

Trauma and Its Impact

*Northwest MHTTC
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Learning Objectives

Participants will be able to:

- Explain the difference between acute, chronic, and developmental trauma
- Give three examples of how trauma can affect people's engagement in services
- Name one example each of the bio-psycho-social-spiritual-communal impact of trauma
- Identify three ways to make our services more trauma-informed



An invitation



Trauma- awareness: Entering the shadows



**How might survivors
of long-term trauma
complete this stem?**

The world is...

They always think that I...

I will never be...

I am...

If they really cared...



“Unspeakable”

“Trauma is the most avoided, ignored, denied, misunderstood, and untreated cause of human suffering.”

Peter A. Levine in Healing Trauma

“The ordinary response to atrocities is to banish them from consciousness.”

Judith Lewis Herman, Trauma and Recovery

**“A jackhammer,
sledgehammer,
vacuum sweeper,
lawn mower”**



Under Construction

Heidi H.

I used to have no trespassing signs all over my body
Some people don't know the meaning of boundaries

One day they came busted down my door

they came in violating code

they tore up my floors and gutted my soul

they put a jackhammer through my walls

and a sledgehammer to my head.

I have enough yellow police tape to hang myself.

Untitled

Catherine H.

Trying to get close to my mother was like
getting close with a vacuum sweeper;
And being close with my father has been
being close with a lawn mower.



“Trauma disconnects people from their bodies. In love we are 'swept off our feet.' In trauma, our legs are pulled out from under us.”

Peter Levine



“Normal”

“I was taken from my mother when I was five years old. Every day I looked after the herd. Every night I was raped by my master. I always thought, without understanding, that this was normal.

In Mauritania, where I’m from, hundreds of thousands of people are still held this way today. But I was lucky. My brother escaped his masters and found an organization working to stop slavery. He asked them to help free me.

But when they came to take me away, at first I completely refused. I couldn’t imagine a life away from my masters... This was the only life I had ever known.”

Haby mint Rabah, Avaaz Sept 2015



“A thief”

What gets stolen?



Safety; ability to trust; dignity;
connection to one's own body;
inner calm; feeling grounded; self-
regulation of emotions and
behaviors; belief in goodness of self
and others; healthy relationships;
optimism; sense of lightness of
being; ease of problem-solving;
ability to respond vs. react; sense
of autonomy; self-confidence;
empowerment; health protective
factors; overall well-being



Relevance of trauma-informed approaches in our work

Traumatic experiences have a direct impact on people's overall health and well-being

Traumatic experiences have a direct impact on *how* people engage in services and care

If someone discloses current or past trauma, it's important to know how to respond

Knowing about the impact of trauma can improve health outcomes

Understanding trauma can help you better manage risk



Ways our services can re-traumatize

Lack of privacy

Unwanted physical touch (even when well-intended)

Personal questions that may be embarrassing/distressing

Expert-recipient vs. partnering approach

Only one right way

Unresolved trauma that's transmitted

Institutional inequities

Staff bias – race, ethnicity, gender, sexual identity, class

Either/or thinking

Rigid policies and procedures

Other



How trauma can affect people's engagement in services

Avoidance due to fear of not being seen, heard, taken seriously, believed

Fear of placing trust in others, being controlled, exploited, abandoned

More comfortable with transactional relationships

Difficulty keeping appointments, following up on referrals, following through with plans (fear, avoidance, impaired memory, poor decision-making)

Other



Why a trauma-informed approach matters for clients and staff

People receive better services and care

Staff able to cope more effectively with their work and is associated with greater resilience among workers

Promotes staff retention and reduces turnover

Reduces levels of vicarious trauma experienced by staff



Kintsukuroi (keen-tsoo-koo-roy)



The Japanese art of mending pottery using gold or silver lacquer. The broken and mended pot becomes even more beautiful than the original. A compelling metaphor for how pain, grief, and trauma in our lives can transform us in positive, even beautiful ways.



Video: Chad

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sFH6GRoASKg>

1. In what ways was the trauma Chad experienced unspeakable, normal, a thief?
2. Who and what was helpful in dealing with his trauma?

Video: Chad



Chad

1. In what ways was the trauma Chad experienced unspeakable... normal... a thief? Other metaphors?
2. Who and what was helpful in dealing with his trauma?

Trauma

Definitions, sources, types,
prevalence



Stress

negative

stress

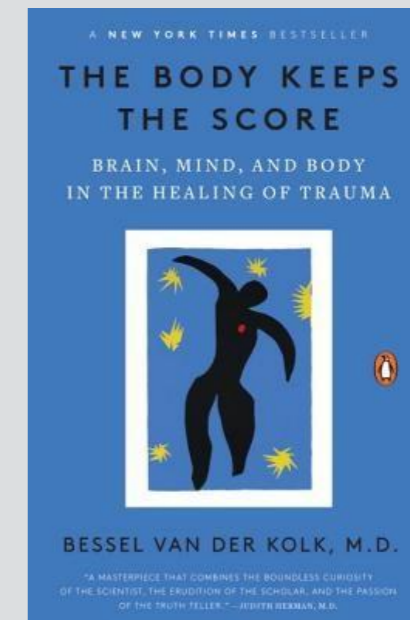
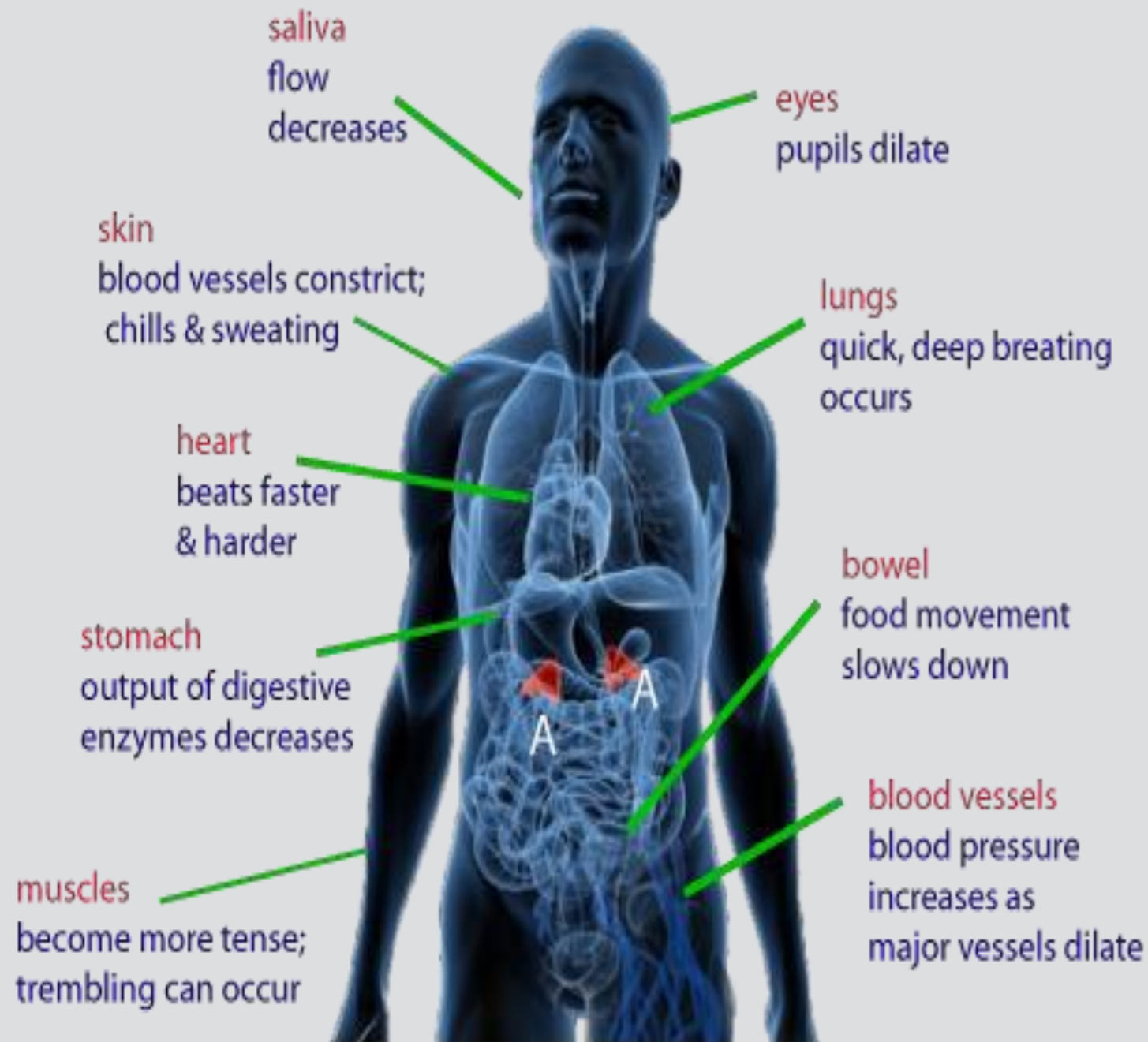
transmittic

stress

POST-traumatic
STRESS

Human Stress Response

Fight or Flight Response



The physiologic stress response is due to massive amounts of cortisol and adrenaline being released

Overwhelming demands placed upon the physiological system that result in a profound felt sense of vulnerability and/or loss of control.

Robert D. Macy



Traumatic stress

“Traumatic events overwhelm the ordinary systems of care that give people a sense of control, connection, and meaning.”

Judith Herman

What makes an experience traumatic?

- The experience involves a threat to one's physical or emotional well-being.
- It is overwhelming.
- It results in intense feelings of fear and lack of control.
- It leaves people feeling helpless.
- It changes the way a person understands themselves, the world and others.



“Being traumatized means continuing to organize your life as if the trauma were still going on – unchanged and immutable – as every new encounter or event is contaminated by the past.”

Bessel van der Kolk, The Body Keeps the Score





“Long after the actual event has passed, the brain may keep sending signals to the body to escape a threat that no longer exists.”

Bessel van der Kolk, The Body Keeps the Score

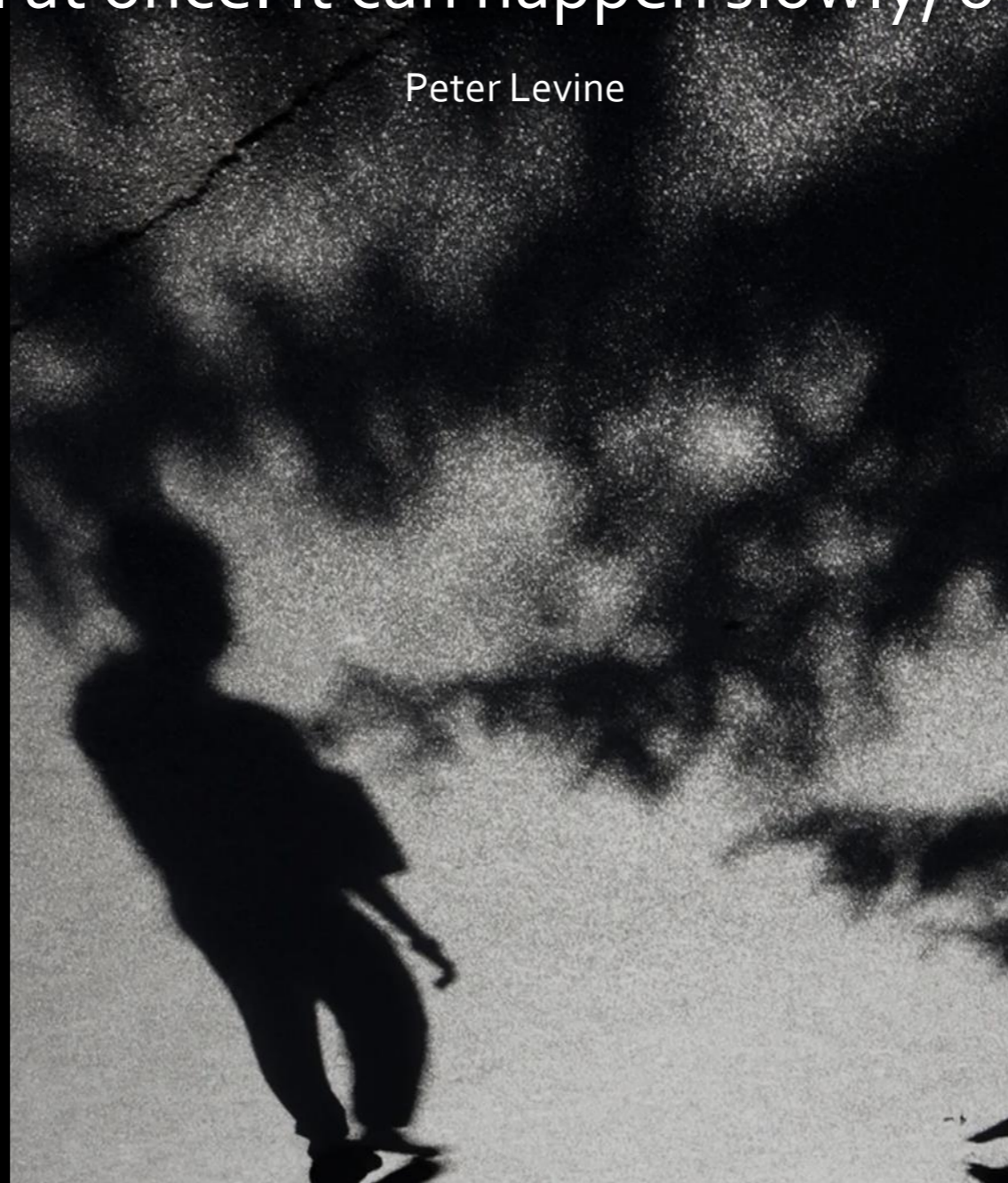
“Trauma almost invariably involves
not being *seen*, not being *mirrored*,
and not being *taken into account*.”

Bessel van der Kolk, The Body Keeps the Score



“In short, trauma is about loss of connection — to ourselves, to our bodies, to our families, to others, and to the world around us... It is often hard to recognize, because it doesn’t happen all at once. It can happen slowly, over time...”

Peter Levine



Sources of Trauma



“Natural” and humanmade disasters

Human events

Interpersonal violence/abuse

Insidious trauma

Historical/generational/system-induced trauma

Types of Trauma

Acute

Trauma from a one-time event

Chronic

Multiple traumatic experiences that occur over time

Complex (Developmental)

Trauma that starts in early childhood and impacts learning, developing, coping, and relationships into adulthood

Developmental (Complex) Trauma: The Hidden Epidemic

“Anthony”

Prevalence of trauma

Finding Your ACE Score

While you were growing up, during your first 18 years of life:

1. Did a parent or other adult in the household **often or very often**...
Swear at you, insult you, put you down, or humiliate you?
or
Act in a way that made you afraid that you might be physically hurt?
Yes No If yes enter 1 _____
2. Did a parent or other adult in the household **often or very often**...
Push, grab, slap, or throw something at you?
or
Ever hit you so hard that you had marks or were injured?
Yes No If yes enter 1 _____
3. Did an adult or person at least 5 years older than you **ever**...
Touch or fondle you or have you touch their body in a sexual way?
or
Attempt or actually have oral, anal, or vaginal intercourse with you?
Yes No If yes enter 1 _____
4. Did you **often or very often** feel that ...
No one in your family loved you or thought you were important or special?
or
Your family didn't look out for each other, feel close to each other, or support each other?
Yes No If yes enter 1 _____
5. Did you **often or very often** feel that ...
You didn't have enough to eat, had to wear dirty clothes, and had no one to protect you?
or
Your parents were too drunk or high to take care of you or take you to the doctor if you needed it?
Yes No If yes enter 1 _____
6. Were your parents **ever** separated or divorced?
Yes No If yes enter 1 _____
7. Was your mother or stepmother:
Often or very often pushed, grabbed, slapped, or had something thrown at her?
or
Sometimes, often, or very often kicked, bitten, hit with a fist, or hit with something hard?
or
Ever repeatedly hit at least a few minutes or threatened with a gun or knife?
Yes No If yes enter 1 _____
8. Did you live with anyone who was a problem drinker or alcoholic or who used street drugs?
Yes No If yes enter 1 _____
9. Was a household member depressed or mentally ill, or did a household member attempt suicide?
Yes No If yes enter 1 _____
10. Did a household member go to prison?
Yes No If yes enter 1 _____

Now add up your "Yes" answers: _____ This is your ACE Score.

ACE Study

Adverse Childhood Experiences

ACE study participants

17,337 Kaiser Permanente members

Recruited between 1995-97

Nearly half female, half male

74.8% white

Average age = 57

75.2 had attended college

All had jobs and good health care (Kaiser HMO)



Questions asked

Types of childhood trauma



- Physical abuse
- Sexual abuse
- Emotional abuse
- Physical neglect
- Emotional neglect
- Mother treated violently
- Household substance abuse
- Household mental illness
- Parental separation or divorce
- Incarcerated household member

What's missing?

Explicit and implicit bias/racism, witnessing violence outside the home, bullying, losing a parent to deportation, living in an unsafe neighborhood, involvement with the foster care system, experiencing homelessness, living in a war zone, moving many times, witnessing a sibling being abused, witnessing a father/caregiver/extended family member being abused, involvement with the criminal justice system, attending a school that enforces a zero-tolerance discipline policy...

ACE study findings



ACEs are much more common than anticipated or recognized

Center for Nonviolence and Social Justice

ACE study findings

About two-thirds reported at least one ACE

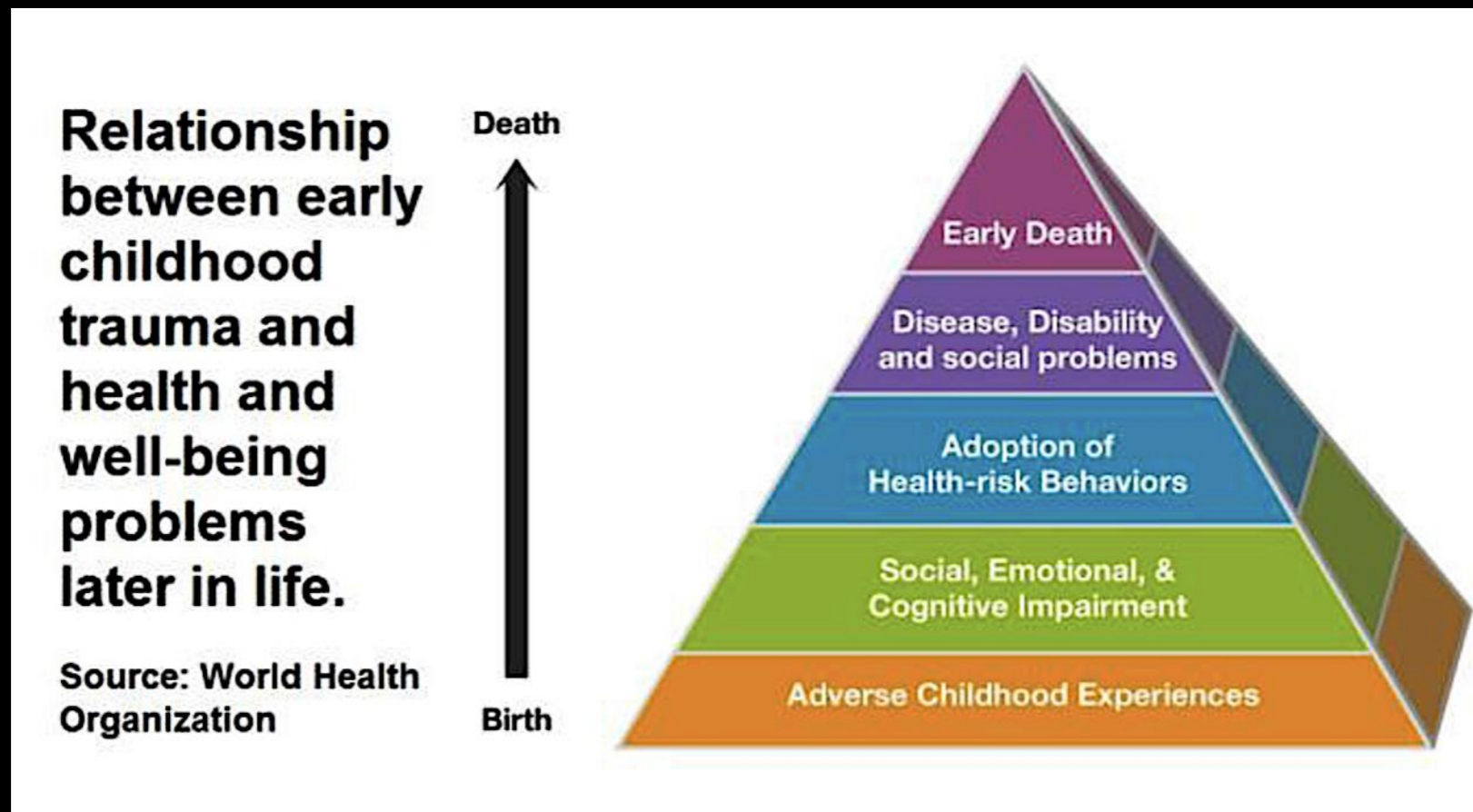
87% with one ACE reported at least one additional ACE

Prevalence of

- emotional abuse 10.6%
- physical abuse 28.3%
- sexual abuse 20.7%
- emotional neglect 14.8%
- physical neglect 9.9%

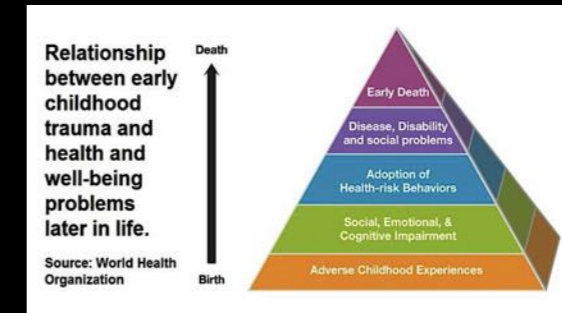


ACE study findings



ACEs have a powerful correlation to health outcomes later in life

ACE study findings



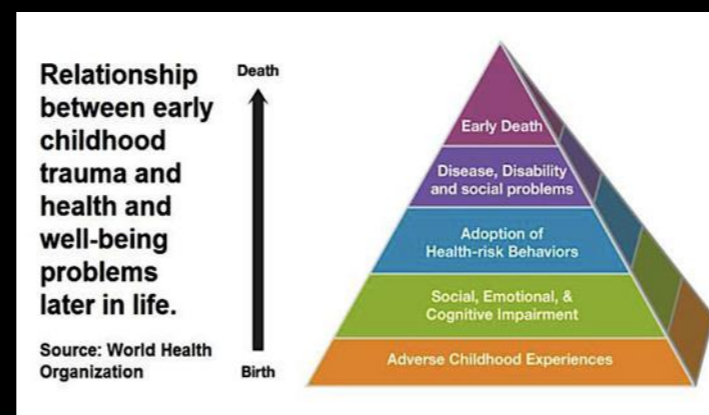
Impact of Trauma

Increases the risk of neurological, biological, psychological and/or social difficulties such as:

- Changes in brain neurobiology;
- Social, emotional & cognitive impairment;
- Adoption of health risk behaviors as coping mechanisms (eating disorders, smoking, substance misuse, self harm, sexual promiscuity, violence); and
- Severe and persistent behavioral health, physical health and social problems, early death.

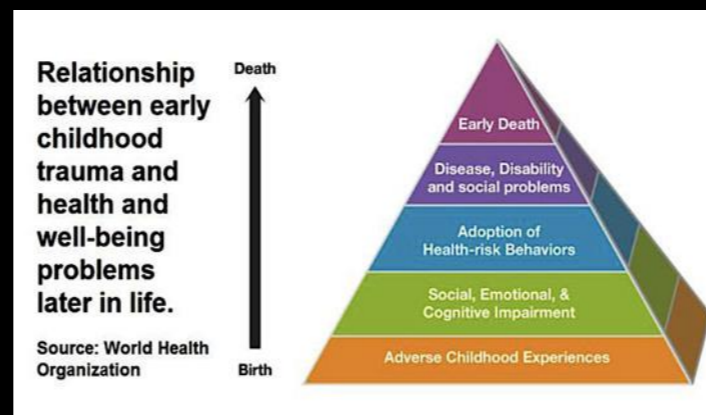
Correlation of ACEs to Health Outcomes

ACEs have a strong influence on adolescent health, teen pregnancy, smoking, substance misuse, sexual behavior, the risk of re-victimization, performance in the work force, and the stability of relationships, among other health determinants.



Correlation of ACEs to Health Outcomes

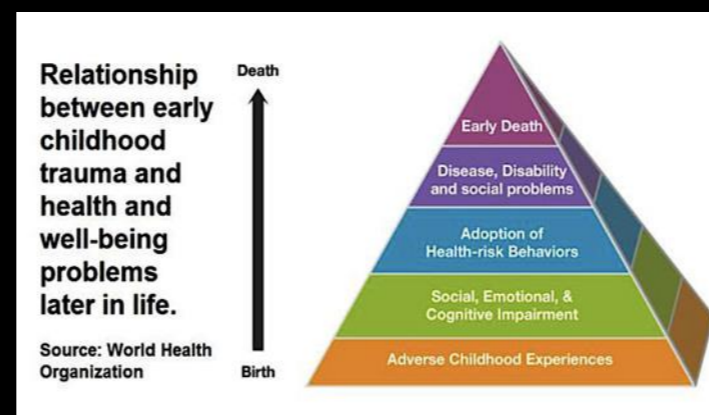
The higher the ACE score, the greater the risk of heart disease, lung disease, liver disease, suicide, HIV and STDs, and other risks for the leading causes of death.



Correlation of ACEs to Health Outcomes

Compared to ACE score of zero, *four* adverse childhood experiences associated with:

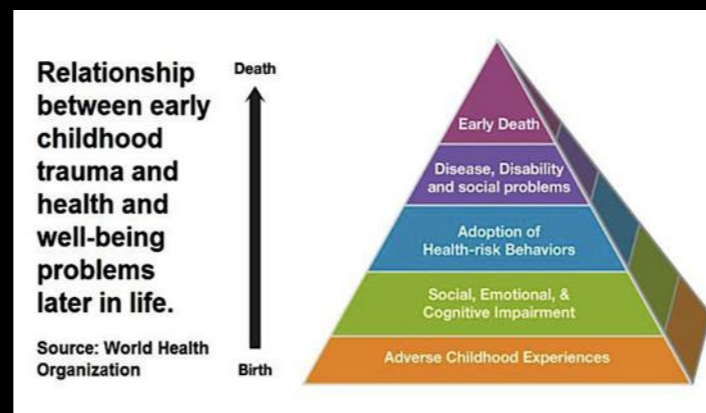
- *seven-fold* increase in alcoholism
- *doubling* of risk of being diagnosed with cancer
- *four-fold* increase in emphysema



Correlation of ACEs to Health Outcomes

People with an ACE score of *six or higher* die nearly 20 years earlier than those whose ACE score is zero

An ACE score *above six* was associated with a 30-fold increase in attempted suicide



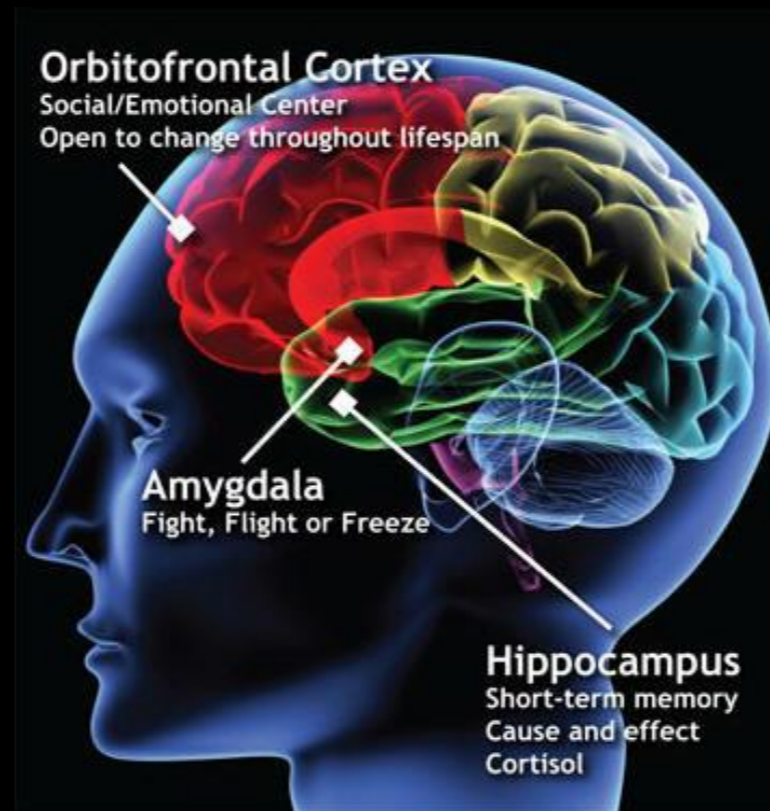
Understanding the pervasive

Impact

of trauma



Trauma and the brain



Trauma and the Brain



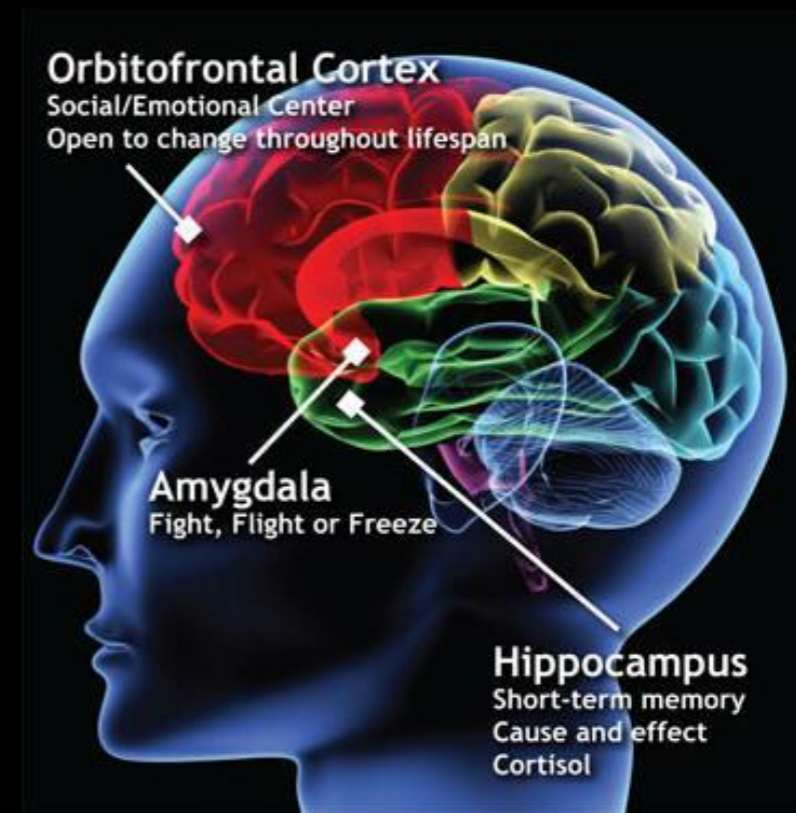
Trauma and the brain

Our brains are sculpted by our early experiences

Martin Teicher, MD, PhD

The most important job of the brain is to ensure our survival, even under the most miserable conditions.

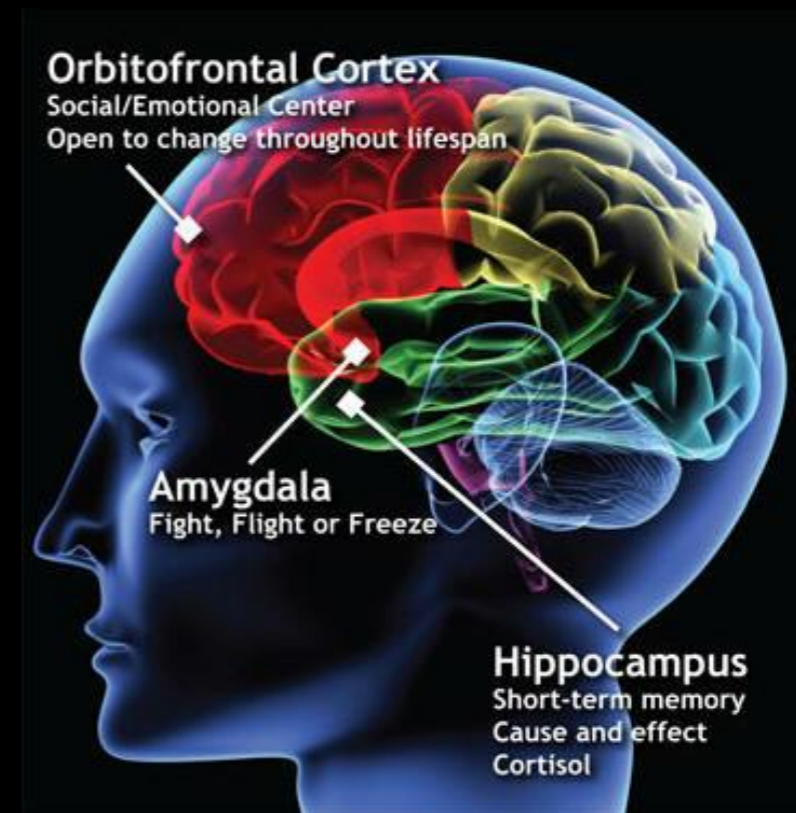
Bessel van der Kolk, The Body Keeps the Score



Trauma and the brain

“Neurons that fire together wire together...if you feel safe and loved your brain becomes ‘wired’ for play and exploration; if you are frightened, unwanted, you become ‘wired’ to manage feelings of fear and abandonment.”

Bessel van der Kolk, *The Body Keeps the Score*



How the brain tries to protect us



The bio-psycho-social- spiritual-communal impact of trauma



Impact of Trauma: Physical health

Chronic health conditions (diabetes, high BP, asthma)

Headaches

Chronic pain

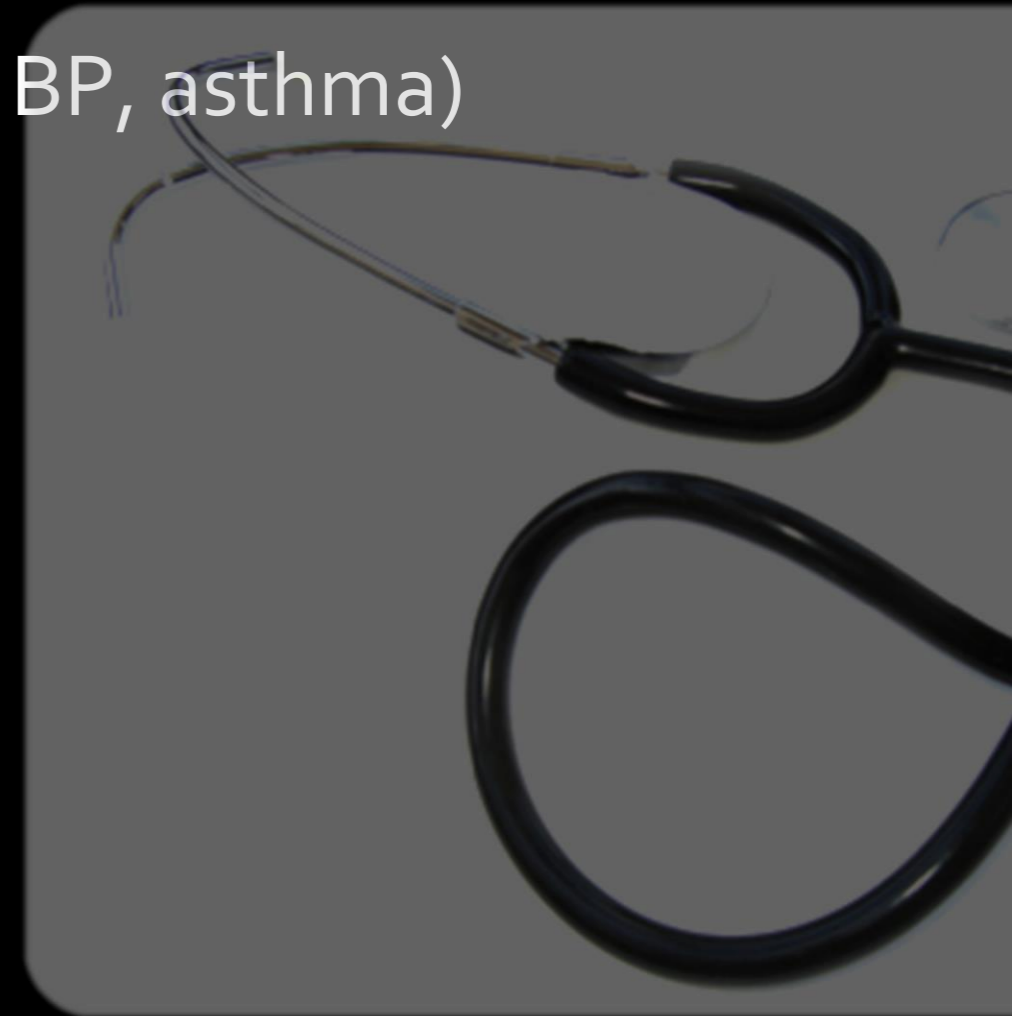
Gynecological difficulties

Gastrointestinal (GI) problems

Cancer

Musculoskeletal difficulties

Autoimmune disorders



Impact of Trauma:

Ability to function

Self-regulation of behaviors and emotions

High levels of distress, anxiety, sometimes panic

Confusion, disorientation, loss of control

Dissociation

Intrusive thoughts, hyper-arousal, avoidance

Re-experiencing traumatic events (triggers)

Impact of Trauma:

Mental health

Depression

Anxiety

Suicide

Somatization

Eating disorders

Borderline personality disorder

Post-traumatic stress disorder



Characteristics of PTSD

Intrusion

Flashbacks
Nightmares
Recurrent images
Intense response to triggers

Avoidance

Constricted activities
Avoiding reminders of
the trauma

Hyper-arousal

Irritability
Poor concentration
Hyper-vigilance

Dissociation

Not remembering
Feeling detached,
disconnected, numb

Impact of Trauma: Shattered spirit and belief systems

The world is unsafe

Other people are unsafe and cannot be trusted

God has abandoned me

My own thoughts and feelings are unsafe

I'm unworthy

I'm not capable



Impact of Trauma:

Social

Difficulty trusting others, lack of empathy

Social isolation and/or overattachment

Boundary issues

Unable to comfortably rest in the arms of another

Unstable relationships

Impact of Trauma: Communal

The social-cultural environment

The economic and social processes that concentrate poverty and urban decay in inner city neighborhoods damage social networks and trust, the ability to take action for change, and social norms.

Impact of Trauma: Communal

The physical/built environment

Economic and social changes in the last 50 years have led to communities where high rates of poverty are concentrated in neighborhoods with crumbling infrastructure: There are dilapidated buildings and deteriorating roads, poor transportation services and crippled local economies. The pressures of gentrification and displacement have become an added element in the toxic stress that exacerbates community trauma in poor inner-city, and suburban, communities.

Impact of Trauma: Communal

The economic environment

Multiple studies have found that levels of violence, crime and delinquency, education, psychological distress, and various health problems are affected by neighborhood characteristics, particularly the concentration of poverty. The stressors of living with inadequate access to economic and educational opportunities or inequitable opportunities can also indicate trauma at the community level.



grief
guilt
shame



grief

“I feel badly”

guilt

“I did something bad”

shame

“I am bad”



“The compassion we seek is that which stands in awe at what (people) have to carry, rather than stand in judgment about how they carry it.”

Fr. Gregory Boyle, *Tattoos on the Heart*

Thank you!

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