



# Building a Trauma-Informed Community

A workshop sponsored by Trauma-  
Informed Hampshire County



# What is psychological trauma?

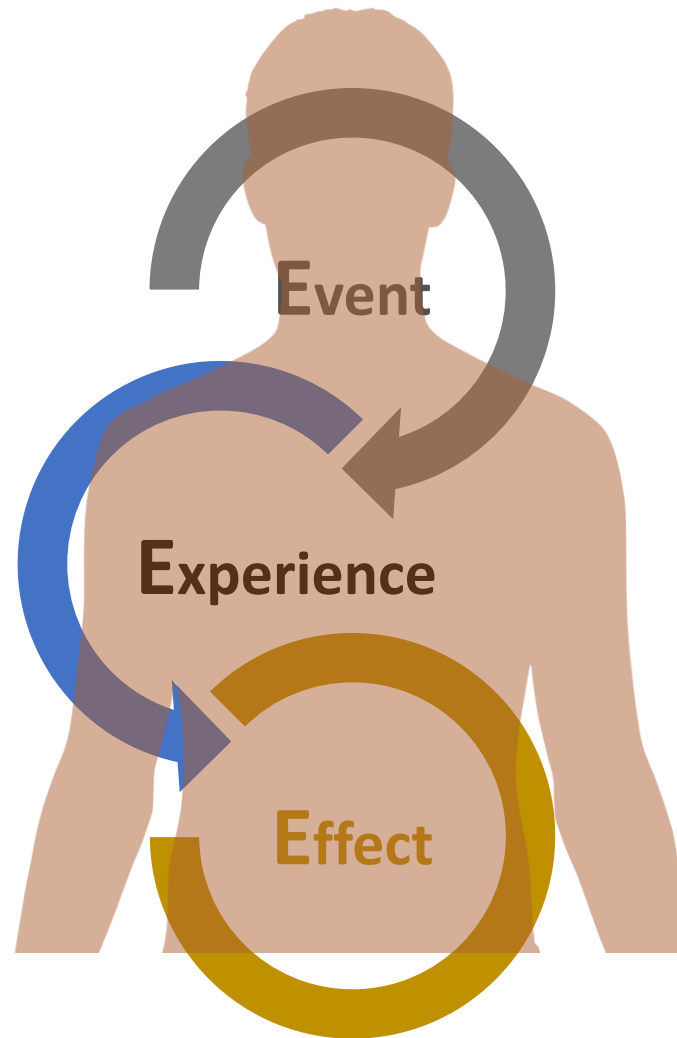
Trauma is a unique individual experience of an event or enduring situation where:

- The person's ability to integrate their emotional experience is overwhelmed

AND

- The person experiences it as physically or emotionally harmful and/or life threatening.

# The 3 E's of Trauma



# What is Adversity?

- Difficult life circumstances or events that may be extremely stressful and can have negative health outcomes.
- “Childhood adversity” – When the circumstances or events happen in childhood, they can be especially harmful.
- These circumstances or events may or not be traumatic.

# What is Adversity cont'd

- It is even more intense for marginalized or structurally excluded groups such as people of color and those who identify as LGBTQIA+
- Things like systemic oppression, colonization and historical trauma can be harder to see or name directly but can have deep, long-lasting effects on a person or family for generations.

# What Is Resilience?



Alicia Mary Smith

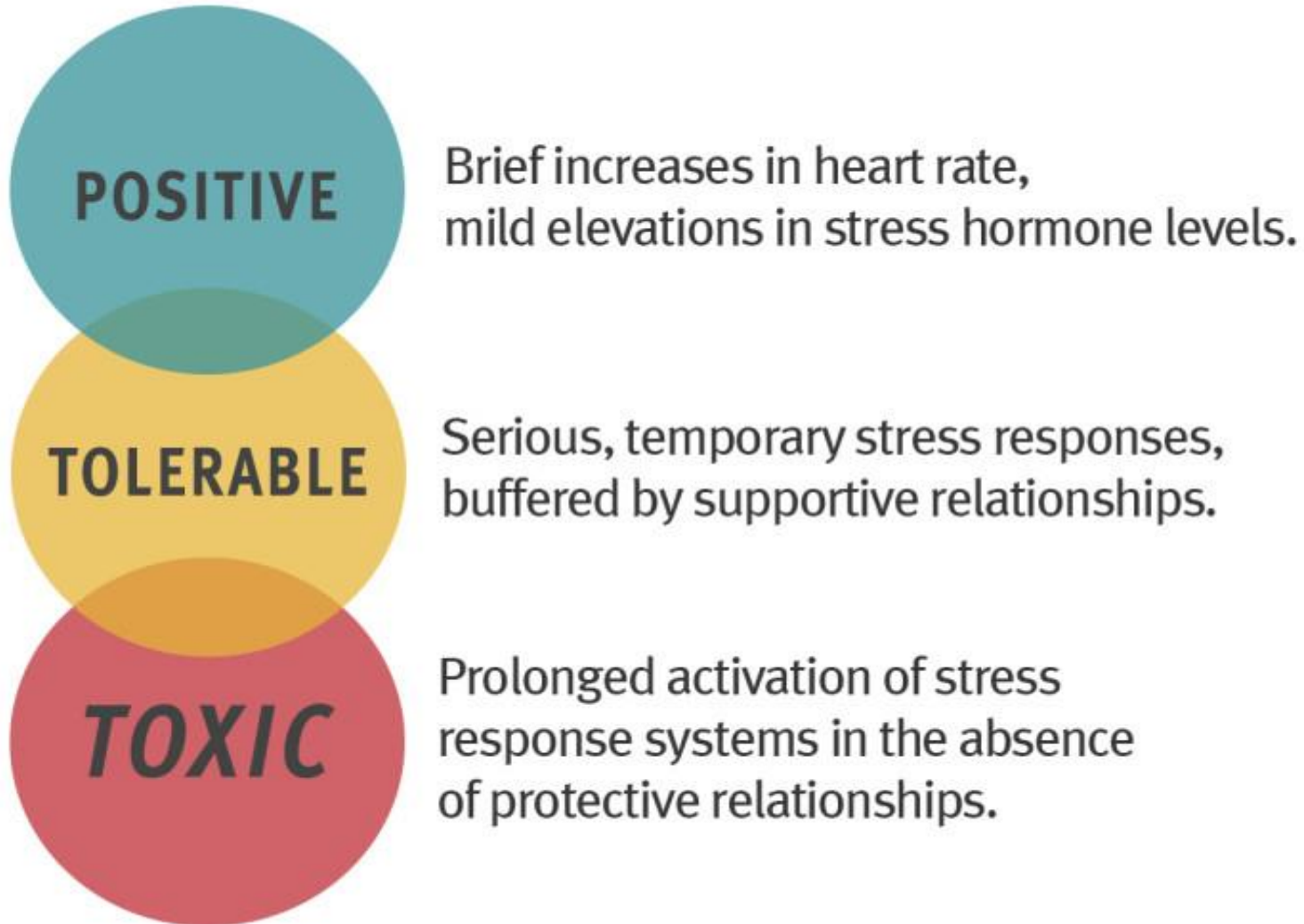
“Successful adaptation in the face of biological challenges and stressful or traumatic life events.”

Dr. Emmy Werner, 1992

*In other words:*

The ability to “bounce back” from difficult events

# Three Kinds of Stress



# Lifelong Impact of Trauma and Adversity

Adverse Childhood Experiences  
(ACE) Study





# Story of the Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) Study

Very large sample -- 17,000 patients at Kaiser  
Permanente Health Maintenance Organization (HMO)

Average age: 57

Mostly white

High-functioning

All insured

Middle and upper middle class

74% attended college

Anda et al., 2006

# ACE Categories

## **ABUSE AND NEGLECT**

- Emotional abuse
- Physical abuse
- Sexual abuse
- Emotional neglect
- Physical neglect

## **HOUSEHOLD DYSFUNCTION**

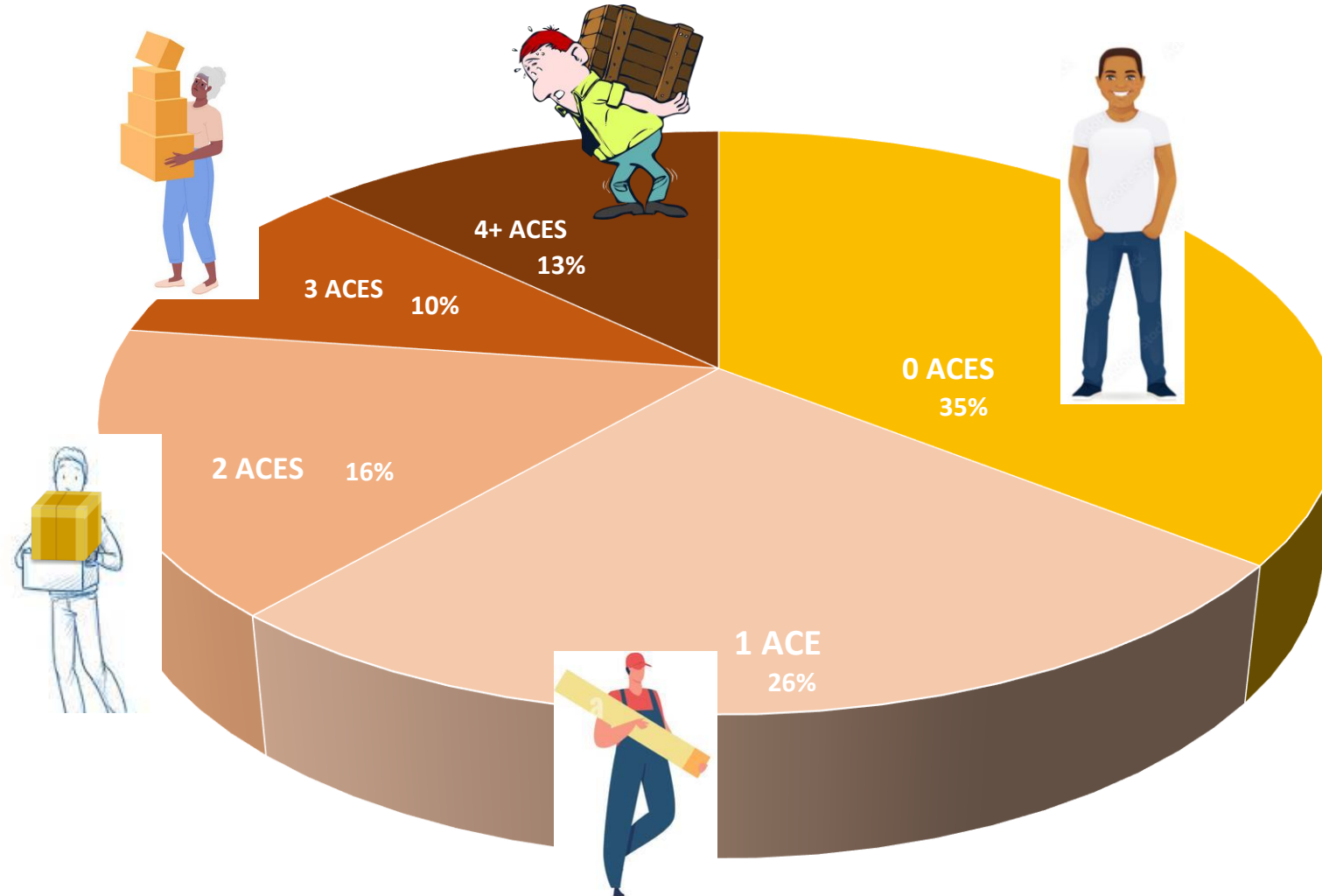
- Mother treated violently
- Household substance abuse
- Household mental illness
- Parental separation or divorce
- Incarcerated household member

## **SYSTEMIC/ENVIRONMENTAL\***

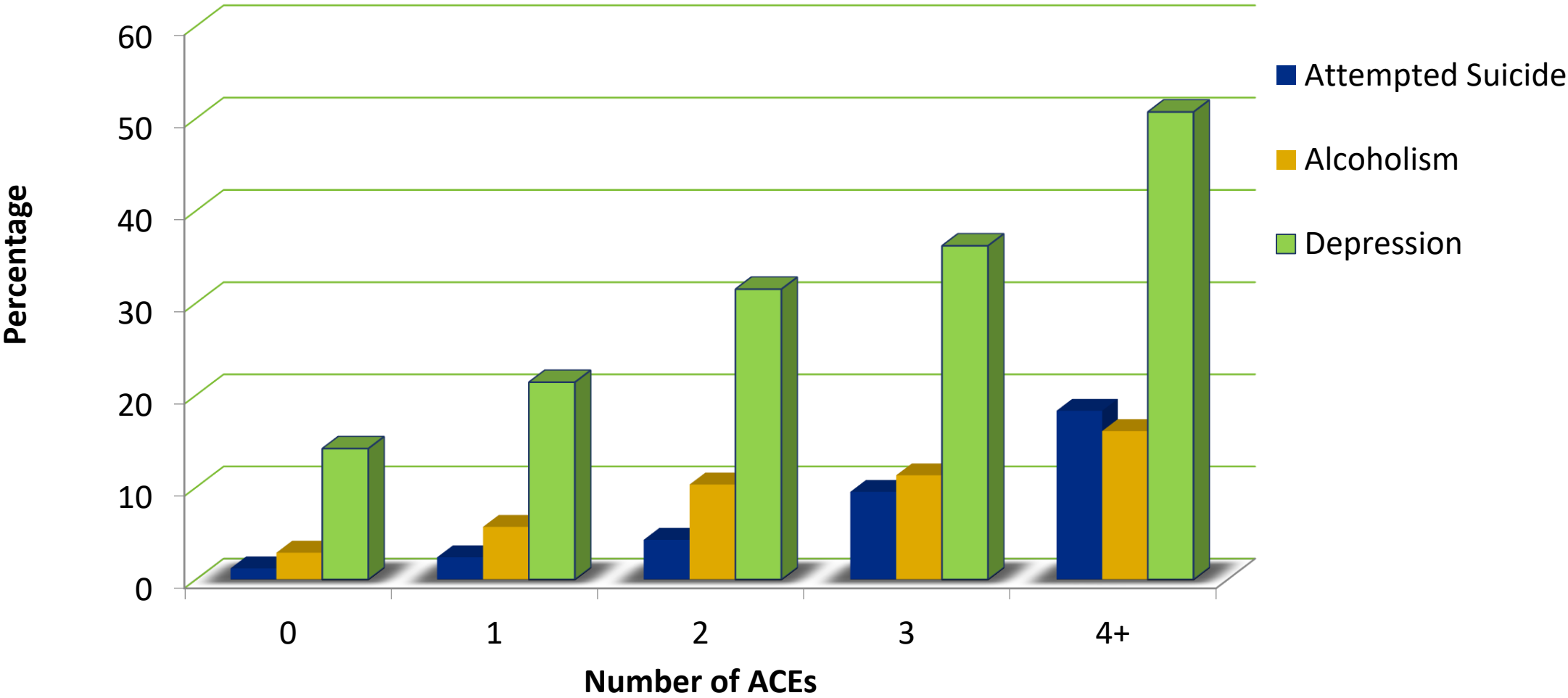
- Structural racism
- Witnessing violence
- Unsafe neighborhoods
- Living in foster care
- Experiencing bullying
- Environmental disasters
- Pandemics

\* not included in initial Kaiser Study

# Findings: There are high rates of ACEs(Adverse Childhood Experiences)in the general population

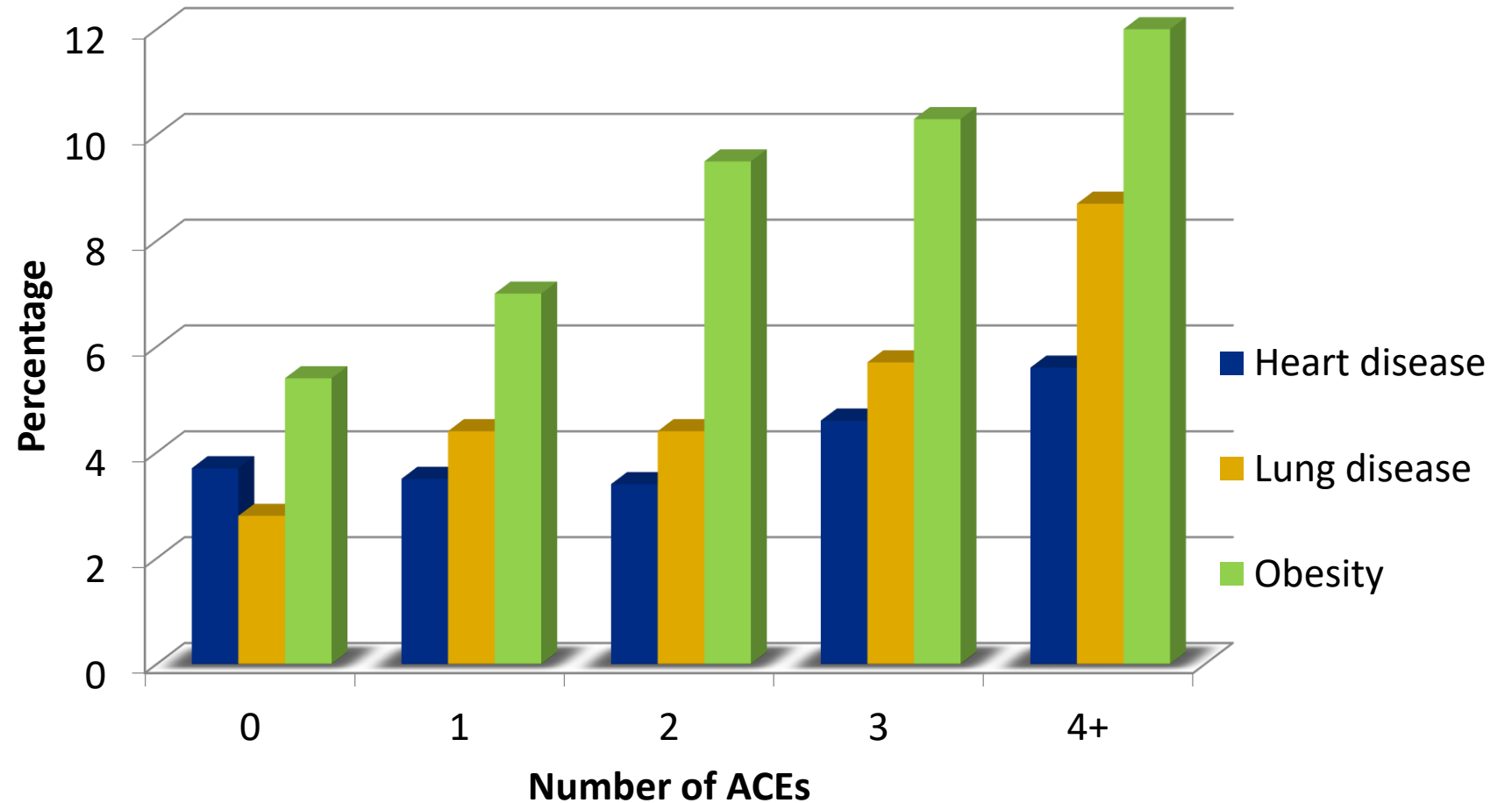


# Findings: High Association to Negative Behavioral Health Outcomes

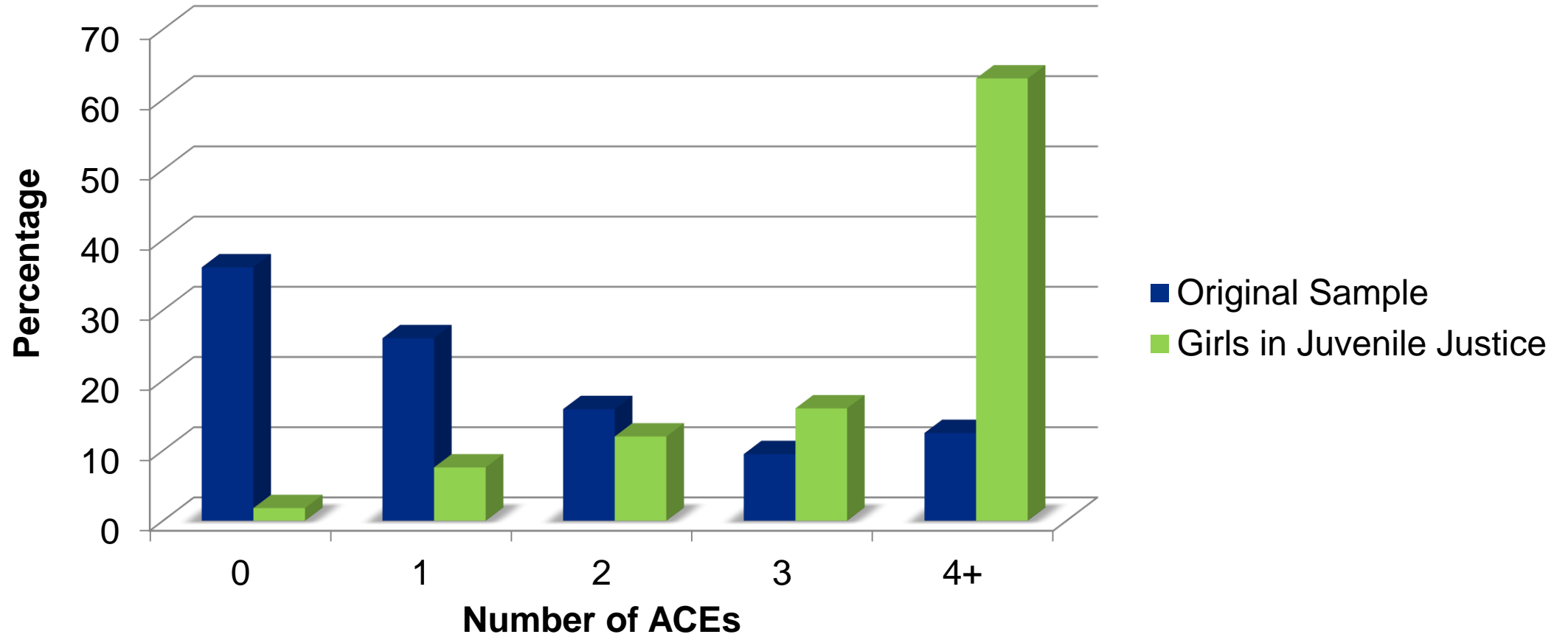


# Findings: High Association to Negative Physical Health Outcomes

- Negative impacts BEYOND mental health
- Repeated stress has lifelong impact
- Physiological impact on cellular level



# Original Sample vs. Girls in Juvenile Justice



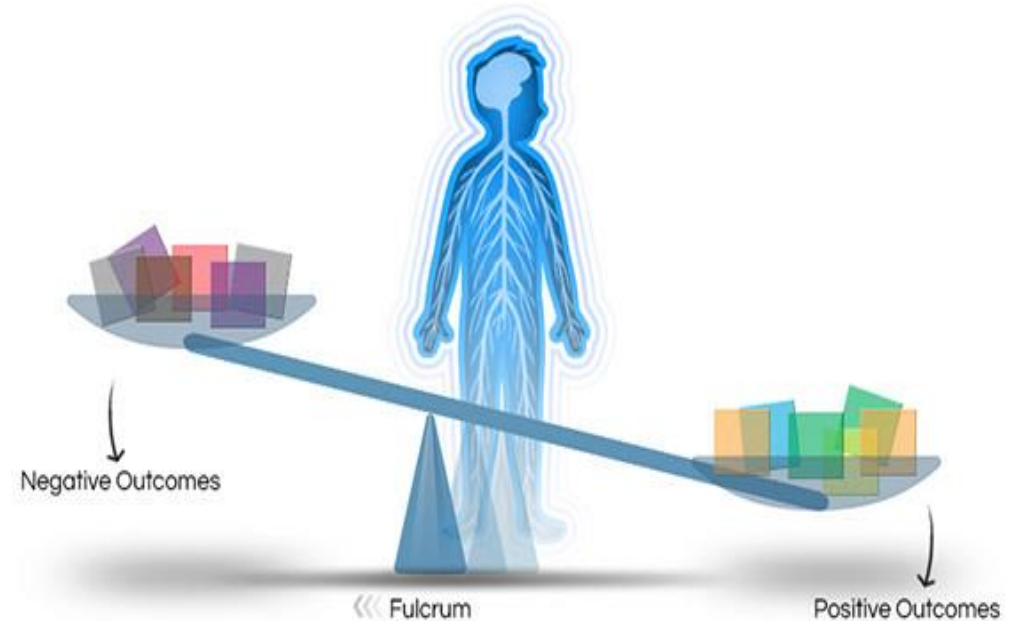
Anda et al., 2006 Reavis, Looman, Franco, & Rojas, 2013  
Baglivio et al., 2014  
Slide created by [Traumatic Stress Institute](https://www.traumaticstressinstitute.com)

# Resilience Rises Above ACEs

## Resiliency Factors

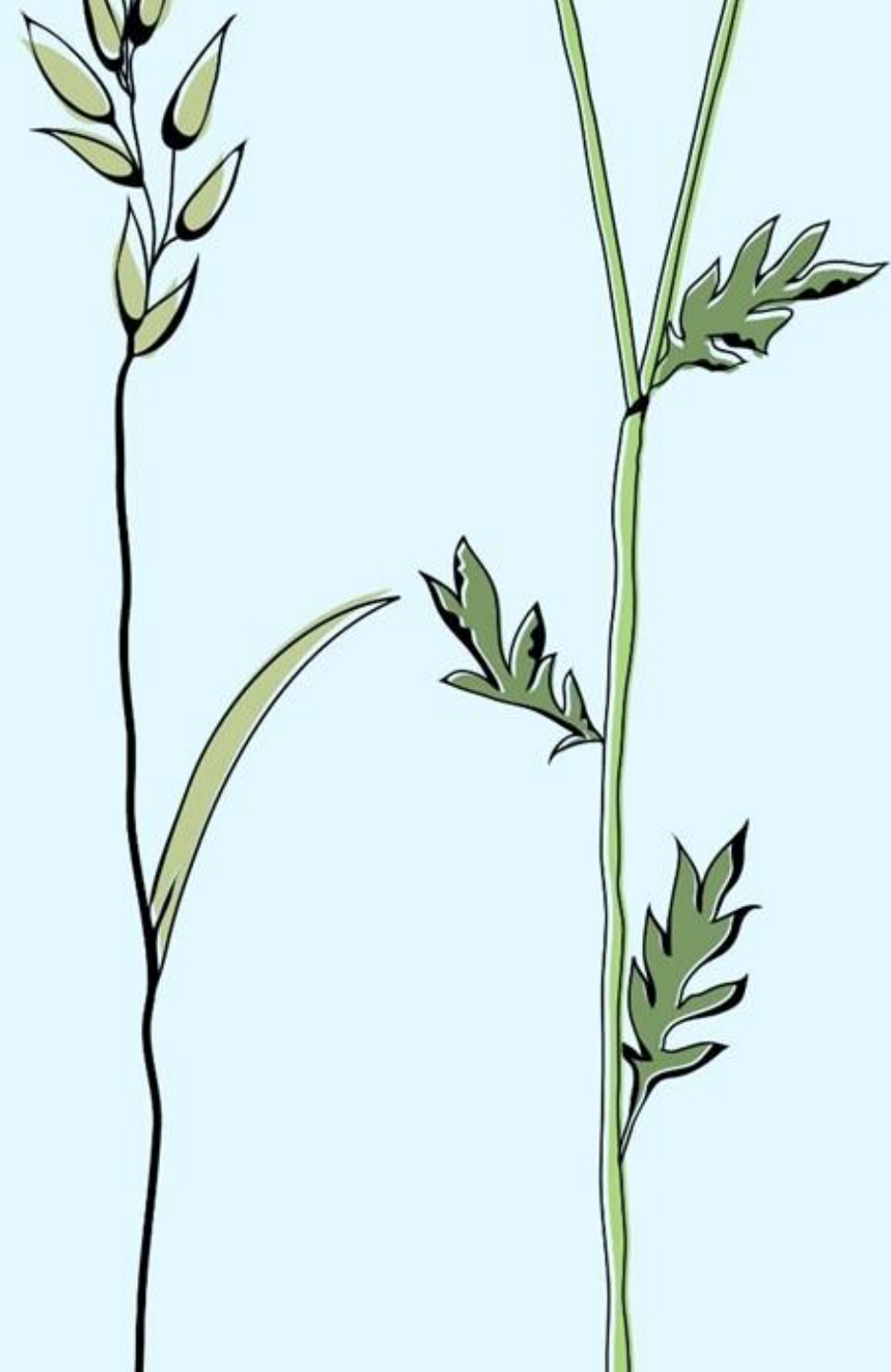
- A stable relationship with a supportive person
- Feeling connected to a community
- Access to sources of faith, hope, and cultural traditions.

***ACEs Are Not Destiny***



Harvard Center of the Developing Child  
Slide created by [Traumatic Stress Institute](#)

# Trauma-Informed Care





# Trauma-Informed Care

## Reframing Our Response to Challenging Behavior:

**From:** “What’s *wrong* with you?”

**To:** “What *happened* to you?”



# What Is Trauma-Informed Care (TIC)?

## The 4 **R**'s

A philosophy or approach where all parts of a community or system:

**REALIZE** the pervasive impact of ACEs and trauma

**RECOGNIZE** the signs of trauma in people impacted

**RESPOND** by applying the principles of TIC to all parts of community

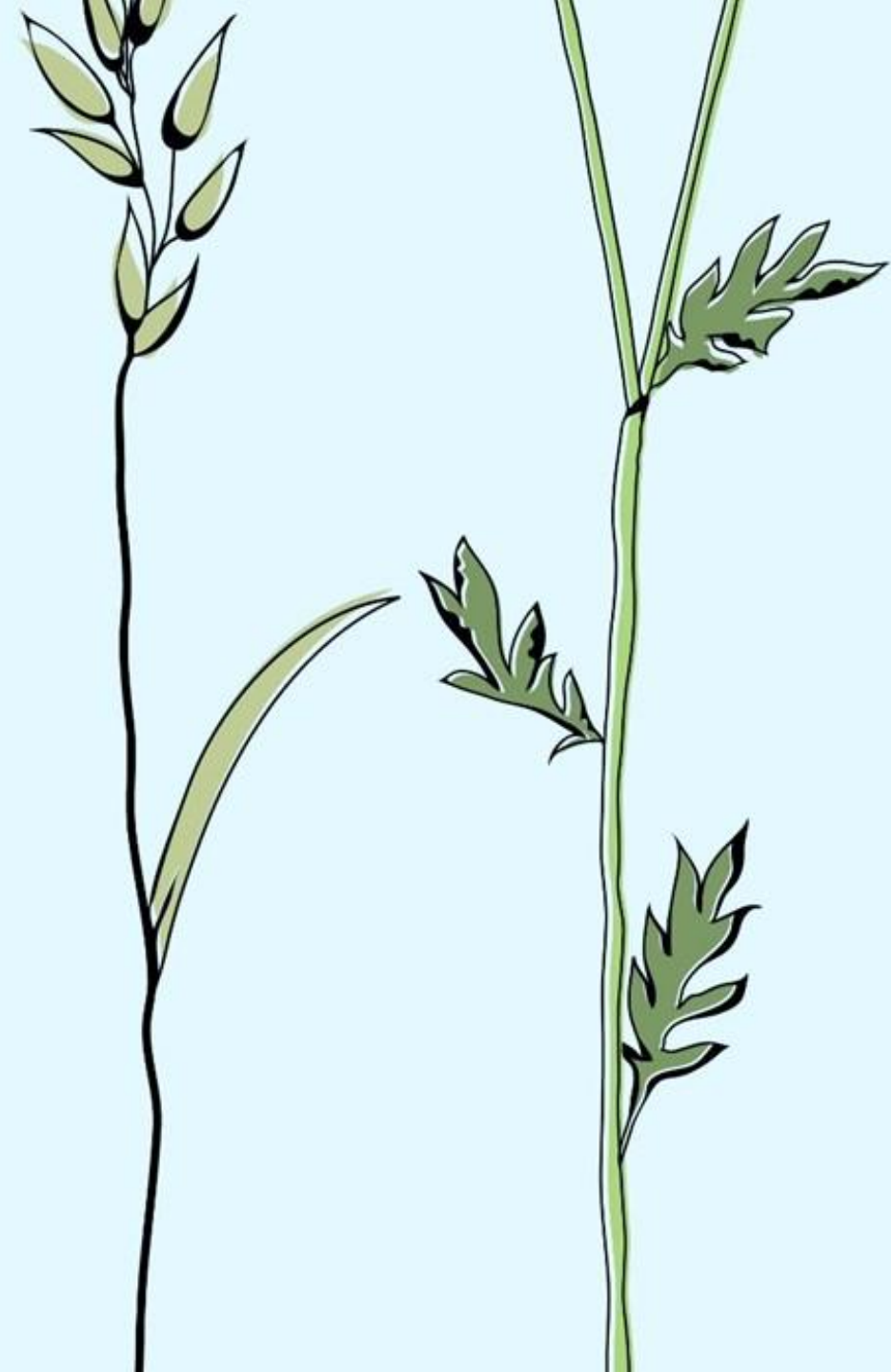
**RESIST RE-TRAUMATIZATION** - provide services and a community environment that heals rather than make things worse

(SAMHSA, 2014)

An approach where all parts of a community:

**STRENGTHEN RESILIENCY FACTORS**

# How Trauma-Informed Care Applies to You



## 2 Broad Things You Can Do

1. Foster connection and healing relationships
2. Prevent re-traumatization



# 1. Foster Connection and Healing Relationships

## Healing Relationships...

- Are important whether one-time or ongoing
- Contradict survivor's basic expectations about relationships
- Decrease a person's isolation and feelings of worthlessness
- Rewire the brain

**Healing relationships are the single most important antidote to trauma**



## 2. Prevent Re-Traumatization

- Our actions (unwittingly) can make the impacts of trauma worse.
- People suffering trauma can display extreme behavior evoking strong reactions in us.
- Resist impulse to shame, blame, and be punitive.
- Extreme behaviors are often reasonable ways they have learned to adapt to an unsafe world.

***“An abnormal reaction to an abnormal situation is normal behavior”***

***Victor Frankl, *Man’s Search for Meaning****

# Trauma's Impact on Individual Survivors

## **People with low ACEs tend to:**

Feel in control of their lives  
Respect yet also can challenge people with power  
Expect to be treated well and that life generally works out  
Feel worthy and likeable  
Be activated by stress, but can calm down easily

## **People with high ACEs tend to:**

Feel a lack of control  
Have extreme reactions to people with power (authority figures)  
Be on high alert for bad things to happen  
Be highly prone to feeling unworthy and ashamed  
Be easily set off by triggers that relate to their trauma (people talking harshly, being ignored or not listened to, others taking control, etc.)

# Exercise: What Makes Things Worse? What Makes Things Better?

<b>EXAMPLES OF IMPACT OF TRAUMA</b>  <b>People with histories of ACEs and trauma often:</b>	<b>Practices in Your Setting/Role that Might (unwittingly) Make This Impact Worse</b>	<b>Practices in Your Setting/Role That Could Intentionally Make This Impact Better</b>
Do not trust and expect to be hurt/betrayed in relationships		
Have extreme reactions to authority figures (get passive or withdraw Or get easily set off/aggressive)		
Fear and expect the worst (waiting for the “next shoe to drop” especially when expectations and boundaries unstated or not clear)		



# Becoming a Trauma-Informed Community





Thanks to **Building Community Resilience Collaborative and Networks** and the **International Transformational Resilience Coalition** for inspiration and guidance. Please visit [PACESConnection.com](https://PACESConnection.com) to learn more about the science of ACEs and join the movement to prevent ACEs, heal trauma and build resilience.



# What Can Schools Do?

- Revise suspension and expulsion policies recognizing that trauma underlies many behavior problems
- Train staff that problem behavior is often a “perfect adaption to a damaged world”
- Teach social and emotional skills
- Train support staff (bus drivers, crossing guards, cafeteria staff) about the critical importance of relationships to counteract the impact of adversity, build resilience, and re-sculpt impaired brains

# What Can First Responders Do?

- Counter the perception that you are an authority figure that will hurt them
- Calm the environment before intervening
- Provide choices when possible
- Validate concerns and feelings (validation does not mean agreement)

# What Can Physical Health Providers Do?

- Screen routinely for childhood adversity and trauma
- Ask permission and provide choices when possible
- Recognize you are an authority figure so explicitly invite feedback to level the power difference
- Inquire about simple accommodations that could make medical exams more tolerable (have trusted person present, listen to music, tell person in advance what to expect, allow person to stay partially clothed, etc.)

# What Can Government Do?

- Train staff about trauma-informed care
- Review forms for questions that are shaming
- Post information that is welcoming, not only about rules and limits

# What Can Veteran Providers Do?

- Provide peer-to-peer mentoring
- Recognize the reality of military sexual trauma
- Address and coordinate care for medical, occupational, psychological, and spiritual domains

# What Can Business Owners Do?

- Post information that is welcoming, not only about rules
- Be open to the possibility of accommodations for customers with special needs. Don't only think about consequences.
- Understand that odd behaviors may be the perfect adaptations to a damaged world.
- Set limits in a compassionate manner.



# What Can Mental Health Providers Do?

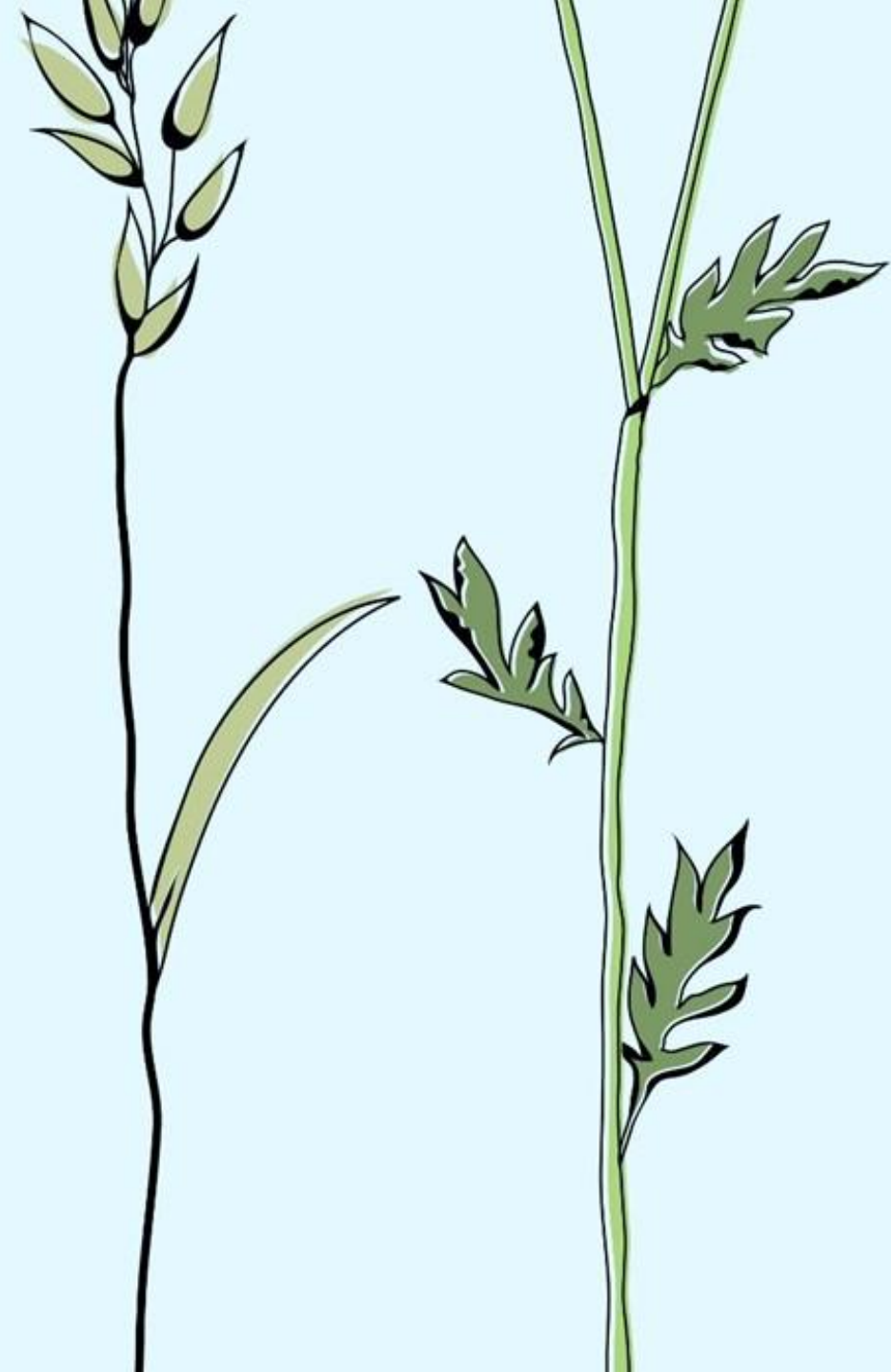
- Recognize that trauma and childhood adversity is at the root of many mental health diagnoses.
- Screen for history of trauma and recognize that disclosure of trauma is a process
- View symptoms and problem behaviors as adaptations. They solve a problem in the moment although have longer term negative consequences
- Use the power of the therapeutic relationship to heal

# What Can Civic Organizations Do?

- Raise community awareness about ACEs and their impact
- Advocate for a more compassionate community
- Fund organizations that are building resilience in community members

# Sustaining Ourselves:

Moving from Compassion Fatigue to  
Compassion Satisfaction



# Definitions

## Compassion Fatigue

Emotional and physical exhaustion that can affect helping professionals, caregivers, and concerned citizens over time.

## Compassion Satisfaction

The satisfaction you derive from being able to do work as a helping professional, caregiver, and concerned citizen of the community.

# Signs of Compassion Fatigue

**Physical** – exhaustion, not sleeping, headaches, susceptibility to illness

**Behavioral** – irritability, increase alcohol and drug use, not attending to family, over-responsibility, labeling people, isolation

**Psychological** – cynicism, negative self-image, inability to feel empathy, problems with intimacy, concerns about safety and trust, intrusive imagery

# Protecting Ourselves

Awareness

Balance

Connection



# Awareness

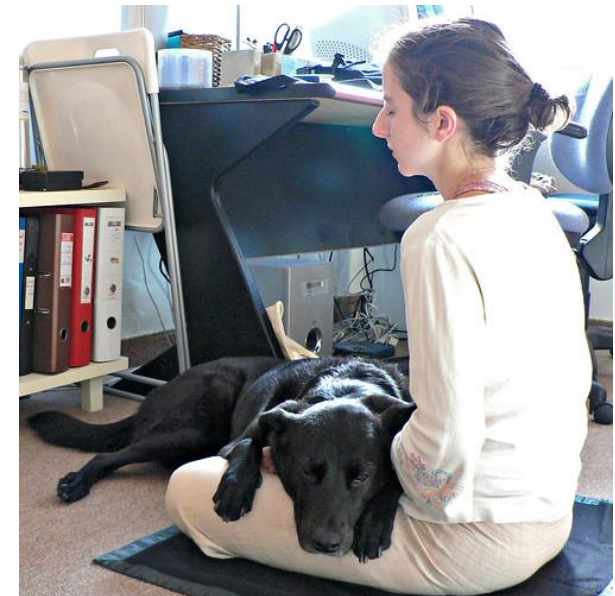
Be attuned to your needs, limits, emotions, resources

Watch out for signs through your thoughts, feelings, bodily signs, intuition.

The earlier you can catch your stress the easier it can be to shift it.

Practice mindfulness and acceptance

*Easy to say, not always easy to do!*





# Balance

- Work to find balance between family, work, play, and rest.
- Have things you can do to support your mental health





# Connection

- To oneself
- to others
- to something larger



# Compassion Satisfaction

Witnessing and attending to suffering teaches us about:

- Courage and human resilience
- Gratitude
- The power of hope
- The importance of making meaning out of suffering



# Summary

- Childhood adversity and trauma are very common in our communities. They can have a lifelong impact on health.
- Resilience counteracts the impact of trauma.
- The impact of ACEs is predictable. What's predictable is preventable.
- A trauma-informed community asks, “what happened to you” not “what’s wrong with you.”
- Professionals and community members can take actions to heal the impact of trauma.
- Compassion fatigue is common and must be addressed. Compassion satisfaction is the goal.
- A trauma-informed Hampshire County builds resilience and hope.

Bring This Training or our new *Roadshow for Caregivers* to Others!

**Contact:**

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**We value your feedback! Use link in chat.**

**Thank you!**