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Trauma, Toxic Stress and Resilience in Early Childhood

Learning Objectives

Participants will be able to:

PART 1:

1. Define trauma
2. Describe the potential impact of adverse experiences (toxic stress) on young children
3. Identify signs and symptoms of trauma in infants, toddlers and preschoolers
4. Identify steps to support children and families who have experienced trauma.



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Learning Objectives

Participants will be able to:

PART 2:

1. Define resilience
2. Identify strategies to build protective factors for young children and their families



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What is Trauma?



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Trauma occurs...

when frightening events or situations overwhelm a child's ability to cope or deal with what has happened



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Group Discussion:

What kinds of potentially traumatic experiences do children and families face?



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Toxic Stress

Positive

Brief increases in heart rate,
mild elevations in stress hormone levels.

Tolerable

Serious, temporary stress responses,
buffered by supportive relationships.

Toxic

Prolonged activation of stress response systems
in the absence of protective relationships.

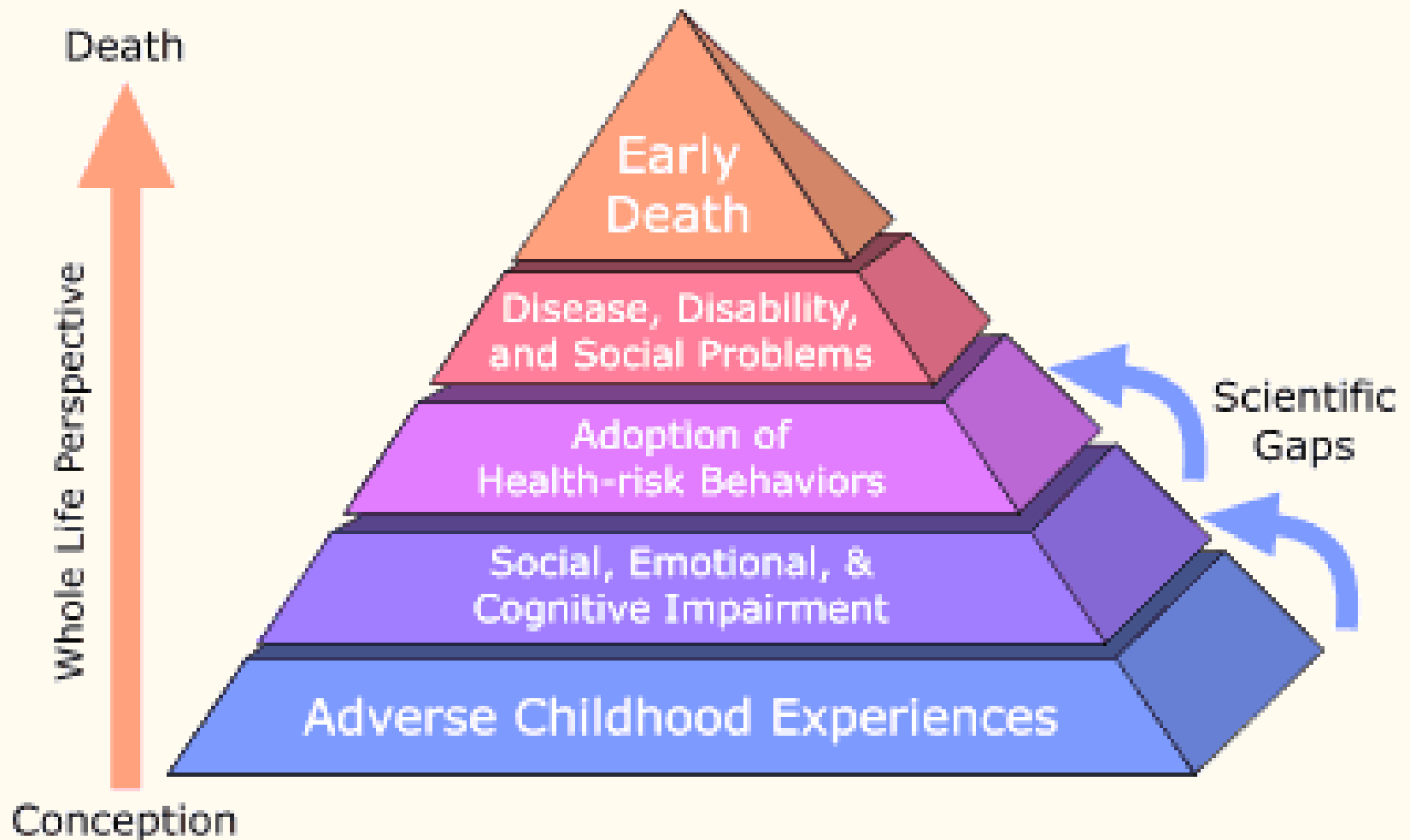
The Impact of Adverse Experiences: Years Later

Lessons from the Adverse Childhood
Experiences (ACES)



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Adverse Childhood Experience (ACE) Outcomes



Knowing the Signs & Symptoms



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Signs and Symptoms of Trauma in Infants and Toddlers

- Eating & Sleeping disturbance
- Clingy/separation anxiety
- Irritable/difficult to soothe
- Repetitive/post-traumatic play
- Developmental regression
- Language delay
- General fearfulness/new fears,
- Easily startled
- Reacting to reminders/trauma triggers
- Difficulty engaging in social interactions through gestures, smiling, cooing
- Persistent self-soothing behaviors, for example, head banging
- Aggression (toddlers)



Signs and Symptoms of Trauma in Preschoolers

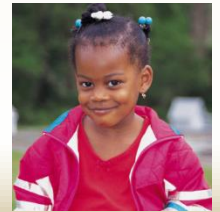
- Avoidant, anxious, clingy
- General fearfulness/new fears
- Helplessness, passive
- Restless, impulsive, hyperactive
- Physical symptoms (headache, etc.)
- Inattention, difficulty problem solving
- Irritability
- Aggressive and/ or sexualized behavior
- Sadness
- Repetitive/ post-traumatic play
- Talking about the traumatic event and reacting to trauma triggers
- Developmental regression
- Poor peer relationships and social problems (controlling/over permissive)



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The Operation Breakthrough Experience: Part I

How trauma impacts children, families, and staff
in a Head Start/Early Head Start setting





OPERATION BREAKTHROUGH
founded in 1971 by two sisters



Alice Berry Graham



Katherine Berry Richardson

**CHILDREN'S MERCY HOSPITAL
founded in 1897 by two sisters**

Operation Breakthrough

- Missouri's largest free standing early Head Start program
- More than 400 children per day
- 92 % in poverty
- 96 % female headed household
- 20-25% are homeless
- Employees 100 people



Children's Mercy Hospital

- Only children's tertiary care system in region
- 354 beds, two hospitals, five urgent care sites
- Level I trauma center
- 40 peds sub-specialties
- Employees 6500 people
- Clinic at OB >15 years



Head Start and Pediatric Healthcare Common Goals

- Optimize well being and potential of children and families
- Optimize readiness to develop and learn
- Address toxic stress; ameliorate adverse childhood experiences; respond to trauma
- Develop resilience



CMH-OB Partnership

- Children living in poverty have unique health and learning challenges.
- Parents and children with multiple ACEs are on course for school failure, negative physical and mental health outcomes including early death.
- We want to change the trajectory for these children and families.
- We believe interprofessional teams can knock down silos and bring the best of healthcare and the best of early childhood education together to benefit these children.

One Stop Shop - Supporting Families

- Interprofessional Team
- Head Start school
- Healthcare
- Dental Care
- OT and PT
- Nutritious meals
- Food Pantry
- Clothes closet
- Mental Health services
- Family Advocate
- Employment support
- Adult education support
- Early/Late child care
- Parenting support

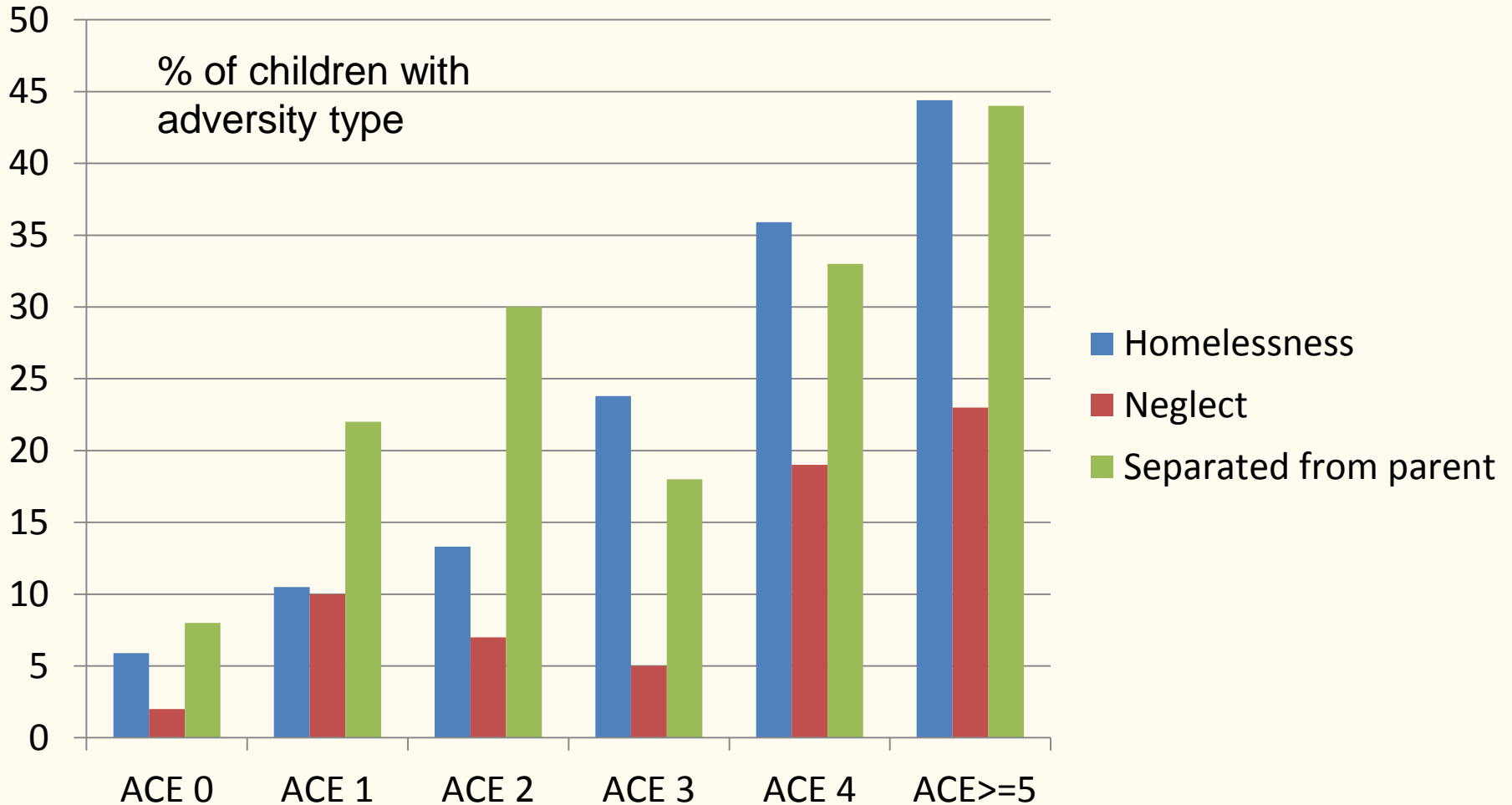


Operation Breakthrough Parents, 2013

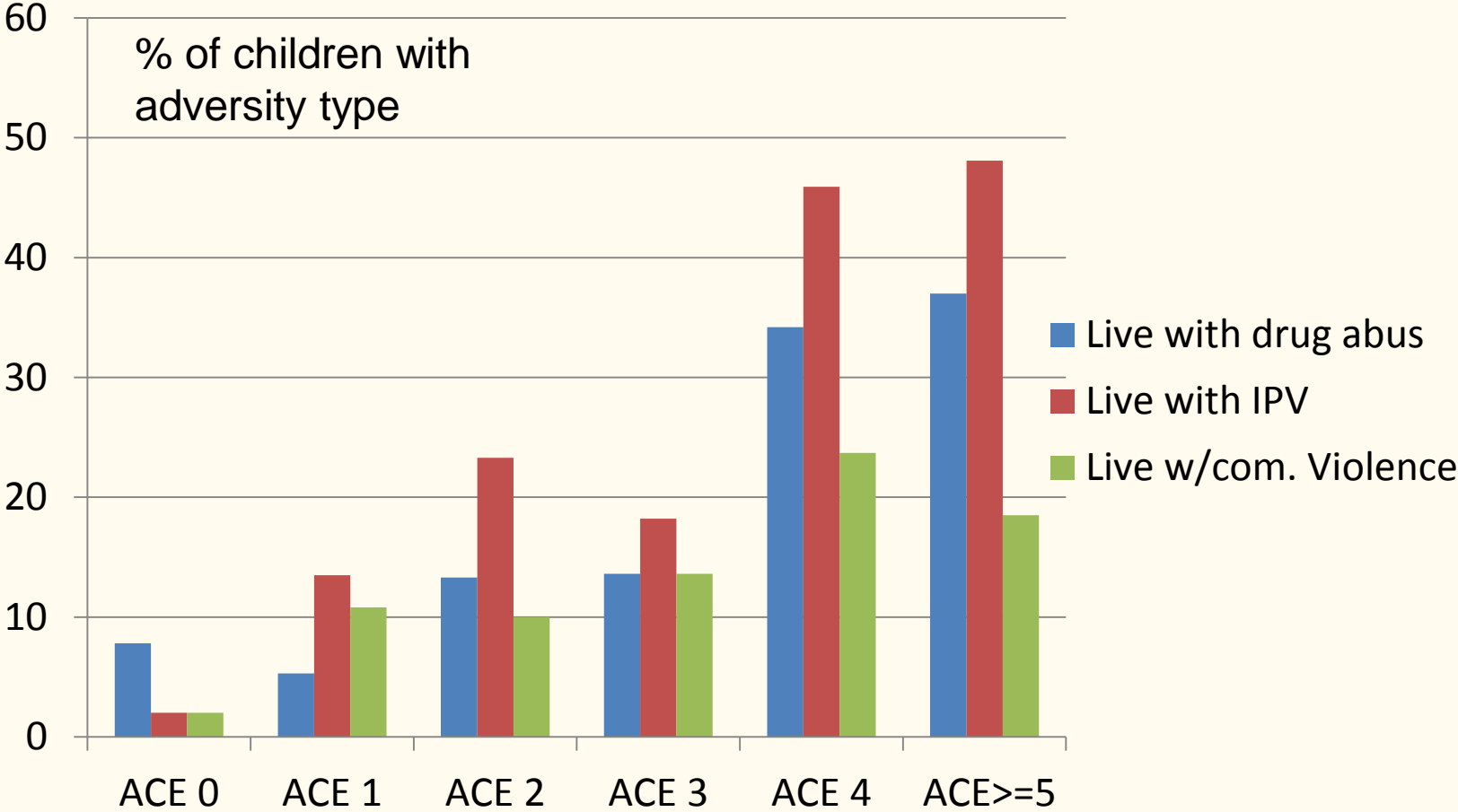
Adverse Childhood Experiences

| ACE CATEGORY | Percent of Parents | National Reference* |
|-----------------------------|--------------------|---------------------|
| Emotional Abuse | 29 | 11 |
| Sexual Abuse | 23 | 21 |
| Physical Abuse | 23 | 28 |
| Emotional Neglect | 38 | 15 |
| Physical Neglect | 19 | 10 |
| Domestic violence | 19 | 13 |
| Substance Abuse | 32 | 27 |
| Mental Illness | 23 | 19 |
| Parental divorce/separation | 45 | 23 |
| Incarcerated family member | 22 | 5 |
| Total ACEs 4 or more | 33.0 | 12.5 |

Relationship of parental ACE score to their child's current or past child adversity, 2013



Relationship of parental ACE score to their child's current or past child adversity, 2013



Group Discussion: Facilitated Referral Process

- What is your role in encouraging families to seek mental health services?
- How do you encourage families to seek help after potentially traumatic experiences?
- How can you help a referral for mental health services to be successful?



Head Start Performance Standards: Mental Health

1304.24 (a) (1) Work Collaboratively with Parents

1304.24 (a) (2) Must Secure the Services of Mental Health Professionals to enable the timely and effective identification and intervention in family and staff concerns about a child's mental health

1304.24 (a) (3) must include a regular schedule of on-site mental health consultation



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Summary

- Adverse experiences can impact very young children
- Obtaining mental health services for children and families who have experienced potentially traumatic experiences can help reduce the negative impact of these experiences



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Summary

- Understanding signs of trauma helps make sure children who need help receive it
- Help for children who experience trauma includes help for the caregivers and families who care for them



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Part II: Supporting Resilience in Early Childhood



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Learning Objectives

PART 2:

Participants will be able to:

1. Define resilience
2. Identify strategies to support and promote protective factors in young children



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What Protects Young Children from Adversity?

Small group discussion with report out



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Resilience Defined

- Recovering from or adjusting to misfortune or change
- The ability to bounce back
- Overcoming the odds



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Resilience Model



Watch the Still Face Clip

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=apzXGEbZht0>.

The Most Important Vital Sign

Two Generation Model

- Mother-baby relationship
- Other family relationships
- Family challenges/ACES
- Family resources/strengths



Trauma, Brain and Relationships: Helping Children Heal

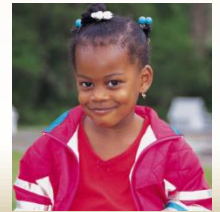




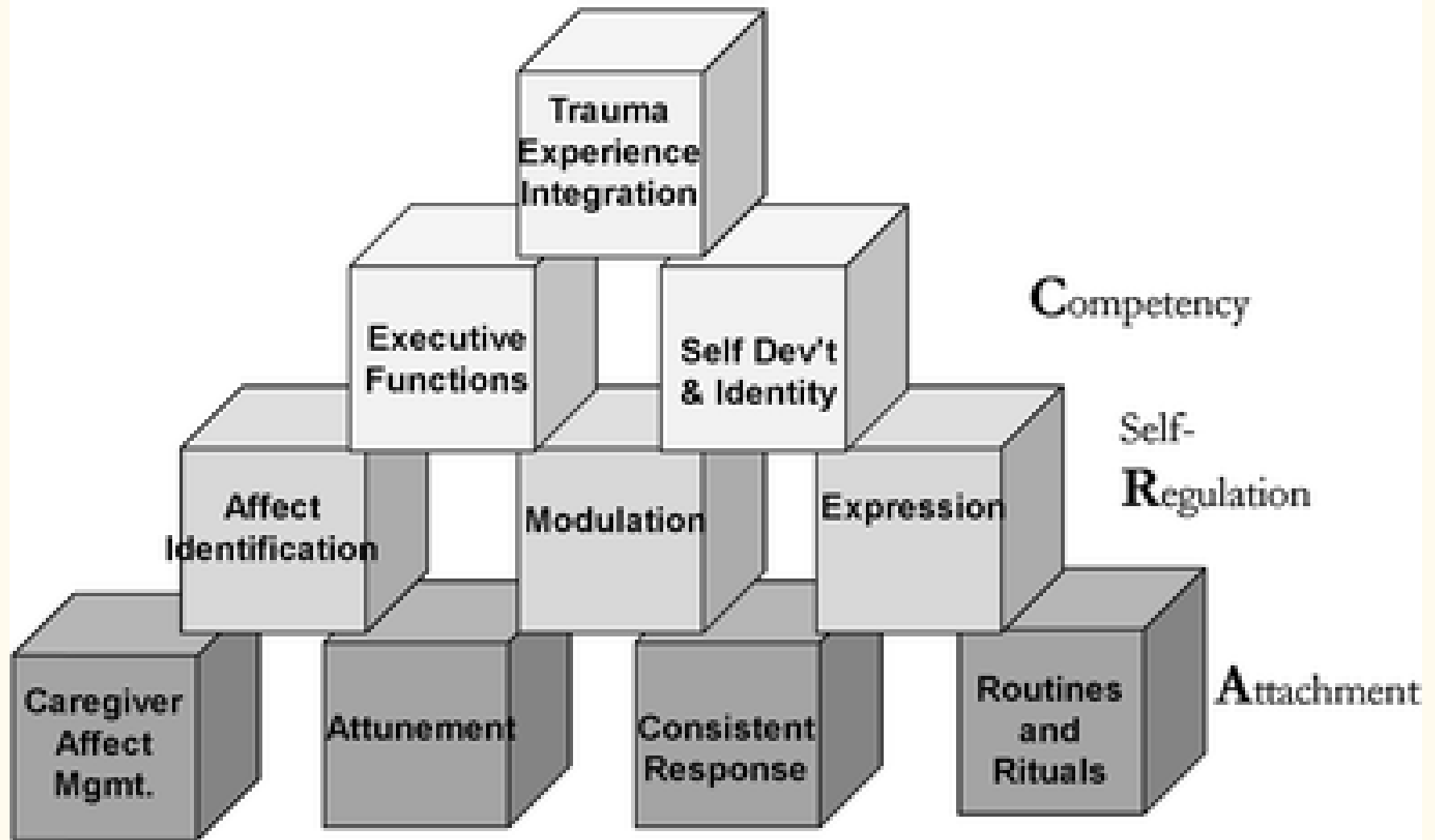
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The Operation Breakthrough Experience: Part II

An example of putting these principles into
practice in a Head Start/Early Head Start setting



ARC - 10 Building Blocks



Blaustein & Kinniburgh, 2010; Kinniburgh & Blaustein, 2005
Reprinted with permission.

Calm Down



BREATHE

COUNT 1, 2, 3, 4



Breathing Star

A Place to Calm Down

- Physical space within each classroom
- Safe place to calm down
- Adults/teachers are present to help children learn ways to self-soothe.



Calm Down Toys



More Calm Down Toys



Self-Regulation Activities

- Musical activities (drumming, loud/soft)
- Stop-Start games
- Hokey Pokey
- Head, Shoulders, Knees and Toes
- Repetitive songs (calm to excited then back to calm)
- Physical activity (hop like frogs)

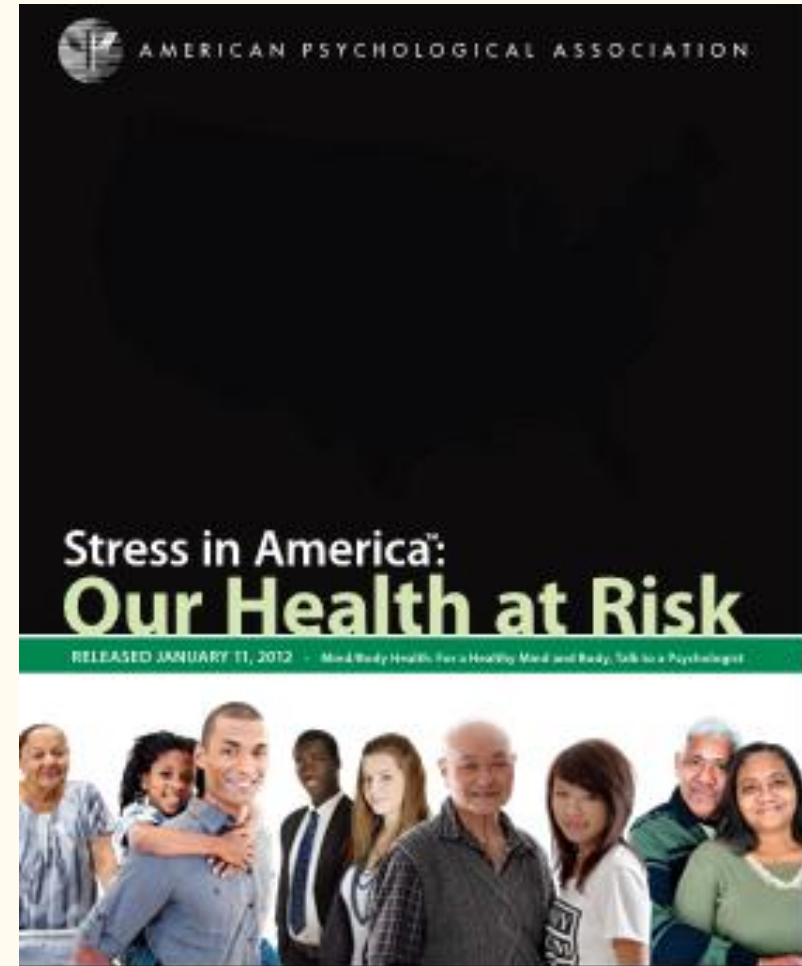
Take Care of Yourself

One-third of Americans are living with extreme stress and nearly half of Americans (48%) believe that their stress has increased over the past five years.

Report from the American Psychological Association, 2012



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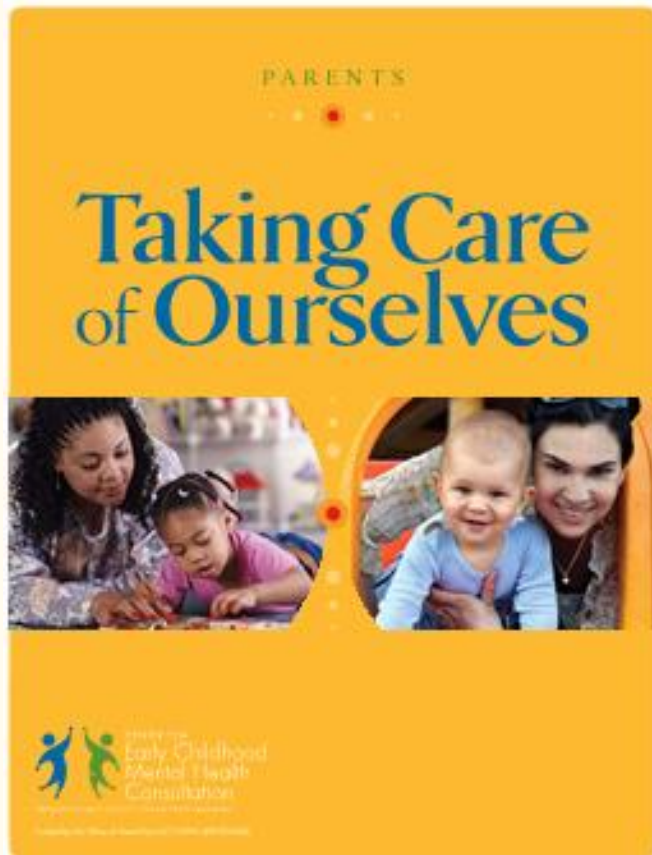
Adults Under Chronic Stress

- Are often more irritable
- Are more likely to be inconsistent
- Have less energy
- Lose a feeling of joy of life



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Take Care of Yourself: Tips



STRESS

Take a **B**reath

Belly breathing or "Deep Breathing Exercise" is a proven way to reduce stress. Try this technique standing or seated in a chair:

1. Place your arms and hands at your side, relaxed
2. Close your eyes
3. Focus on your belly, the lower part of the stomach. Imagine a small balloon inside
4. Breathe in slowly and deeply through your nose, imagine the balloon inflating. Slowly, hold a few seconds
5. Slowly exhale through your mouth, imagine the balloon gently deflating. Blow out of your mouth as if you were blowing out a candle
6. Repeat at least 3 times

TIP: Place a hand over your belly to feel it go up and down, and make sure you're not breathing with your chest

You can do this in your classroom, at home, on the bus, in the car, or anywhere!

A woman with long dark hair, wearing a green top and a patterned scarf, is sitting on a black horse. She is looking to the right with a calm expression. The background is a bright, outdoor setting with trees.

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www.ecmhc.org

How Do You Build Protective Factors in Young Children?

Large Group Conversation

- With children?
- With families?



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Provide Consistent, Responsive Caregiving

- Identify a primary caregiver to increase the level of support and encouragement
- Hold, cuddle and rock children
- Respond gently & quickly to cues (smiles, cries, etc.)
- Talk to children about their emotions
- Stay close by as children interact with one another
- Observe each child's skills



Provide Predictable Routines & A Safe Environment

- Maintain a predictable schedule
- Provide choices
- Provide a safe place for the child to talk or just relax
- Be sensitive to cues the child gives related to the environment- create a soft, nurturing space



Core Strengths for Children

Developed by Bruce Perry

<http://www.childtrauma.org/>

- Attachment
- Self Regulation
- Affiliation
- Awareness
- Tolerance
- Respect



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Supporting Families with Immediate Needs

Know your community supports for:

- Housing, Food, & Clothing
- Job Training
- Transportation
- Health Care and Insurance
- Child Care subsidy
- What else?



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Building Resilience

- “Ordinary Magic”
- Allows children to emerge from stressful experiences with unique strengths
- Allows healthy development in spite of adversity
- Adverse experiences are history, not destiny



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Mastin, A. (2001) Ordinary Magic: Resilience Processes in Development. *American Psychologist*, 56 (3), 227-238

The Opportunity to....

- Identify toxic stress as a root cause of disease and learning difficulty in childhood...
- Demonstrate early intervention can change the trajectory toward positive health and school success
- Lead change from an illness-based system to a wellness-based system

...belongs to us!!!



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Together we can accomplish so much



Wrap-Up

- Evaluation/Feedback
- What questions do you still have?
- What will you do differently?
- What will you remember?



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Learn More . . .

- www.developingchild.harvard.edu – Many resources on toxic stress & child development; Working papers are great synopsis of current science
- www.cdc.gov/ACE - Information on the ACE studies
- AAP's Medical Home for Children Exposed to Violence (Google this phrase)
- www.NCTSN.org – Evidence-based evaluations of trauma treatment programs



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<http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/health/center>



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