



# **Building a Trauma Responsive School System: Educating the Whole Child**



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# School Responses to . . .

- Violence & Traumatic Incidents
  - School Crisis Assistance Team
- Bullying
  - Restorative measures

# School Responses to . . .

- Misconduct
  - SB100
  - Early childhood programs
- Sexual Harassment & Assault
  - Title IX: Staff Training



**The Partnership for Resilience works to improve academic, health, and social outcomes for children by fostering trauma-responsive schools and effective family, school, health, and community partnerships.**

## **Partners**

- American Academy of Pediatrics – Illinois Chapter (ICAAP)
- Consortium for Educational Change (CEC)
- Cook County Health and Hospitals System
- Education Redesign Lab at the Harvard Graduate School of Education
- Governors State University (GSU)
- Illinois Education Association (IEA)
- Illinois Federation of Teachers (IFT)
- Advocate Health Care
- Lurie Center for Childhood Resilience
- Southern Illinois University School of Medicine
- School Districts Ridgeland 122 (Oak Lawn), 127.5 (Chicago Ridge), 130 (Blue Island), 132 ( Calumet Park), 147 (Harvey-Dixmoor), 148 (Dolton Riverdale), 163 (Park Forest), 169 (Ford Heights), 205 (Thornton Township), 215 (Lansing/Calumet City), 143 (Midlothian), Resilient Southern Illinois (17 Districts)

**[www.partnership4resilience.org](http://www.partnership4resilience.org)**

# Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)

- A study that was presented in 1990 by Dr. Anda and Dr. Felitti looked at long term health outcomes of over 17,000 adults. Their findings were amazing, and they have had an impact on both the medical and educational fields. Their research found that exposure to stress had a direct correlation to life expectancy. The higher the ACE Score (more exposure to stress) of a patient, the more likely they were to have a shorter life.

# ABUSE



Physical



Emotional



Sexual

# NEGLECT



Physical

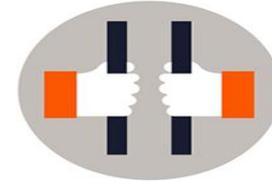


Emotional

# HOUSEHOLD DYSFUNCTION



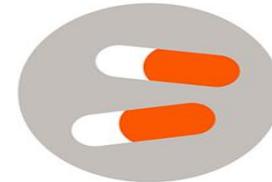
Mental Illness



Incarcerated Relative



Mother treated violently



Substance Abuse



Divorce

CENTER FOR DISEASE  
CONTROL

What is Trauma?

*An emotional  
response to a  
terrible event*

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Complex  
Trauma?

*Repetitive and  
Continuous in  
nature*

**Trauma has real and lasting effects on the brain, if we understand this, we can better understand and help our students.**

What does exposure to toxic stress do to the body and mind?

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The Adversity-Health Connection

**Nadine Burke Harris, M.D.**

**The Deepest Well Healing the Long Term Effects of Childhood Adversity**

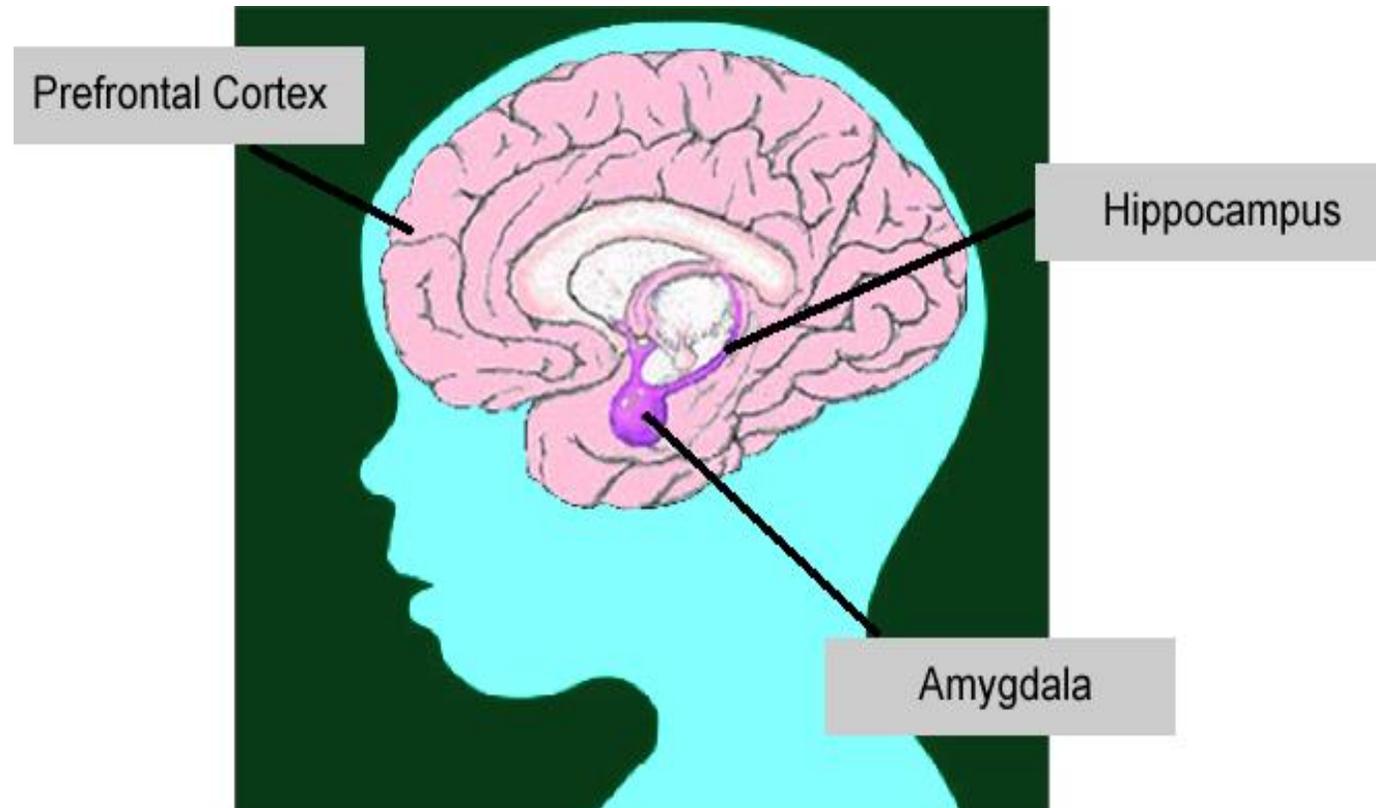
Dose-Response Relationship

“Adversity’s detrimental impact on health had all the hallmarks of a public health crisis hidden in plain sight.”

# The brain's response to trauma

The amygdala detects whether a stimulus (person or event) is threatening and the hippocampus, the center of short-term memory, links the fear response to the context in which the threatening stimulus or event occurred. These two brain structures also play an important role in the release of stress hormones such as cortisol and adrenaline influencing the capacity of the prefrontal cortex for regulating thought, emotions, and actions, as well as keeping information readily accessible during active learning.

Georgetown University Center for Child and Human Development



# How can ACEs impact learning?

- Executive functioning is impacted
  - The student's ability to organize and maintain control may be lacking
  - Regulation/dysregulation
  - May appear ADHD
  - Inability to cope
  - Inability to form or maintain relationships
  - Abnormal or extreme responses to events
  - Inability to complete work or follow directions
  - Poor concentration

# Using the Trauma Lens

Change your focus from

- What's wrong with this child?
- to**
- What has happened to this child?

## Safety

- Physically safe
- Emotionally safe
- Treated fairly and equitably
- School is orderly

## Challenge and Engagement

- High expectations
- Educational opportunities are connected to life goals
- Strong personal motivation
- Academic engagement
- Robust opportunities to learn

## Support

- Meaningful connection to adults
- Experience of care and respect
- Strong bonds to school
- Positive peer relationships
- Effective and available support

## Social and Emotional Learning

- Understand and manage emotions and relationships
- Pro-social values
- Responsible decision making
- Opportunities to contribute to the school community

Osher, D., Sidana, A., & Kelly, P. (2008). *Improving Conditions for Learning for Youth Who Are Neglected or Delinquent.*

# Teacher/Staff Care Self Care

- Self Care is Different for Different People
- Has to fit the personality of the person
- Should be maintained permanently
- Meaningful and positive
- Self-Care can't just happen over break or in the summer
- Not taking care of yourself can not become a lifestyle
- It is not part of the job

# What needs to be in place to become a trauma responsive school system?

- Understand that becoming a trauma responsive system takes time
- Build a **strong foundation** and include **all** staff members
- Connect this work to initiatives already in place (staff needs to understand that this is a change in mindset and must be woven into every aspect of the school/district)
- Create a “resilience team” that includes union leadership, teachers, staff, and administration (Leadership must be on board including both admin. and teacher leaders)
- Engage parents in student learning and decision making (Membership)
- Engage the community and community agencies for wrap around (medical, dental, behavioral health)
- Deepen the teacher’s tool bag to include SEL and trauma informed Strategies (Professional Development)
- Keep data and make your program decisions based on the needs of the students
- Consider both walls of date: Academic Learning and Social Emotional Learning (both are essential to success!)
- Teachers and Staff that are well and ready to support their students (Employees need to know they are cared for and acknowledged for their work they do.)

Its about  
building  
relationships

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All children are  
born with  
potential...

They are not all  
given the same  
tools to reach that  
potential.

- Children don't care how much you know until they know how much you care.
- It is our job as educators to level the playing field by giving the children the tools they need reach their full potential and be resilient learners.

# Final Thoughts.....

- Be systematic and strategic in implementation of trauma responsive schools
- Listen
- Communication is a key
- Understand that it takes time and a strong foundation is essential

# Questions?

