



SWORD & SHIELD:
Protecting Youth from
Trauma and Risk

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Road Map for Today
T.A.P. into Strengths

- **Trauma**
 - What is trauma?
 - How does it impact development?
- **ACEs-Adverse Childhood Experiences**
 - What are ACEs?
 - How do they impact health?
- **Protective & Promotive Factors**
 - What are the Youth Thrive Protective and Promotive Factors?
 - How they provide pathways for support for youth and families?

Trauma

Trauma is an experience that threatens life or may cause physical injury and is so powerful and dangerous that it **overwhelms an individual's capacity to cope.**

One out of every **4** children attending school has been exposed to a traumatic event that can affect learning and/or behavior.

Traumatic events include:

- Abuse in all forms
- Death or loss of loved one
- Witnessing violence in the home or in the community
- Serious accidents
- Life-threatening health situations and/or painful medical procedures
- Life-threatening natural disasters
- Acts or threats of terrorism
- Bullying

from the National Child Traumatic Stress Network (NCTSN)

Trauma and Behavior

Body Symptoms of Activation

| | |
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| Hot/Sympathetic: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Increase the heart rate• Constrict blood vessels• Raise blood pressure, muscle tension• Hyper-sensitivity• Release the "keep me safe" hormones• Headaches• Decreased metabolism and immune systems | Cool/Para-Sympathetic: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Promote digestion• Active metabolism• Resistance to infection• Circulation to non-vital organs• Release the "feel good" hormones• Decreases heart rate, blood pressure and body temperature |
|--|--|

Origins Training & Consulting

Trauma and Behavior

"When we believe an individual has complete control over his or her behavior, we are more likely to be angry when that behavior is inappropriate."

Excerpt from the book: [Helping Traumatized Children Learn](#)

Trauma and Brain Development



Adverse Childhood Experiences

Spearheaded by Dr. Vincent Felitti in partnership with the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention, as well as the Kaiser Health Plan's Department of Preventive Medicine in San Diego, CA

- 17,337
- Solidly middle class
- Caucasian
- 75% Some college and higher
- Average age = 57

Adverse Childhood Experiences

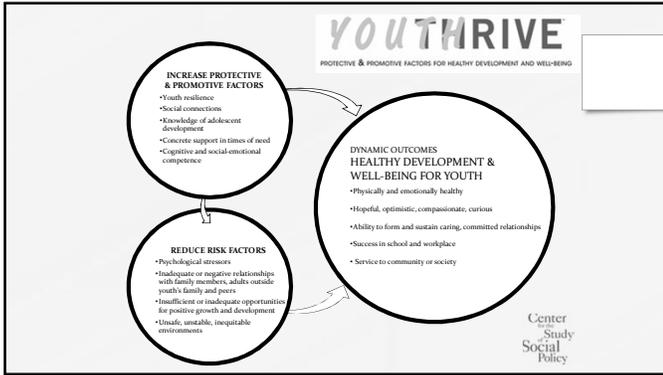
2 Categories of ACEs

| | |
|---|---|
| <p>Growing up with abuse:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recurrent physical abuse Recurrent emotional abuse Sexual abuse Emotional or physical neglect | <p>Growing up with Household Dysfunction:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Alcohol or drug abuser Incarcerated household member Household member with mental illness Parent being treated violently One or no parents |
|---|---|

Impact of ACEs

Out of 100 people...

| | | |
|--|--|---|
| <p>33% Report 0 ACEs</p> <p>With 0 ACEs 1 in 16 smokes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 in 69 are alcoholic 1 in 480 use IV drugs 1 in 14 has heart disease 1 in 96 attempts suicide | <p>51% Report 1-3 ACEs</p> <p>With 3 ACEs 1 in 9 smokes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 in 9 are alcoholic 1 in 43 use IV drugs 1 in 7 has heart disease 1 in 10 attempts suicide | <p>16% Report 4-10 ACEs</p> <p>With 7+ ACEs 1 in 6 smokes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 in 6 are alcoholic 1 in 30 use IV drugs 1 in 6 has heart disease 1 in 5 attempts suicide |
|--|--|---|

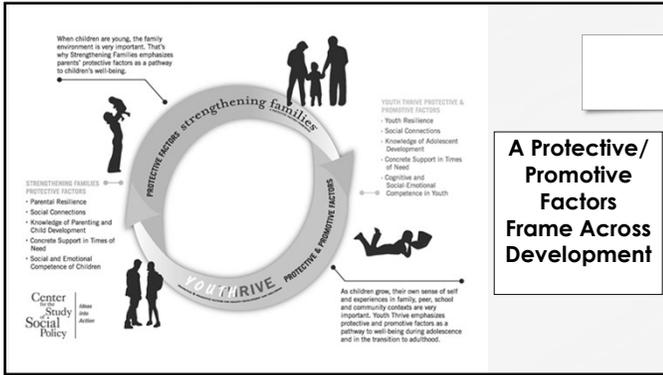


Two Goals of Youth Thrive

- To provide a way for child welfare agencies to translate the federal mandate for child well-being into actions
- To disseminate information about how we can support and promote healthy development for young people

The Four Big Ideas of the PPF Framework

1. A focus on protective and promotive factors
2. An approach, not a model
3. A changed relationship with youth
4. Alignment with developmental science



Before we dive in, there's this....

Youth Thrive Protective and Promotive Factors Framework

- Promoting youth resilience
- Social connections
- Knowledge of adolescent development
- Concrete support in times of need
- Cognitive and social-emotional competencies

Adolescent development: A few key points

- Adolescence starts with biological changes of puberty
- Emotional, cognitive, social development as well
- Our knowledge and understanding has changed over time
 - Development of brain cortex and frontal lobe
 - "Templates" based on past experience used to interpret future experiences
 - "Pruning" of neural connections
 - Impact of trauma

In the child welfare system...

Young people who have lived in high-stress environments for long periods may:

- Not be able to easily return to the calm & connected state
- Respond with rejection, suspicion, aggression, or withdrawal
- Present greater development in lower brain areas than in higher functions
- Need repetitive positive experiences & opportunities to create new brain pathways

Youth Resilience

Internal, adaptive traits that evolve from youths' positive or adverse life experiences, and that enable youth to survive and thrive.



Youth Resilience

- The process of managing stress and functioning well even when faced with adversity or trauma
- Resilient young people:
 - Have close, supportive connections with trusted adults
 - View themselves in a positive light
 - Are aware of their emotional responses, can modulate their arousal and manage impulses
 - Possess strong communication skills
 - Have confidence in their ability to solve their own problems – but can ask for help when needed

Youth Resilience: Implications

- Youth need adults who will help them to:
 - face challenges competently
 - make productive decisions, including when and how to seek help
 - think about results of their actions and take responsibility for them
 - positively influence their development and well-being

Social Connections



Youths' healthy, sustained relationships with people, institutions, the community and a force greater than oneself that promote a sense of trust, belonging and that one matters.

Social Connections

- Emotional support
- Informational support
- Instrumental support
- Spiritual support

- Peer connections are especially important in adolescence
 - Identity – self-concept and sense of self
 - Independence – emotional, cognitive and behavioral autonomy

Social Connections: Implications

- We can support the development and strengthening of social connections
- Pay special attention to:
 - "Testing" behavior
 - "Too quick" relationship development
 - Transitions

Knowledge of adolescent development

Parents and adults working with youth have accurate knowledge about the unique aspects of adolescent development because beliefs about youth influence how they are perceived and treated.



Photo credit: Lorraine LaPlante



Photo credit: arish in studio

For youth, increasing their understanding about their own development helps to "normalize" their individual experiences as developmentally typical and even healthy as they prepare for adulthood.

Knowledge of adolescent development

- Youth understanding of:
 - The changes they are experiencing
 - The risks and opportunities of this phase of life
 - Reasons for their conflicting urges, mood swings, etc.
 - Strategies to improve their own well-being
- Adult (parent, caregiver, worker) understanding of:
 - Reasons for behaviors that can be challenging
 - The need for continued adult support and guidance
 - The need for opportunities to advance development

Knowledge of adolescent development: Implications

- Environments need to be emotionally & physically safe
- We need to be caring and nurturing:
 - Understand the meaning of behavior
 - Be aware of developmental needs – renegotiate roles
 - Value young people
 - Provide opportunities to explore, make choices, make mistakes & grow
 - Listen & seek to understand who the young person is
 - Opportunities for self-expression & voice
 - Affirm assets, skills, and competence

Concrete Support in Times of Need

...those things that we can count on when we are in need of extra help or resources

...can make it easier to get through a hard time or to address a specific issue



Concrete Support in Times of Need

Interactive Components of Concrete Support

- Youths' positive help-seeking behavior
 - Informal sources: friends, family, other significant adults outside the family
 - Formal sources: youth program leaders, teachers, counselors, social workers, medical staff, clinical service providers, religious healers
- High quality service delivery
 - Strengths-based
 - Trauma-informed
 - Critical factor that influences whether youth will seek help again or benefit from help when it is provided

Concrete Support in Times of Need: Implications

- Promote help seeking
- Provide/refer to services that are individually focused, culturally responsive, grounded in respect and trust
- Provide a different experience to build trust
- Engage youth as helpers in mutual support networks
- Be flexible and available to respond to youth needs

Cognitive and Social-Emotional Competence in Youth



Cognitive and Social-Emotional Competence in Youth

- Essential developmental tasks in adolescence
- Lay the foundation for forming independent identity
- Promote productive, responsible, and satisfying adulthood

- Many experiences we provide for young people focus on either cognitive or social-emotional development – we need to focus on the "whole person"

Cognitive and Social-Emotional Competence in Youth: Implications

- Need for safe environments to reduce brain activation and expand brain resources
- Change takes time
- Access to experiences that support competence building
- Adults acknowledge competence and successes
- Validate the experience of failure and its feelings
- Reframing success

Applying Youth Thrive and Strengthening Families together

- Working across age ranges of children and youth in your caseload

- Supporting young parents who need support for their adolescent development at the same time as they need support in their parenting role

- Other thoughts?

RESOURCES

- ACES Connection – a Community-of-Practice Social Network - <http://www.acesconnection.com/>
- AZ ACEs information - <http://www.azpbs.org/strongkids/>
- Center for the Study of Social Policy – Strengthening Families Protective Factors resources - <http://www.cssp.org/refom/strengtheningfamilies>
 - PRACTICE – information, tools and resources to increase knowledge of PPF
 - SYSTEMS – tools for implementing PPF Approach in variety of fields including Child Welfare
- Center for the Study of Social Policy – Youth Thrive - <http://www.cssp.org/refom/child-welfare/youththrive>
- Child Welfare Information Gateway – Trauma-Informed Practice – <https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/responding/trauma/>
