Integrating the Needs of Foster Care Youth in Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention Programming: Trauma-Informed Approaches

April 21, 2016
3:00 p.m.–4:30 p.m. ET

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Administration for Children, Youth and Families
Family and Youth Services Bureau
Personal Responsibility Education Program (PREP)

Learning Objectives

By the end of this workshop, participants will be able to do the following:

- Explain the rationale for providing trauma-informed sexual health programming for youth in foster care
- Describe key principles for trauma-informed practice with youth in foster care
- Identify three actions they can implement in their adolescent pregnancy prevention programs

Presenters

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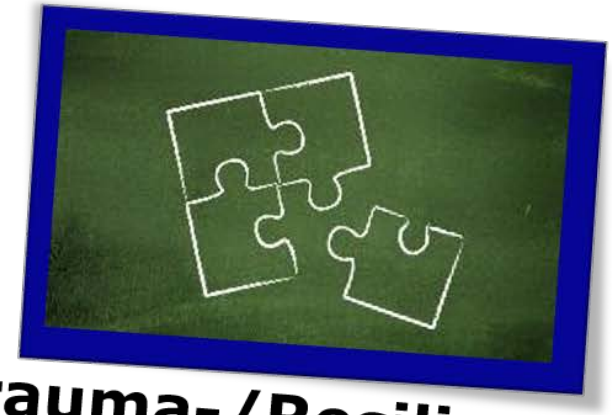
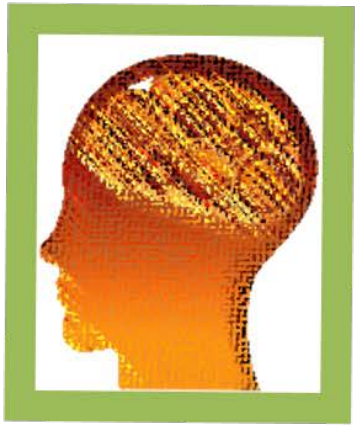
Oklahoma Institute of Child Advocacy

Our Journey…

Definitions



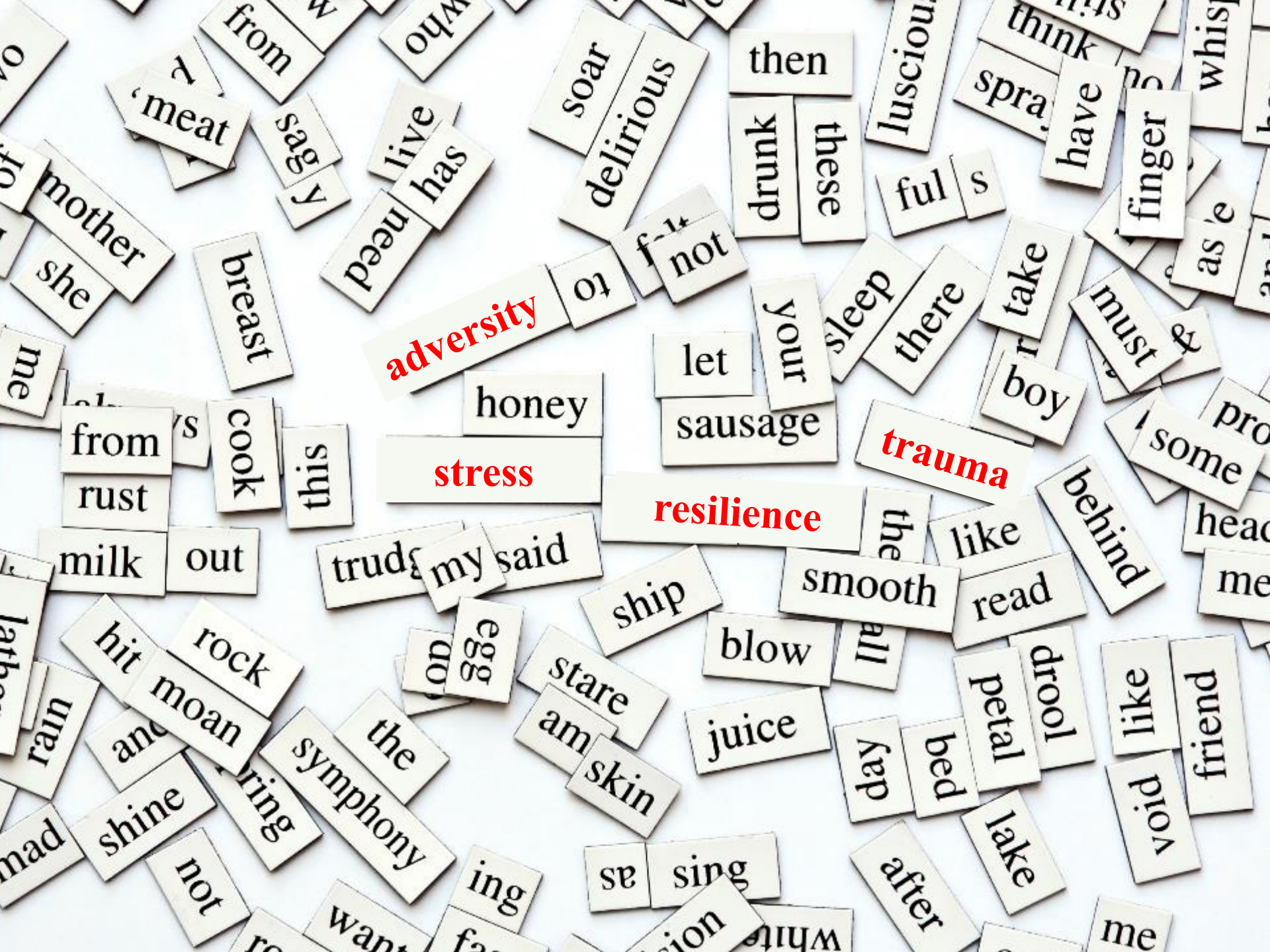
Trauma-/Resilience – Informed Strategies



Effects of Stress & Trauma

Lessons from the Field

Definitions


adversity
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ABUSE

Physical

Emotional

Sexual

NEGLECT

Physical

Emotional

HOUSEHOLD DYSFUNCTION

Mental Illness

Incarcerated Relative

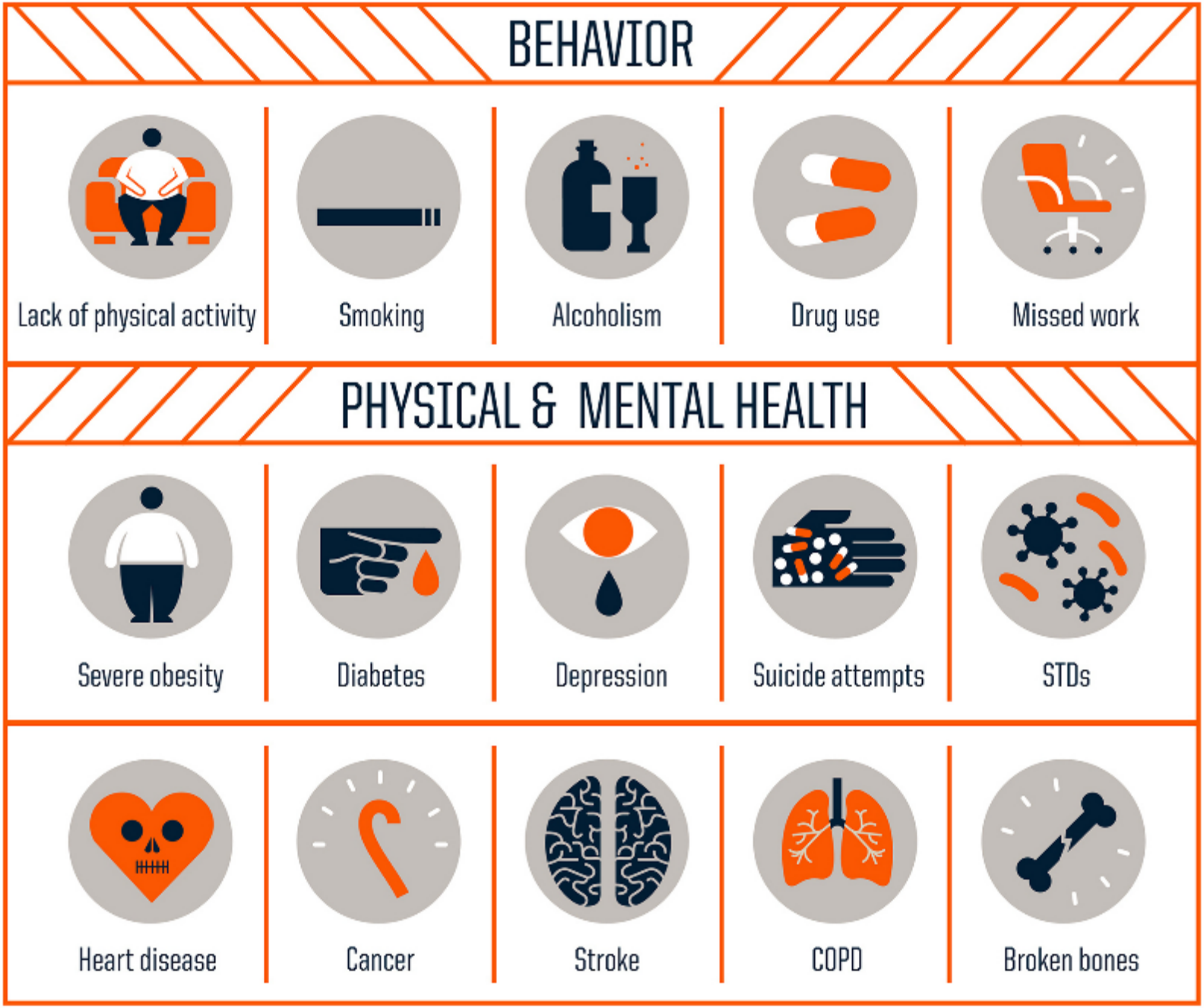
Mother treated violently

Substance Abuse

Divorce

WHAT IMPACT DO ACEs HAVE?

As the number of ACEs increases, so does the risk for negative health outcomes


BEHAVIOR
Lack of physical activity
Smoking
Alcoholism
Drug use
Missed work
PHYSICAL & MENTAL HEALTH
Severe obesity
Diabetes
Depression
Suicide attempts
STDs
Heart disease
Cancer
Stroke
COPD
Broken bones

Positive Stress

Mild/moderate and short-lived stress response necessary for healthy development; brief increases in heart rate and mild elevations in stress hormones

Tolerable Stress

More severe stress response but limited in duration which allows for recovery; buffered by supportive relationships

Chronic or Toxic Stress

Extreme, frequent or extended activation of the body's stress response without the buffering presence of a supportive adult

Source: Harvard Center for the Developing Child

Trauma

Acute Trauma

Insidious and Historical Trauma

Complex Trauma

Secondary Trauma

Intergenerational Trauma

Vicarious Trauma

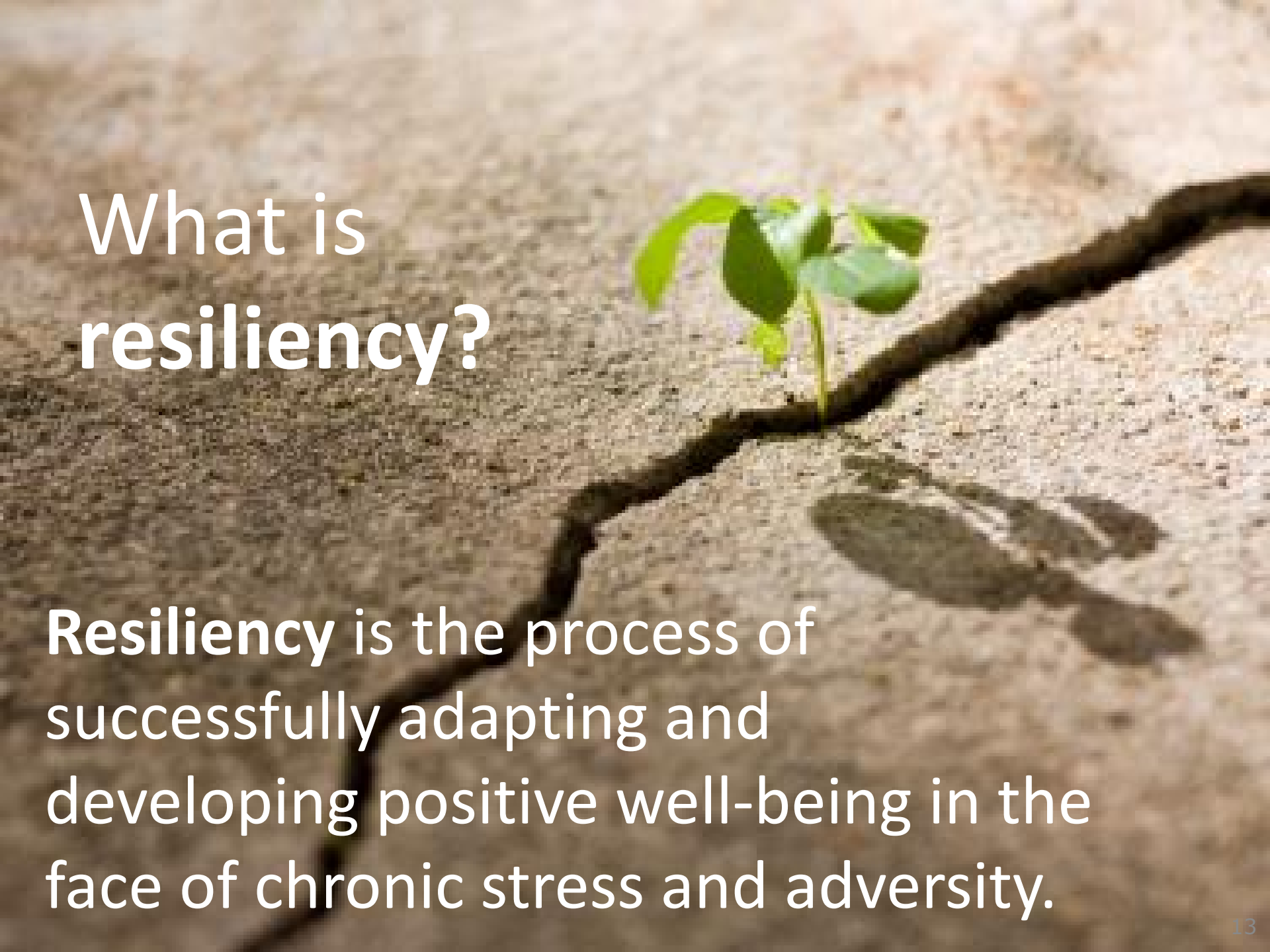
Source: Adolescent Health Working Group Trauma & Resilience Toolkit

Foster Care & Trauma

The great majority of young people in the foster care system have experienced trauma in some form as a result of the following:

- Maltreatment (child abuse and neglect) often with other adverse childhood experiences (ACEs)
- Separation from family and community as a result of foster care placement
- Moves and other adverse experiences while in foster care placement

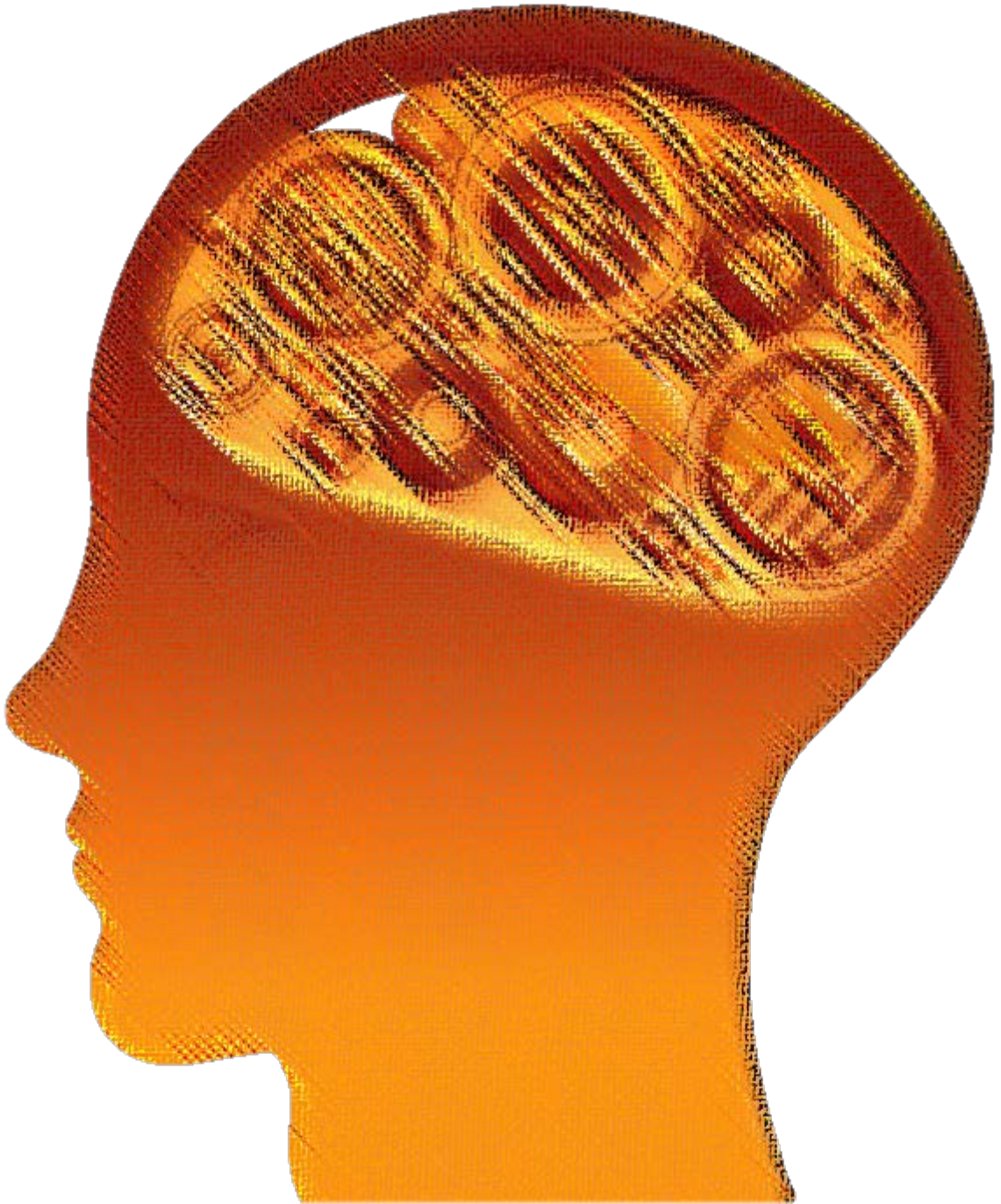
Source: Ko, S. J., et. al. (2008). Creating trauma-informed systems: Child welfare, education, first responders, health care, juvenile justice. *Professional Psychology, 39*(4), 396–404.



What is **resiliency?**

Resiliency is the process of successfully adapting and developing positive well-being in the face of chronic stress and adversity.

Effects of Stress and Trauma



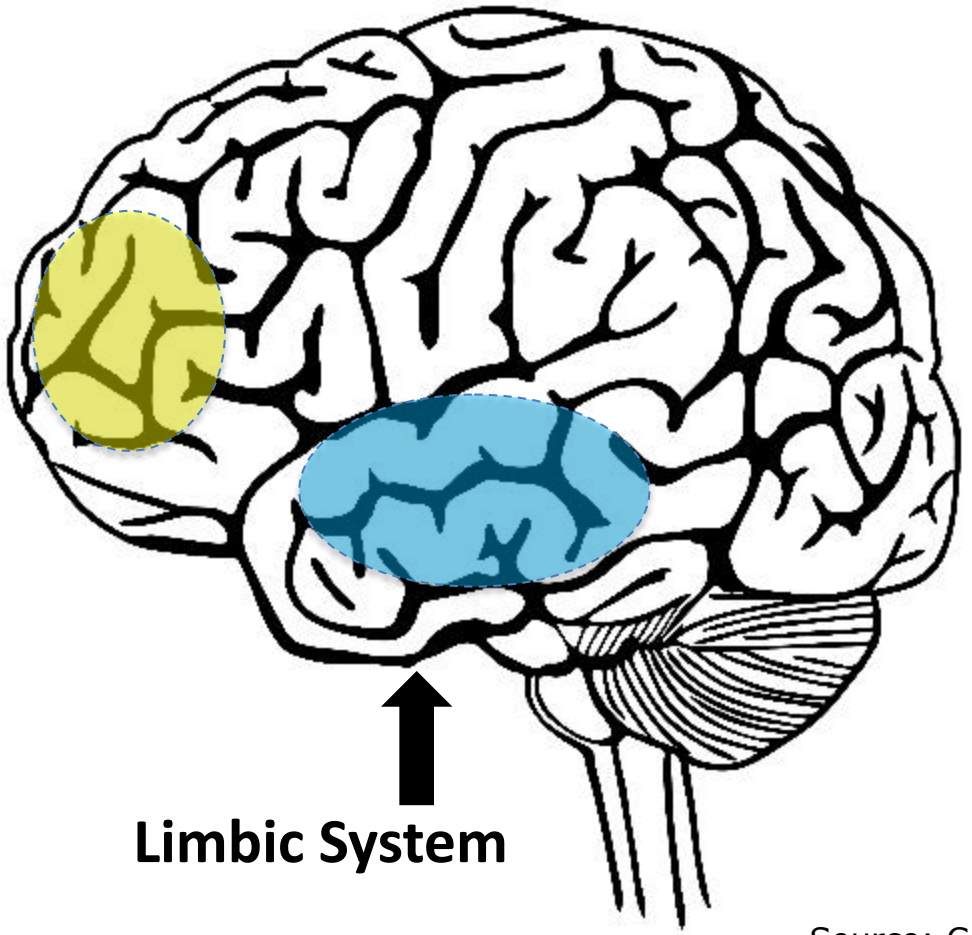
Survive Mode: Flight/Fight/Freeze

Frontal lobe (Prefrontal cortex) goes offline

Limbic system / mind and lower brain functions take over

Learning/ Thinking Brain

Prefrontal Cortex



Limbic System

Source: Community Resilience Cookbook

The Window of Tolerance

Hyperarousal Zone

Sympathetic "Fight or Flight Response"
(too much arousal)

- Emotional reactivity
- Defensiveness
- Feeling unsafe
- Feeling overwhelm
- Hyper-vigilance
- Impulsivity
- Anger/rage

Optimal Arousal Zone

"Window of Tolerance"

- Feeling safe
- Feel and think simultaneously
- Present moment awareness
- Awareness of boundaries
- Optimal learning/integration

Hypoarousal Zone

Parasympathetic "Immobilization Response"
(too little arousal)

- No energy
- Numbing of emotions
- No feelings
- Passive, shut down
- Reduced physical movement

Source: Ogden, P., Minton, K., & Pain, C. (2006). Trauma and the body: A sensorimotor approach to psychotherapy. New York, NY.

From Biology to Behavior

- **Behavioral & Self-Regulation:** often identified as acting out, defiant or disruptive behavior, lack of motivation or interest in school
- **Cognition**: memory problems, inability to pay attention, academic difficulties
- **Attachment**: inability to form trusting relationships, over-clinging behavior/dependent
- **Self-Concept:** impacts self-image, self-esteem, and self-value

Trauma/Resilience -Informed Strategies

Two co-facilitators are preparing to do a condom demonstration with a group of young females in a group home. They have placed a penis model and condoms on a table for display. Several students are giggling and making jokes. One student, Jasmine, is quiet, looking down at the floor, and shaking. The facilitators are aware that many of these young women experience complex trauma and have a history of sexual abuse.

Trauma/Resilience-Informed Care/Approaches

Trauma Specific Interventions/Treatments

Source: Trauma-Transformed

Understand the effects of stress and trauma

- ✓ Train all staff on the effects of stress & trauma – including self care
- ✓ Assess current practices and policies
- ✓ Shift from *"What is wrong?"* to *"What is happening?"*
- ✓ Other questions to ask:
  - ✓ *What is happening here?*
  - ✓ *What is the underlying need?*
  - ✓ *How can we best meet this need?*

Ensure cultural humility and responsiveness

- ✓ Self-reflection of cultural biases
- ✓ Respect culture and diversity within the community
- ✓ Recognize power imbalances
- ✓ Avoid judgment, shame, and blame

Establish safe and stable environments

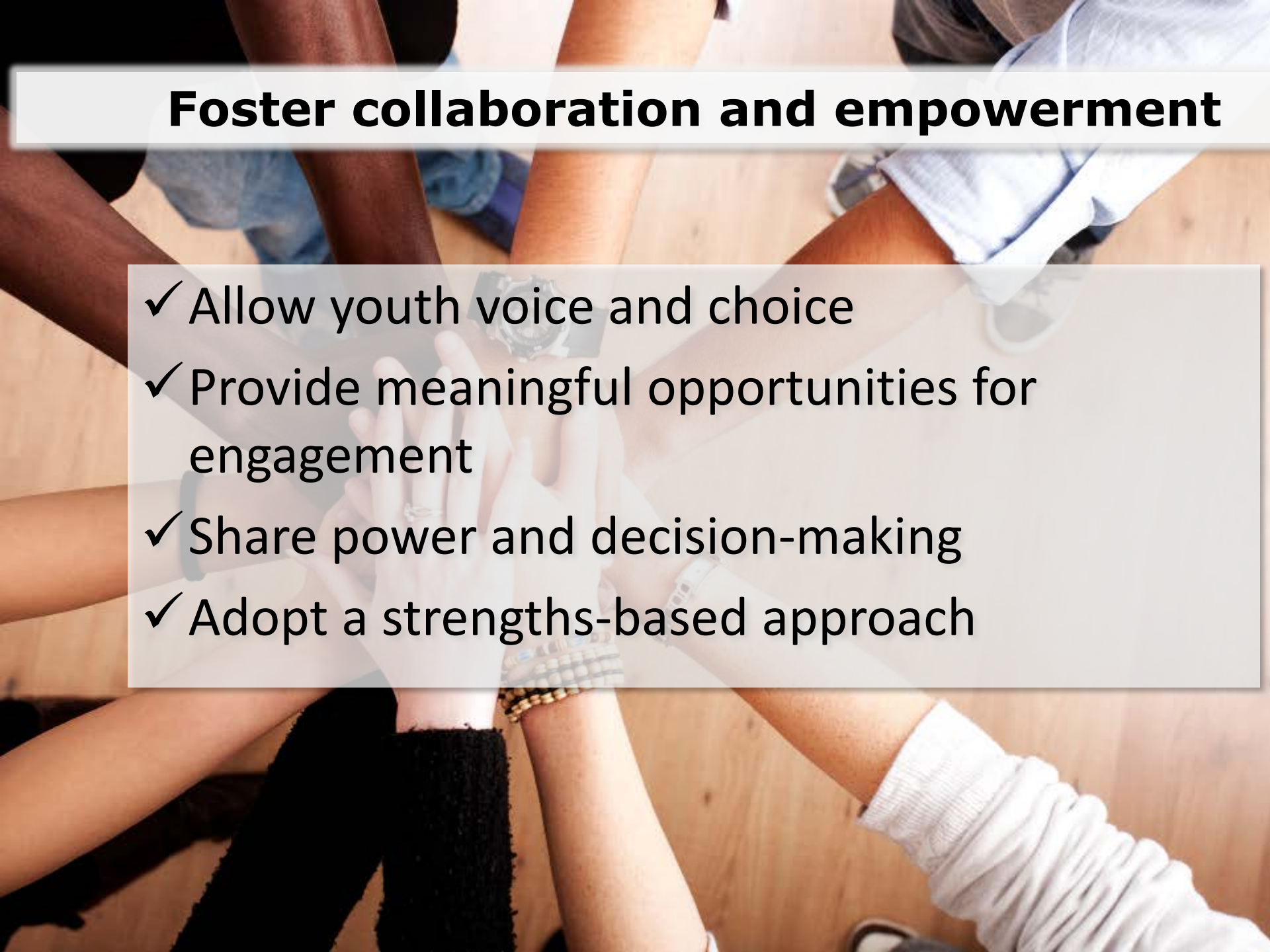
- ✓ Maintain a warm, calm presence
- ✓ Attune to students' needs
- ✓ Physical environment is warm and inviting
- ✓ Set and adhere to clear group expectations
- ✓ Refer to group expectations frequently
- ✓ Be prepared and organized
- ✓ Establish seating arrangements
- ✓ Plan for potential triggers

Establish safe and stable environments

- ✓ Identify and respond to potential triggers
- ✓ Use de-escalation strategies
  - Notice signs of distress
  - Connect with the young person
  - Re-direct behavior with reasonable choices/alternatives
  - After youth is calm, discuss if needed
- ✓ Integrate calming exercises
- ✓ Establish calm zones or safe places
- ✓ Use restorative or positive discipline practices

Connect youth to compassionate and dependable relationships

- ✓ Express genuine and consistent concern and support
- ✓ Manage stress so that you can be attuned to youth
- ✓ Provide trauma trainings for foster parents and other staff who interact with youth
- ✓ Know and refer youth to community resources
- ✓ Make sure all youth are connected to a caring adult



Foster collaboration and empowerment

- ✓ Allow youth voice and choice
- ✓ Provide meaningful opportunities for engagement
- ✓ Share power and decision-making
- ✓ Adopt a strengths-based approach

Promote resilience and recovery

- ✓ Develop an attitude of resilience
- ✓ Connect young people to appropriate care and supports
- ✓ Maintain high expectations
- ✓ Enhance life skills (e.g., self-regulation, problem-solving)

Source: Trauma-Transformed

Lessons
Learned

POWER THROUGH Choices

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www.PowerThroughChoices.org

A PROJECT OF THE OKLAHOMA INSTITUTE FOR CHILD ADVOCACY

PTC Research Study

Test the efficacy of the *Power Through Choices (PTC)* curriculum in reducing the incidence of unprotected sex, STIs and teen pregnancy among youth, ages 13 to 18, living in out-of-home placements.

Oklahoma Institute for Child Advocacy

Planned Parenthood of Maryland

Kern County Superintendent of Schools (CA)

1,038 youth study participants

Ages 13 to 18

Living in Child Welfare (foster care) or Juvenile Justice group homes

Trauma-informed Practice

Establish a positive environment

Provide consistency

Authentic adults

Preparation for anticipated and unanticipated events

Case Example

Prepare for the unexpected

Provide permission to opt-out

Arrange for support services in advance

Offer a range of participation options

Accept that you may never understand the “why?”

Any

Questions

Closure

Resources

- Organizational Assessments
  - Trauma-Informed Organizational Toolkit
  - Trauma Sensitive School Checklist
- Toolkits
  - A Trauma-Informed Approach for Adolescent Sexual Health
  - The Heart of Learning and Teaching: Compassion, Resiliency, and Academic Success
  - Helping Traumatized Students Learn: Creating and Advocating for Trauma Sensitive Schools
  - Trauma-Informed Child Serving Systems
- Training Models
  - The Sanctuary Model by Dr. Sandra L. Bloom

One important point from today's Webinar that I want to remember is…

Let's Hear from You!

- Please complete the following evaluation related to your training needs and interests.

  https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/BKML3PF

- If you attended the Webinar with other team members, please share the link and complete the evaluation separately.