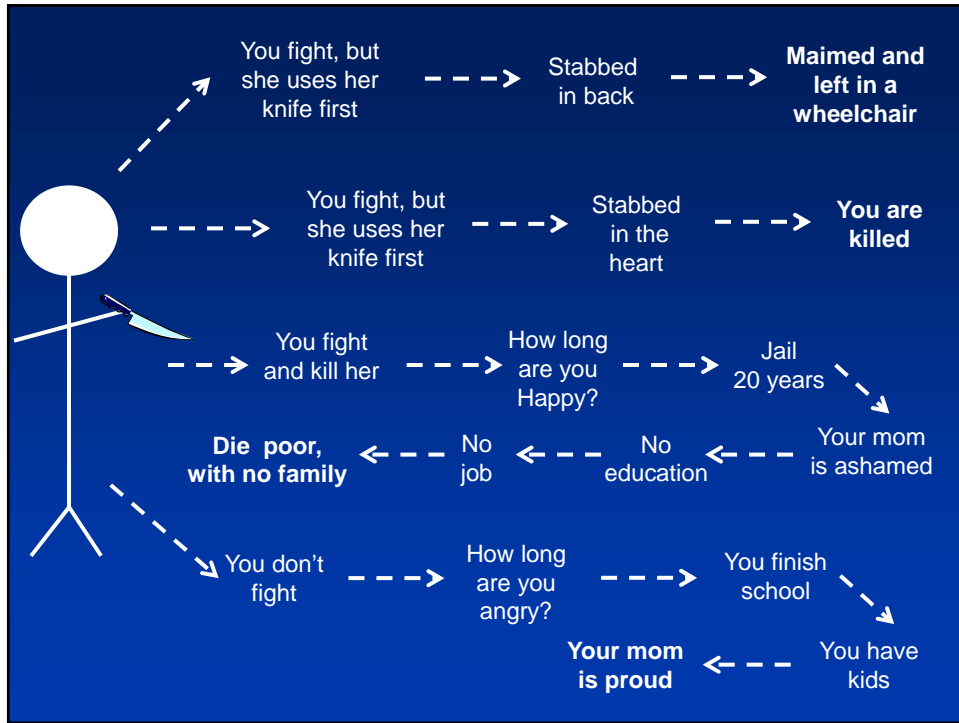
CONTROL:

The C most affected by trauma

Giving Kids Control Over Their Decisions

Learning Not to Undermine Competence

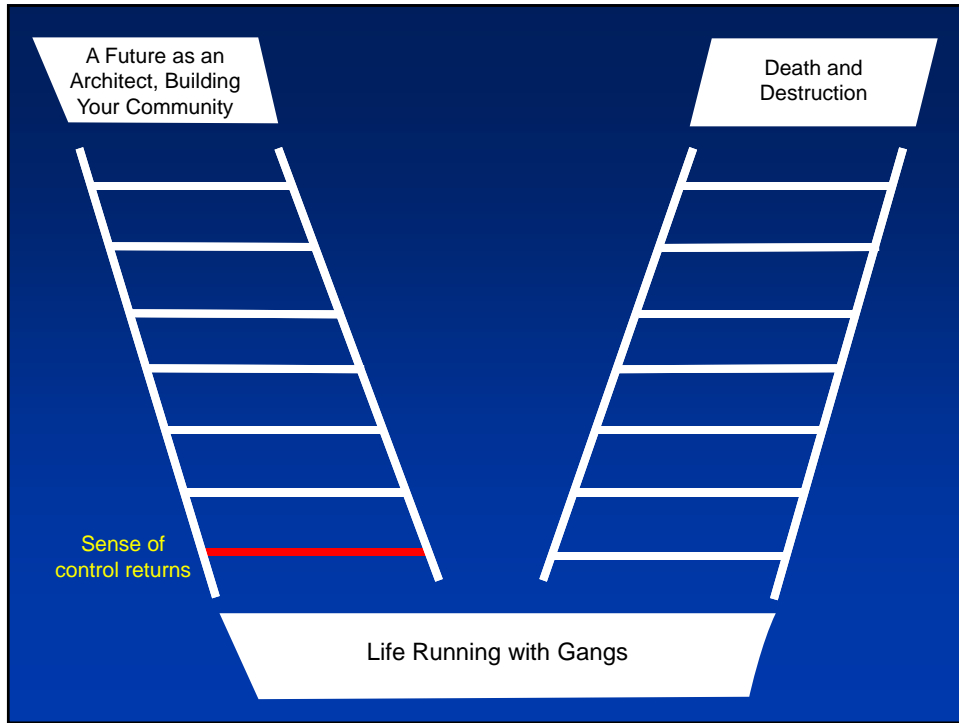
- Talking in a way young people understand
- Recognizing the cognitive development of adolescence
- No more lectures!!!!!!



The World Happens to Me

or

I control my Destiny



**How Much Control Should Parents
(or we, who are reparenting) Have?**

Effective Monitoring

We are the borders

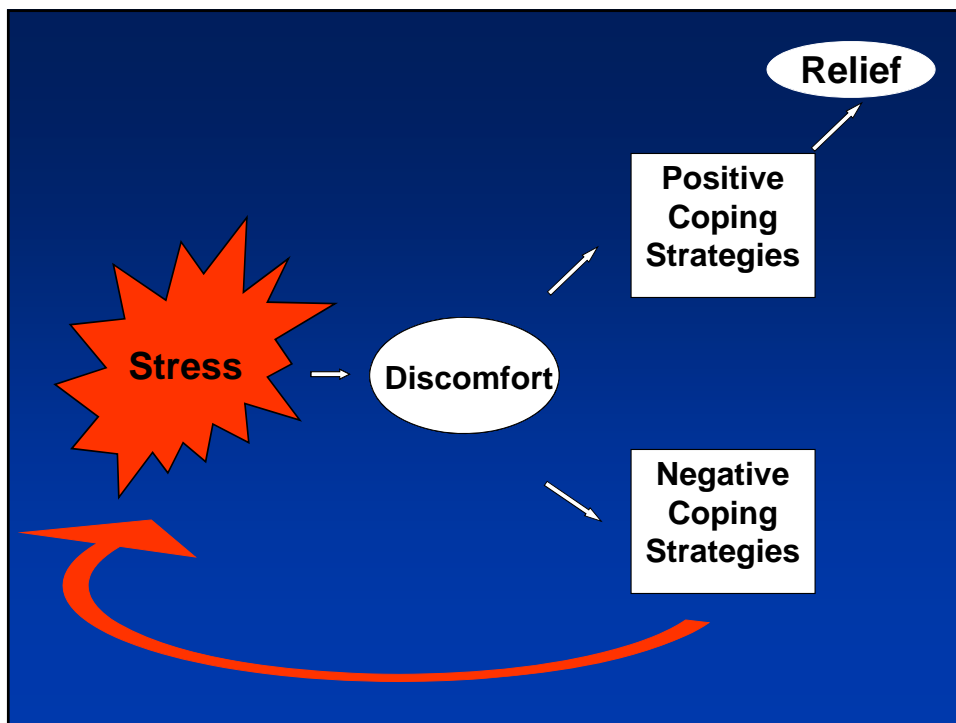
We are the picture on the box

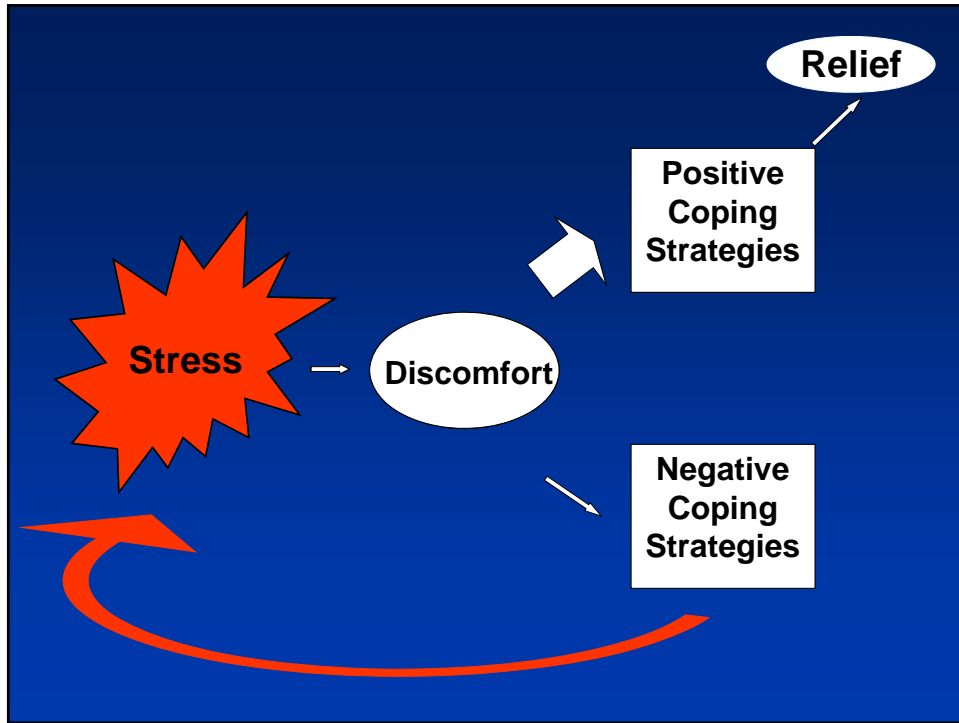


Towards *Inter*dependence

Resilience

- Is about learning to cope, in a positive way with life's inevitable stressors
- We might do our greatest good by raising youth with a wide repertoire of positive coping strategies





Connection is the most important coping strategy

Defining the Stressor

Distinguishing Paper Tigers from Real Tigers

Knowing When Bad Things are Temporary

Knowing When Good Things are Permanent

Coping

Engagement vs. Disengagement

Emotion Focused vs. Problem Focused

A Stress Management Plan for Teens

(It Might Just Work for grownups)

Stress Management : Tackling The Problem

- 1) Making the problem manageable
- 2) Active Avoidance
- 3) Let Some things go

Serenity Prayer

Grant me the serenity to accept
the things I cannot change;
courage to change the things I
can; and wisdom to know the
difference

Stress Management : Taking Care of My Body

4) Exercise

- o Fear
- o Anger

Stress Management : Taking Care of My Body

5) Relaxation

6) Nutrition

Stress Management : Taking Care of My Body

7) Sleep

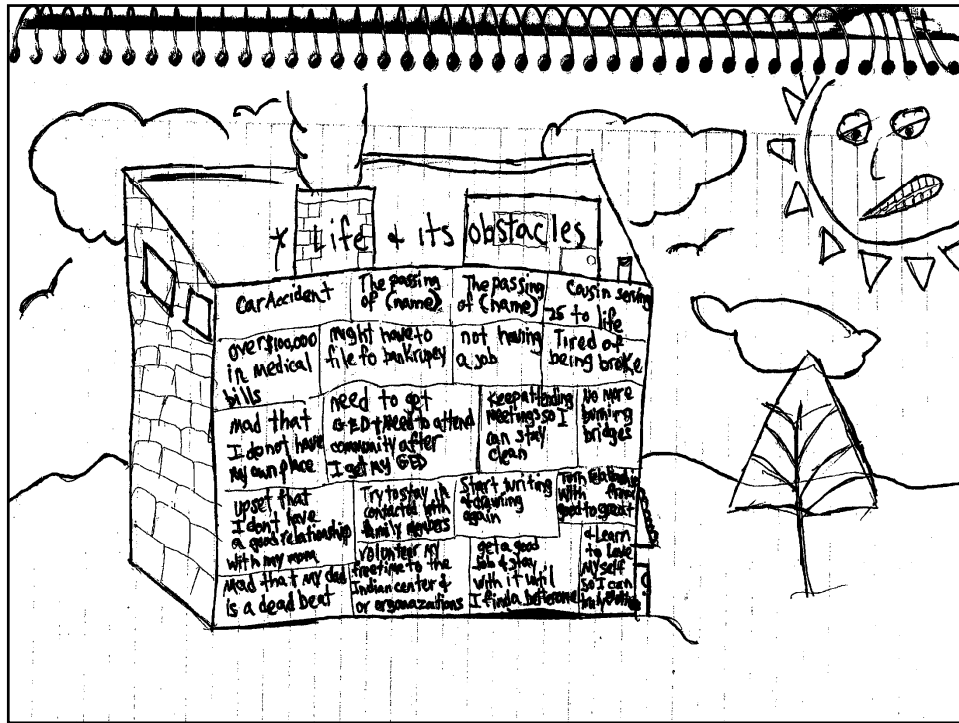
- Stimulation
- Cool Down
 - Exercise
 - Shower
- Release emotion

Stress Management : Managing Emotions

8) Instant Vacations

9) Releasing Emotions

The Worst thing is not to be
stressed . . . it is to be **NUMB**



Stress Management Plan : Making the World Better

10) Contributing to the world

Breathe, again
(Because this is not easy)

We cannot **and must not** fall back
on the defense mechanisms that
allow others to ignore the
realities we bear witness to every
day

There is no “other”

There is only US

If we are to be this open to reality,
without falling back on toxic defense
mechanisms . . .

We must have strategies and supports
that allow us to remain whole while
serving youth in a loving way

**Something We Who Serve Others
Rarely Speak About**

Us

How do we define success?

To touch many lives over a
lifetime of service and
connection with others

Burnout Prevention

Stress is usually something people are acutely aware of, whereas burnout can present insidiously.

When you are **stressed**, you care too much, but when you are burned out, you don't see any hope of improvement. You are numb.

The Worst thing is not to be
stressed . . . it is to be **NUMB**

Stress

Characterized by over engagement
Emotions are overreactive
Produces urgency and hyperactivity
Loss of energy

Stress

Leads to anxiety disorders
Primary damage is physical
May kill you prematurely
Activated, sometimes paralyzed

Burnout

Characterized by disengagement

Emotions are blunted

Produces helplessness and
hopelessness

Loss of motivation, ideals, and hope

Burnout

Leads to detachment and Depression

Primary damage is emotional

May make life seem not worth living

Depleted

Workplace Factors that lead to burnout:

- Cultures that normalize extending oneself beyond physical, or emotional capacities.
- Cultures that confuse over-functioning with ambitiousness and blur the boundary between professional and personal lives.
- Coercive or punitive rules
- Work that causes you to violate your personal values

Individual Factors that lead to burnout:

- Individuals who have unmet personal needs or have conflicting needs
- Individuals whose self definition is too tightly tied to work
- Setting unrealistic goals for yourself or having them imposed on you
- Being expected to be too many things to too many people

The Universal Factor that may lead to our burnout:

Those who spend their work lives attending to the needs of others, especially if their work puts them in frequent contact with the dark or tragic side of human experience.

What does burnout do to our relationships and work environment?

May make us less likely to engage

May send a message to eager coworkers that they are over-functioning, setting an overall lower standard as part of the “welcoming” or orientation process

May make more energetic coworkers **misjudge** seasoned colleagues as unfeeling or uncaring, when, in fact, the problem is that they have cared too much

Serving Over a Lifetime

The “Solution” on One Slide (The premise is ridiculous)

1. Boundaries
2. Knowing (and experiencing) that what we do matters
3. Self-Care

Boundaries

- Not the easy stuff. How do you love and still remain whole?
- Knowing our buttons
- Being trauma-informed
- Knowing who is the expert
- Avoiding the rescue fantasy
- Giving control back
- Planting seeds

Finding your buttons (again)

Being Trauma Informed is Healing (For Us and Youth)

Boundaries



The Rescue Fantasy

Love without boundaries is not safe for anyone

How much can you give each person? The warm handoff

Knowing (and experiencing) that what we do matters

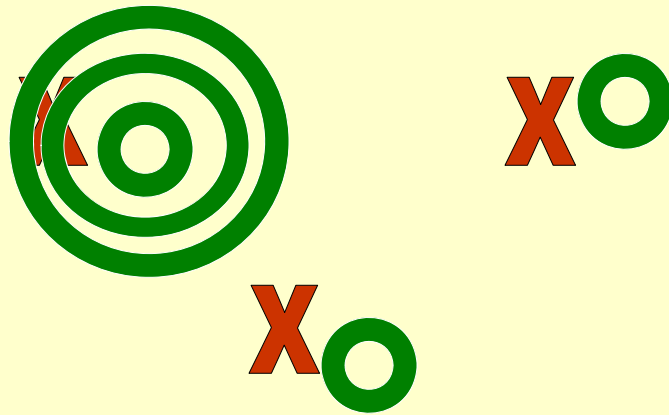
- Who's the expert?
- Who's the facilitator?
- Turning off the lecture
- Restoring control to the person who needs it

Self Care: The Greatest Gift You Can Give Those You Serve

The Bottom Line of Resilience

- We will be more resilient if important people in our lives believe in us unconditionally and hold us to high expectations

Finding Competence Building Confidence



“Love is seeing someone as they deserve to be seen, *as they really are*, not through the lens of the behaviors they have sometimes needed to display.”

The importance of
Connection can not be
overstated. . .

- Family
- Spirituality
- Community
- **Mission**

Writing a personal mission statement

Is balance possible?

Urgent Not Important	Urgent Important
Not Urgent Not Important	Not Urgent Important (at least to you!)

What is High Yield

What is irreplaceable?

Where are you irreplaceable?

Moving Forward

- Seeing with fresh eyes
- Reaching Teens

One last breath . . .

“The little man’s almost done!”

How will we judge our success?

(not in ways that are easy to measure!!!)

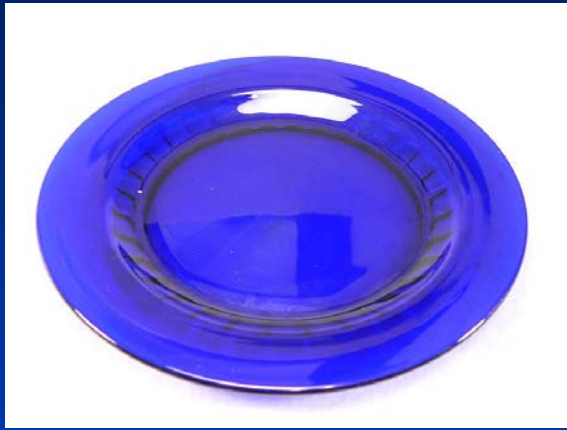
- Through easy measurements: extrication from exploitation, housing, meals, jobs, graduations, reunifications.
- By proving adolescents are capable of healing from trauma
- By helping our young people experience that people are worthy of trust
- By helping our young people know they are worthy of being loved
- By making it more likely that our youth will be able to “pass along” our love to their children, and then break the cycle of trauma and oppression.

How will we judge our success?

- By making it so our young people can feel again
- By creating the kind of environment where staff never forgets how to feel

Do we view our colleagues, and even ourselves, through the same strength-based lens with which we commit to see the young people we serve?





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