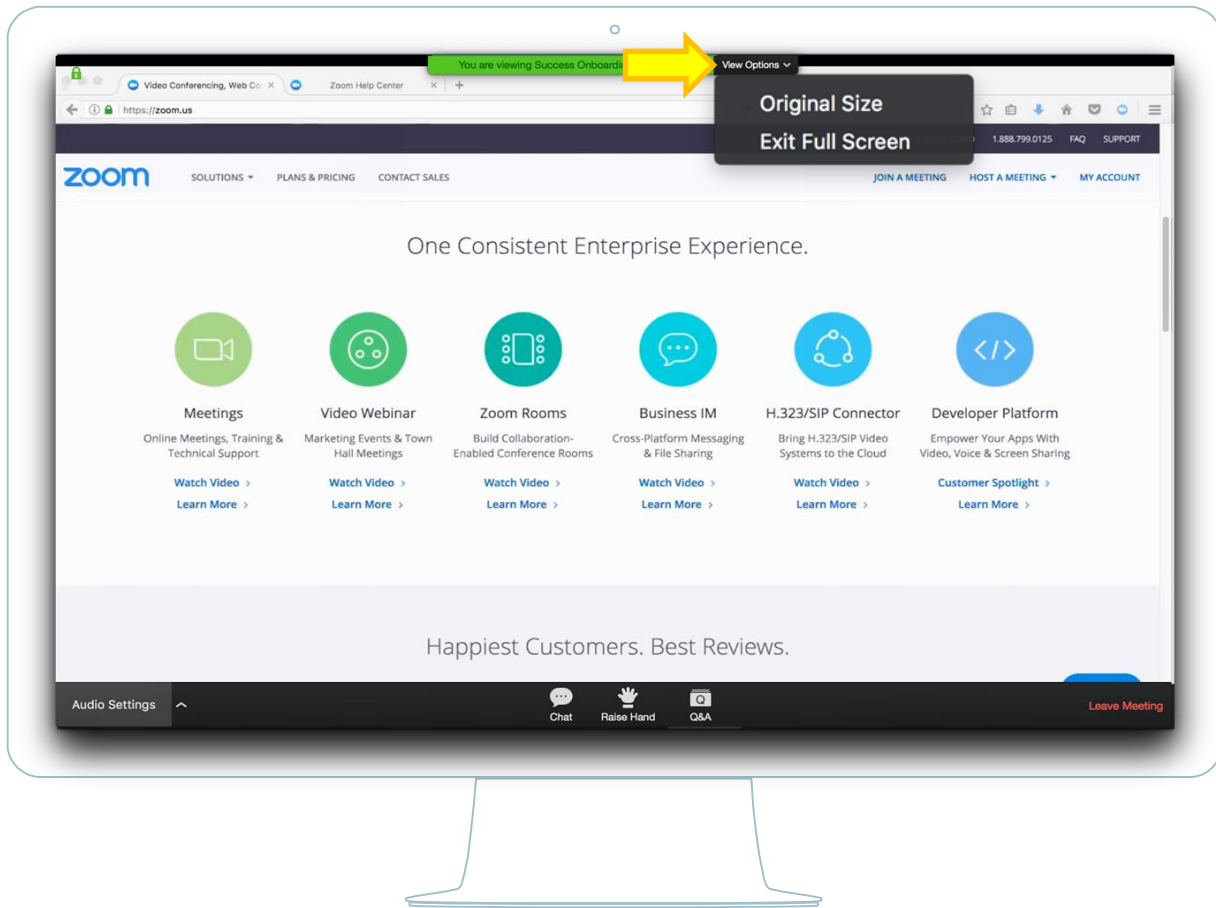
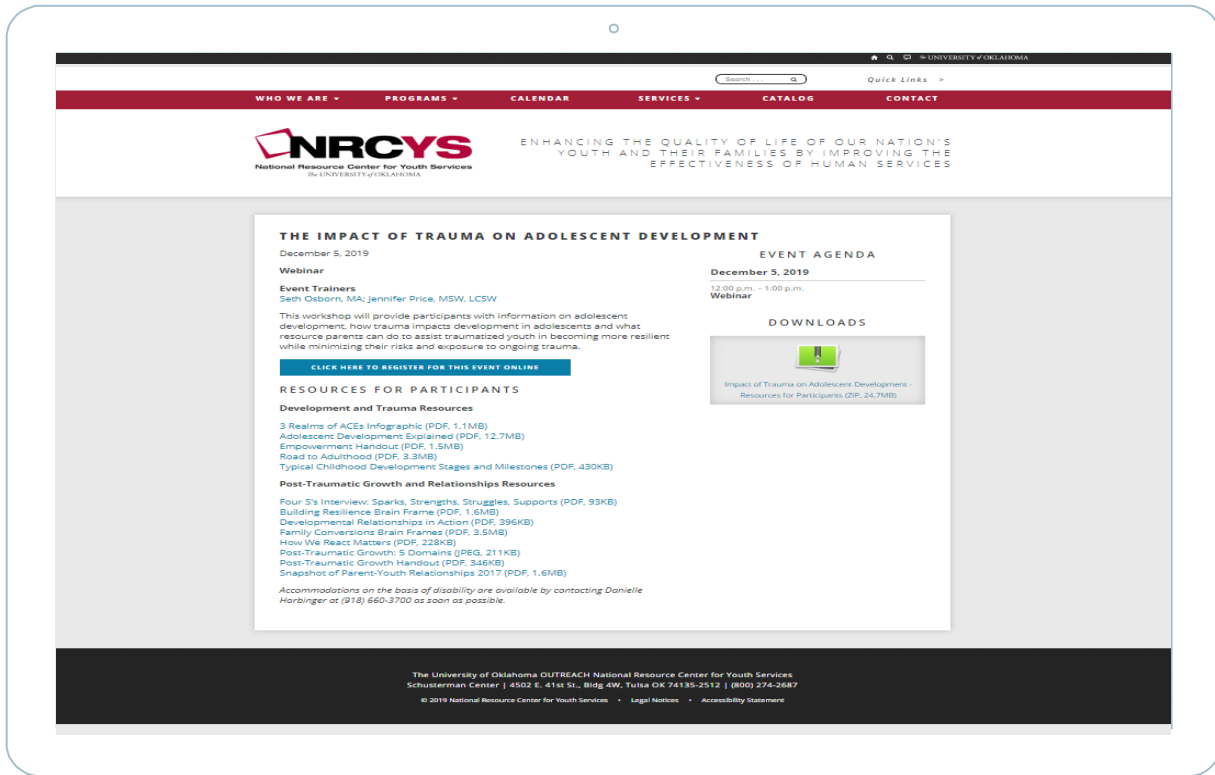


# The Impact of Trauma on Adolescent Development





Participation and Interaction



<https://nrcys.ou.edu/nrcys/programs/collaborative-calendar/event/the-impact-of-trauma-on-adolescent-development-1219>

Resource Documents for Participants



# Introduce Yourself

**Name**  
**Role/Agency**  
**Age Ranges of Children**

# Hello!



**Seth Osborn, MA**

Senior Program Development Specialist  
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Program Development Specialist  
Resource Family Training & Support  
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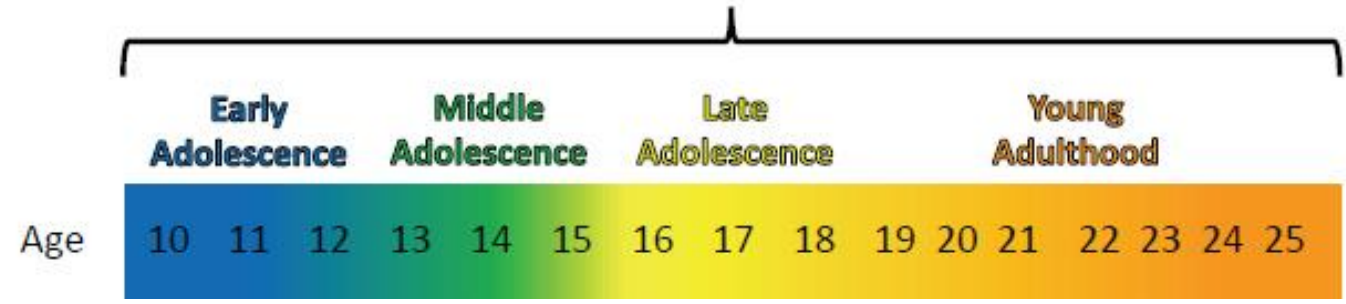


What does adolescence  
mean to you?

**What words would you  
use to describe this  
stage of life?**



### Developmental Periods of Adolescence





# 6 DOMAINS



PHYSICAL  
DEVELOPMENT

INTELLECTUAL  
DEVELOPMENT

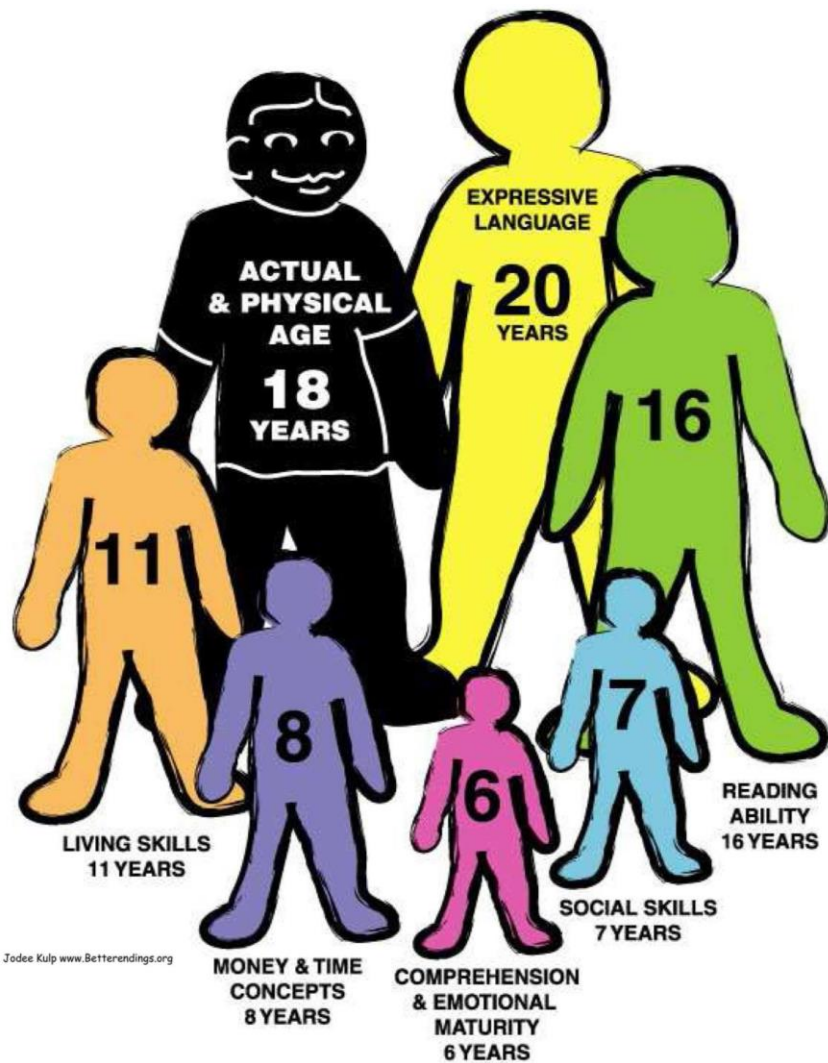
EMOTIONAL  
DEVELOPMENT

SOCIAL  
DEVELOPMENT

MORAL/SPIRITUAL  
DEVELOPMENT

SEXUAL  
DEVELOPMENT





Jodee Kulp [www.Betterendings.org](http://www.Betterendings.org)

# ADOLESCENT BRAIN DEVELOPMENT

**Brain Function:** Manages cognitive, emotional, behavioral, and physical functioning.

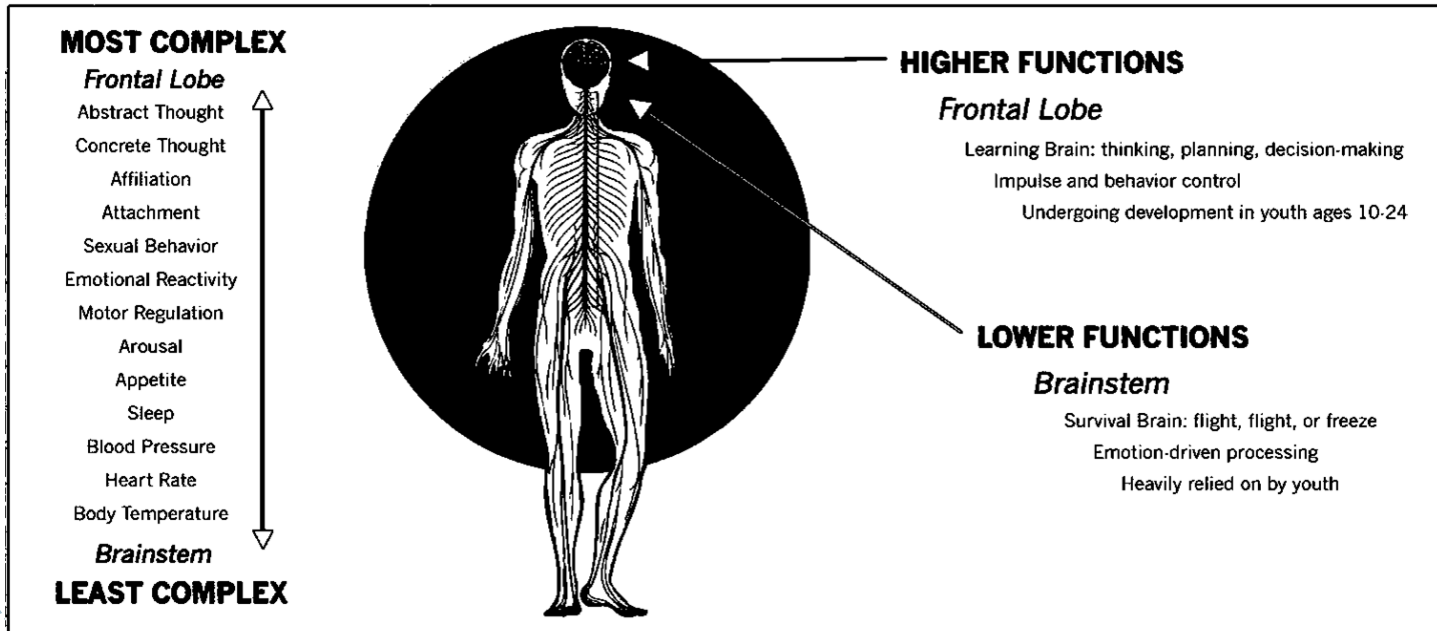
**Brain System:** Made up of interconnecting systems that go from least complex (brainstem: mediates heart rate) to most complex (frontal lobe: the main decision maker of the brain).

**Brain Growth:** 2 major growth spurts: 1) in the womb, and 2) between childhood and adolescence.

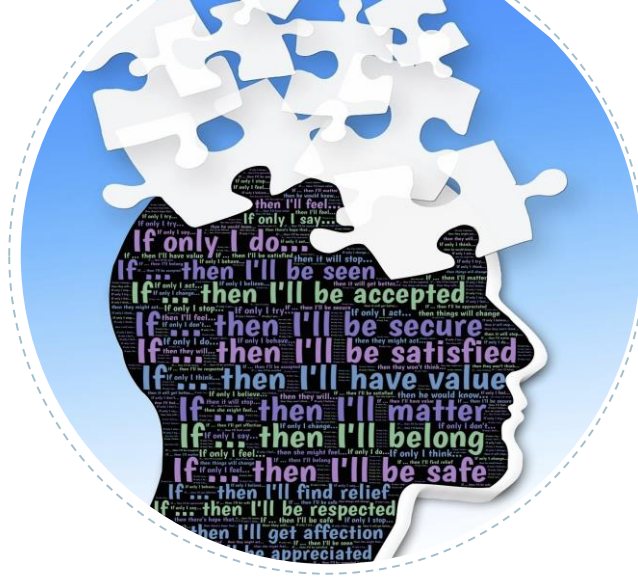
**IMPORTANT:** Brain development is **NOT** complete until mid to late 20's.

**Neurons that Fire Together Wire Together (Hebb's Rule):** Brain neurons synapse (i.e. connect with other neurons) or change (chemically and structurally) in response to signals from the environment (experiences) and create memories (cognitive, emotional, behavioral, and physical). The more often neural connections are made, the stronger these connections become.

**Synaptic Pruning:** During adolescence, the brain begins to break down the least used synapses, or connections and strengthens those most used.







# Challenges

What is the most challenging part of adolescence?

# The Trauma Equation

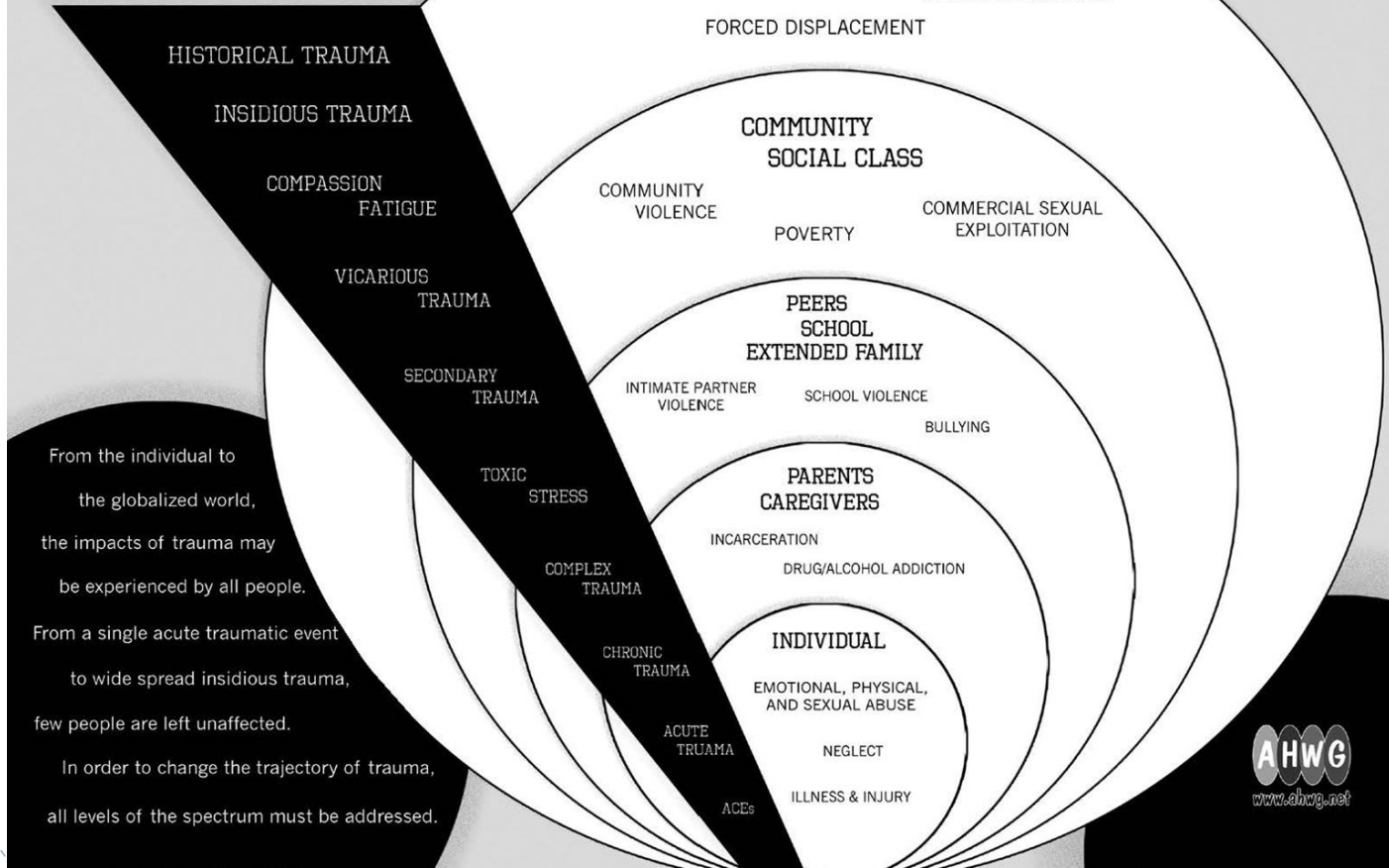
Trauma = The Sum of...

EVENTS

EXPERIENCE

EFFECTS

# SPECTRUM OF TRAUMA: CONTEXT



From the individual to the globalized world, the impacts of trauma may be experienced by all people.

From a single acute traumatic event to wide spread insidious trauma, few people are left unaffected.

In order to change the trajectory of trauma, all levels of the spectrum must be addressed.

# 3

# Realms of ACEs

ACEs Connection accelerates the global movement to prevent and heal adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), and supports communities to work collaboratively to solve our most intractable problems. Left unaddressed, toxic stress from ACEs harms children and families, organizations, systems and communities, and reduces the ability of individuals and entities to respond to stressful events with resiliency. The ACEs in these three realms intertwine throughout people's lives, and affect the viability of organizations, systems and communities.





# Trauma Responses

**TRAUMA TRIGGERS:** Can activate the “survival brain,” causing youth to react as though a “there and then” experience (previous traumatic event) is happening “here and now” (in current reality).

**Common triggers include:**

- Unpredictability
- Sudden changes or transitions
- Loss of control
- Sensory overload
- Feeling vulnerable
- Rejection
- Loneliness
- Confrontation
- Intimacy
- And even praise or positive attention

When youth are in a triggered state, they may not be able to access higher functions of the frontal lobe (“learning brain”). At this time, verbal warnings of consequences, or making demands on the higher “learning brain” (i.e. asking them to explain their decision-making process), may escalate the situation.

## SURVIVAL RESPONSE: FIGHT, FLIGHT, OR FREEZE (34-36)



### FIGHT

- Youth struggle to regain or hold on to power, especially when feeling coerced.

*Youth often mislabeled as:* Non-compliant or combative.



### FLIGHT

- Youth disengages or runs away and “checks out” emotionally.

*Youth often mislabeled as:* Uncooperative or resistant.



### FREEZE

- Youth gives in to those in positions of power; does not, or is unable to “speak up.”

*Youth often mislabeled as:* Passive or unmotivated.

# CHRONIC TRAUMA



## EMOTIONAL

Terror/fear  
Sadness Shock  
Loss of pleasure from activities  
Despair Emotional numbing  
Hypersensitivity Helplessness  
Depression Irritability  
Guilt Grief  
Phobias  
Anger



## INTERPERSONAL & BEHAVIORAL

Aggression  
Regression in behavior  
Crying easily Risk taking  
Social withdrawal Change in eating patterns  
Alienation Avoiding trauma reminders Tantrums  
School impairment Refusal to go back to school  
Increased relationship conflict  
Vocational impairment  
Isolation

## PHYSICAL

Sleep disturbance  
Somatic complaints Startle response  
Insomnia Impaired immune response  
Gastrointestinal problems  
Decreased appetite  
Hyperarousal  
Decreased libido  
Headaches  
Fatigue



## COGNITIVE

Worry  
Nightmares  
Disbelief Confusion  
Memory impairment  
Impaired concentration Impaired decision making ability  
Self blame Decreased self-efficacy  
Decreased self-esteem Distortion  
Intrusive thoughts/memories

# AFFECTS THE WHOLE YOUTH

ADOLESCENTS ARE EXPECTED TO...	FOR YOUTH WHO HAVE EXPERIENCED FOSTER CARE: WHAT IF...	CULTURAL CONSIDERATIONS: WHAT IF...
Adjust to a new physical sense of self	I have grown to feel disconnected from my physical sense of self as a coping mechanism?	I don't have a sense of who I am and almost every message I receive is negative?
Adjust to new intellectual abilities	My need to focus on survival has overwhelmed or distracted my cognitive capacities?	I can't think clearly or take intellectual risks because of my sense of not being good enough?
Meet increased cognitive demands at school	Multiple moves and school changes prevent me from applying myself in school?	I am disciplined more than my peers, which means I am often out of the classroom and will never catch up; so why try?
Expand verbal skills	My stress responses have limited my ability and confidence to verbalize how I feel and what's important to me?	I don't feel like anyone wants to hear or believes what I have to say, so I just remain silent?
Develop a personal sense of identity	My experiences with adults have not validated that I matter? What if most people have just identified me as "a troubled child"?	Every message I get from society tells me that as a youth of color or identifying as LGBTQ I am inferior?
Consolidate the capacity to control impulses, calibrate risks and rewards, regulate emotions, project the self into the future and think strategically	I have not had the foundation or environment to develop and consolidate these skills?	My experiences have limited my capacity to look into the future? What if I see too many bad things that I don't understand happening to people who look like me? What if I am unsure that I will even have a future?

# TRAUMA INEQUITIES



## SOCIAL DETERMINANTS OF HEALTH

- Youth living in poverty are most likely to be exposed to trauma experiences, both at home and in the community.
- Roughly three times as many African-American, Hispanic, and American Indian/Alaska Native children live in poverty compared to White and Asian-American children.
- Poverty is a greater problem for minority ethno-cultural groups that have historically been subjected to political and cultural trauma in the US and in their families' countries of origin.
- Asian-American children and their families who are immigrants from impoverished and violence-torn countries are more vulnerable to violence as a result of racism and the scars of historical trauma.
- Other groups at high risk for exposure to violence in childhood include: urban and rural poor, tribal communities, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning (LGBTQ) youth and adults; children and parents with physical disabilities or mental illness and addictions; and homeless individuals and families.(12)



## CRADLE TO PRISON PIPELINE

- African American boys born in 2001 have a 1 in 3 chance of being imprisoned in their lifetimes.(13)
- Latino boys born in 2001 have a 1 in 6 chance of being imprisoned in their lifetimes.(13)
- Arrest rates of trauma-exposed youth are up to 8 times higher than community samples of same-age peers.(14,15)
- Being abused or neglected as a child increases the likelihood of arrest as a juvenile by 59%.(16)
- 70%-92% of incarcerated girls report sexual, physical, or severe emotional abuse in childhood.(17,18)
- 70% of youth in residential placement have some type of past traumatic experience, with 30% having experienced frequent and/or injurious physical and/or sexual abuse.(19)



## SUBSTANCE ABUSE

- Trauma increases the risk of developing substance abuse, and substance abuse increases the likelihood that adolescents will experience trauma.
- Up to 59% of youth with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) subsequently develop substance abuse problems.
- In surveys of adolescents receiving treatment for substance abuse, more than 70% had a history of trauma exposure. (20)
- Traumatic stress/PTSD may make it more difficult for adolescents to stop using, as exposure to reminders of traumatic events have been shown to increase drug cravings in people with co-occurring trauma and substance abuse. (20)
- Youth who are already abusing substances may be less able to cope with traumatic events as a result of the functional impairments associated with problematic use.
- Youth with both substance abuse and trauma exposure show more severe and diverse clinical problems than do youth who have been afflicted with only one of these problems.
- When trauma and substance abuse are treated separately, youth are more likely to relapse and revert to previous maladaptive coping strategies.(20)



Your Observations  
**What are some of the trauma  
responses you have observed  
in the adolescents you serve?**





Thoughts?

**What stood out for you in the video  
you just watched?**

## Psychological & Emotional Development



- Empathy
- Positive self-regard
- Sense of autonomy
- Self-regulation skills
- Positive coping skills
- Conflict resolution skills
- Optimism coupled with realism
- Ability to comfort self and others
- Recognition of right and wrong

# DEVELOPMENTAL COMPETENCIES



## SUPPORT THE WHOLE YOUTH

## Physical Development



- Healthy Habits**
  - Personal hygiene
  - Nutrition and exercise
  - Regular medical and dental care
- Risk Management**
  - Seat belts
  - Condoms
  - Bike helmets

- Sense of belonging to society
- Connectedness with parents/cargivers, peers, and other adults
- Attachment to pro-social institutions such as school and church
- Ability to navigate in multiple cultural contexts
- Commitment to civic engagement



## Social Development

### **Essential Life Skills:**

- Literacy
- Budgeting and banking
- Shopping and cooking
- Transportation and Safety planning

### **Essential Vocational Skills:**

- Job applications and interviews
- Time management
- Knowledge of more than one culture
- Critical thinking and reasoning
- Decision-making and planning



## Intellectual Development





# Post-Traumatic Growth...

- ◎ Means that individuals are able to find meaning in the trauma and learn more about themselves in the process
- ◎ **Includes**
  - ◎ changes in one's perception of self
  - ◎ improvement and deepening of one's relationships with others
  - ◎ heightened compassion for others
  - ◎ increased ability to express emotions
- ◎ Does NOT mean that pain or fear from trauma go away

## REQUIREMENTS FOR POSTTRAUMATIC GROWTH:<sup>(9)</sup>

### *A safe environment*

- Since feelings of extreme danger and vulnerability are inherent to most traumatic experiences, establishing feelings of safety for youth is necessary before beginning to process the experience.

### *Listening without trying to solve*

- Youth may feel angry or scared and express a variety of emotions in order to make sense of an experience.
- Caring adults must resist the urge to “make it all better,” which may come from personal needs to make intense feelings more tolerable.

### *Recognizing and highlighting growth or changed perspective:*

- Making note and commenting on a youth’s new insights can help reinforce positive growth.

### *Reframing growth and opportunity*

- There is a tendency to say that a traumatic experience caused growth. It may be more helpful to reframe and say that trauma didn’t cause the growth but created an opportunity for growth.

### *Referrals for counseling, if appropriate*

- Many youth don’t know about, are afraid of, or have heard negative experiences about mental health services, however counseling can be a useful tool for youth in making sense out of life



# MINDFULNESS SKILLS

## MINDFULNESS IS:

- Paying attention, here and now, with kindness and curiosity. (16)
- A mental state, characterized by focused awareness of one's thoughts, actions or motivations.
- A component of many therapeutic treatments for trauma.

## BUILDING MINDFULNESS SKILLS CAN HELP YOUTH AND ADULTS:

1. Become more aware of negative judgments and thoughts.
2. Build more positive decision-making skills.
3. Become more focused on the moment.
4. Be less reactive to their environments.
5. Be utilized in group meetings or individual sessions with youth, or among adult providers.

## MINDFULNESS “WHAT” SKILLS

### Observe

- Just notice: Use your 5 senses- sight, sound, taste, touch, smell
- Watch your thoughts and feelings come and go: Don't push them away or hold onto them

### Describe

- Put words on the experience: “my stomach muscles are tightening”
- Name your feelings: “I’m so mad I could scream”
- Label your thoughts as thoughts, not facts: “Thinking you’re dumb doesn’t mean that you are dumb”
- Name thoughts, feelings, and sensations separately

### Participate

- Become one with your experience
- Dive into what you do and get really into it without being self-conscious or fearful
- Practice, practice, practice, like learning how to ride a bike



## MINDFULNESS “HOW” SKILLS

### Don't judge

- See without evaluating
- Acknowledge without judgment
- Don't judge your judging

### Stay focused

- Do ONE thing at a time
- Let go of distractions
- Dive into the current moment, the here and now
- Concentrate your mind

### Do what works

- Focus on what's going to help
- Do what you need to do to achieve your goals
- Play by the rules
- Act as skillfully as you can
- Let go of feelings that hurt you and others

<b>Initial Parental Approach</b>	<b>Young Person May Think</b>	<b>Alternative Parental Approach</b>
<p>"Something came up at work and I can't pick you up after practice. But I spoke to Mike's mom and she is going to drive you home, OK? I should be home by 7 p.m. and we can eat dinner together then."</p>	<p><i>It's starting again. He doesn't really care about me. He is probably just going out for drinks with people from work. I can't count on him. I can't count on anyone but myself.</i></p>	<p>"I want you to always feel you can count on me to be there for you. I want that more than anything because you are important to me. But, something came up at work and I need to stay late. This means we should decide together how best to get you home from practice. What do you think is a good plan? What would you like to do together after I get home?"</p>
<p>"Please chew with your mouth closed. I have asked you so many times. It is really unappealing and I don't want you grossing out your friends or teachers."</p>	<p><i>I can't change everything all at once. I'll never fit in here. I'll never be what you want me to be. I should just leave now before you kick me out.</i></p>	<p>"I know we've talked before about you chewing with your mouth closed. It must be really hard to change something you have done for so long. You have an awesome future ahead and I think this could help you along the way. Can you think of anything we could do together to help you break this habit?"</p>

# Developmental Relationships

Young people are more likely to grow up successfully when they experience developmental relationships with important people in their lives, including parenting adults. Developmental relationships are close connections through which young people discover who they are, cultivate abilities to shape their own lives, and learn how to engage with and contribute to the world around them. Search Institute has identified five elements—expressed in 20 specific actions—that make relationships powerful in young people’s lives.

				
Express Care	Challenge Growth	Provide Support	Share Power	Expand Possibilities
<p>Show me that I matter to you.</p>	<p>Push me to keep getting better.</p>	<p>Help me complete tasks and achieve goals.</p>	<p>Treat me with respect and give me a say.</p>	<p>Connect me with people and places that broaden my world.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Be dependable.</b> Be someone I can trust.</li> <li>• <b>Listen.</b> Really pay attention when we are together.</li> <li>• <b>Believe in me.</b> Make me feel known and valued.</li> <li>• <b>Be warm.</b> Show me you enjoy being with me.</li> <li>• <b>Encourage.</b> Praise me for my efforts and achievements.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Expect my best.</b> Expect me to live up to my potential.</li> <li>• <b>Stretch.</b> Push me to go further.</li> <li>• <b>Hold me accountable.</b> Insist that I take responsibility for my actions.</li> <li>• <b>Reflect on failures.</b> Help me learn from mistakes and setbacks.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Navigate.</b> Guide me through hard situations and systems.</li> <li>• <b>Empower.</b> Build my confidence to take charge of my life.</li> <li>• <b>Advocate.</b> Stand up for me when I need it.</li> <li>• <b>Set boundaries.</b> Put in place limits that keep me on track.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Respect me.</b> Take me seriously and treat me fairly.</li> <li>• <b>Include me.</b> Involve me in decisions that affect me.</li> <li>• <b>Collaborate.</b> Work with me to solve problems and reach goals.</li> <li>• <b>Let me lead.</b> Create opportunities for me to take action and lead.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Inspire.</b> Inspire me to see possibilities for my future.</li> <li>• <b>Broaden horizons.</b> Expose me to new ideas, experiences, and places.</li> <li>• <b>Connect.</b> Introduce me to people who can help me grow.</li> </ul>

NOTE: Relationships are, by definition, bidirectional, with each person giving and receiving. So each person in a strong relationship both engages in and experiences each of these actions. However, for the purpose of clarity, this framework is expressed from the perspective of one young person.



## Tips, Tricks & Advice

**What's a tip, trick, or piece of advice that has been helpful to you when working with adolescents who have experienced trauma?**

# CULTURALLY SENSITIVE APPROACHES TO TRAUMA

## APPROACHES THAT ARE NOT TRAUMA-INFORMED ASK:

“WHAT’S WRONG WITH YOU.”

### WHAT “HELP” LOOKS LIKE (NOT TRAUMA-INFORMED)

- The “helper” decides what “help” looks like.
- Focused on “needs” as defined by helper.
- Relationships are based solely on problem-solving and resource coordination, not creating meaningful connections.
- Safety is defined only as risk management.
- Common experience is assumed and defined by setting; i.e. in clinical setting experience is based only on “illness” and coping with “illness.”

## TRAUMA-INFORMED APPROACHES ASK:

“WHAT HAPPENED TO YOU.”

### WHAT “HELP” LOOKS LIKE (TRAUMA-INFORMED)

- • A sense of trust and safety is mutually defined, created, and sustained in all relationships.
- • Collaboration and shared decision-making exists.
- • Crisis becomes opportunity for growth and connection.
- • Authentic relationships are emphasized in a context of wellness.
- • It is recognized that people rarely have the same experience or make the same meaning out of similar events.

### COMMON CULTURAL MISTAKES ABOUT TRAUMA

- Assuming everyone who has experienced violence needs professional help.
- Focusing on the most extreme instances of violence as the most damaging.
- Assuming that violence is unusual, an aberration, and generally perpetrated by individuals.
- Relying only on DSM diagnoses or lists of trauma “symptoms.”
- Applying norms and standards of behavior without considering political and social context.
- Assuming that one person’s story represents the “typical” story for a group of people.
- Inadvertently highlighting the stories of people that fit cultural stereotypes.
- Assuming that if people speak English, you don’t have to worry about an interpreter or translated documents.
- Assuming that people always (or never) want to tell their stories and that if people want help they will ask for it.

### MORE CULTURALLY SENSITIVE APPROACHES TO TRAUMA (5)

- • Assuming people are resilient and giving them many opportunities to tell you if they need help.
- • Allowing individuals to define what aspects of their experiences have been most traumatic and recognizing that this may change over time.
- • Recognizing that violence is perpetrated by groups and institutions, not only individuals, and may be so common that people become desensitized to it.
- • Recognizing that political and social oppression may affect priorities and values; allowing individuals to define the meaning of their experiences.
- • Recognizing that trauma responses are varied and that different cultures express grief and loss and understand trauma differently; learning how different people and cultures express distress.
- • Recognizing that one person’s story is just one person’s story.
- • Providing opportunities for many people to share their stories, noticing what is unique, and making sure many points of view are represented.
- • Recognizing that some topics are very difficult to talk about in anything other than your first language; knowing and acting within the law about provision of language assistance services.
- • Being aware that self-disclosure and help-seeking vary widely across cultures and may be dependent upon whether an individual feels safe; learning different cultural norms and expectations.

The background features several decorative elements: a large orange ring with a dashed red inner circle in the top left; a large teal ring in the bottom right; a large teal circle with a dashed teal border in the top center; a large green circle with a dashed green border in the middle right; a large yellow circle with a dashed yellow border in the middle right; a large green circle with a dashed green border in the bottom left; a large teal circle with a dashed teal border in the bottom right; and several smaller solid circles in orange, green, yellow, and pink scattered throughout.

1

Making It Happen!

What is ONE thing you can do, try, or share in the coming month?





# PEACE

“It does not mean to be in a place where there is no noise, trouble, or hard work. It means to be in the midst of these things and still be calm in your heart.”

--Author Unknown

Thanks!



Any questions?

The National Resource Center for Youth Services

[nrcys.ou.edu](http://nrcys.ou.edu)



## Credits

ACEs Connection. [www.acesconnection.com](http://www.acesconnection.com)

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