

Toxic Stress: Helping Students and Families Overcome

Dr. Barb Brady



Presenter...



Dr. Barb Brady
Executive Director, Inspiring
Dreams Network
ACEs Coalition of WV -
Awareness Task Team Chair
Therapist – BetterHelp / Private
Practice



Objectives

- **To understand the implications of trauma, toxic stress and impact on students and families.**
- **To understand ACEs that contribute to toxic stress**
- **To learn ways to overcome support families to mitigate toxic stress.**
- **To review best practices for help students and families build resilience; protective factors; and the importance of Safe, Stable and Nurturing Relationships and Environments.**





The Three E's in Trauma

Events

Experience

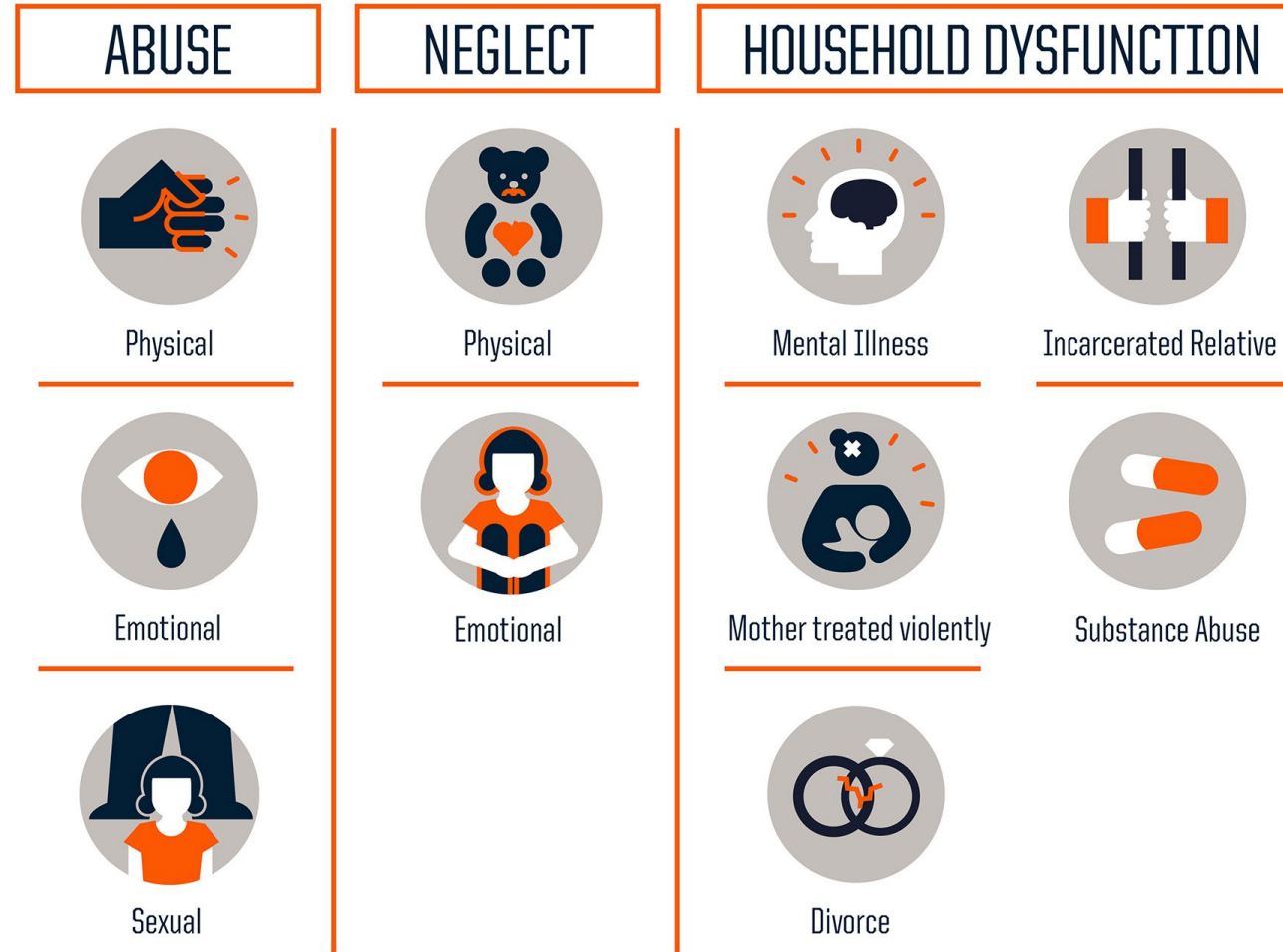
Effects



What are Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)?

All types of abuse,
neglect, and other
traumatic
experiences that
occur to individuals
under the age of 18

The most commonly discussed forms of trauma / toxic stress: ACEs





Original ACES Questionnaire

www.acestoohigh.com/got-your-ace-score



ACEs (Adverse Childhood Experiences) can include:

- Abuse: Emotional/physical/sexual
- Bullying/violence of/by another child, sibling, or adult
- Homelessness
- Household: Substance abuse/mental illness/domestic violence/incarceration/parental abandonment, divorce, loss
- Involvement in child welfare system
- Medical trauma
- Natural disasters and war
- Neglect: Emotional/physical
- Racism, sexism, or any other form of discrimination
- Violence in community



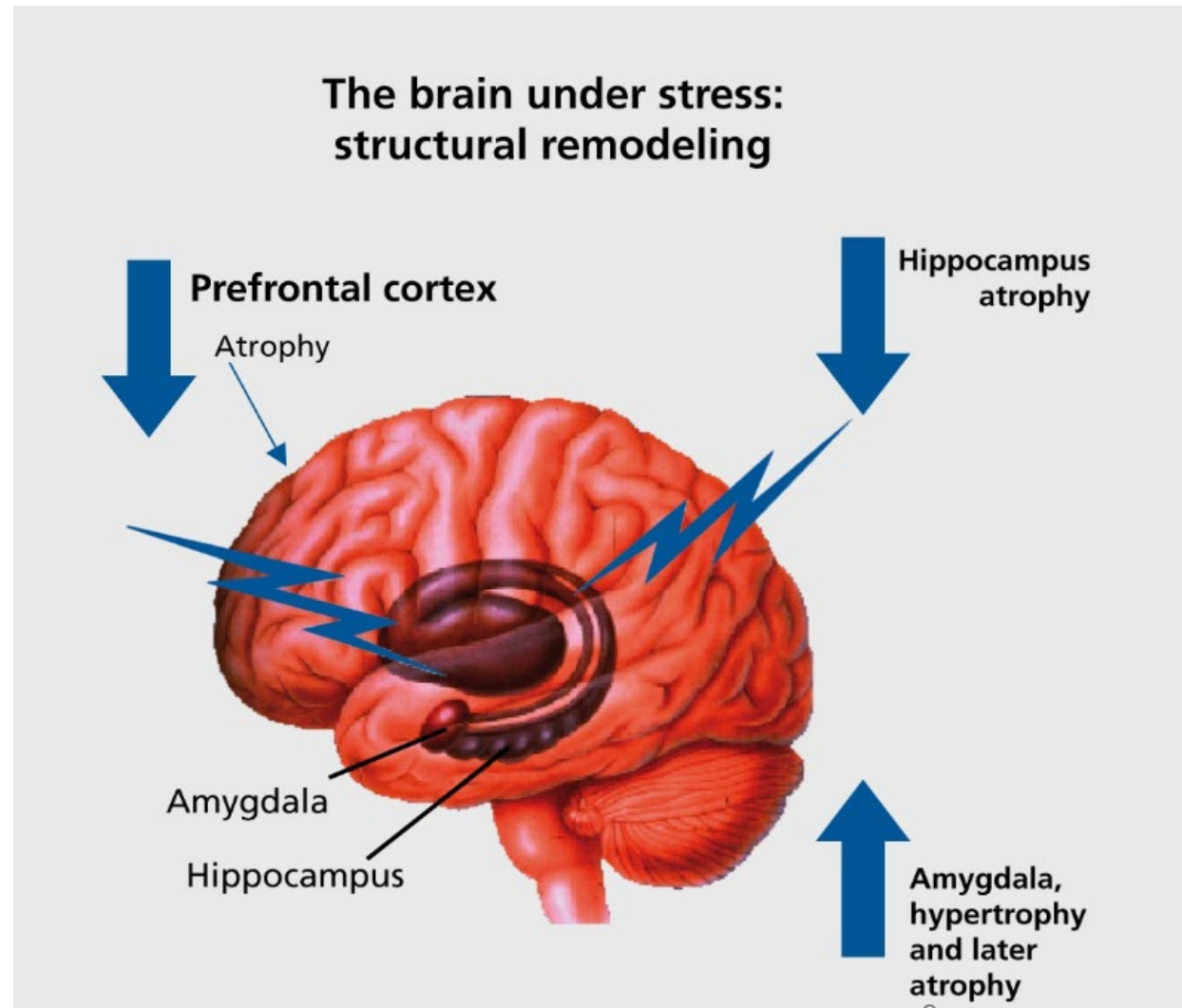
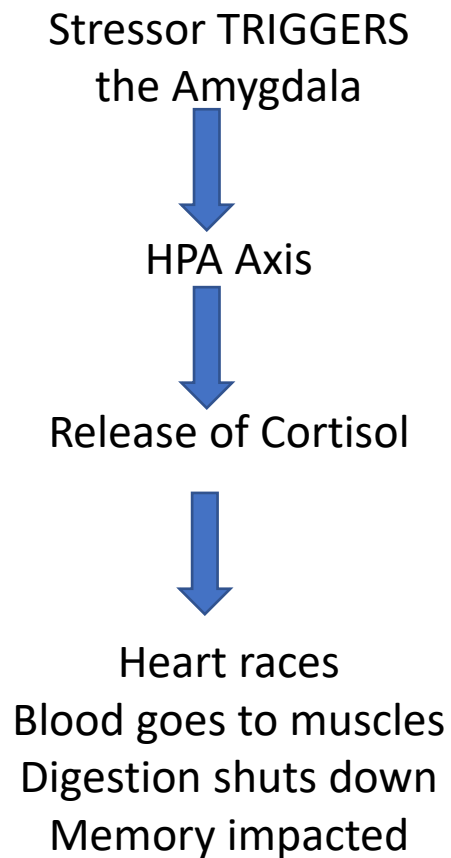
SURVIVAL MODE RESPONSE

Toxic stress increases a child's heart rate, blood pressure, breathing and muscle tension. Their thinking brain is knocked off-line. Self-protection is their priority.

Traumatic Stress Impact on Brain

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q6vqSehMYQQ>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IRmnVmELMn8>



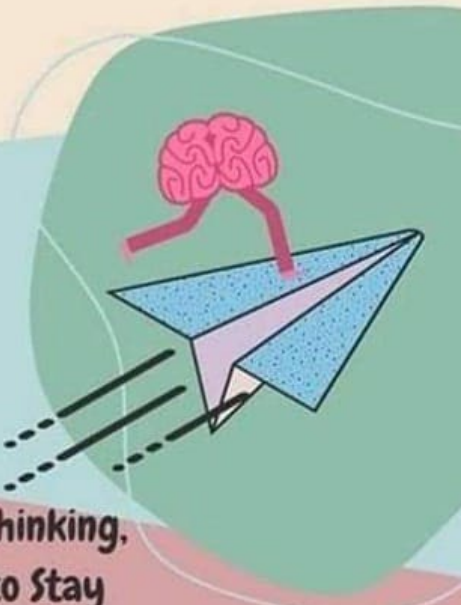
Slides courtesy of Michelle Hoersch

Trauma Responses can look like...



FIGHT

Angry Outbursts, Shouting
Impulsion, Controlling
Bullying, Demanding, Explosive
Behaviour



FLIGHT

Panic, Anxious, Overthinking,
Disengaging, Need to Stay
Busy, Perfectionism, Fidgety,
Workaholic



FREEZE

Depression, Dissociation,
Isolation, Zoning out, Brain
Fog, Indecisiveness, Feeling
Numb, Feel of trying new
things, may appear 'lazy'



FAWN

People Pleasing,
Compassion for Others, Co-
dependency, lack of
boundaries, Lack of
Identity, Avoids Conflict



Typical Behavioral Responses to Trauma



- Emotional numbing
- Avoidance of stimuli
- Flashbacks and nightmares
- Confusion
- Depression
- Withdrawal / isolation (flight)
- Argumentative
- Somatic Complaints
- Suicidal thoughts/talk
- Anti-social behavior
- Anger / Agitation
- Focused on the past/victim talk
- Negative fantasies
- Interpersonal conflicts
- Aggression / fighting
- Health-risk behaviors
- Substance use
- Loss of focus

Common Trauma Symptoms in Students and Helpful Strategies for Educators

Trauma can have a detrimental impact on students' functioning in the school setting.¹ Educators need tools to identify and support students who may have experienced or are currently experiencing traumatic stress.

The front of this handout lists common trauma symptoms grouped into the following categories: **physical, cognitive, social and emotional, language and communication, and learning.**² It is important to note that children can respond to trauma in many different ways and may not exhibit all of these symptoms. You can use this list to guide your thinking in identifying students who may have experienced trauma and providing or referring students to appropriate supports.

The back of this handout outlines strategies for working with students who may exhibit emotional or behavioral symptoms of trauma. You can use **preventative strategies** in everyday classroom interactions, **"in the moment" strategies** when students are in crisis, and **"after the moment" strategies**³ after a student's behaviors and emotions have deescalated. These strategies generally target students' **safety, positive relationships, and self-regulation**, and are focused on **teaching appropriate skills** and **avoiding punishment** (which may re-traumatize students).

Lowers tolerance for stress, which can result in behaviors such as fighting, checking out or defiance

Increases difficulty in making friends and maintaining relationships

Increases stress hormones which affects the body's ability to fight infection

May cause lasting health problems



Increases problems with learning and memory, which can be permanent

"I can't hear you, I can't respond to you, I am just trying to be safe!"

Reduces ability to respond, learn, figure things out, which can result in problems in school

Physical

- Increased somatic complaints (e.g., headaches and stomachaches)
- Over- or under-reacting to stimuli (e.g., getting startled easily [or not at all] by bells, physical contact, doors slamming, sirens)
- Increased activity level (e.g., fidgeting, getting out of seat)
- Withdrawal from other people and activities

Cognitive

- Recreating the traumatic event (e.g., repeatedly talking about or "playing out" the event) or avoiding topics that serve as reminders
- Difficulties with executive function (e.g., impulse control, attention)
- Worry and fear about safety of self and others
- Dissociation (e.g., disconnected from surroundings, "spacing out")

Social and Emotional

- Rapid changes in heightened emotions (e.g., extremely sad to angry)
- Change in ability to interpret or respond appropriately to social cues
- Difficulties with emotion regulation and impulse control (e.g., angry outbursts, aggression, increased distress)
- Emotional numbness, isolation, and detachment

Language and Communication

- Language development delays and challenges
- Difficulties with expressive (e.g., expressing thoughts and feelings) and receptive language (e.g., understanding nonverbal cues)
- Difficulties with nonverbal communication (e.g., eye contact)
- Use of hurtful language (e.g., to keep others at a distance)

Learning

- Absenteeism and changes in academic performance/engagement
- Difficulties with authority, redirection, or criticism
- Difficulties listening and concentrating during instruction
- Difficulties with memory (e.g., may require more repetitions)
- Difficulties generalizing learned material in different contexts

¹ Honsinger & Brown, 2019.

² Symptoms adapted from Statman-Weil, 2015 and National Child Traumatic Stress Network Schools Committee, 2008.

³ Strategies adapted from Honsinger & Brown, 2019.



A score of 4 or more can make someone:

2 times as likely to be a smoker

12 times as likely to attempt suicide

7 times as likely to be an alcoholic

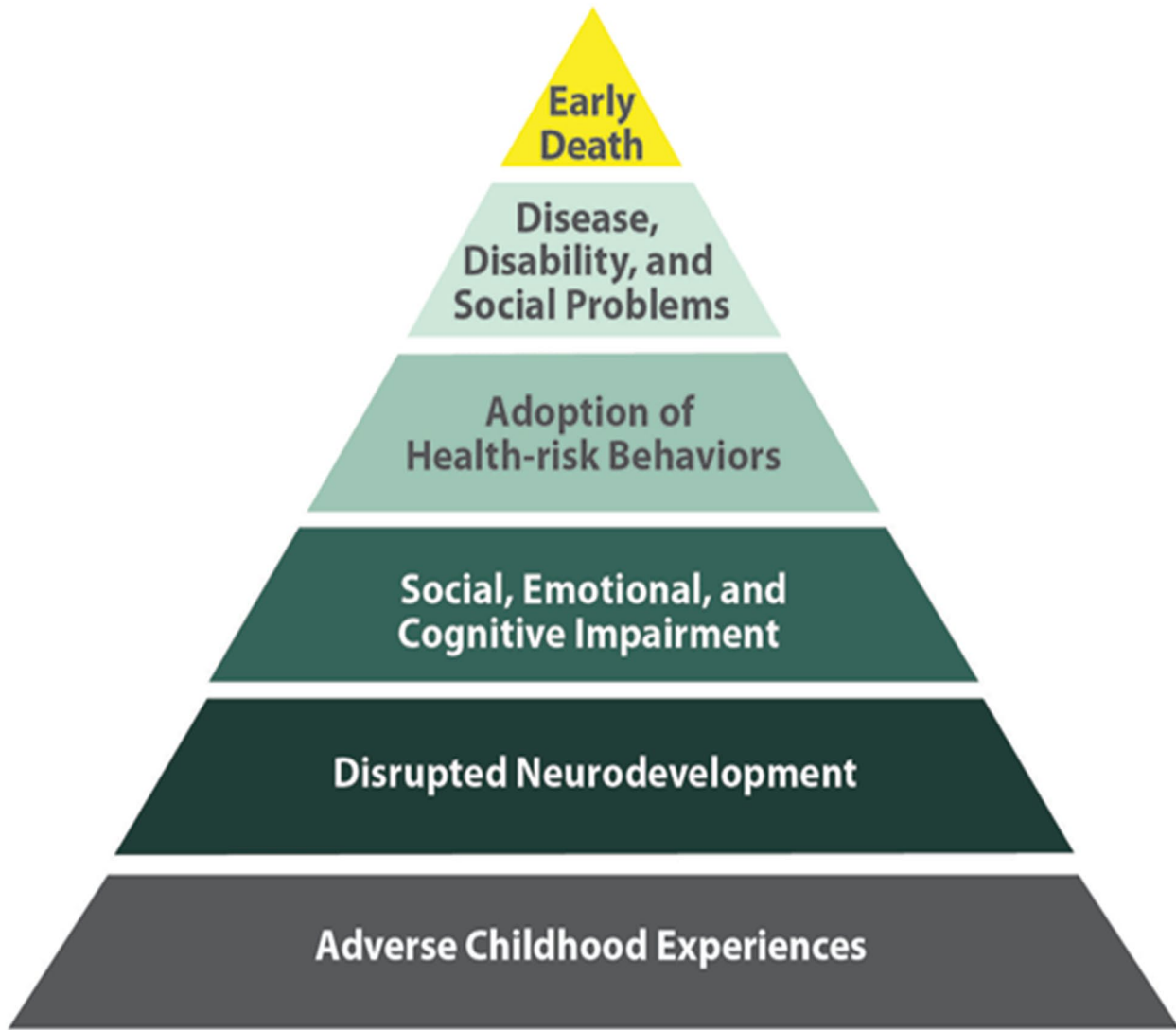
10 times as likely to use injected street drugs



Wear and Tear



Without supports and intervention, the effect is 'wear and tear' on the brain, like a car engine being revved for days or weeks at a time.



Mechanism by Which Adverse Childhood Experiences Influence Health and Well-being Throughout the Lifespan



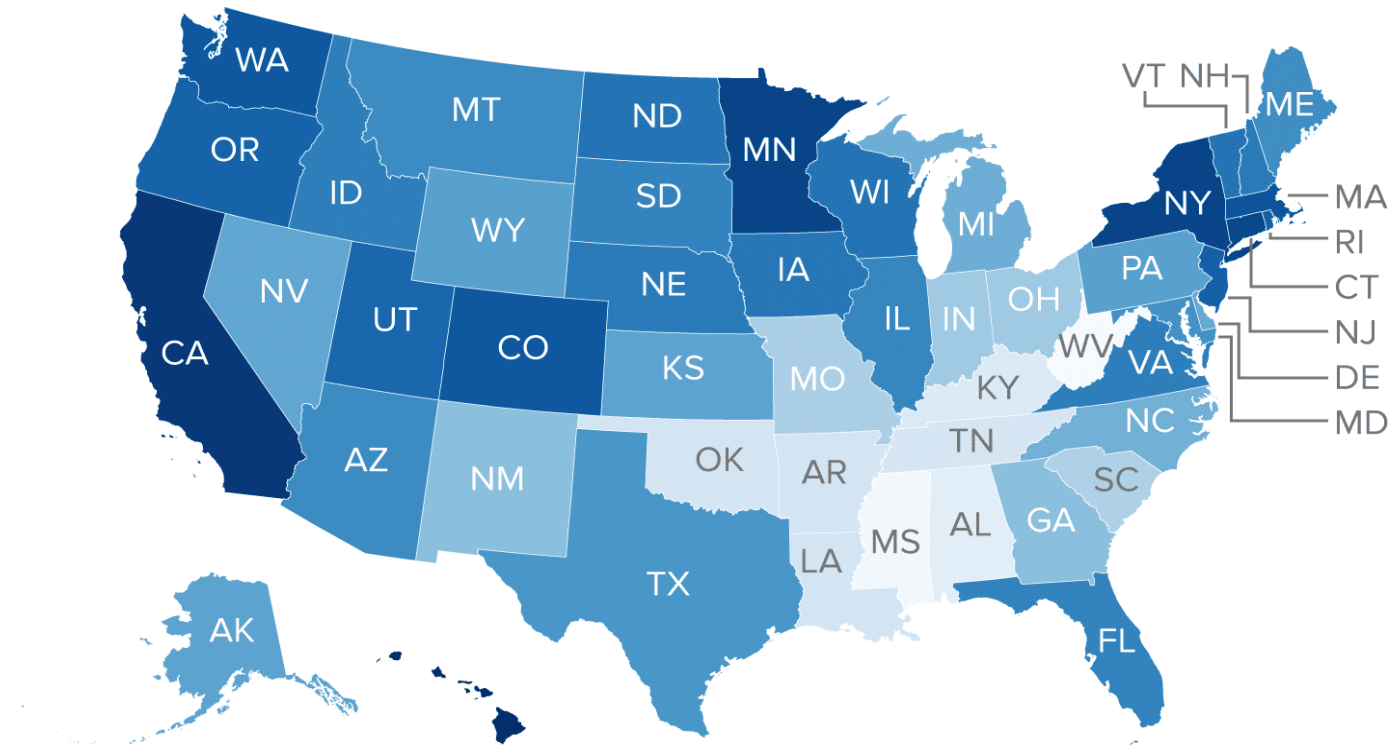
WV Life Expectancy



U.S. Life expectancy by state

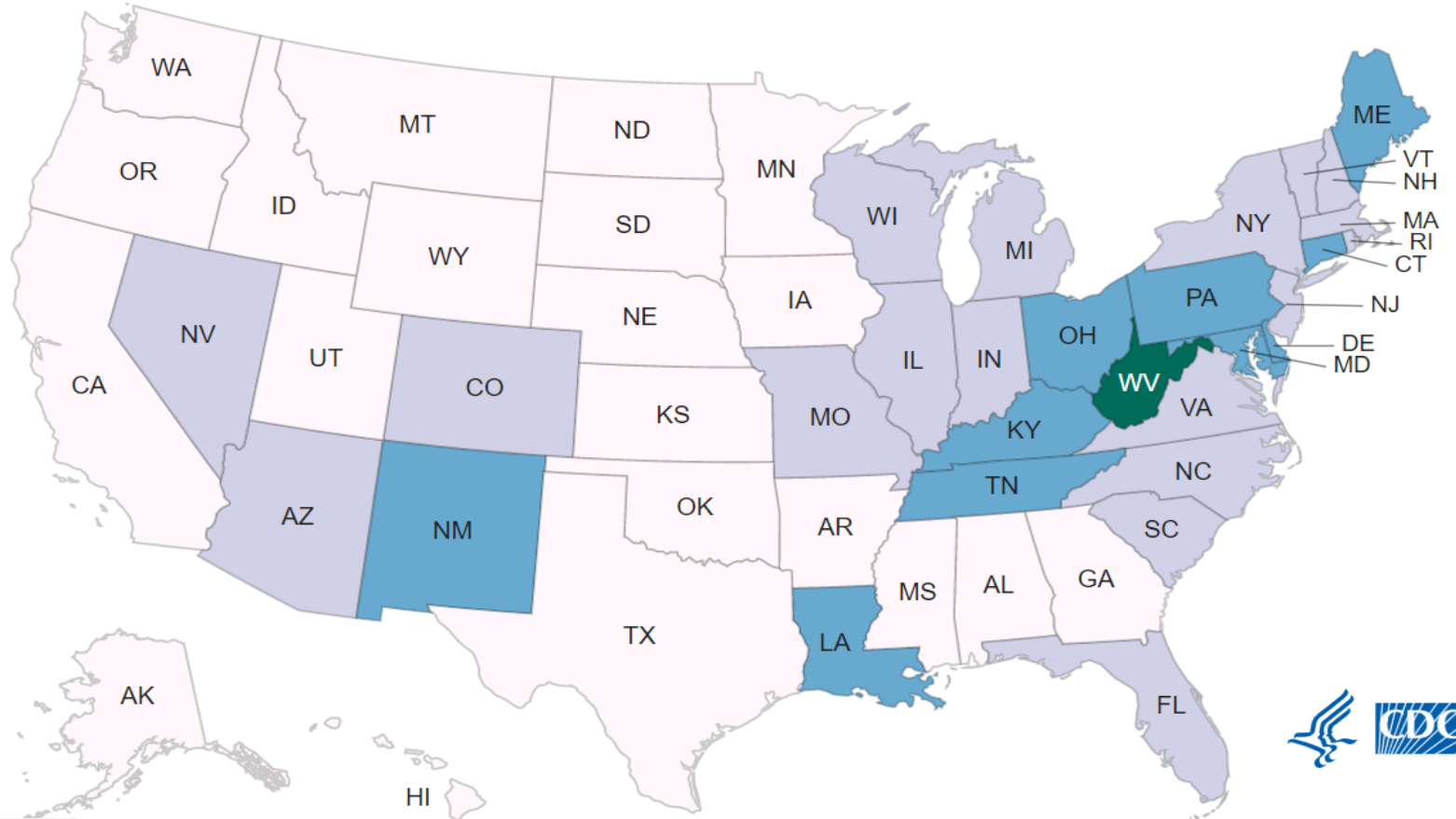
Life expectancy at birth as of 2018

74.4  81 years



SOURCE: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Vital Statistics Report

Drug Overdose Mortality by State



Location	Death Rate (Click for Ra... ▾)	Deaths
West Virginia	81.4	1,330
Kentucky	49.2	2,083
Delaware	47.3	444
Ohio	47.2	5,204
Tennessee	45.6	3,034
Maryland	44.6	2,771

Age-Adjusted Death Rates¹



Filters

YEAR



Learning Your ACE Score



www.acestoohigh.com/got-your-ace-score

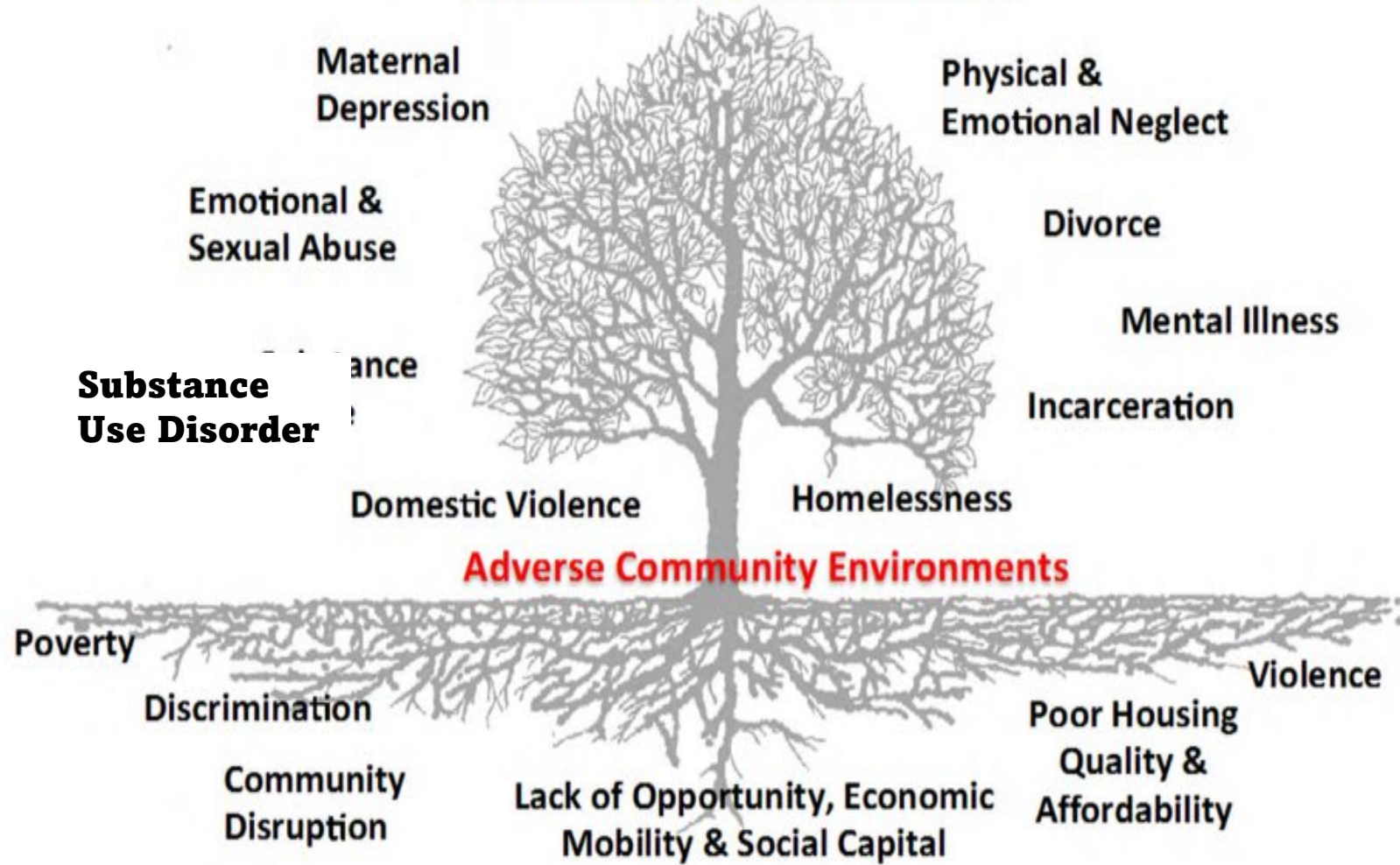
What is ‘surge capacity’?

It’s a collection of adaptive systems—mental and physical—that *humans draw on for short-term survival in acutely stressful situations*, such as natural disasters.



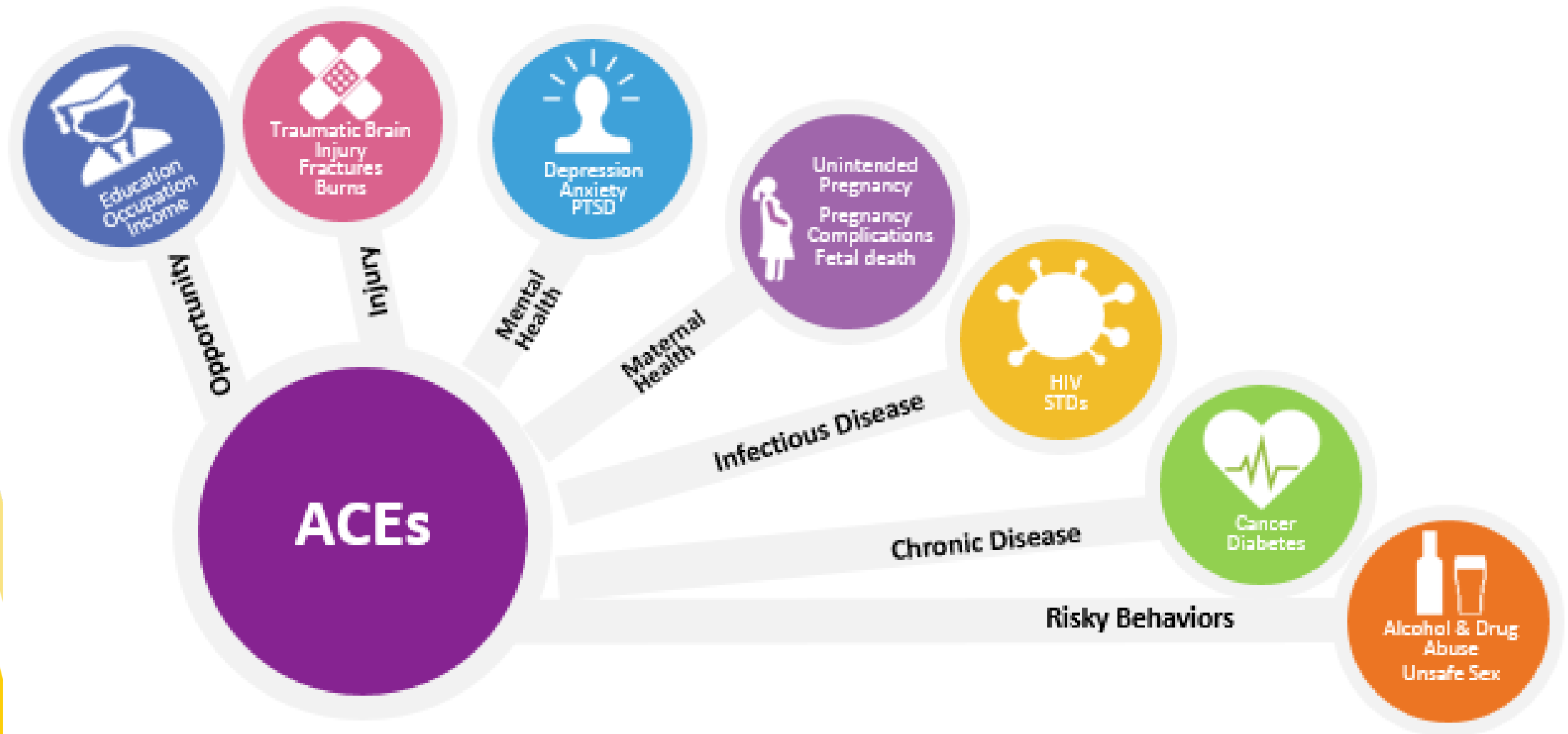
The Pair of ACEs

Adverse Childhood Experiences



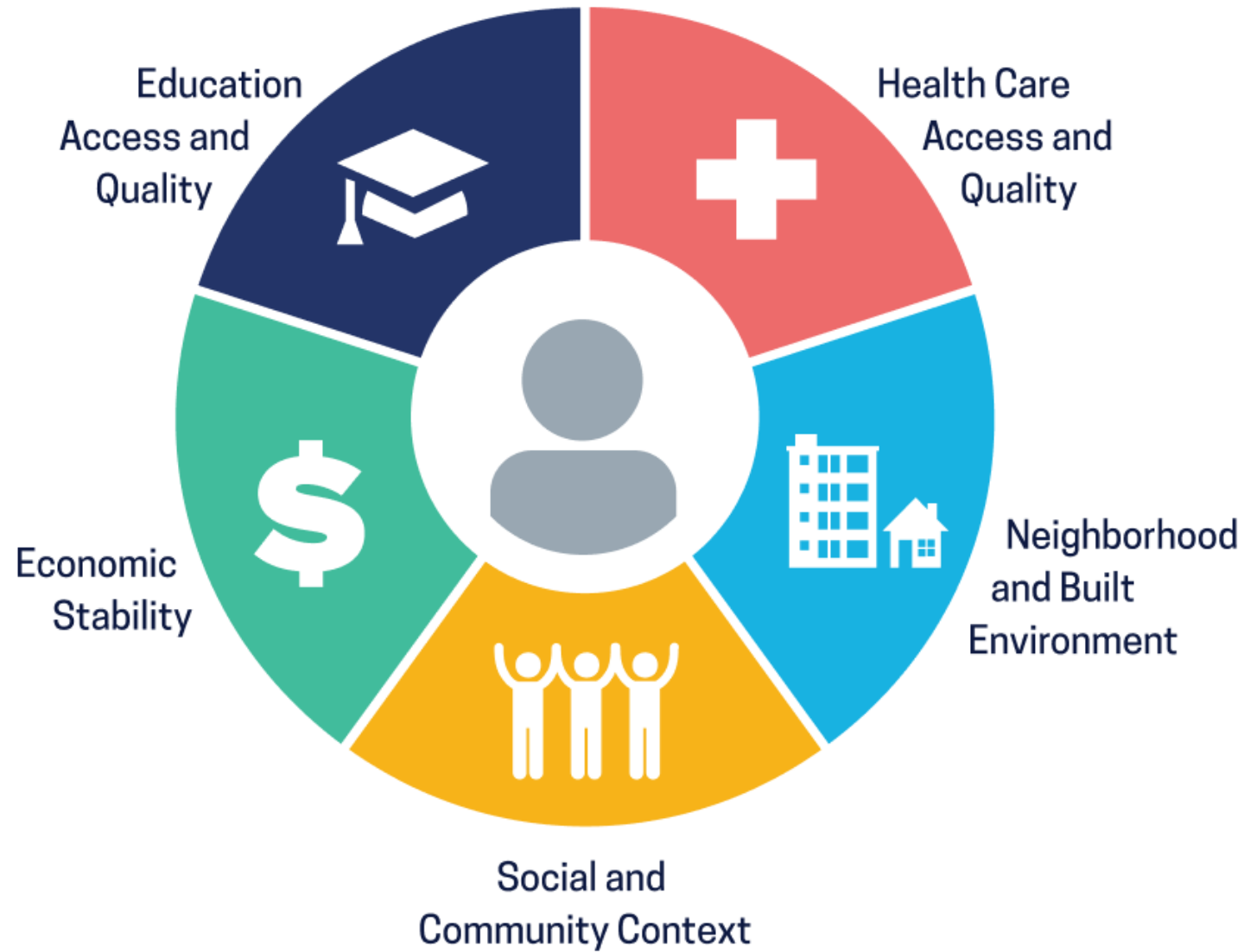
Ellis, W., Dietz, W. (2017) A New Framework for Addressing Adverse Childhood and Community Experiences: The Building Community Resilience (BCR) Model. *Academic Pediatrics*. 17 (2017) pp. S86-S93. DOI information: 10.1016/j.acap.2016.12.011





A high ACE score can impact all aspects of a person's life

Social Determinants of Health



Building Resilience... What is Resilience?

Resilience is the capacity to ***recover quickly from difficulties*** or ***adapt to challenging life experiences***, especially when experiences present mental or emotional challenges.

Resilient individuals

- show emotional and mental toughness,
- have the ability to be flexible,
- are able to emotionally regulate, and
- adjust to external and internal demands.



Seven Keys to Resilience

Dr. Ken Ginsberg
International Youth Foundation



HOW TO RAISE RESILIENT KIDS

7 Building Blocks from the
International Youth Foundation



COMPETENCE

Kids become competent only by experience. They learn how to trust their judgments and make responsible choices by **DOING** (this includes succeeding **AND** failing).



CONFIDENCE

Kids develop confidence when they learn how to cope with challenges and try out new things on their own.



CONNECTION

Close ties to family provide security and strong values. Kids also develop a sense of belonging through connections to civic, educational, religious, and athletic groups.



CHARACTER

Kids have a fundamental sense of right and wrong. With guidance, they can learn to make wise choices, contribute to the world, stick to their own values and become stable adults.



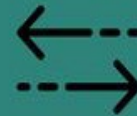
CONTRIBUTION

When kids see the importance of their contributions, they gain a sense of purpose and they realize the world is a better place because they're in it.



COPING

Kids learn how to manage stress and overcome challenges with positive, adaptive coping strategies instead of dangerous negative behaviors.



CONTROL

Kids know they have internal control when they realize that their choices and actions determine the results.

Using a Trauma Informed Approach



What are the principles of trauma-informed care?

Following are [recognized principles](#) of a trauma-informed approach that are needed to transform a health care setting:



Safety

Throughout the organization, patients and staff feel physically and psychologically safe



Trustworthiness + Transparency

Decisions are made with transparency, and with the goal of building and maintaining trust



Peer Support

Individuals with shared experiences are integrated into the organization and viewed as integral to service delivery



Collaboration

Power differences — between staff and clients and among organizational staff — are leveled to support shared decision-making



Empowerment

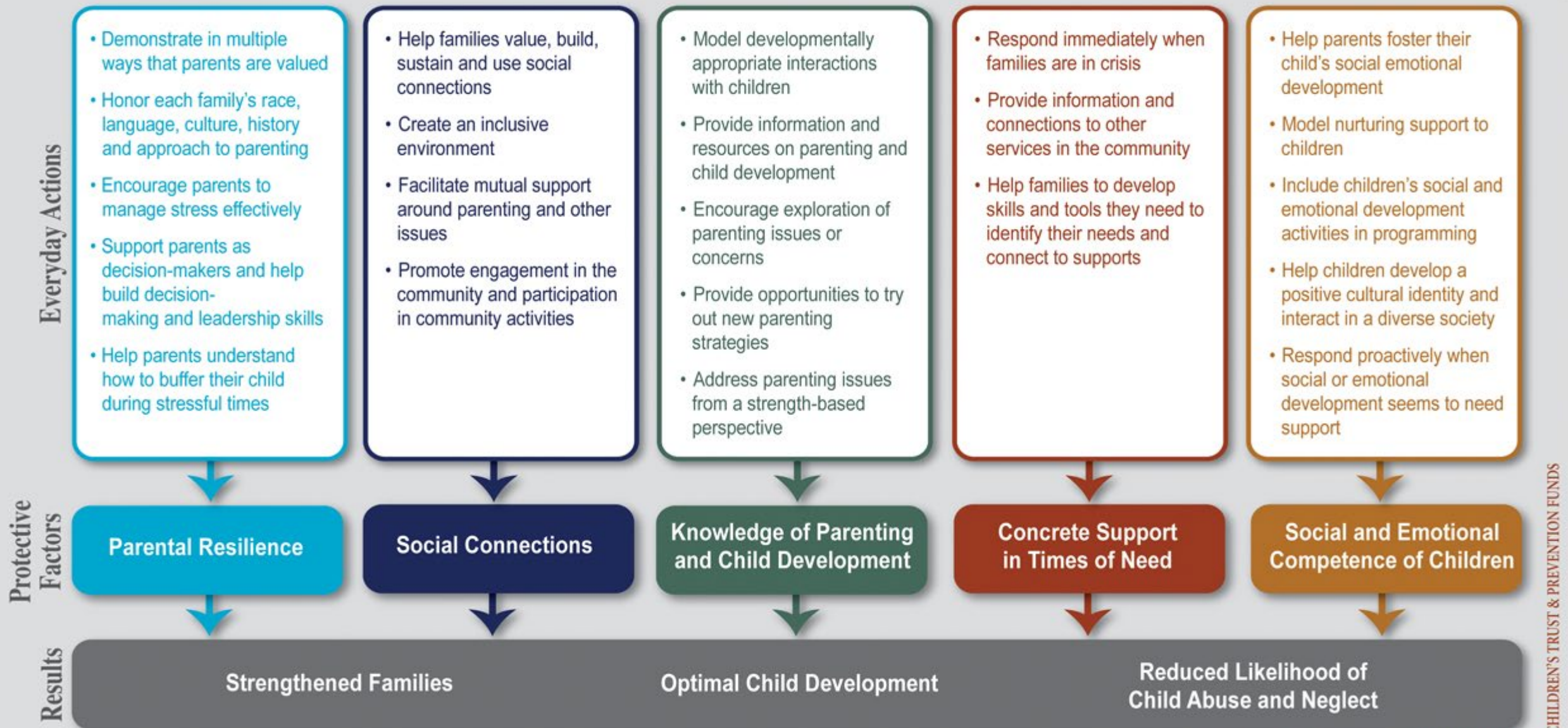
Patient and staff strengths are recognized, built on, and validated — this includes a belief in resilience and the ability to heal from trauma



Humility + Responsiveness

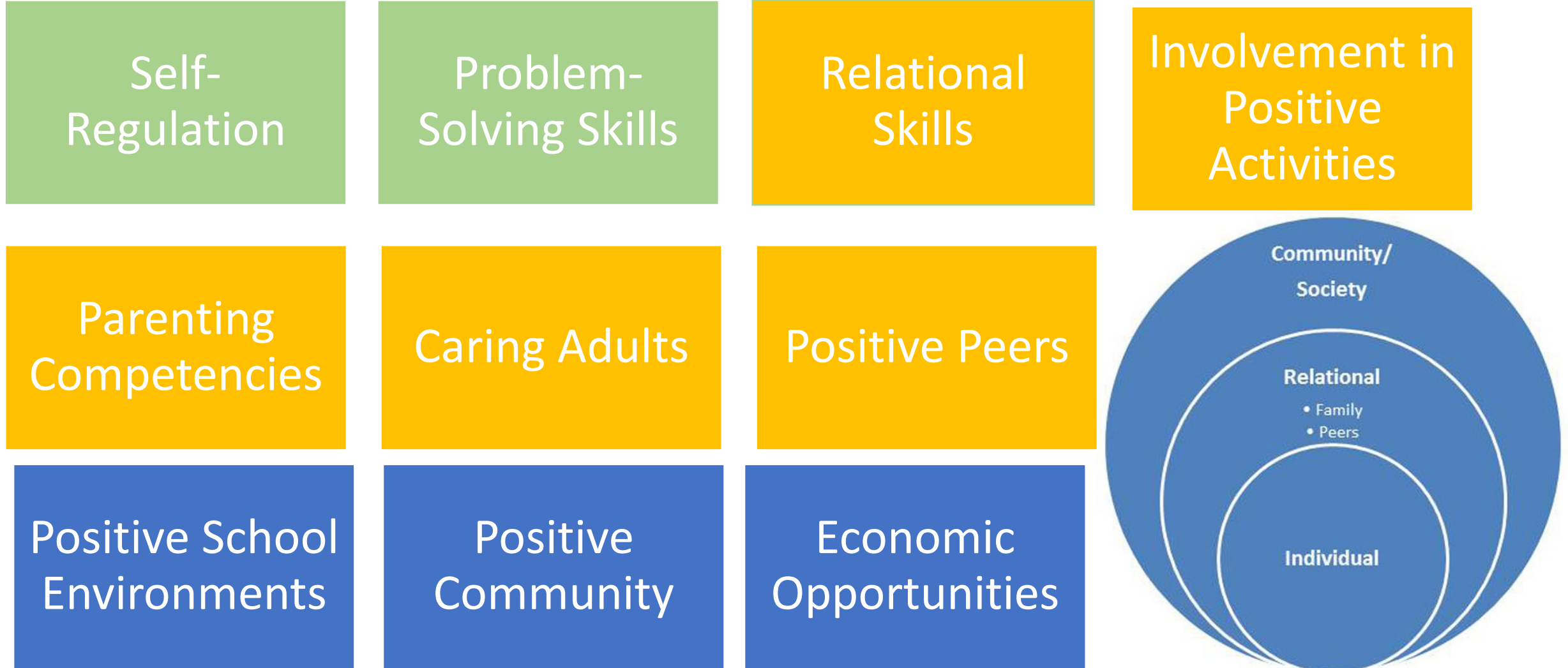
Biases and stereotypes (e.g., based on race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, age, geography) and historical trauma are recognized and addressed

Everyday Actions That Help Build Protective Factors



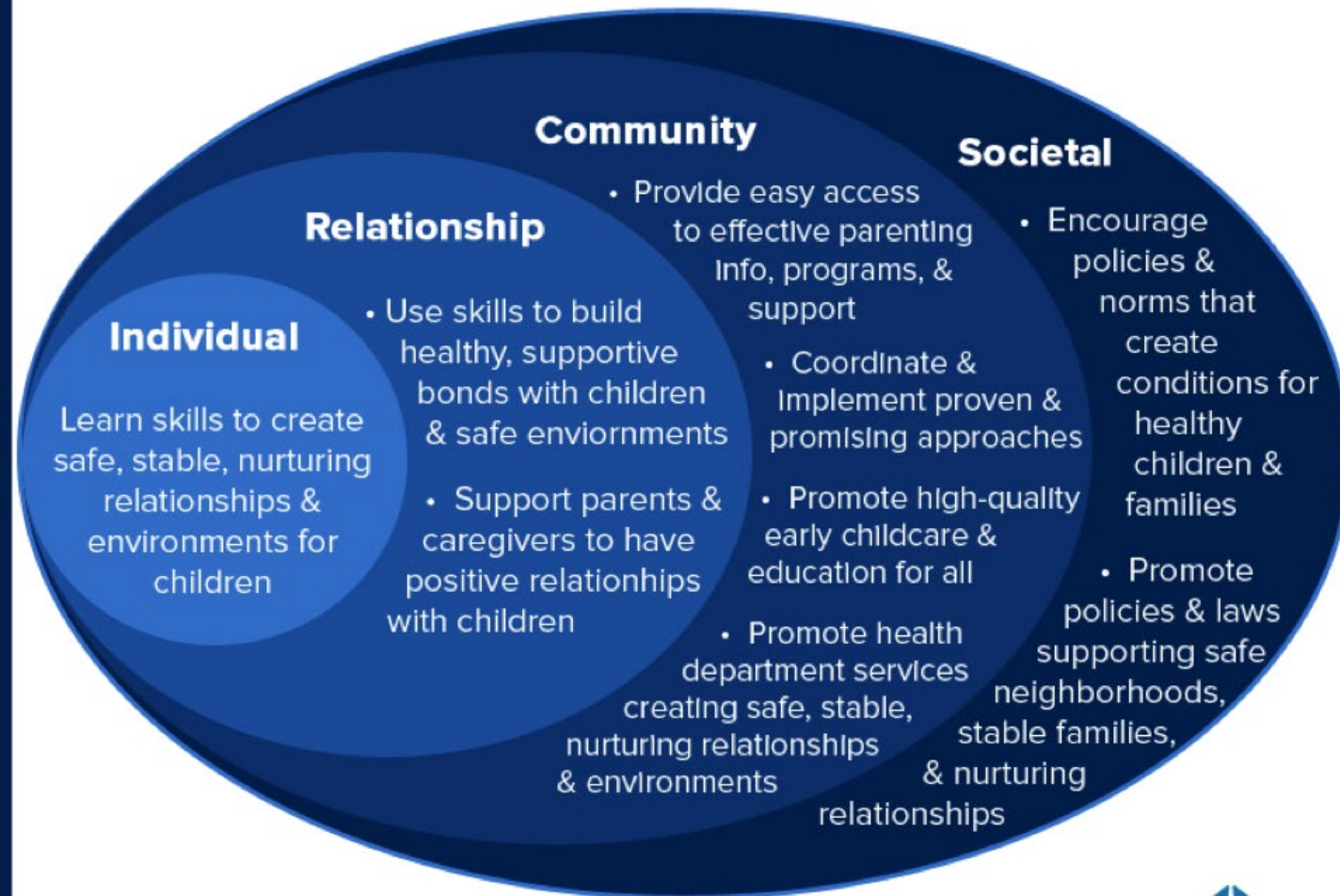
Youth Protective Factors

ACYF identified 10 protective factors with the strongest level of evidence, across three domains:



Prevent Child Abuse & Neglect Through Changes at All Levels

Strategies may include:



Learn more about child maltreatment prevention from CDC:
<http://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/childmaltreatment/prevention.html>



ring Dreams
NETWORK

Some Key Strategies to Support Youth Overcome Trauma



Strengthening	Promoting	Ensuring	Teaching	Connecting	Intervening
Strengthening economic supports for families	Promoting social norms that protect against violence and adversity	Ensuring a strong start for children and paving the way for them to reach their full potential	Teaching skills to help parents and youth handle stress, manage emotions, and tackle everyday challenges	Connecting youth to caring adults and activities	Intervening to lessen immediate and long-term harms

[Preventing Adverse Childhood Experiences \(cdc.gov\)](https://www.cdc.gov/prevention/childhood-experiences/)



Strengthen economic support for families

Policies to ease school or organization-related financial burden

Financial literacy Programs

Classes/programs/events

Legislative advocacy to strengthen Families and communities (childcare, housing, educational supports in home and communities, grand families financial

Promote social norms that protect against violence and adversity



[This Photo](#) by [kr](#)

[CC BY-ND](#)

Public education campaigns / Advocacy

Positive behavior support programs

Bystander policies

Bullying prevention

Awareness of and advocacy for other WVBOE policies that ensure student and family supports:

WVDE Policy 2510 Advisor/advisee program/curriculum advocating for enforcement

Fully implementing Policy 4373: Expected Behaviors in Safe and Supportive Schools

Policy 2520.19 College and Career Readiness Standards for Student Success

7

Positive Childhood Experiences (PCEs)



feeling able to talk to your family about feelings



feeling a sense of belonging in high school



feeling your family stood by you during difficult times



feeling safe and protected by an adult in your home



feeling supported by friends



enjoying participation in community traditions



have at least two non-parent adults who took genuine interest in you



mezzosolutions.com

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Teach Skills



- Social-emotional learning /emotional regulation (GOTR, PAX, Second Step, Kidding Around Yoga, Go Noodle, Girls on the Run)
- Coping skills
- Conflict resolution/anger management
- Respectful behavior/Safe dating and healthy relationship skill programs (FRIS)
- Parenting skills and family relationship approaches

Connect youth to caring adults and activities

- ✓ Mentoring / coaching
- ✓ After-school programs
- ✓ Community youth development programs (4-H, Scouts)
- ✓ Evidence and standards-Based Advisory
- ✓ Community in Schools



Intervene to lessen immediate and long-term harms

- ✓ Enhanced school / community collaboration
- ✓ Staff trained in Youth mental health first aid & Trauma informed care
- ✓ Refer for professional support (school and community counseling, 411 WV, Prevent Suicide WV, etc)
- ✓ Early referral to SAT, 504, IEP teams
- ✓ Expanded school mental health (Therapist in schools)
- ✓ Teach, model and reward positive behaviors (PBIS or PAX)
- ✓ Offer parenting classes



<http://educationalliance.org/sel/>

SOCIAL EMOTIONAL LEARNING TOOLKIT

Best Practices to Support
STUDENT MENTAL HEALTH

1.0

Dr. Chris Schimmel

Education
Alliance
Business & Community for Public Schools

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REFERENCES

<https://educationalliance.org/sel/>



Teach and Embed Coping Skills

MINDFULNESS

PAST



FUTURE

PRESENT



SLOW DOWN & CALM DOWN

Learn

The Slow Down and Calm Down strategy is useful to anyone learning to regulate their emotions. During times of stress, it can be difficult for children to think about strategies to help them calm down. Slow Down & Calm Down is simple and easy to implement. By practicing simple calming strategies regularly, children learn to regulate their emotions when needed. Regulating emotions is another important skill for children to learn about at an early age and develop as they grow and mature.

Stay Grounded Using Your 5 Senses

Relax Your Body, Take a Few Deep Breaths and Focus on the Following...

- 5 Things You Can See 
- 4 Things You Can Feel 
- 3 Things You Can Hear 
- 2 Things You Can Smell 
- 1 Thing You Can Taste 

Teach and Embed Coping Skills

MINDFUL BREATHING

Breath In 1 2 3 4



HOLD
1 2 3 4

Smell those
Chocolate
Chip
cookies

Breath Out
1 2 3 4
Blow out
Birthday
Candle



STAR BREATHING BOARD

Learn

This activity can be used to help students cope with many different emotions and is a great tool to have on hand when teaching students how to breathe.

Consider

Deep breathing helps get more oxygen into the bloodstream, opening up capillaries. This has a physical effect on the body to help calm down and lower stress.



SOCIAL EMOTIONAL LEARNING TOOLKIT 2.0

A Framework for Mentors to Support
Student Mental Health

Developed by Dr. Barb Brady
for
The Education Alliance

Education
Alliance
Business & Community for Public Schools

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References



Social Emotion Learning Toolkit 2.0

<https://educationalliance.org/publications/>



Chapter 4 - Sample Student Activities

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3. Same and Different	p.34	4. Let's Make a Plan (Problem Solving)	p.35
5. Seven Pillars of Self-Care plan	p.36	6. Self Help Plan	p.37
7. My Protective Factors	p.38	8. Locus of Control	p.39
9. Strengths Chain	p.40	10. Using "I" Statements	p.41
11. Caring Adult Brainstorm	p.42	12. Success Thinking Vs. Distress Thinking	p.43

The ACEs Website: Your Resource

<https://www.acescoalitionofwv.com>



[Home](#) [About the Coalition](#) [Awareness Materials](#) [Request A Training](#) [Trainers Portal](#) [Collaborative Of Communities](#) [Resources](#) [Contact Us](#) [Donate](#)

Helping Prevent Adverse Childhood Experiences

You can't change your childhood,
but you can change your life.





JOIN the movement

PACEs = Positive & Adverse Childhood Experiences

HOME

Blog Posts

The NARM Training Institute presents...

Transforming Trauma

A podcast where leaders in the Trauma-Informed movement guide listeners through the diverse ways they apply the NeuroAffective Relational Model (NARM) for addressing ACEs, C-PTSD and supporting Post-Traumatic Growth.

Post

Welcome to PACEs Connection 

- > Learn about PACEs Connection & who we are.
- > How to be a part of our social network.
- > Join local or interest based communities.
- > Invite others to join PACEs Connection!





[Youth Development Resource Portal](#)

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Welcome to our

YOUTH DEVELOPMENT RESOURCE PORTAL



Our Youth Development Resource Portal is being developed thanks to a grant from the Pallottine Foundation's Healthy Communities Initiative.

Click on the appropriate button below to find resources to help support youth.

[ADULTS SERVING YOUTH](#)

[FAMILIES](#)

[YOUTH](#)

Often youth and the families and adults who support them are unable to find resources in areas in which youth struggle including academic, career, mental health, and social

YOUTH RESOURCES

If you are looking for a particular resource and cannot locate it, reach out to johnbarton@inspiringdreamsnetwork.org. We will partner with you to find the valuable resources you need.

(Resource list below)

ACADEMIC/CAREER PLANNING

CAMPS/EVENTS

MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORTS

SOCIAL EMOTIONAL SUPPORTS

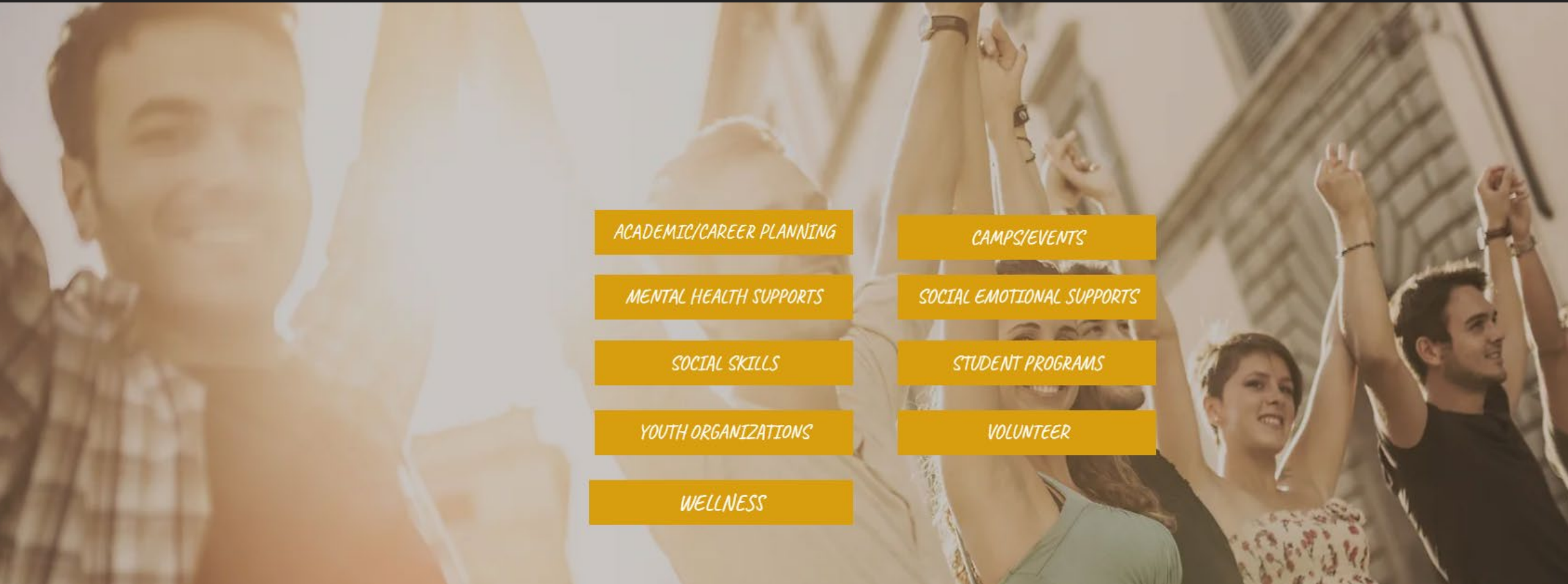
SOCIAL SKILLS

STUDENT PROGRAMS

YOUTH ORGANIZATIONS

VOLUNTEER

WELLNESS



Other Training Opportunities

- ACES 101 – Understanding ACES
- ACES 102 – Overcoming ACES
- ACES 103 – Preventing ACES
- Connections Matter
- Building Relationships and Resilience
- Preparing Students for a Successful Summer
- Youth Mental Health First Aid
- Adult Mental Health First Aid
- Success Coaching and Mentoring
- Suicide Prevention
- Neurodivergence and Accessibility
- Dispelling the Myths of Autism
- Trauma Informed Approaches
- Inspiring Career Dreams Using www.cfwv.com
- Regrounding our Response – Five Part Training Series
- and more...





Connect with Us!

Check out our website for resources and request trainings:

<https://www.acescoalitionofwv.com/>

Become a member:

<https://www.acescoalitionofwv.com/CONTACT>

Like our Facebook page:

<http://www.facebook.com/wvacescoalition>

Contact our Team

Coordinators:

[Bobbie Spry –
bspry@kingeryandcompany.com](mailto:bspry@kingeryandcompany.com)

[Tricia Kingery –
tkingery@kingeryandcompany.com](mailto:tkingery@kingeryandcompany.com)

Awareness Task Team Chair:

[Dr. Barb Brady –
drbarbbrady@gmail.com](mailto:drbarbbrady@gmail.com)



Vision:

All West Virginians will thrive in a compassionate community that supports lifelong healthy development.

Mission:

To improve the health and well-being of all West Virginians by reducing the impact of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and preventing their occurrence.



Resources/References



Center for Disease Control and Prevention

www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/acestudy/index.html

www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/essentials_for_childhood_framework.pdf

North Carolina Medical Journal: SSNRE

<http://www.ncmedicaljournal.com/content/76/2/133.full>

SAMHSA Trauma Informed Interventions

www.samhsa.gov/nctic/trauma-interventions

Kaiser Permanente ACEs Resources

www.acestoohigh.com

Bruce Perry's Child Trauma Academy

<http://childtrauma.org/>



Resources/References



Center for the Developing Child – Harvard University

<https://developingchild.harvard.edu/resources/supportive-relationships-and-active-skill-building-strengthen-the-foundations-of-resilience/American>

Academy of Pediatrics – The Resilience Project

www.aap.org/en-us/advocacy-and-policy/aap-health-initiatives/resilience/Pages/ACEs-and-Toxic-Stress.aspx

Mayo Clinic Health System – Road to Resilience: Raising Healthy Kids

www.mayoclinichealthsystem.org/adverse-childhood-experiences

Child Welfare Information Network – Adverse Childhood Experiences

childwelfare.gov/topics/preventing/preventionmonth/resources/ace

ACES Connections now PACES

<https://www.acesconnection.com/blog/we-ve-changed-our-name-to-paces-connection>

Positive & Adverse Childhood Experiences

[What ACEs and PCEs do you have? | PACESConnection](#)



Q&A



Presenter Contact Info



Dr. Barb Brady

Executive Director, Inspiring Dreams Network, Corp.

ACEs Coalition of WV - Awareness Task Team Chair

dr.barbbrady@gmail.com

drbarbbrady@InspiringDreamsNetwork.org