

Our Kids Are Not Broken: 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

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.

Resilience

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

Resilience is a Mindset

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

Trauma Informed Care

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

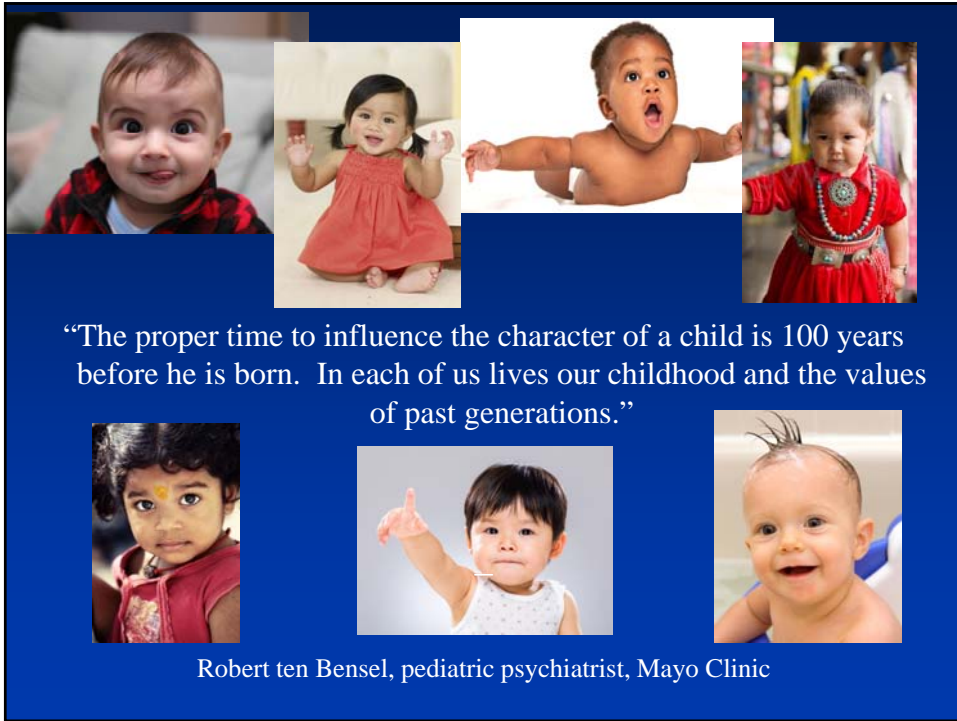
- Emotional Abuse
- Physical Abuse
- Sexual Abuse
- Neglected
- Exposure to Substance Abuse in Household
- Exposure to Mental Illness in Household
- Exposure to Domestic Violence in Household
- Parent(s) Sent to Prison
- Were Parents Divorced or Did You Experience Parental Abandonment?

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

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”

**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

**YOU JUST DON'T
UNDERSTAND WHY
I AM SO **ANGRY**.**



*I am not **mad** because of slavery.*

*I am not **upset** about separate water fountains or civil rights.*

*I am not **worried** about white hoods burning crosses in my yard.*

*I am **mad** that you follow me around stores because you think I am a thief.*

*I am **upset** that you arm yourself against me and hold your purse tighter when I walk by.*

*I am **worried** that I will have to prepare my children and tell them that they will be hated, feared, and demonized for absolutely no logical reason at all.*

It's not the past that saddens me, it's the future.

Behavioral Change 101

(What they're missing)

? Pre-contemplation ?

“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

What we know about how a sense
of control is associated with success
versus anxiety and self doubt:

PRAISE
CRITICISM

**Perfectionism: A Challenge
to both Resilience
and Success**

(And Why an Unrealistic Bar is Harmful)

What is Perfectionism?

And ... why isn't it a good thing?

- Self Loathing
- Fear of the B+
- Fear of the “D” word
- No “out-of-the-box” thought
- The death of creativity
- Resents constructive feedback

Learning how to fail and recover

The Lies You Don't Want to Buy Into

- The SAT's will pave the way...
- You have to be good at everything...
- Just put it off...

Don't say "just try your best"

- Victims of a toxic society
- What do we praise...or notice?
- Desire to spare us

Learning to build a high achiever

- Letting young people make mistakes
- Praising effort rather than results
- Building Spikes – Celebrating Unevenness

Not all perfectionists are perfect

Motivational Interviewing (not even) 101

- Rooted in stages of change
- Recognizes each youth as the expert in their own life
- Evokes change talk
- Can quantify and challenge motivation

Giving Kids Control Over Their Decisions

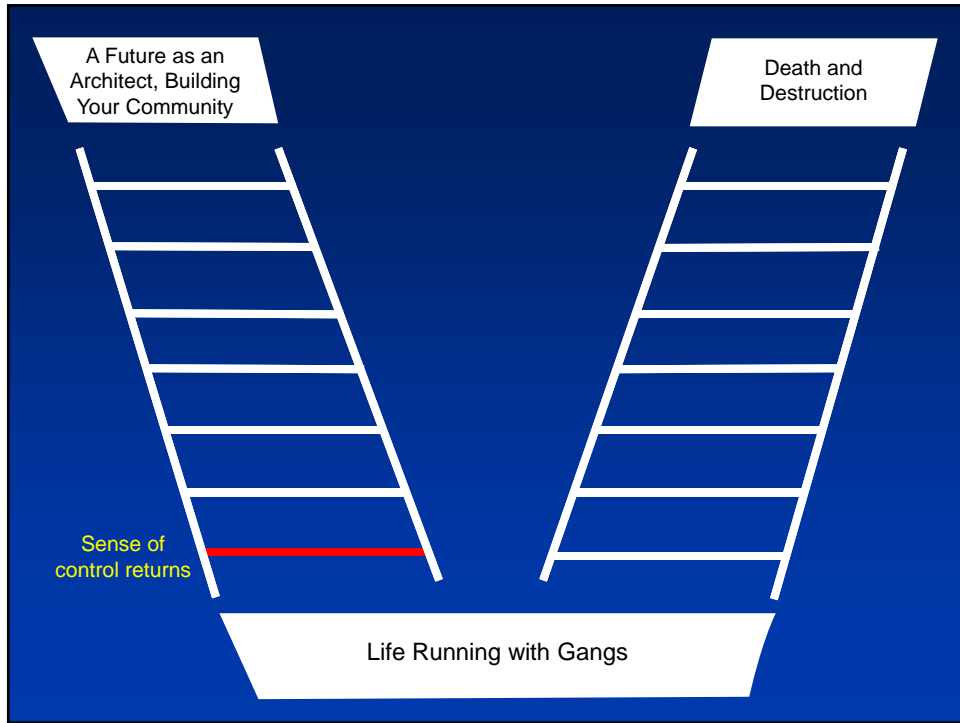
Learning Not to Undermine Competence

- Giving Control back to youth
- Recognizing and leveraging the intelligence they do have
- 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

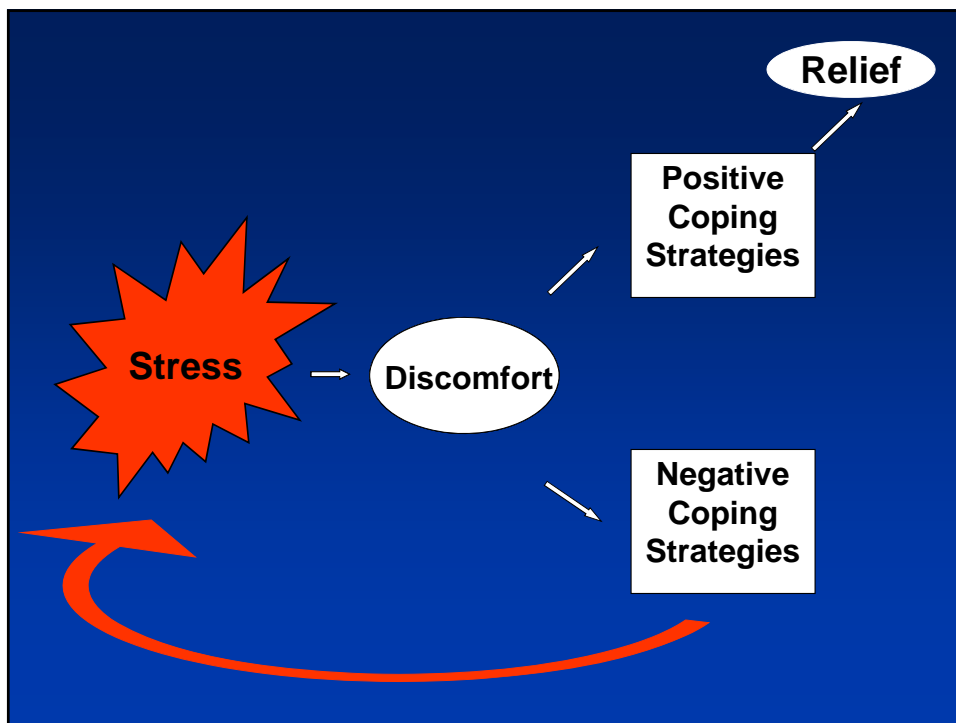
We are the picture on the box

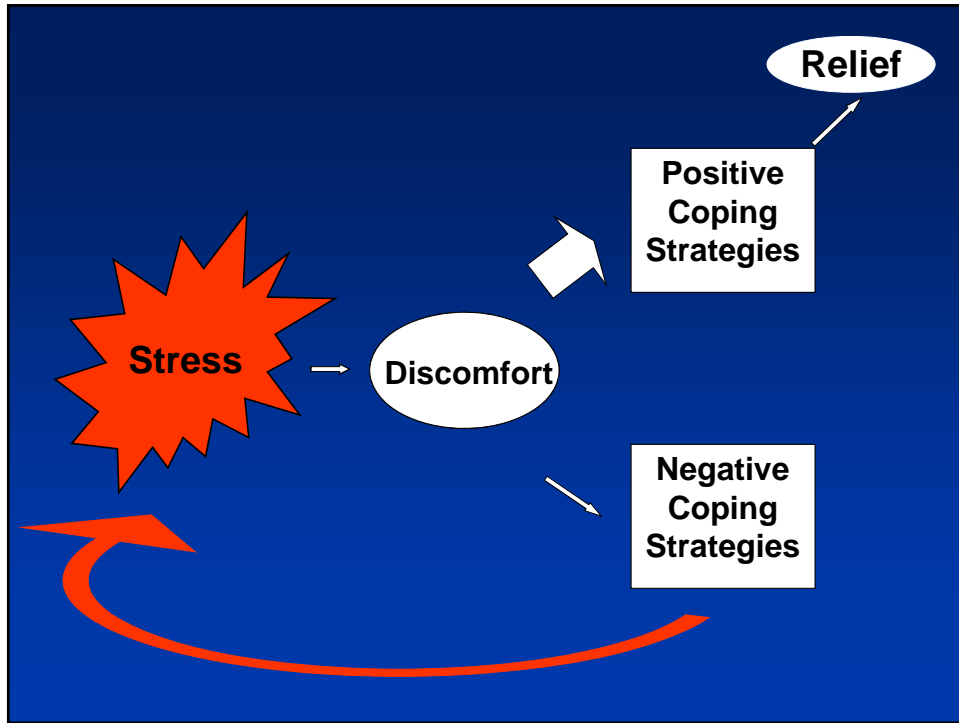


Towards *Inter*dependence

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

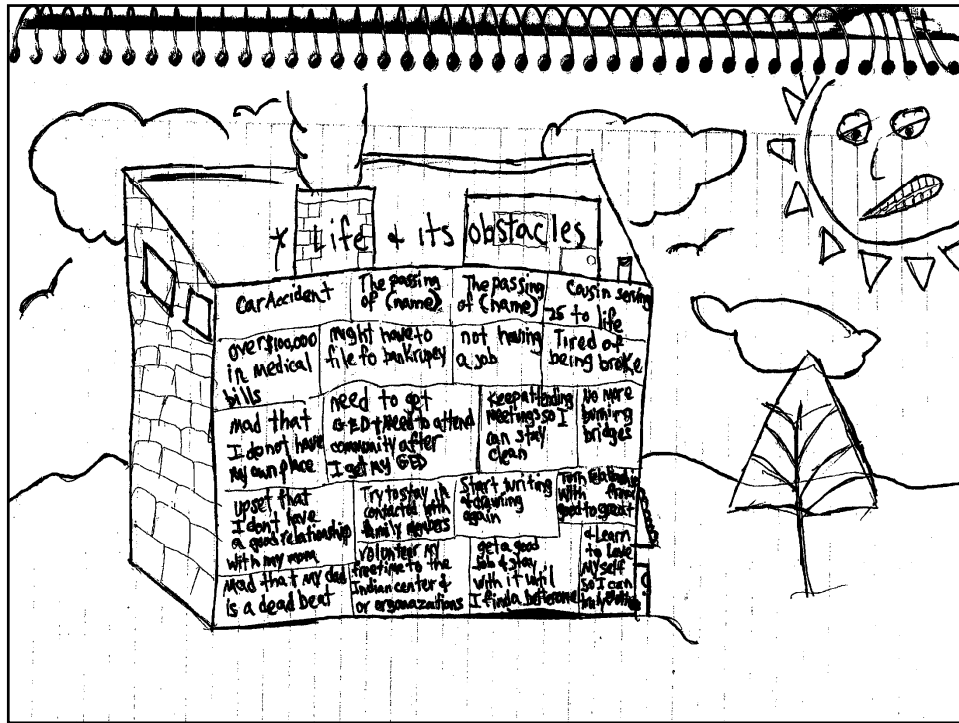
- Stimulation
- Cool Down
 - Exercise
 - Shower
- Release emotion

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

Moving Forward

- Seeing with fresh eyes
- Reaching Teens

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?



Fosteringresilience.com

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