

A Trauma-Informed Approach

Gary Rukin, MA, MS, LPC

Trauma-Informed Coordinator, McHenry County Mental Health Board

Why

Looking at life through a trauma-informed lens allows us to better understand and relate to ourselves and each other.



BENEATH EVERY BEHAVIOR THERE
IS A FEELING. AND BENEATH EACH
FEELING IS A NEED. AND WHEN
WE MEET THAT NEED RATHER
THAN FOCUS ON THE
BEHAVIOR, WE BEGIN
TO DEAL WITH
THE CAUSE,
NOT THE
SYMPTOM.

ASHLEIGH WARNER



tinybuddha.com

“You shift the frame,
you change the lens,
and all at once the
world is revealed *and
nothing is the same.*” —

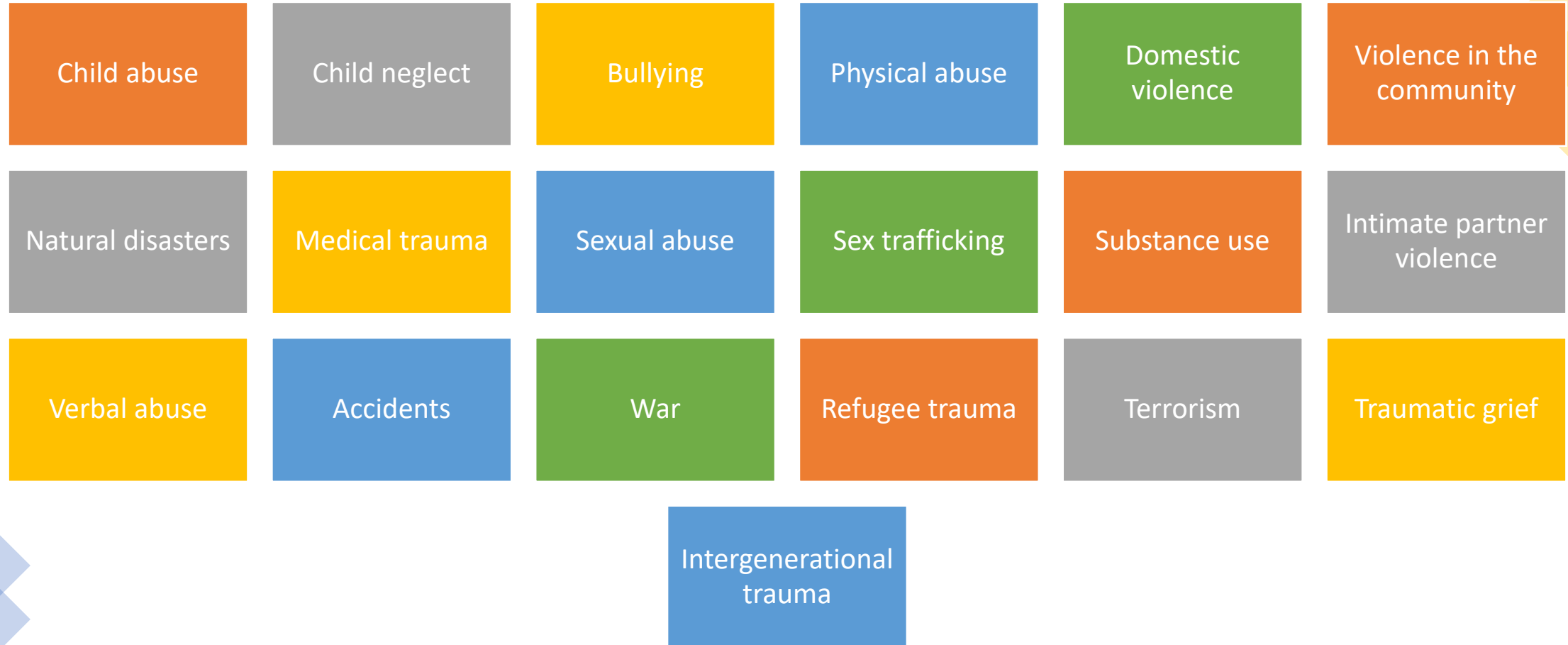
Dr. Nadine Burke Harris, M.D.



What is Trauma?

- Trauma can either be physical or emotional.
 - Physical trauma is a serious bodily injury.
 - Emotional trauma is the emotional response to a disturbing event or situation.

Types of Trauma include, but are not limited to:



Psychological Symptoms of Emotional Trauma

Fear

Helplessness

Dissociation

Changes in
attention,
concentration, and
memory

Changes in
behavior

Changes in attitude

Changes in
worldview

Difficulty
functioning

Denial—
Refusing to believe
the trauma
occurred

Anger

Bargaining

Avoidance

Depression

Anxiety

Mood swings

Guilt or shame

Blame (including
self-blame)

Social withdrawal

Loss of interest in
activities

Emotional
numbness

Physical Symptoms of Emotional Trauma

Increased
heart rate

Body aches or
pains

Tense muscles

Feeling on
edge

Jumpiness or
startling easily

Nightmares

Difficulty
sleeping

Fatigue

Sexual
dysfunction

Appetite
changes

Excessive
alertness



The Underlying Pathophysiology of Trauma

- Thomas Rutledge writes, “Modernity...has exposed us to a problem that our ancestors and evolutionary biology rarely encountered: chronic stress.
- Instead of the historically normal process of HPA axis activation followed by rest and recovery, modern traumas and stressful events frequently result in a fight-or-flight response that may be sustained for months or even years.”



A Trauma-Informed Approach

- Aims to avoid re-victimization
- Appreciates that problem behaviors may be attempts to cope
- Strives to maximize choices for the survivor and control over their own healing process
- Seeks to be culturally competent

SAMHSA/CDC

Six Principles of Trauma-Informed Care

Principles of Trauma-Informed Care



Safety



Trustworthy &
Transparency



Peer Support



Collaboration
& Mutuality



Empowerment
& Choice



Cultural,
Historical,
Gender Issues

SAMHSA/CDC

Six Principles of Trauma-Informed Care

SAFETY

- Throughout the organization, staff and the people they serve, whether children or adults, feel physically and psychologically safe.
- The physical setting is safe and interpersonal interactions promote a sense of safety.
- Understanding safety as defined by those served is a high priority.



SAMHSA/CDC Six Principles of Trauma-Informed Care

Trustworthy & Transparency

- We build and maintain trust with people served by our organization and their family members, among staff and leadership, and with all other stakeholders and partners.
- We have a culture of honesty, where people follow through on their commitments to each other and the people we serve.



SAMHSA/CDC

Six Principles of Trauma-Informed Care

Peer Support

- We value the insights and knowledge of people with lived experiences of trauma.
- If we're working with children, we strive to involve adults who experienced trauma and children or family members of children who experienced traumatic events.
- We include peers in service delivery and ensure they have input into how services are designed and offered.



SAMHSA/CDC Six Principles of Trauma-Informed Care

Collaboration & Mutuality

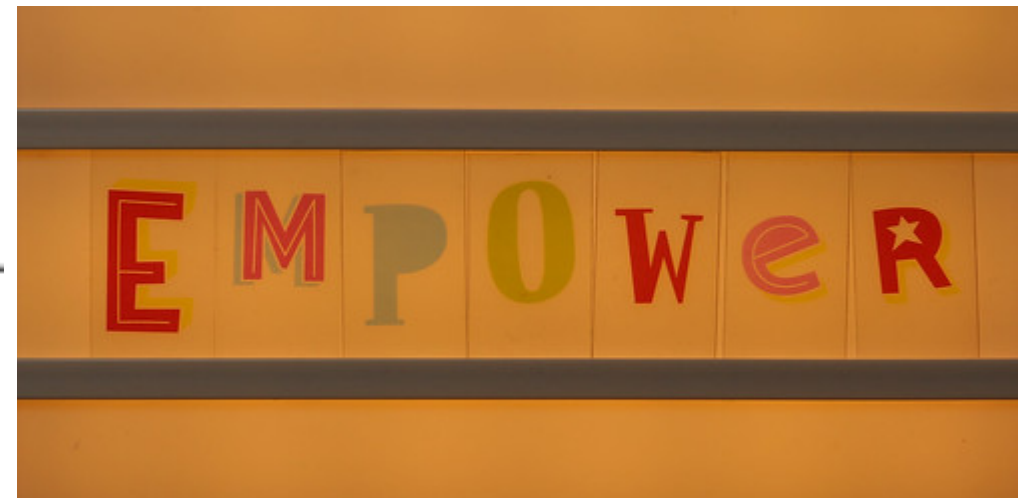
- We value partnering and leveling power differences between ourselves and the people we serve and among organizational staff, recognizing that healing happens in relationships and in the meaningful sharing of power and decision-making.
- Everyone, especially the people we serve, has a role to play in deciding what services are needed and how they are delivered.
- We promote a sense of community and belonging in others.



SAMHSA/CDC Six Principles of Trauma-Informed Care

Empowerment, Voice, & Choice

- We recognize and celebrate the strengths of others and uphold the centrality of the people we serve.
- We believe in resilience, and in the ability of individuals, organizations, and communities to heal, and we focus on shared decision-making, identify and offer choices for service delivery, and listen to understand the meaningful goals of the people we serve.



SAMHSA/CDC Six Principles of Trauma-Informed Care

Cultural, Historical, & Gender Issues

- We acknowledge and respond to cultural, historical, and gender issues, balancing the need to understand, honor, and respond to cultural and intersectional differences and offer culturally competent and gender responsive services while at the same time moving past cultural stereotypes and biases in our expectations and service delivery.



Why Use a Trauma-Informed Approach



Trauma is Often Invisible

- When we see someone with a broken leg, we know they are impaired, and will often strive to make their lives easier by holding a door open or offering to carry their packages.





Trauma is Often Invisible

- When someone appears angry or out of control, we often react in kind.
- Someone with a history of trauma may be dysregulated.
- Kindness & understanding are likely to be more helpful in resolving the situation and allowing the person to be heard.

Gabor Maté, M.D. with Steven Bartlett:

Trauma is Invisible

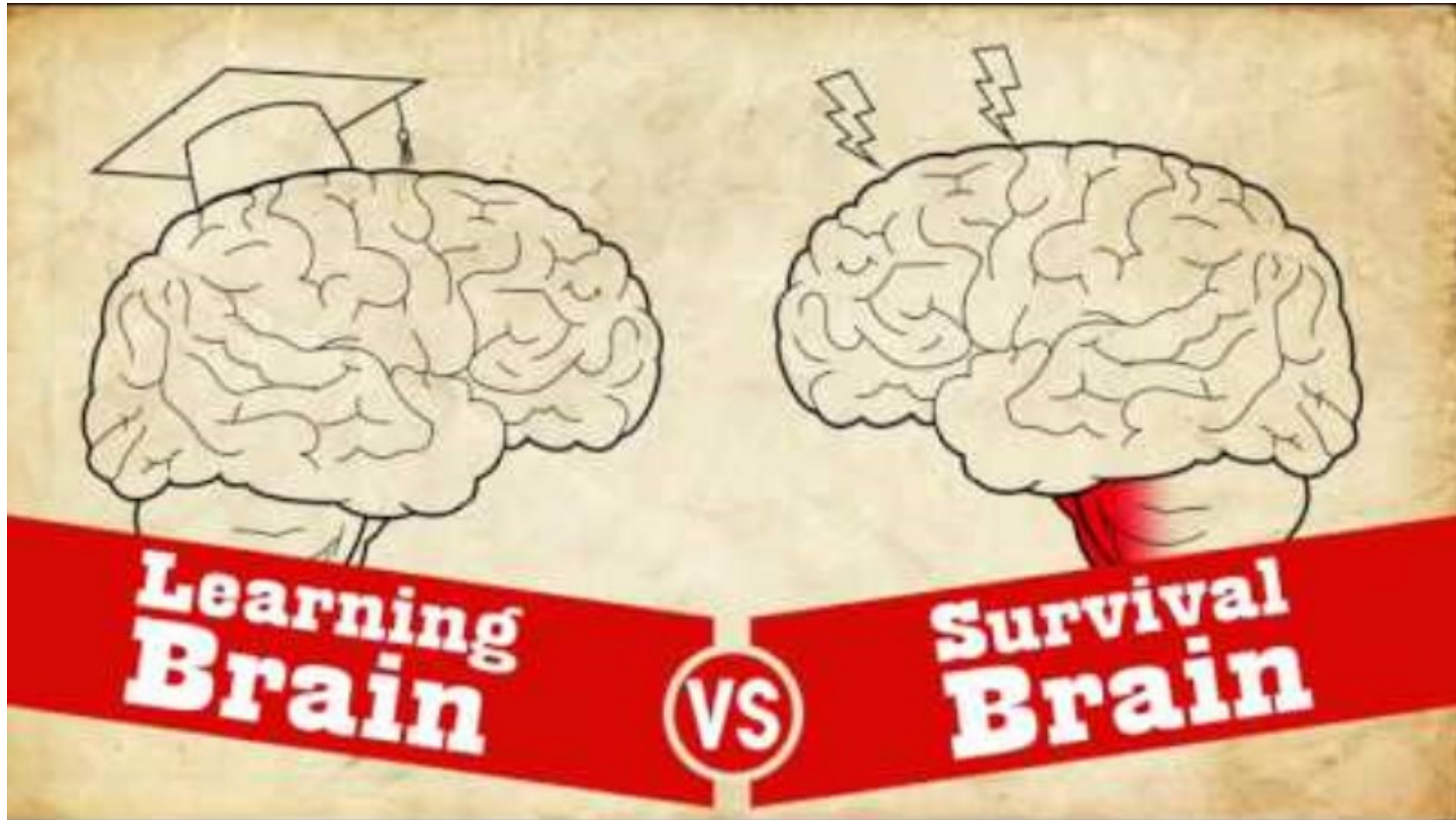


Learning Brain vs. Survival Brain

- When a child comes to school and we ask her to sit still, share, and cooperate, there can be a painful disconnect.
- The child will have to be taught the skills required to succeed in this context just as we would train a person from a more benevolent path how to conduct themselves in a chaotic and dangerous environment.



Learning Brain vs. Survival Brain



A Legacy of Trauma

We All Come
from
Somewhere

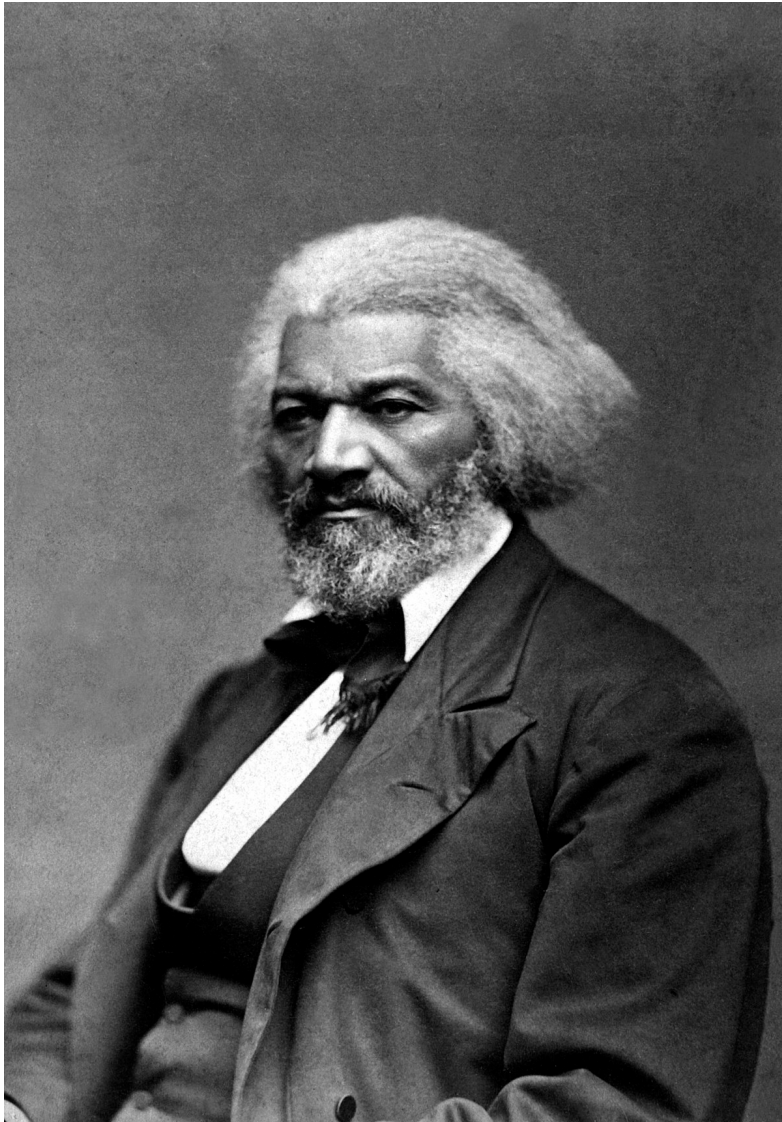




This Photo by Unknown Author is licensed under [CC BY-SA-NC](#)

Some Triumph Against All Odds

- At 5 feet and 3 inches, Mugsy Bogues was an unlikely basketball star.
- The shortest player ever to compete in the NBA, Bogues played point guard for four teams during his 14-season NBA career.
- He had 146 NBA career double-doubles.

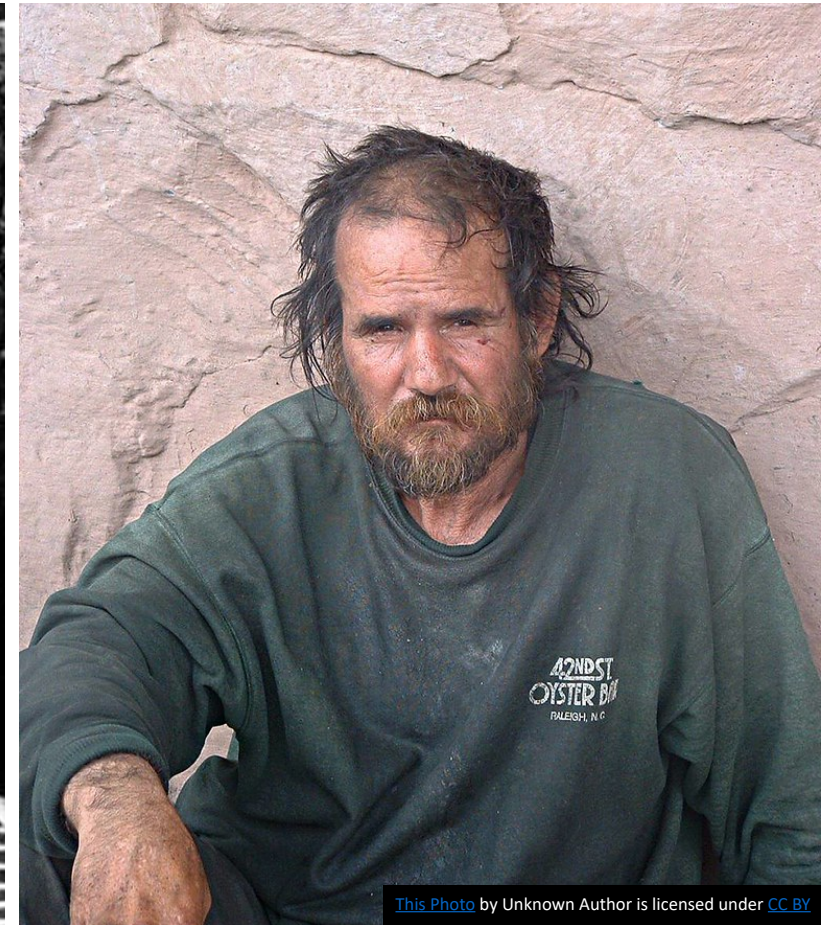


Some Triumph Against All Odds

- Frederick Douglass was born into slavery & separated from his mother at a young age.
- He was beaten severely for teaching himself to read.
- He escaped from slavery, led the abolitionist movement, and gained notoriety for his oratory and antislavery writing.

- Douglass' autobiography is *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave*.

Many Do Not



Epigenetics

There was an experiment done with mice and cherry blossoms, which demonstrates how a reaction to trauma may be passed down for generations.



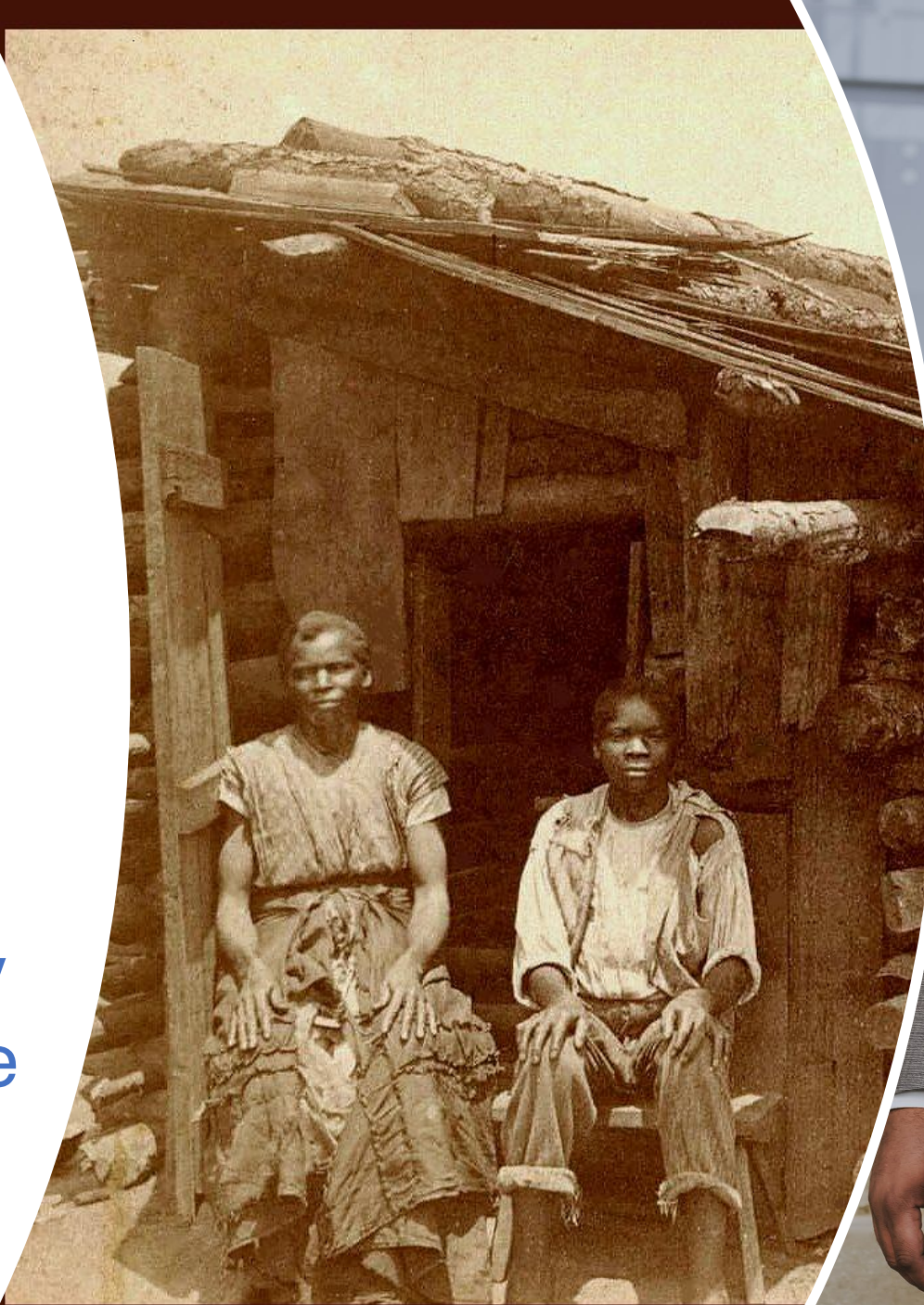
Inheritance

- Think about your family traditions, passed down from one generation to another.
 - the holidays you celebrate
 - the foods you eat
 - the way you choose to name your children.
- These and more are legacies each of us has inherited.

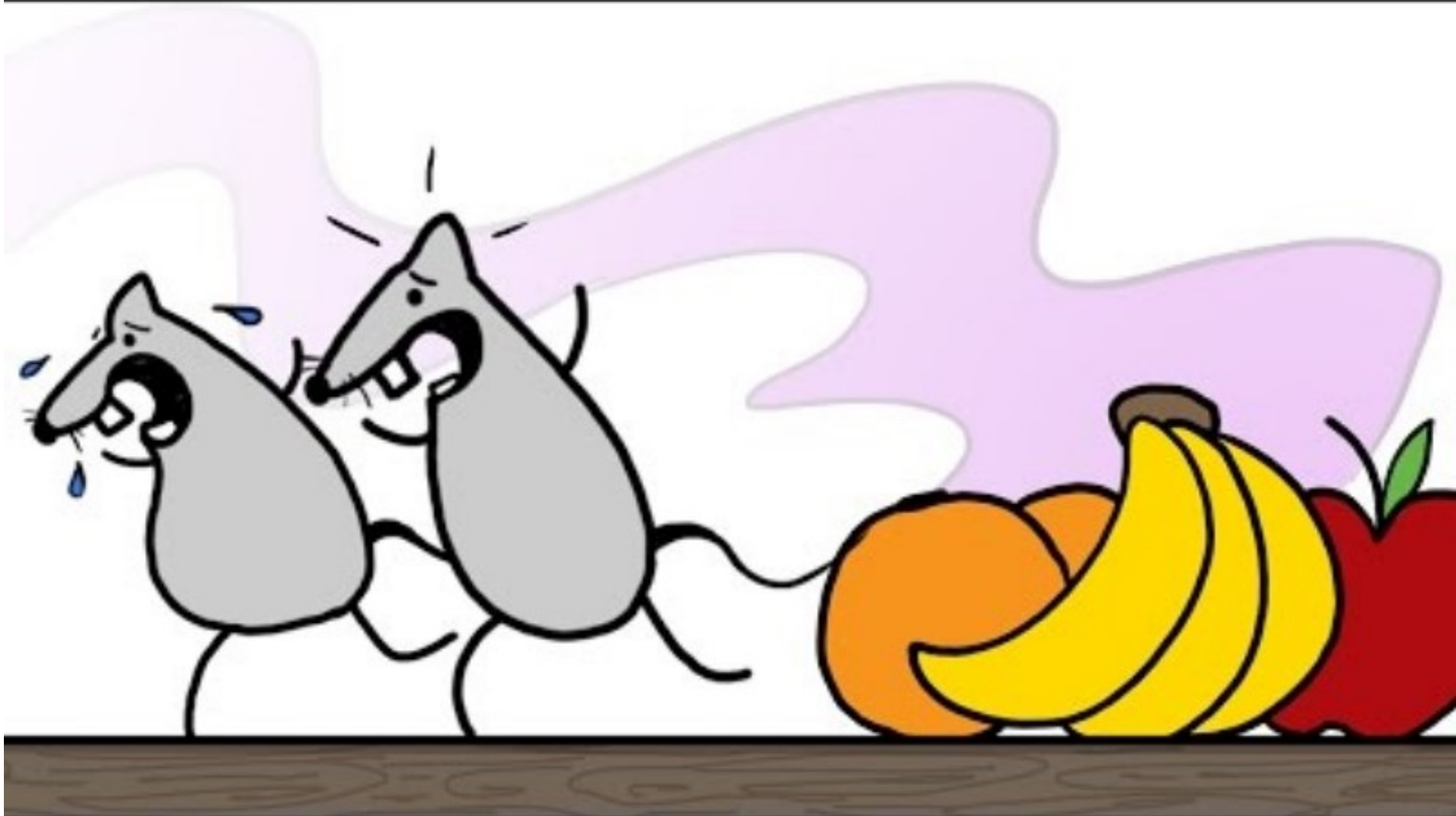


Inheritance

- We not only inherit recipes and family heirlooms, but sensitivities and methods of coping as well.
- We don't merely study history, we live it.



Epigenetics



Epigenetics

- The unacknowledged terrors of one generation may lead to neglect in the next.
- These historical traumas inform decisions about who we can and cannot trust, as well as what we do, and do not believe.





Bayview Child Health Center




Tadpoles & Toads

The Hayes Laboratory Connection



- Researchers at the Hayes Lab studied the maturation of tadpoles to toads while dosing them with steroid hormones.
- They noticed how the tadpole's growth & later metamorphosis had been affected.

A close-up photograph of a toad with a black body and prominent yellow horizontal stripes. The toad is positioned on a light-colored, granular surface, likely sand. Its large, bulging eyes are a pale yellow color with dark pupils. The toad's skin appears slightly moist and textured. The background is out of focus, showing more of the sandy ground and some dry, thin plant matter.

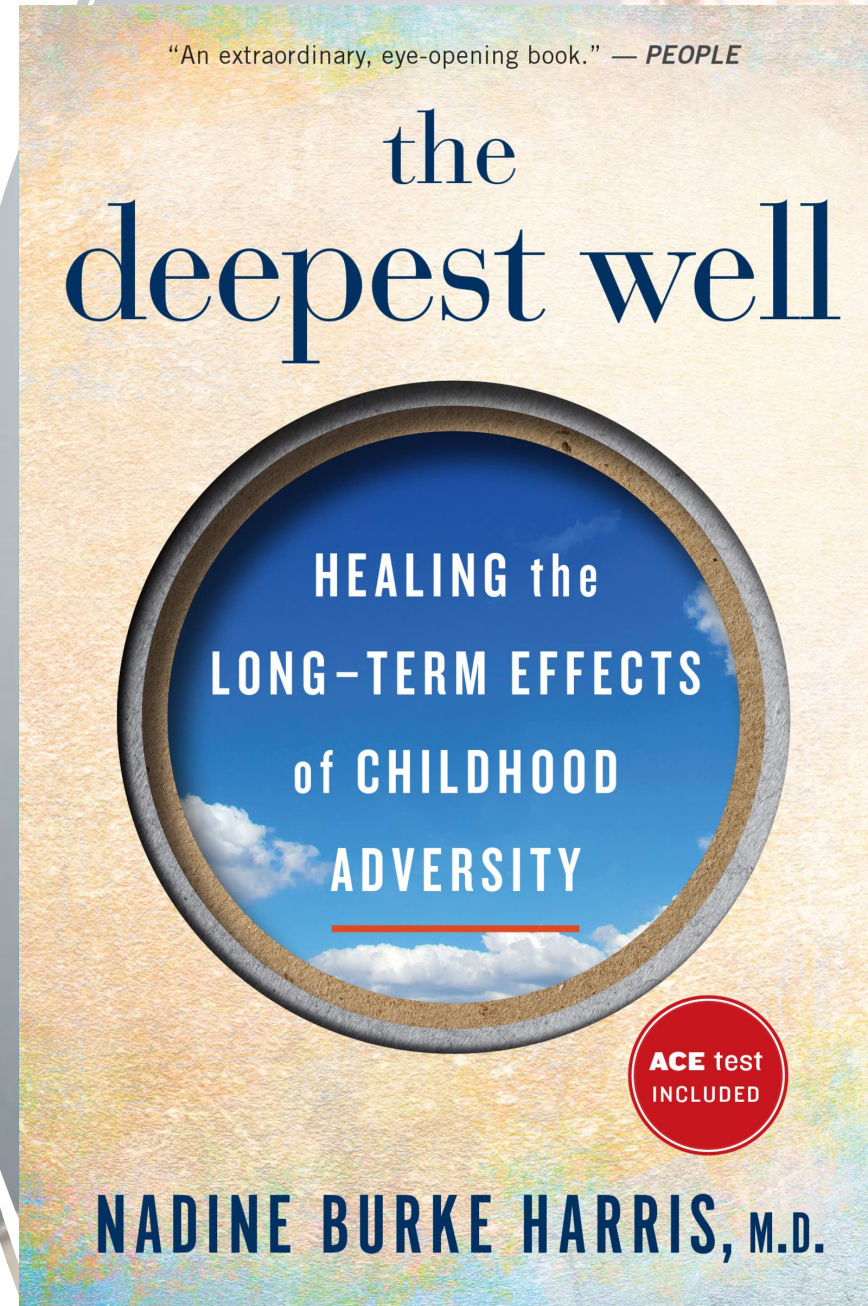
If the toads were exposed to corticosterone late in development, it sped up their metamorphosis from tadpoles to toads



If, however, the tadpoles were exposed to the steroid for a prolonged period,
or,
early in development,
it inhibited their growth,
decreased their immune function,
diminished lung function,
increased blood pressure
& impaired neurological development.

Some never became toads.

- Dr. Nadine Burke Harris hypothesized that the same effect she had observed in the tadpoles was the same effect toxic stress was having on the health of her young patients.



Exposure to Trauma

Based on research, as well as her training, Dr. Burke Harris understood that cortisol, a stress hormone, inhibited growth, increased blood pressure, blood sugar, and produced other related effects.

These were effective strategies for short periods of time when danger was present and required a rapid response.

Adverse Childhood Experiences

Once People Know About ACEs

"Once [they] ... have the information, they are able to look at the context of their lives differently.

Then they no longer feel they are to blame or that they're stupid or that there's something wrong with them.

They understand that their bodies have experienced a normal reaction to abnormal circumstances across the span of their lives.

Nadine Burke Harris, MD The Deepest Well p 179

Educate Your Doctor

Free Downloadable ACEs Fact Sheet

Veronique Mead, MD, MA

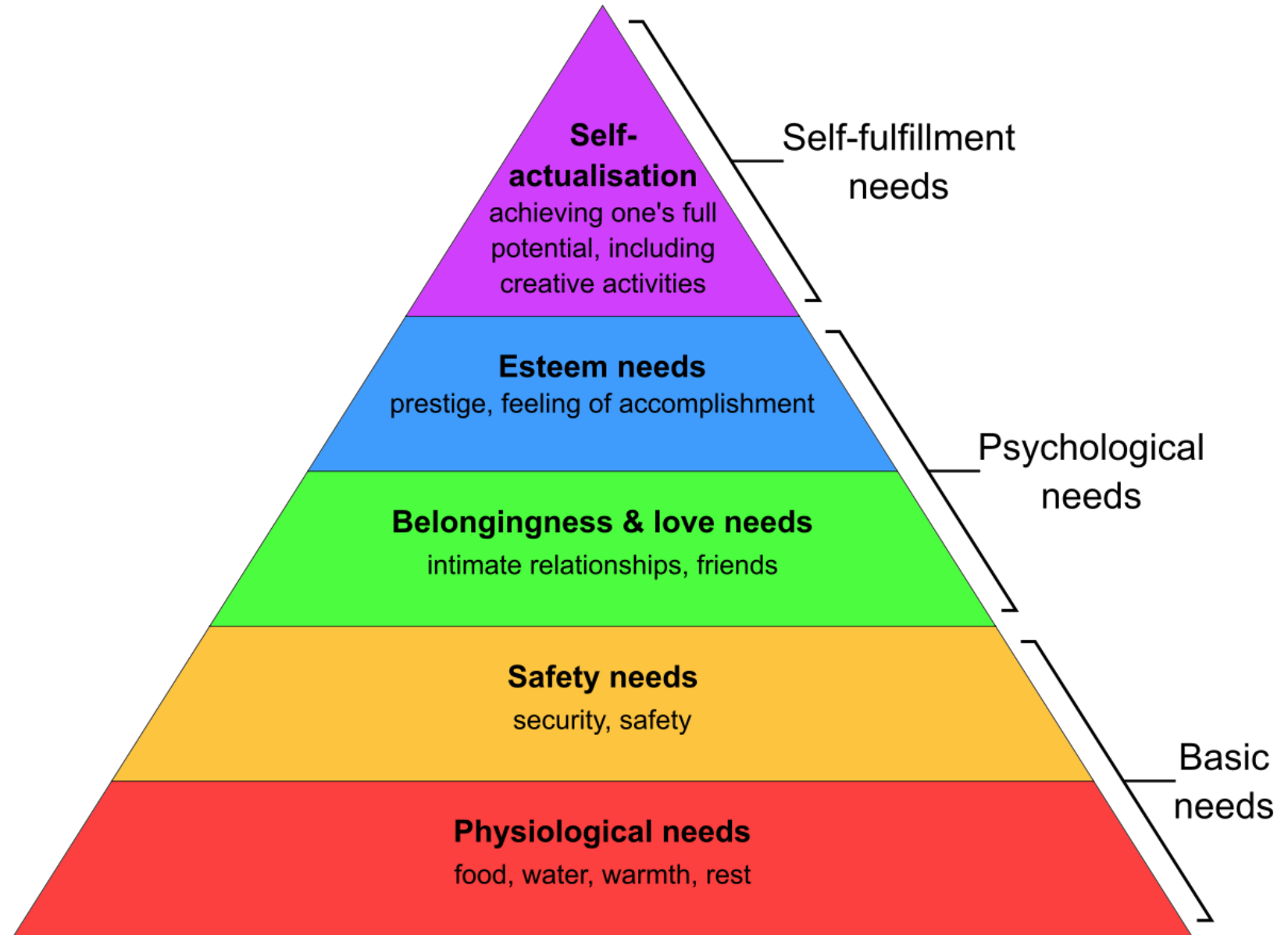


Trauma Symptoms Can Be Age Dependent



“...different symptoms may result from trauma experienced at different times. For example, a toddler with no language to describe the painful and repetitive sexual abuse he experiences may develop a complete aversion to being touched, wide-ranging problems with intimacy and relationships, and pervasive anxiety. But a ten-year-old who is subjected to virtually identical abuse is more likely to develop specific, event-related fears and to work deliberately to avoid particular cues associated with the place, person and manner of abuse...Further, an older child will probably have associated feelings of shame and guilt—complex emotions mediated by the cortex.”—Bruce Perry, MD, PhD and Maia Szalavitz from The Boy Who Was Raised as a Dog


Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs





**SEEKING
SAFETY**

Our Brains Seek Safety

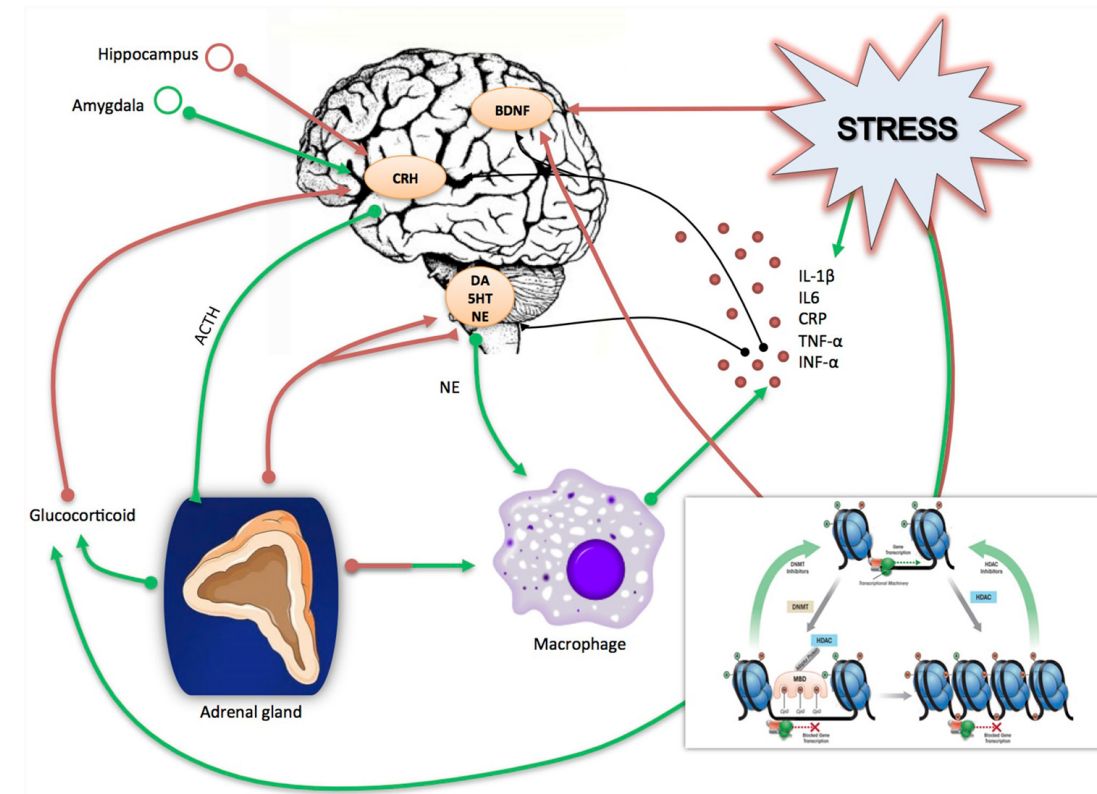


When All or
Most of Our
Needs are Met,
Our Brains are
Free to Explore.



The Toxic Effects of Stress

- When additional grant money for the Bayview Child Health Center was obtained, Dr. Burke Harris hired a mental health therapist.
- Dr. Whitney Clarke introduced her to a study performed in San Diego at Kaiser-Permanente by Drs. Vincent Felitti, Robert Anda and colleagues:
- The Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) Study.





Dr. Vincent Felitti, couldn't figure out why more than half of the people in his obesity clinic dropped out, even those who initially did well.

He began to discover that for many of his female patients, obesity was the solution to romantic interest from men, after a history of sexual abuse.



Dr. Robert Anda had been studying how depression and feelings of hopelessness affect coronary heart disease.

"I became interested in going deeper, because I thought there must be something beneath the behaviors generating them."

Prior to their investigations, most mental health professionals believed Adverse Childhood Experiences did not affect very young children, as they were unable to recount these experiences verbally.

ACE STUDY 1995–1997

- 17,000 primarily white, middle-class adults.
- Each person indicated whether any of the ten adverse experiences occurred in his or her childhood.
- Only one-third reported none.
- More than two-thirds had undergone at least one adverse childhood experience.
- One in eight had undergone four or more.



The 10 Adverse Childhood Experience s

1. Emotional abuse
2. Physical abuse
3. Sexual abuse
4. Mother treated violently
5. Substance abuse in the home
6. Mental illness of a family member
7. Parents divorced/separated
8. Family member incarcerated
9. Emotional neglect
10. Physical neglect

Conclusion: ACEs are the leading cause of health and social problems in our nation, including:

- Depression
- Anxiety
- Suicide
- Sexual Behavior Problems
- Unintended Pregnancy
- Violence
- Issues in the Workplace



- Alcohol Dependence & Abuse
- Drug Dependence & Abuse
- Chronic Obstructive Lung Disease
- Coronary Heart Disease
- Obesity
- Liver Disease
- Fetal Death



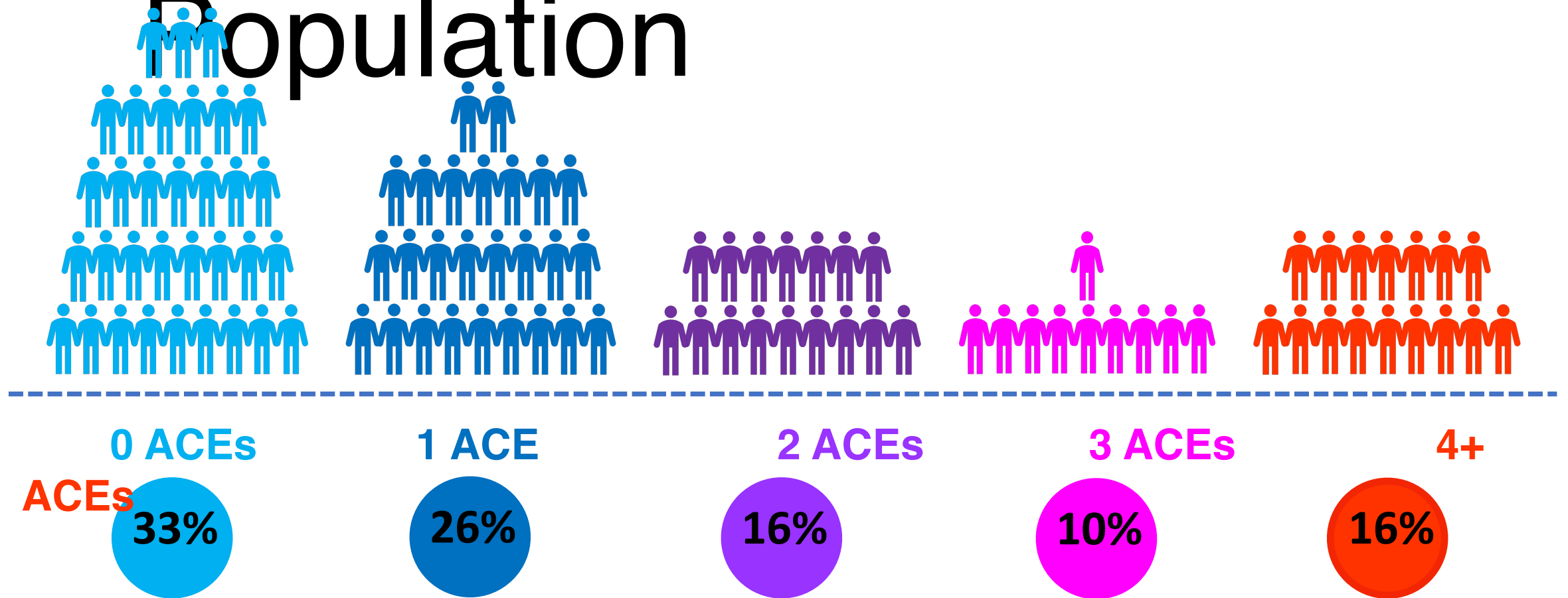


Dr. Burke Harris identified six mitigating interventions for those with multiple ACE Scores:

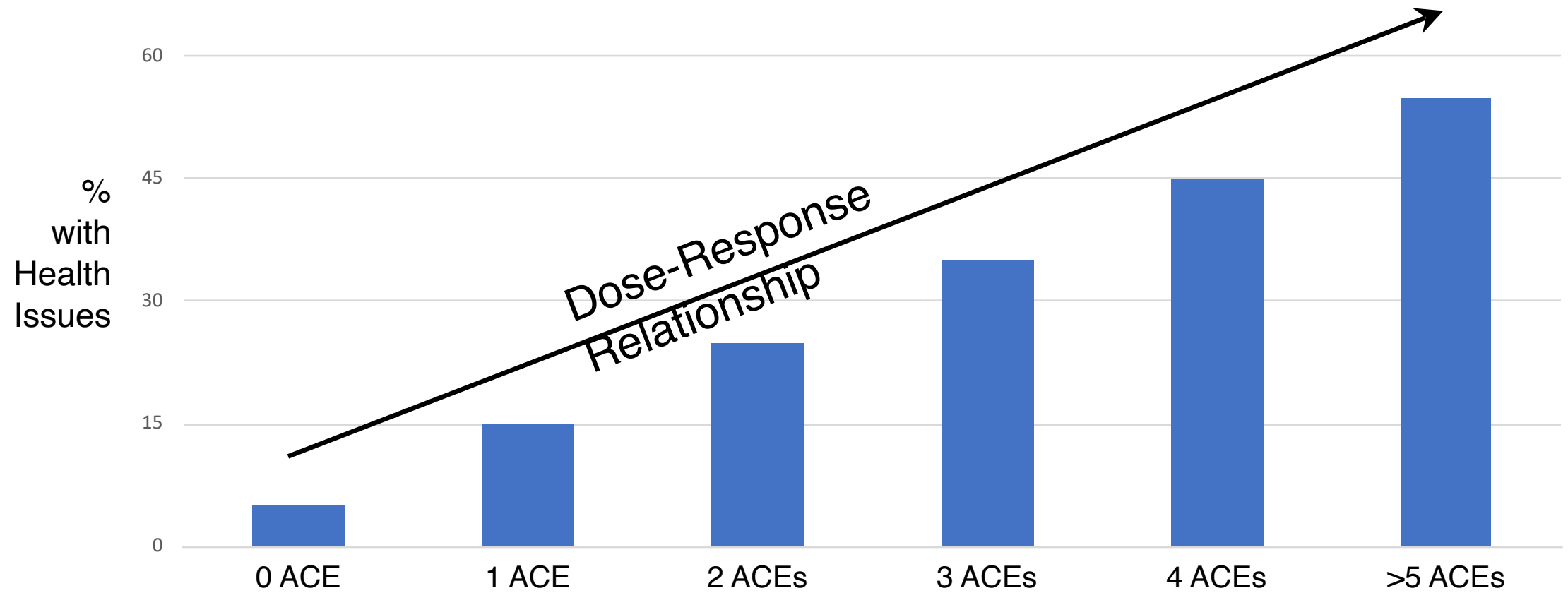
- Improved Sleep Hygiene
- Exercise
- Better Nutrition
- A Mindfulness Practice
- Mental Health Treatment
- Healthier Relationships



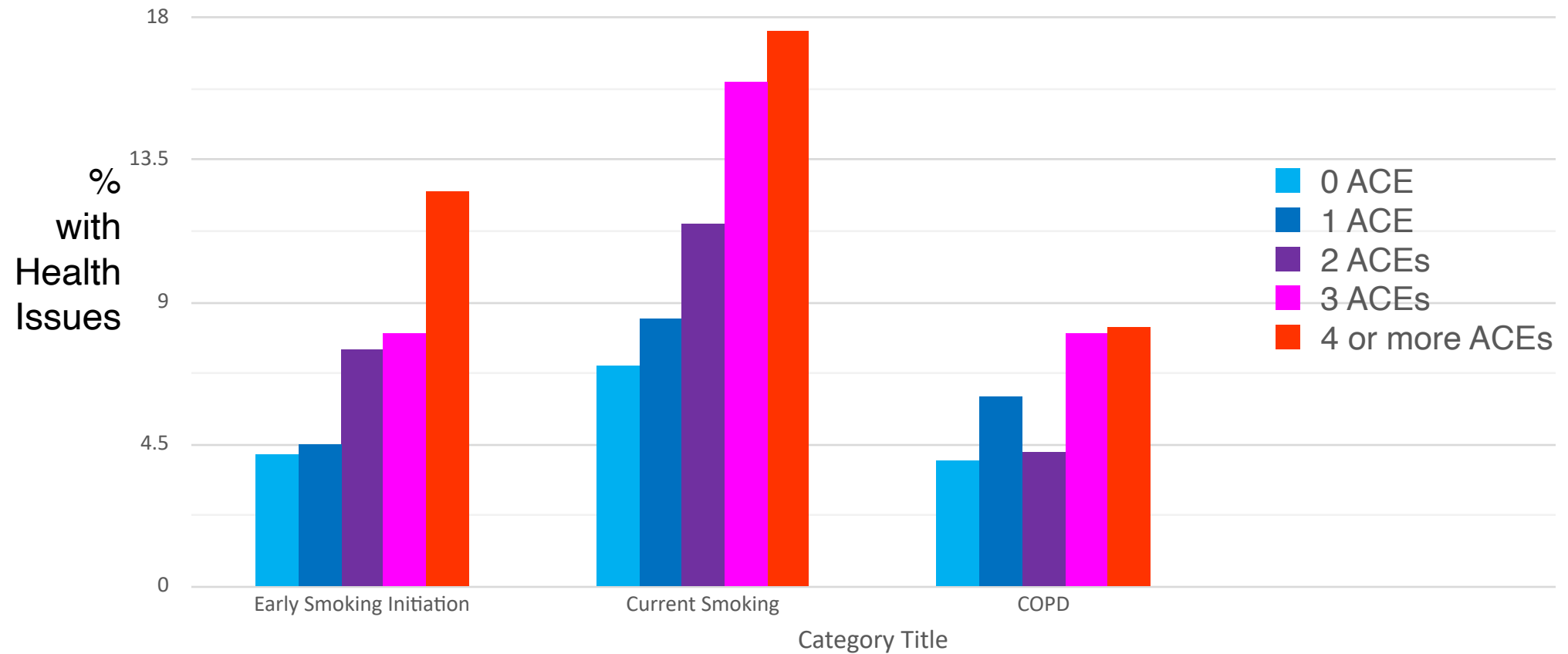
ACE Score by Population



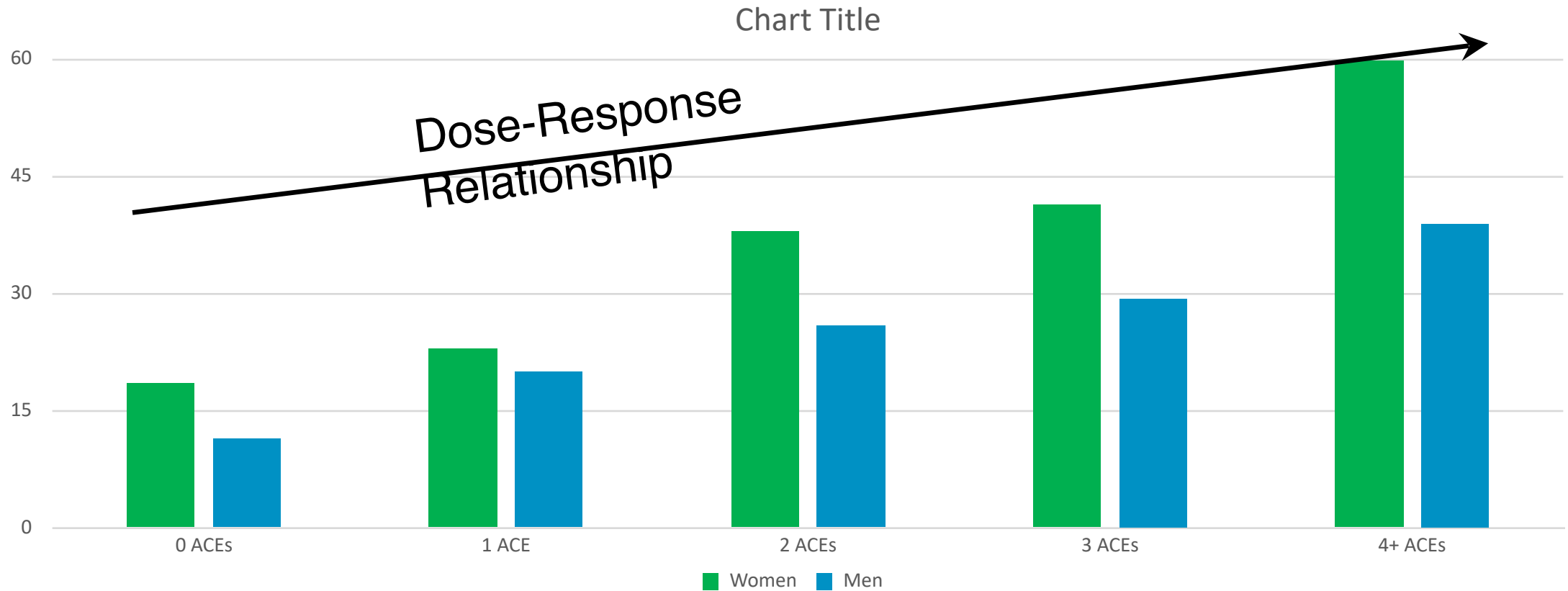
ACE Score and Health Problems



ACEs, Smoking and Lung Disease



ACEs and Depression





The ACE Studies measured 10 traumatic events

They did not measure bullying, community violence, natural disasters, witnessing non-domestic violence, racism, sexism, or other forms of abuse, isolation or discrimination.

Gabor Maté, M.D.:

Trauma is more common than you may think



Building Adult Capabilities





When Traumatized Children Grow Up

- **They may be quick to react**
 - Any sudden noise or gesture may elicit intense fear.
 - They may appear reactive, which can be interpreted as aggression.
 - They may appear dysregulated at times: angry, yelling or crying.



When Traumatized Children Grow Up

- **They may have issues with concentration**
 - Concentration requires focus and safety.
 - Traumatized people rarely feel safe, even years later.
- **They may have difficulty connecting with others**
 - Traumatized people often find it hard to trust.

In the Workplace



- People with a trauma history will likely become easily frustrated.
- Kindness toward them will triumph discipline almost always!

At Walmart

- **Individuals with a trauma history are often uncomfortable in crowded situations**
 - They may have difficulty waiting their turn in a line.
 - They may have difficulty with making decisions, especially when faced with numerous choices.
 - They may find the layout of the store difficult to navigate.





On the Road

- Persons with a trauma history can become dysregulated
 - Trapped in a traffic jam may trigger familiar memories of being restrained, or in an abusive relationship.
 - Escalation can occur quickly.

AngryDuc.

calm down bro

In the history
of calm down,
no one has
ever calmed
down
by being told to
calm down.



[This Photo](#) by Unknown Author is licensed under [CC BY-SA-NC](#)



In Some Arenas
those of us with
Multiple ACE
Scores will Thrive

The Benefits of Adversity

- Studies of trauma survivors demonstrate adversity can have benefits called posttraumatic growth.
- The experience of positive change that occurs as a result of struggling with challenging life crises can have certain benefits:
 - Help you see you're stronger than you thought
 - Bring new appreciation and meaning to your life
 - Change your priorities
 - Take you deeper into your spirituality
 - Deepen the closeness you feel toward yourself and others



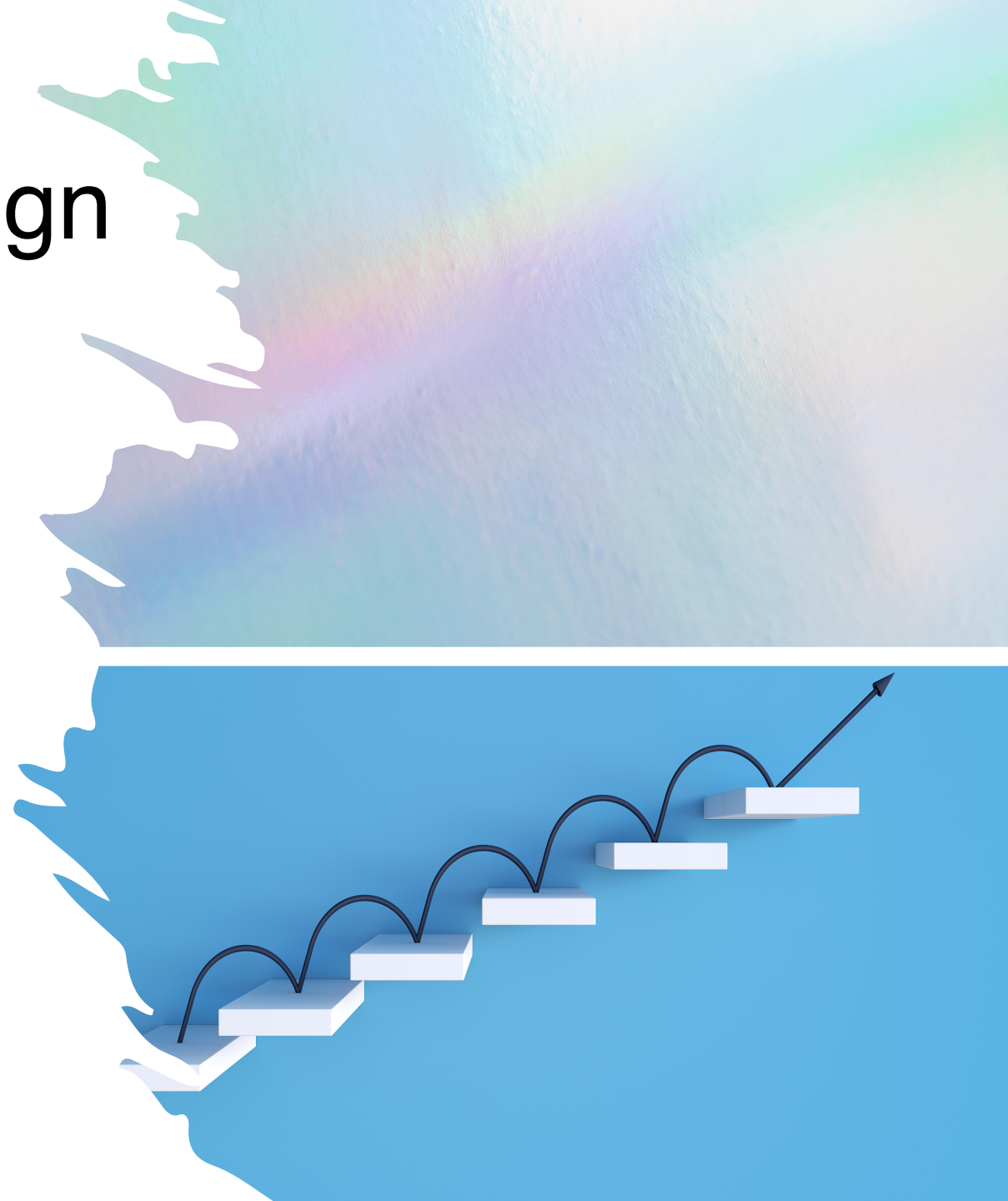
If We Could Eliminate Adverse Childhood Experiences We Would

- Reduce the overall rate of depression by more than half
- Reduce alcoholism by two-thirds
- Reduce suicide, IV drug use, and domestic violence by three-quarters.
- It would have a dramatic effect on workplace performance
- It would vastly decrease the need for incarceration.



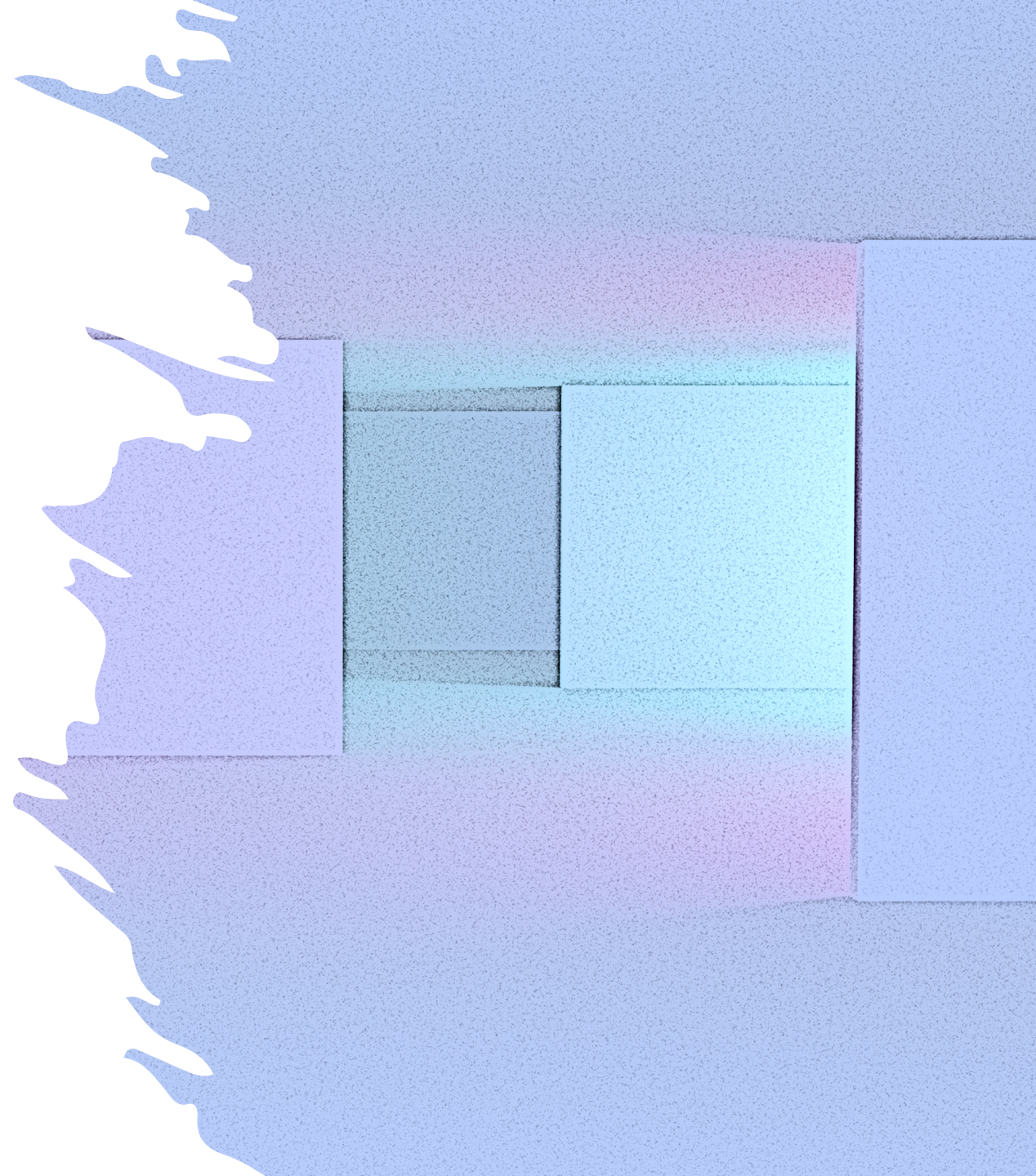
Trauma-Informed Design

- “Trauma-informed design” explores ideas for built environments that support the tenets of trauma-informed care.
- The physical environment has an impact on attitude, mood, and behavior.
- There is a strong link between our physiological state, our emotional state, and the physical environment.



Creating A Trauma-Informed Environment

- Colors
 - Cool colors such as blue, green, and purple have a calming effect.
 - Lighter-colored rooms are perceived as more open, less crowded and more spacious, providing a safer and more calming space.





Creating A Trauma-Informed Environment

- Furniture
 - An open space with clear sightlines and few barriers can further increase the sense of safety.
 - Seating arranged to increase socialization
 - Using natural materials and colors increases connection to nature and a sense of calm.
- Rooms bright with natural light appear less crowded.

Creating A Trauma-Informed Environment

- Plants, Flowers and Greenery
 - Settings which include vegetation reduce stress, promote peace, tranquility, enhanced self-esteem, and a sense of mastery of the environment.
- Art
 - Art adds visual interest and can create a visual distraction that alleviates stress, improves mood, comfort and satisfaction.



“Resilience is not about bouncing back.
It’s about growing through.”

Eileen McDargh



Empowerment

Help ensure opportunities are available for all. Opportunity empowers!

Trauma-Informed Starts with You!



PURPOSE
ATTUNED
GOAL
EMOTIONS



**“People will forget
what you said,
people will forget
what you did,
but people will
never forget how
you made them feel.”**

-Maya Angelou