



Trauma and Chronic Stress: The Water We're All Swimming In

Dr. Dan Jurman, DMin



Introduction

- ACEs Score
- Healthcare Work
- Anti-poverty Work
- Governor's Office of Advocacy and Reform

Heroes & Villains & Trauma



Heroes & Villains & Trauma



Malala Yousafzai



James Alex Fields

Cascading Intersectional Traumas

(2020 Headlines)

- In 2020, 73 Pennsylvania children died and 115 children nearly died as a result of child abuse. Together the two indicators rose 31 percent - Fox43
- Statistics reported by the American Journal of Emergency Medicine suggest that the isolation resulting from the pandemic is linked to the 25-30% surge in domestic violence cases in 2020
- Philly's violent year: Nearly 500 people were killed and more than 2,200 shot in 2020 - Philadelphia Inquirer
- Recently released data by the CDC show that drug overdose deaths reached a record high of 93,331 in 2020 (over 20,000 more than the prior year)
- Pediatricians say the mental health crisis among kids has become a national emergency - NPR
- White supremacist propaganda hit an all-time high in 2020 - USA Today

Cascading Intersectional Traumas

(2023 Headlines)

- Pediatric mental health crisis is the top patient safety concern for 2023, according to a report out Monday from healthcare safety organization Emergency Care Research Institute
- Across America, gun violence surged in many communities in 2022 as overall death rates from firearms rose to the highest level in nearly three decades. The year saw a near-record number of mass casualty shooting incidents, including several allegedly motivated by hate - VOA
- Suicide rates increased 37% between 2000-2018 and decreased 5% between 2018-2020. However, rates nearly returned to their peak in 2021 - CDC

Cascading Intersectional Traumas (2023 Headlines)

- Over four million American workers quit their jobs each month in 2022. And poor mental health is skyrocketing as 70% of the C-suite with the weight of the world—or at least the company—on their shoulders considered quitting to search for a job that responded to their mental health and well-being. A recent survey from Slack found that burnout is on the rise globally, most significantly in the U.S., where 43% of middle managers reported burnout—more than any other worker group – Forbes
- Aggressive driving or “road rage” has increased across Florida by thirty percent between 2020 and 2022. In March 2023, fifteen road rage-related fatalities have been reported. Nationwide, sixty-six percent of vehicle-related fatalities were attributed to road rage this year according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.

Definitions

Chronic stress is a prolonged and constant feeling of **stress** that can negatively affect your health if it goes untreated. It can be caused by the everyday pressures of family and work or by traumatic situations.



Definitions

Trauma

Trauma results from an event, series of events, or a set of circumstances experienced by an individual as physically or emotionally harmful or life threatening. Potentially traumatic events may include those directly experienced by the individual, as well as witnessing such events as threatening to others (e.g., a loved one). **Depending on the presence of resilience factors, trauma can create biologically-based responses and can have long-lasting, adverse effects on the individual's learning, relationships, functioning, and mental, physical, social, emotional, and spiritual well-being.** Not all individuals will experience a potentially traumatic event in the same way. An individual's reaction to the event may influence its effect on their functioning and wellbeing.

Definitions

Trauma-Informed Care

Trauma-Informed Care (TIC) takes a trauma-informed approach to the delivery of services that includes an understanding of trauma and an awareness of the impact it can have across settings, services, and populations. TIC views trauma through an ecological and cultural lens and recognizes that context plays a significant role in how individuals perceive and process traumatic events, whether acute or chronic. TIC involves vigilance in anticipating and avoiding institutional processes and individual practices that are likely to retraumatize individuals who already have histories of trauma. TIC upholds the importance of consumer participation in the development, delivery, and evaluation of services.

~ SAMHSA

Untreated Chronic Stress and Trauma Can Negatively Impact:

- **Your behavioral health**
- **Your physical health**
- **Your relationship with your partner**
- **Your relationship with your children**
- **Your performance at work**
- **Your ability to just enjoy life**

In the Workplace It Can Negatively Impact:

- **Recruitment**
- **Retention**
- **Productivity**
- **Attendance**
- **Health Insurance Costs**
- **Workplace Mood/Culture**
- **Workplace Abuses/Violence**

Depending on the population from which you're hiring, what we have traditionally described as a lack of "soft skills" or generational "laziness" or "sensitivity" could actually be symptoms of chronic stress and complex trauma.

Chronic Stress and Trauma During the COVID-19 Pandemic



Worldview, Circumstances, and Politics Don't Matter

You lost your job / You were working from home

Your kids were in school / Your kids were online

You lost a loved one / You think it's a hoax

You couldn't visit your parents at home / in a facility

You had comorbidities / You were healthy and wanted out

You were afraid of the police / You were afraid of protestors

You think one candidate is a criminal cheat

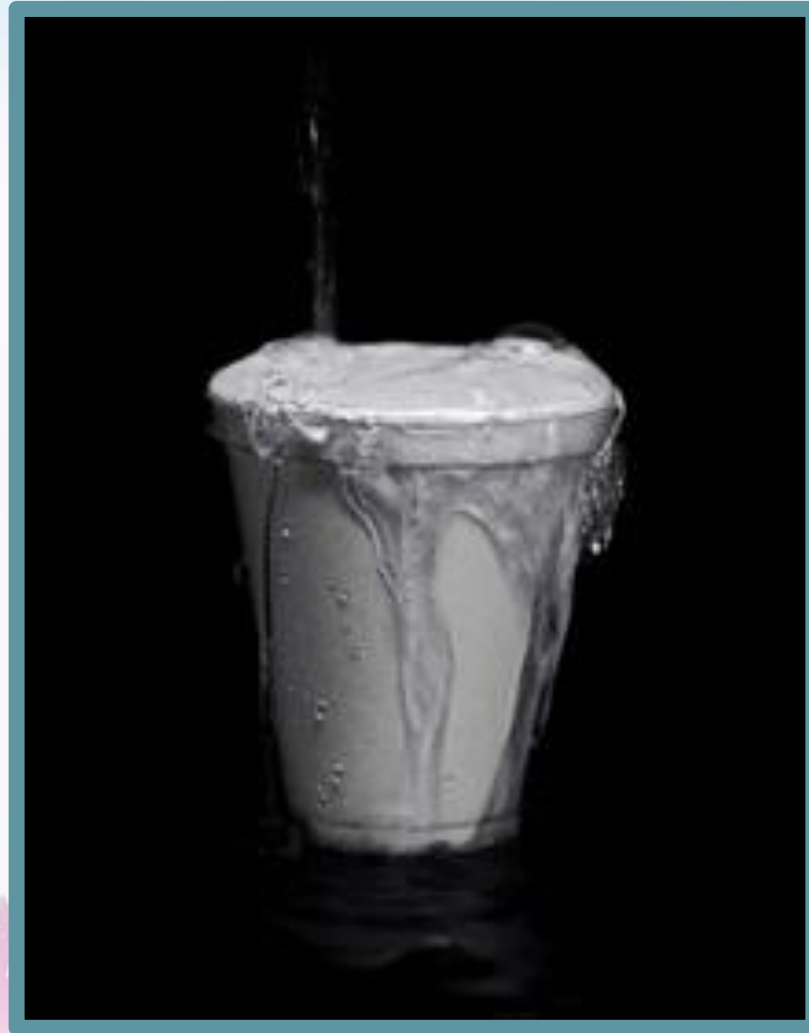
You wanted to be at work / You wanted to work remotely

Everyone has been experiencing at least chronic stress
if not full-blown trauma for three years and it's not over

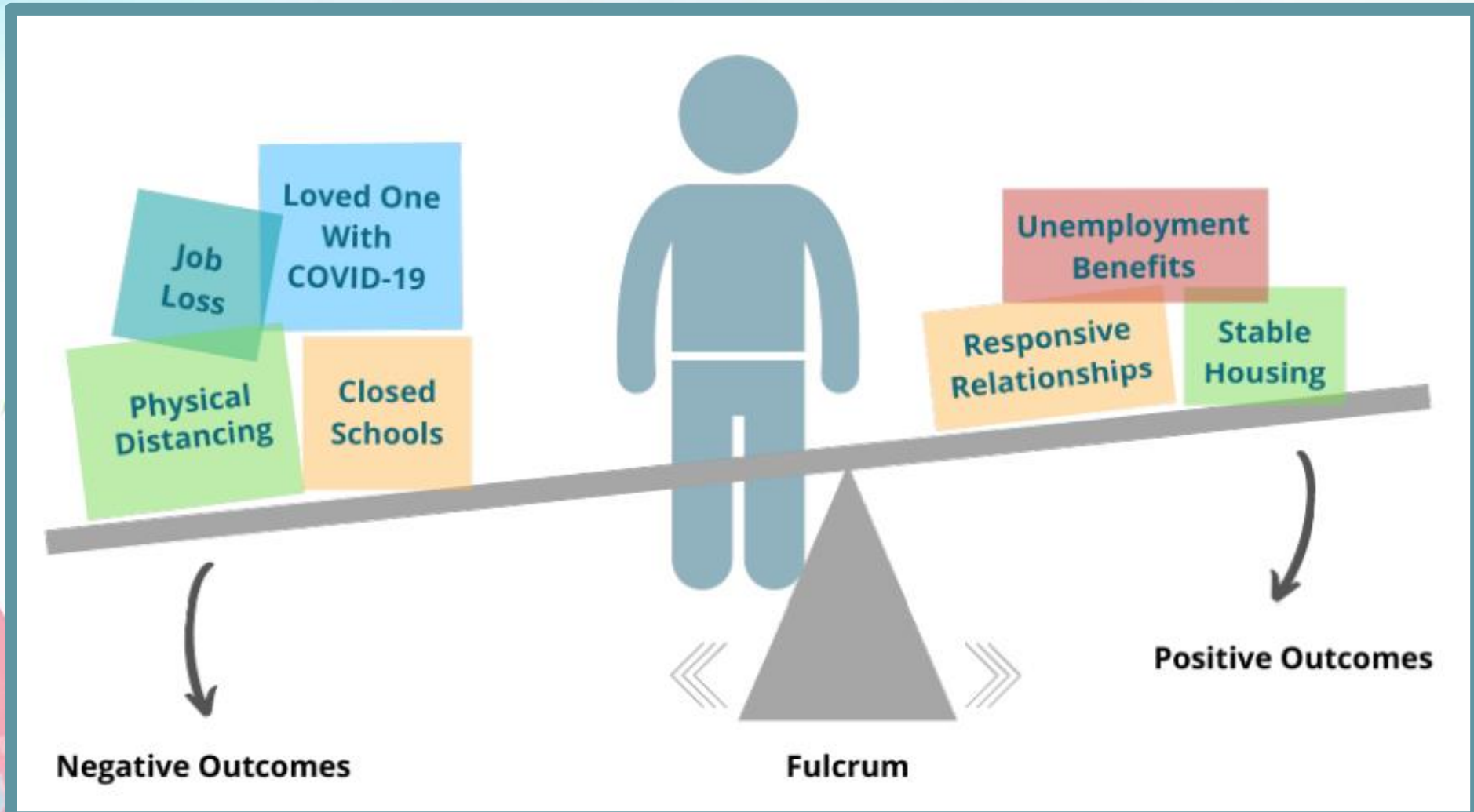
People Have Been Hard Hit

- Primary trauma of separation from family/loss
- Chronic stress of being endangered/exposed
- Chronic stress of the workload during shortages
- Secondary trauma of others' pain and loss
- Overlay racial trauma and stress
- Overlay political divisions and stress/trauma
- Overlay financial stresses/inflation
- Overlay anger, violence, and war in Europe
- Overlay pre-existing traumas/ACEs

We Can Only Handle So Much



We Can Only Handle So Much (& the Effects Are Cumulative)



Center on the Developing Child – Harvard University

Signs of Chronic Stress

- irritability, which can be extreme
- fatigue
- headaches
- difficulty concentrating, or an inability to do so
- rapid, disorganized thoughts
- difficulty sleeping
- digestive problems
- changes in appetite
- feeling helpless
- a perceived loss of control
- low self-esteem
- loss of sexual desire
- nervousness
- frequent infections or illnesses



“Trauma decontextualized in a person looks like personality. Trauma decontextualized in a family looks like family traits. Trauma in a people looks like culture.”

-Resmaa Menakem



How Often Do We Mislabeled and Then Mistreat People?

Signs of ~~Chronic Stress & Trauma~~ negative personality, traits, or culture

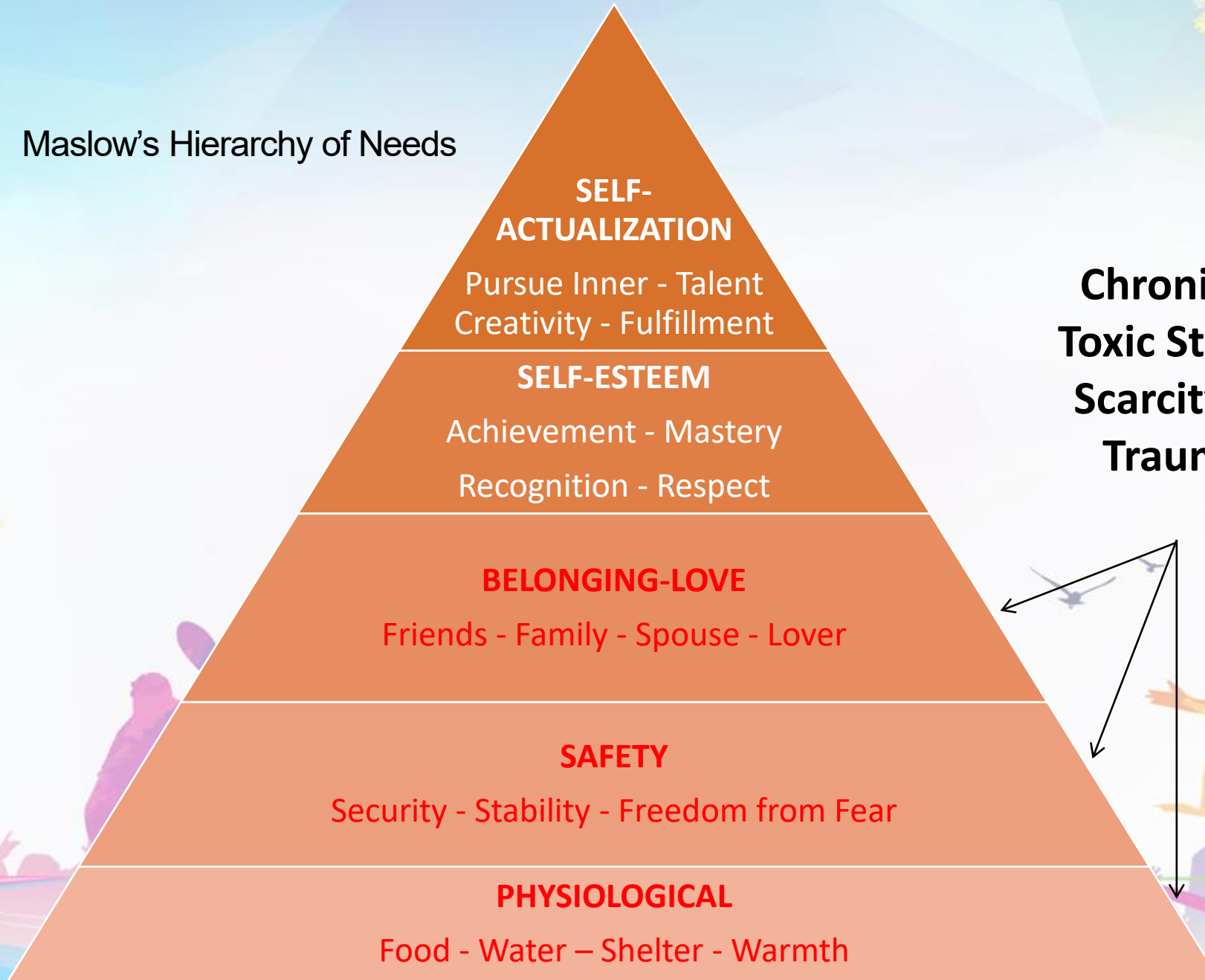
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People living in poverty and those who experienced discrimination or violence were experiencing chronic stress and trauma every day of every year prior to 2020.

The disproportionality of our systems makes this a key observation

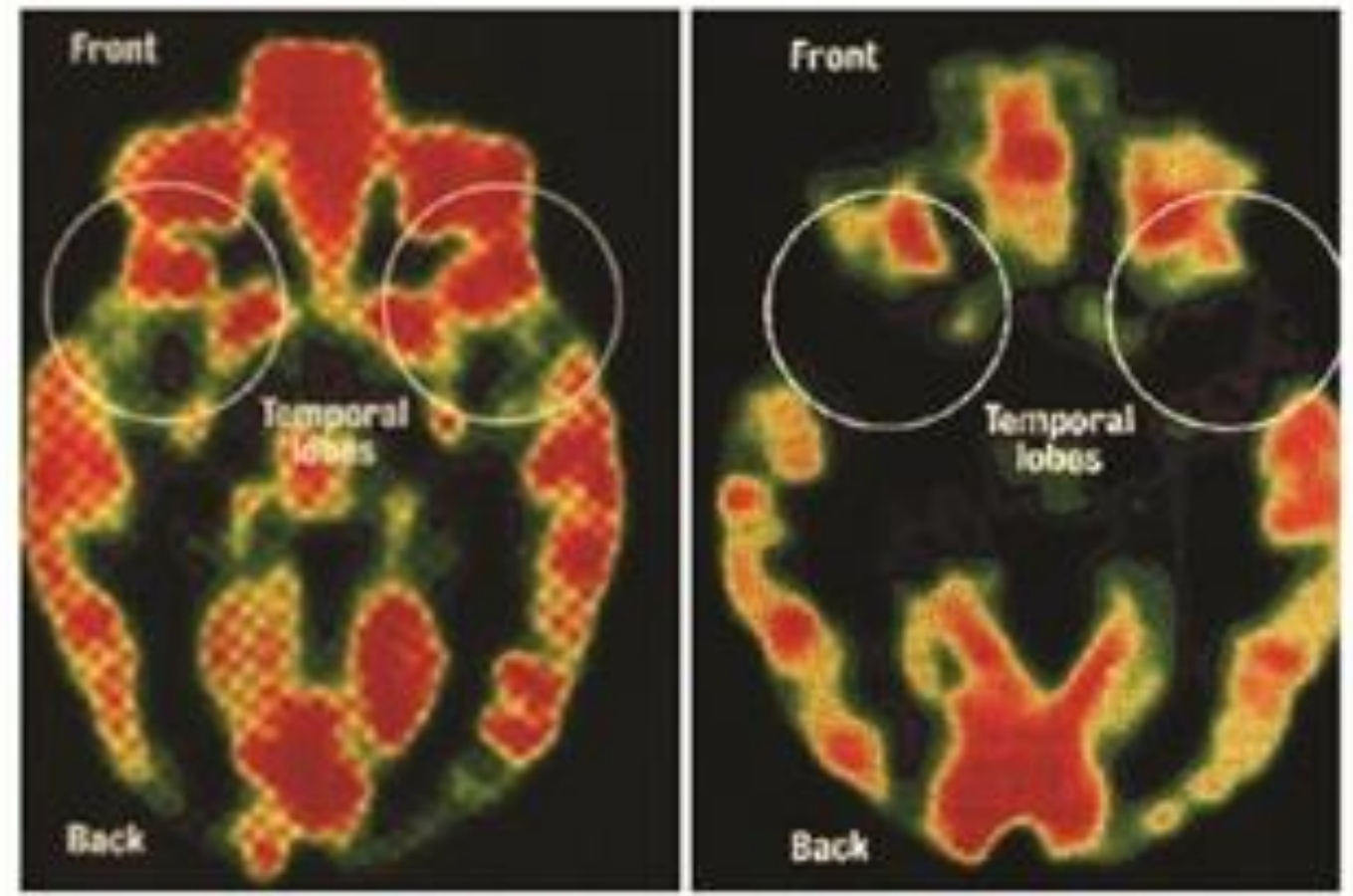
Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs



**Chronic &
Toxic Stress,
Scarcity, &
Trauma**

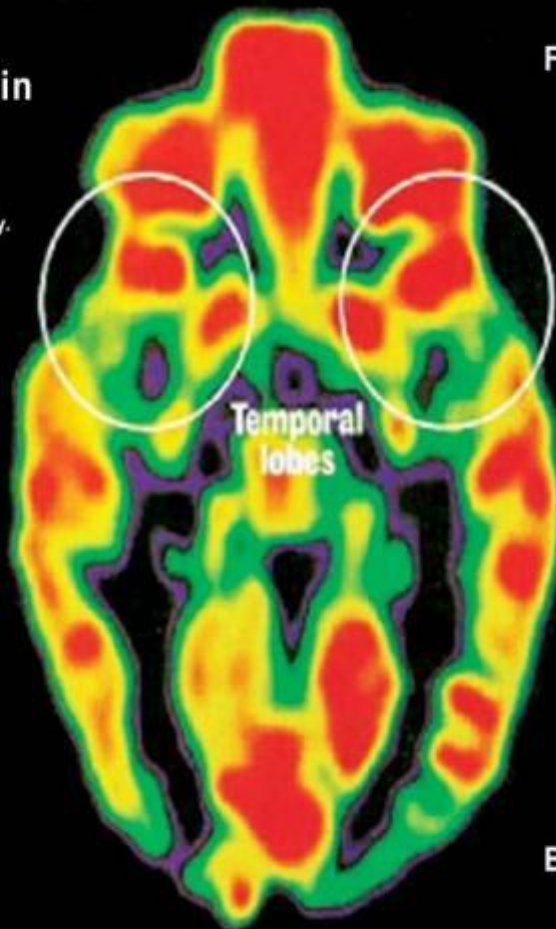
Healthy Brain

Results of Chronic Stress



Healthy Brain

This PET scan of the brain of a normal child shows regions of high (red) and low (blue and black) activity. At birth, only primitive structures such as the brain stem (center) are fully functional; in regions like the temporal lobes (top), early childhood experiences wire the circuits.



Front

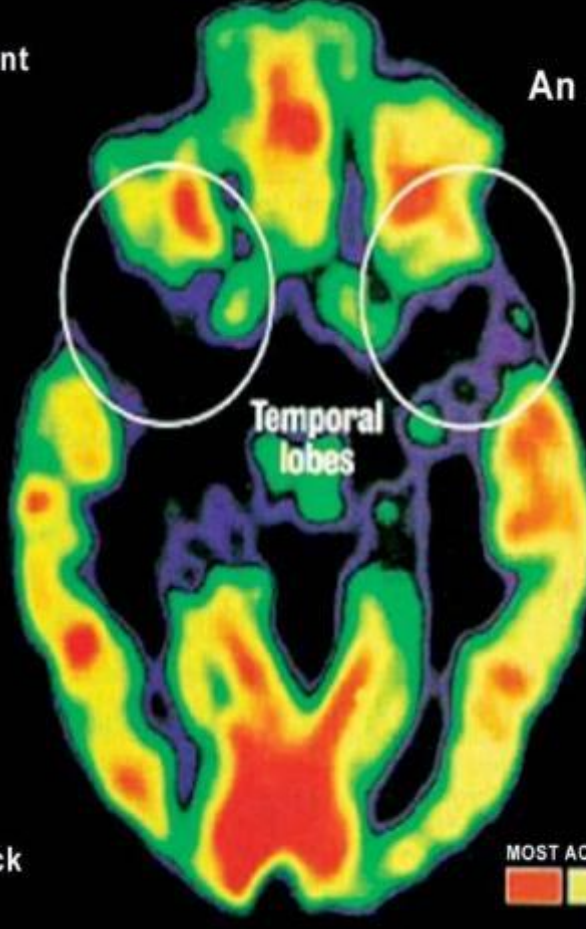
Back

Temporal lobes

Temporal lobes

An Abused Brain

This PET scan of the brain of a Romanian Orphan, who was institutionalized shortly after birth, shows the effect of extreme deprivation in infancy. The temporal lobes (top), which regulate emotions and receive input from the senses, are nearly quiescent. Such children suffer emotional and cognitive problems.

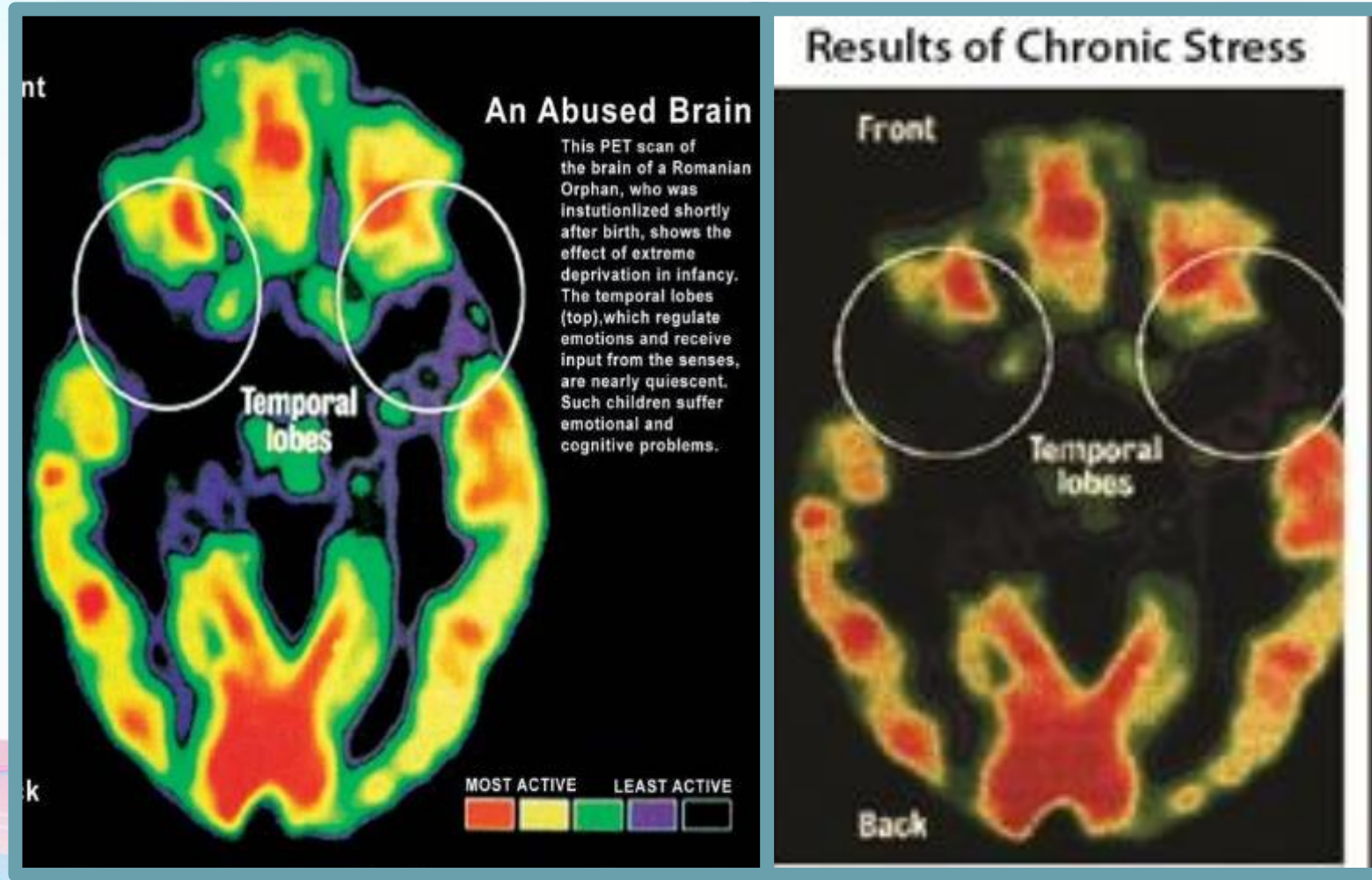


MOST ACTIVE

LEAST ACTIVE



The Brain Treats Chronic Stress, Scarcity, and Abuse / Dangers in Similar Ways

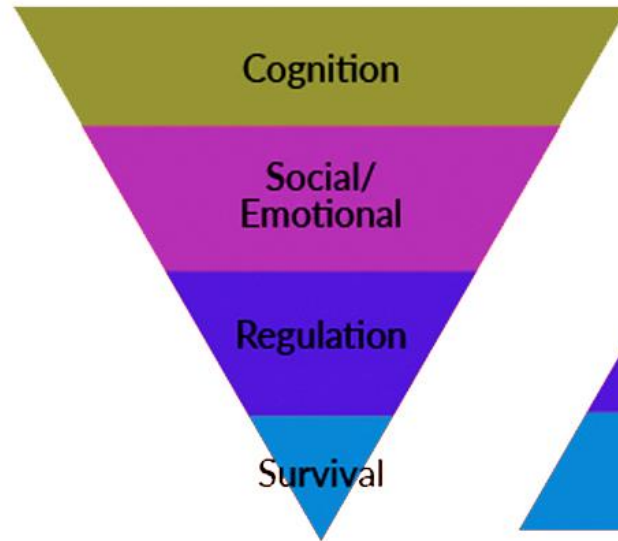


Trauma & Brain Development

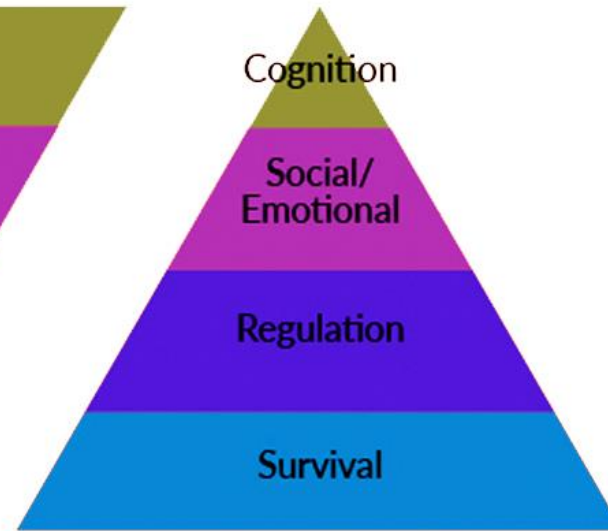


- Reptilian Brain
- Limbic System
- Neocortex

Typical Development



Developmental Trauma



Adapted from Holt & Jordan, Ohio Dept. of Education

ACES

Adverse Childhood Experiences



ABUSE



Physical



Emotional



Sexual

NEGLECT



Physical



Emotional

HOUSEHOLD DYSFUNCTION



Mental Illness



Incarcerated Relative



Mother treated violently



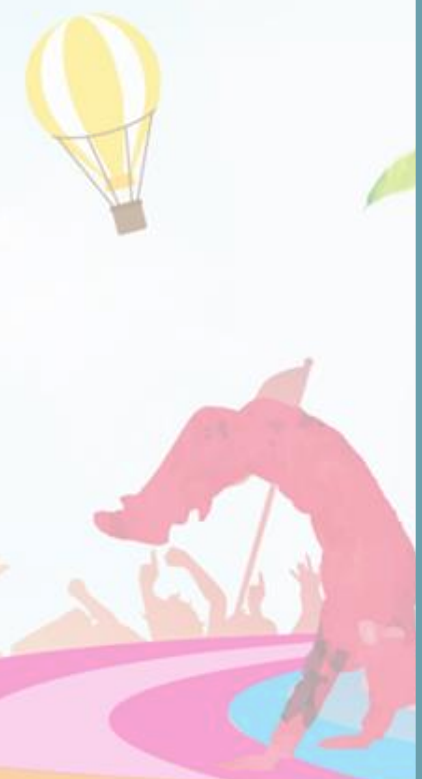
Substance Abuse



Divorce



Adversity exposure	Philadelphia sample (N=1,784), %	Kaiser sample ^{a,b} (N=8,056), %	p-value
Conventional ACEs			
Physical abuse	38.1	10.8	< 0.001
Substance using household member	34.8	25.6	< 0.001
Emotional abuse	33.2	11.1	< 0.001
Mentally ill household member	24.1	18.8	< 0.001
Witnessed domestic violence	20.2	12.5	< 0.001
Sexual abuse	16.2	22.0	< 0.001
Incarcerated household member	12.9	3.4	< 0.001
Emotional neglect	7.7	14.8	< 0.001
Physical neglect	7.0	9.9	< 0.001
Expanded ACEs			
Witnessed violence	40.5	N/A	N/A
Felt discrimination	34.5	N/A	N/A
Unsafe neighborhood	27.3	N/A	N/A
Experienced bullying	8.0	N/A	N/A
Lived in foster care	2.5	N/A	N/A



Why is this such a powerful force?

Fight, Flight, or Freeze





What happens when the Fight, Flight, or Freeze response is triggered over and over again in a person?



The portion of a problem linked to an ACE

- Depression: 50% chance it is caused by an ACE
- Attempted suicide: 58%
- Sexual Assault: 62%
- Domestic Violence: 52%
- Alcoholism: 65%
- Drug abuse: 50%
- IV Drug abuse: 78%

"Attributable Risk" is the portion of a condition in a population that can be attributed to a specific risk factor
Felitti, 2003 conference presentation at Snowbird in 2003

Snakes and Sticks



Fight, Flight, or Freeze

Applies to all dangers








Historical Trauma isn't just historical
It's not just a function of conscious memory
It's biological

Neurobiology
Rewriting RNA
Epigenetics

The Good News – Neuroplasticity



For a long time, it has been assumed that brain plasticity peaks at young age and then gradually decreases as one gets older. Thanks to tremendous advances in medical imaging techniques for assessment of brain structure and function, mounting evidence for lifelong brain plasticity has been generated over the past years.

Within the last four decades, our view of the mature vertebrate brain has changed significantly. Today it is generally accepted that the adult brain is far from being fixed. A number of factors such as stress, adrenal and gonadal hormones, neurotransmitters, growth factors, certain drugs, environmental stimulation, learning, and aging change neuronal structures and functions.

– National Institutes of Health

We Have to Equip People with the Right Tools

- Breathing
- Mindfulness
- Yoga / Exercise
- Nature
- The Arts
- **PLAY**

(the average American adult now logs more hours at work than a 14th-century English peasant – Newsweek)

- One Stable Adult / Relationships
- Community / Workplace Resources
- Resilience-Building
- Trauma Therapy
- **SAFETY**



Trauma Therapy

EMDR - Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing

TF-CBT - Trauma Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy

TST - Trauma Systems Therapy

CFTSI - Child and Family Traumatic Stress Intervention

ARC - Attachment, Self-Regulation and Competency

C-BITS - Cognitive Behavioral Intervention for Trauma in Schools

Psychedelics – Promising therapies on the horizon

We Have to Talk to Each Other!

Wounded Vietnam Veterans and PTSD



Group Therapy Models

Professional Quality of Life Scale (PROQOL)

Measures Compassion Satisfaction
and Compassion Fatigue

https://www.proqol.org/ProQol_Test.html



Change Our Policies and Practices

HR Policies

PTO

Patient / Client Experience

From the color and feel of our physical spaces to the experience of connecting with us, are there aspects that can trigger or retraumatize people? Change them!

Bottom Line:

Trauma and Chronic Stress Can Be Incredibly Damaging

BUT

The Brain Has a Tremendous Capacity for Healing

AND

We **MUST** incorporate opportunities for that healing in our policies and practices to undo the damage of the past three years (and counting).



Questions?

**Please remember to go on cvent
and fill out the session survey!**

