



Trauma Informed Care

For Lowell School District

Dana Allswede, PhD

12/4/24

Disclosures



MASSACHUSETTS
GENERAL HOSPITAL

PSYCHIATRY ACADEMY

Neither I nor my spouse/partner has a relevant financial relationship with a commercial interest to disclose.



Intro to today

- What is trauma
- Prevalence
- Effects
- What can we do



Trauma makes the world feel unpredictable and unsafe

“

A traumatic event is an experience that causes physical, emotional, psychological distress, or harm. It is an event that is perceived and experienced as a threat to one's safety or to the stability of one's world.

”

Levetown M. Communicating with children and families: from everyday interactions to skill in conveying distressing information. Pediatrics. 2008;121:e1441-e1460.



Clinically defining trauma (DSM-5)

Situations involving **actual or threatened death, serious injury, or sexual violence**, in the following way(s):

- Directly experiencing the situation
- Witnessing the situation
- Learning that a relative or close friend was exposed to the situation
- Indirect exposure to extensive details of the situation, usually in the course of professional duties (e.g., first responders, medics)



Examples of trauma

School aged children experience many types of traumatic experiences:

- Unexpected death of a loved one
- Physical, emotional, or sexual abuse
- Witnessing interpersonal violence
- Motor vehicle accidents
- Experiences of natural disasters
- Conditions of war
- Dog bites
- Invasive medical procedures



Trauma is ubiquitous

Percentage of individuals who experience at least one potentially traumatic event before age 18 in the US general population (pre-pandemic):



Trauma is ubiquitous

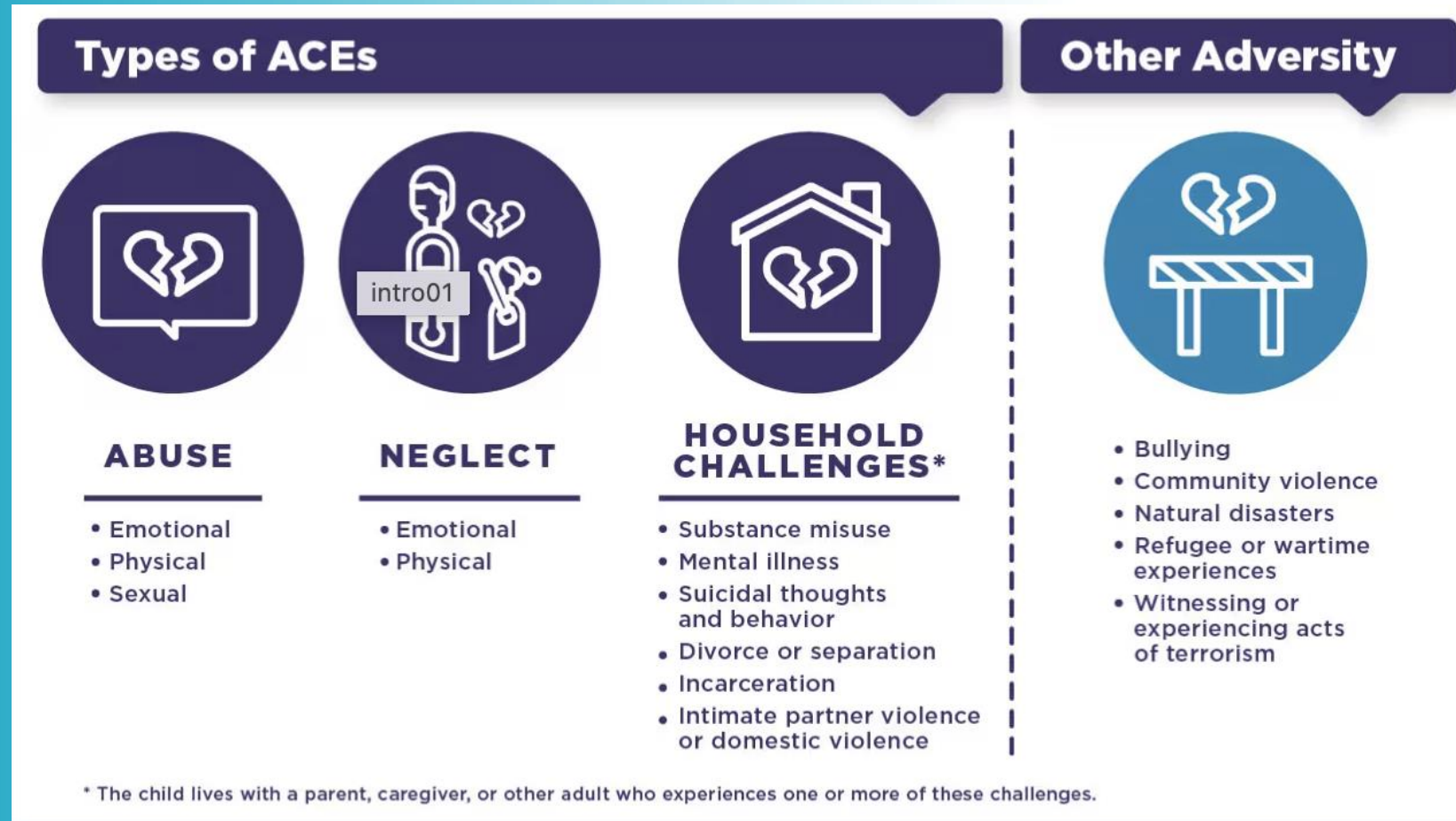
Percentage of individuals who experience at least one potentially traumatic event before age 18 in the US general population (pre-pandemic):

61.8%

19% experienced 3 or more



Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACES)



National Child Traumatic Stress Network, Schools Committee. (2017). Creating, supporting, and sustaining trauma-informed schools: A system framework. Los Angeles, CA, and Durham, NC: National Center for Child Traumatic Stress.

Chronic stress impacts development

! SURVIVAL MODE RESPONSE

Toxic stress increases a child's heart rate, blood pressure, breathing and muscle tension. Their thinking brain is knocked off-line. Self-protection is their priority.

Low tolerance for stress, which can result in behaviors such as fighting, checking out or defiance.

Increases difficulty in making friends and maintaining relationships.

Increases stress hormones which affect the body's ability to fight infection.

May cause lasting health problems.

Increases problems with learning and memory.

**I can't hear you!
I can't respond to you!
I am just trying to be safe!**

Reduces the ability to respond, learn, or figure things out, which can result in problems in school.

Exposure to childhood ACEs can increase the risk of:

- Adolescent pregnancy
- Alcohol and drug abuse
- Asthma
- Depression
- Heart disease
- Intimate partner violence
- Liver disease
- Sexually-transmitted disease
- Smoking
- Suicide

Special thanks to the Community & Family Services Division at the Spokane (WA) Regional Health District for developing and sharing the original parent hand-out.

©2021 PACES Connection. English 11/10



Chronic stress impacts students

The Impact of Trauma on Learning and Behavior

The more adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), the more learning and behavioral problems reported, according to Dr. Nadine Burke Harris.

0 ACEs

3%

1-3 ACEs

21%

4+ ACEs

51%

0 10 20 30 40 50 60

Children With Learning or Behavior Problems

Source: Burke, Hellman, Scott, Weems, & Carrion, 2011

Trauma is "Written Into Our Bodies"—but Educators Can Help. (n.d.). Edutopia.
<https://www.edutopia.org/article/trauma-written-our-bodies-educators-can-help/>

1 in 16 students experience

3x the rate of **academic failure**

4x the rate of **poor health**

5x the rate of severe **attendance problems**

6x the rate of **behavior problems** at school

with an elevated ACE score of 4 or more

The Spokane Washington Study Felitti et al 1998

Source: ACE and Spokane, WA studies
Credit: Anna Iversen, Haskell Education



Rates of ACEs

Some Groups Are More Likely to Have Experienced ACEs

Multiple studies show that people who identified as members of these groups as adults reported experiencing **significantly more ACEs**:



Despite how common trauma is in childhood and adolescence, **symptoms are under-recognized and undertreated**

Rates of ACEs are higher for certain subsets of youth

- Contributes to **higher rates of behavioral health challenges** for these groups

CDC. (2023, March 1). *Teen Newsletter: Adverse Childhood Experiences*. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. <https://www.cdc.gov/museum/education/newsletter/2023/mar/index.html>

Rossiter A, Byrne F, Wota AP, Nisar Z, Ofuafor T, Murray I, Byrne C, Hallahan B. Childhood trauma levels in individuals attending adult mental health services: An evaluation of clinical records and structured measurement of childhood trauma. *Child Abuse Negl.* 2015 Jun;44:36-45. doi: 10.1016/j.chiabu.2015.01.001. Epub 2015 Jan 28. PMID: 25636522.

Connections to school staff

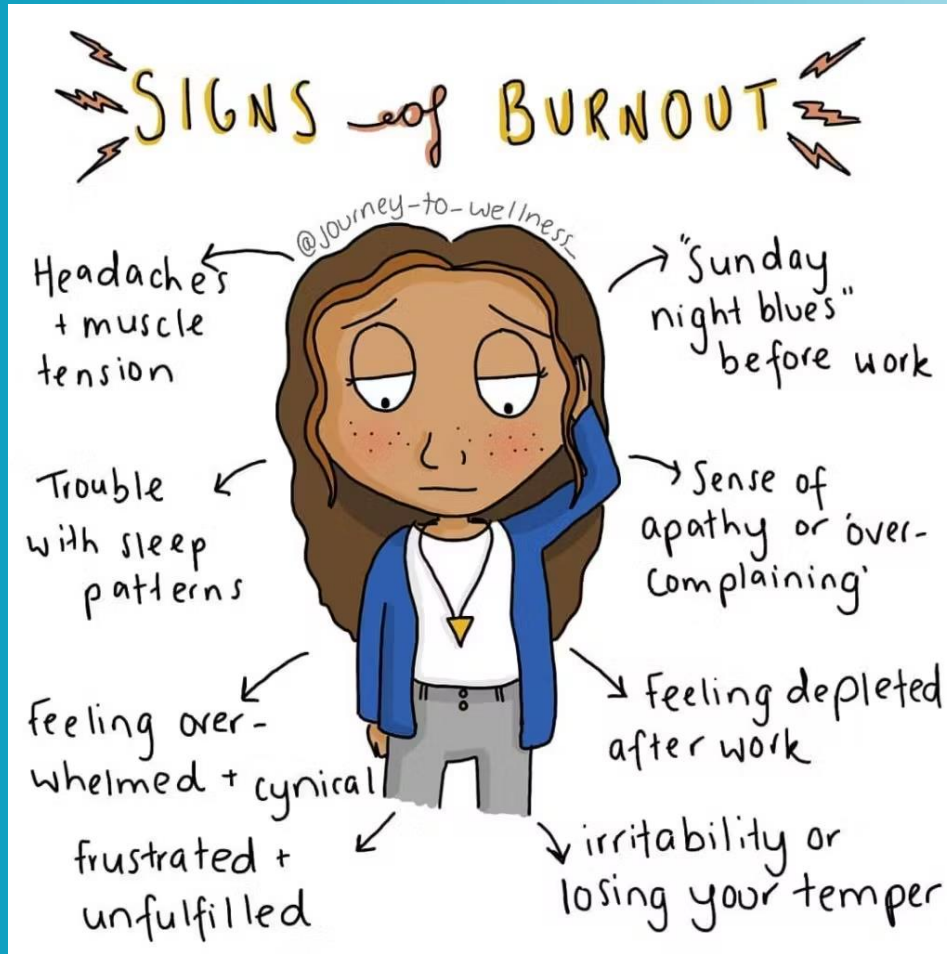


Image credits: Journey to Wellness, Intraconnections Counseling



What we can do



Help children
identify, express and
manage emotions.



Create safe physical and
emotional environments.
(home, school, community, systems).



Understand,
prevent and
respond to ACEs.



“...One of the biggest myths that we have to bust is that if you have experienced childhood adversity, there’s nothing we can do about it.”

– Nadine Burke Harris, MD, MPH, FAAP, Surgeon General of California

Special thanks to the Community & Family Services Division at the Spokane (WA)
Regional Health District for developing and sharing the original parent hand-out.

©2021 PACEs Connection. English 11/10



WITH
SUPPORT
FROM



Family Hui.
A Program of Lead4Tomorrow



Addressing trauma at school

SAMHSA/CDC trauma-informed approach: “4 Rs”

1. **Realize:** widespread prevalence and impact of trauma, understand paths for recovery
2. **Recognize:** signs and symptoms in individuals, families, systems
3. **Respond:** integrate knowledge about trauma into all facets of the system
4. **Resist** re-traumatization by decreasing reminders of trauma and loss and implementing trauma-informed practices

SAMHSA Guidance for a Trauma-Informed Approach, Trauma and Justice Strategic Initiative (2014)

National Child Traumatic Stress Network, Schools Committee. (2017). Creating, supporting, and sustaining trauma-informed schools: A system framework. Los Angeles, CA, and Durham, NC: National Center for Child Traumatic Stress.



Addressing trauma at school

SAMHSA/CDC **trauma-informed approach: “4 Rs”**

- 1. Realize:** widespread prevalence and impact of trauma, understand paths for recovery
- 2. Recognize:** signs and symptoms in individuals, families, systems

SAMHSA Guidance for a Trauma-Informed Approach, Trauma and Justice Strategic Initiative (2014)

National Child Traumatic Stress Network, Schools Committee. (2017). Creating, supporting, and sustaining trauma-informed schools: A system framework. Los Angeles, CA, and Durham, NC: National Center for Child Traumatic Stress.



Addressing trauma at school

SAMHSA/CDC trauma-informed approach: “4 Rs”

1. **Realize:** widespread prevalence and impact of trauma, understand paths for recovery
2. **Recognize:** signs and symptoms in individuals, families, systems
3. **Respond:** integrate knowledge about trauma into all facets of the system

SAMHSA Guidance for a Trauma-Informed Approach, Trauma and Justice Strategic Initiative (2014)

National Child Traumatic Stress Network, Schools Committee. (2017). Creating, supporting, and sustaining trauma-informed schools: A system framework. Los Angeles, CA, and Durham, NC: National Center for Child Traumatic Stress.



Responding to trauma

Behavior happens for a reason

- Challenges with focus, academic achievement, and mood have a root cause
- If a student is experiencing frequent disciplinary actions, pair with interventions for behavioral health

Create systems/space to help with regulating emotions

- Safe spaces to re-regulate (counselor's office, access to coping skills, etc)
- Build into IEP/504 plans as needed

Increase access to appropriate behavioral health supports

National Child Traumatic Stress Network, Schools Committee. (2017). Creating, supporting, and sustaining trauma-informed schools: A system framework. Los Angeles, CA, and Durham, NC: National Center for Child Traumatic Stress.

Referral options



MASSACHUSETTS
GENERAL HOSPITAL

PSYCHIATRY ACADEMY

Vinfen

**Vinfen Behavioral Health
Lowell**

40 Church Street

Lowell, Massachusetts 01852

Open Monday – Friday: 8:00 a.m. –
8:00 p.m.

Saturday & Sunday: 9:00 a.m. – 5:00
p.m.

866-388-2242

or 978-674-6744

bhinfo@vinfen.org

MASSACHUSETTS
**BEHAVIORAL
HEALTH
HELP LINE**

Call or text now

833-773-2445

Visit masshelpline.com to chat



**Northeast
Health Services**

A MEMBER OF TRANSFORMATIONS CARE NETWORK

Lowell, MA

59 Lowes Way

Lowell, MA 01851

(781) 645-4041



Addressing trauma at school

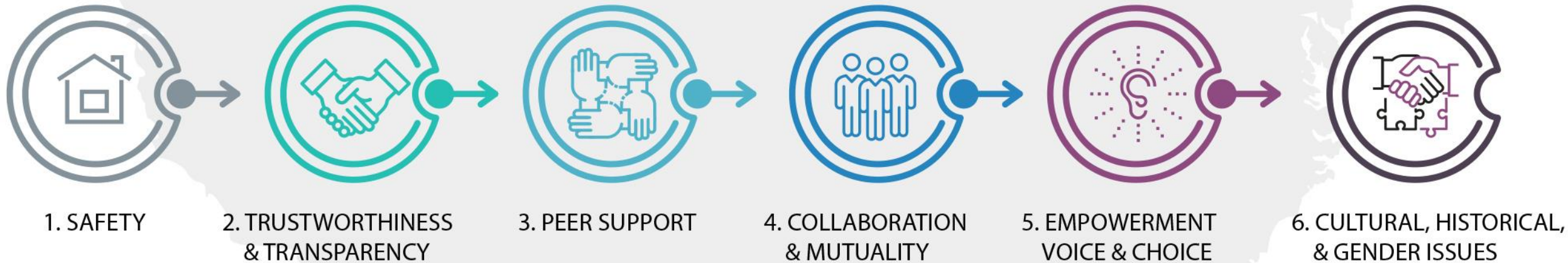
SAMHSA/CDC trauma-informed approach: “4 Rs”

1. **Realize:** widespread prevalence and impact of trauma, understand paths for recovery
2. **Recognize:** signs and symptoms in individuals, families, systems
3. **Respond:** integrate knowledge about trauma into all facets of the system
4. **Resist** re-traumatization by decreasing reminders of trauma and loss and implementing trauma-informed practices

6 GUIDING PRINCIPLES TO A TRAUMA-INFORMED APPROACH

The CDC's [Center for Preparedness and Response \(CPR\)](#), in collaboration with SAMHSA's [National Center for Trauma-Informed Care \(NCTIC\)](#), developed and led a new training for CPR employees about the role of trauma-informed care during public health emergencies. The training aimed to increase responder awareness of the impact that trauma can have in the communities where they work.

Participants learned SAMHSA'S six principles that guide a trauma-informed approach, including:



Adopting a trauma-informed approach is not accomplished through any single particular technique or checklist. It requires constant attention, caring awareness, sensitivity, and possibly a cultural change at an organizational level. On-going internal organizational assessment and quality improvement, as well as engagement with community stakeholders, will help to imbed this approach which can be augmented with organizational development and practice improvement. The training provided by [CPR](#) and [NCTIC](#) was the first step for CDC to view emergency preparedness and response through a trauma-informed lens.



Trauma-informed schools

Promote a **safe and welcoming** climate

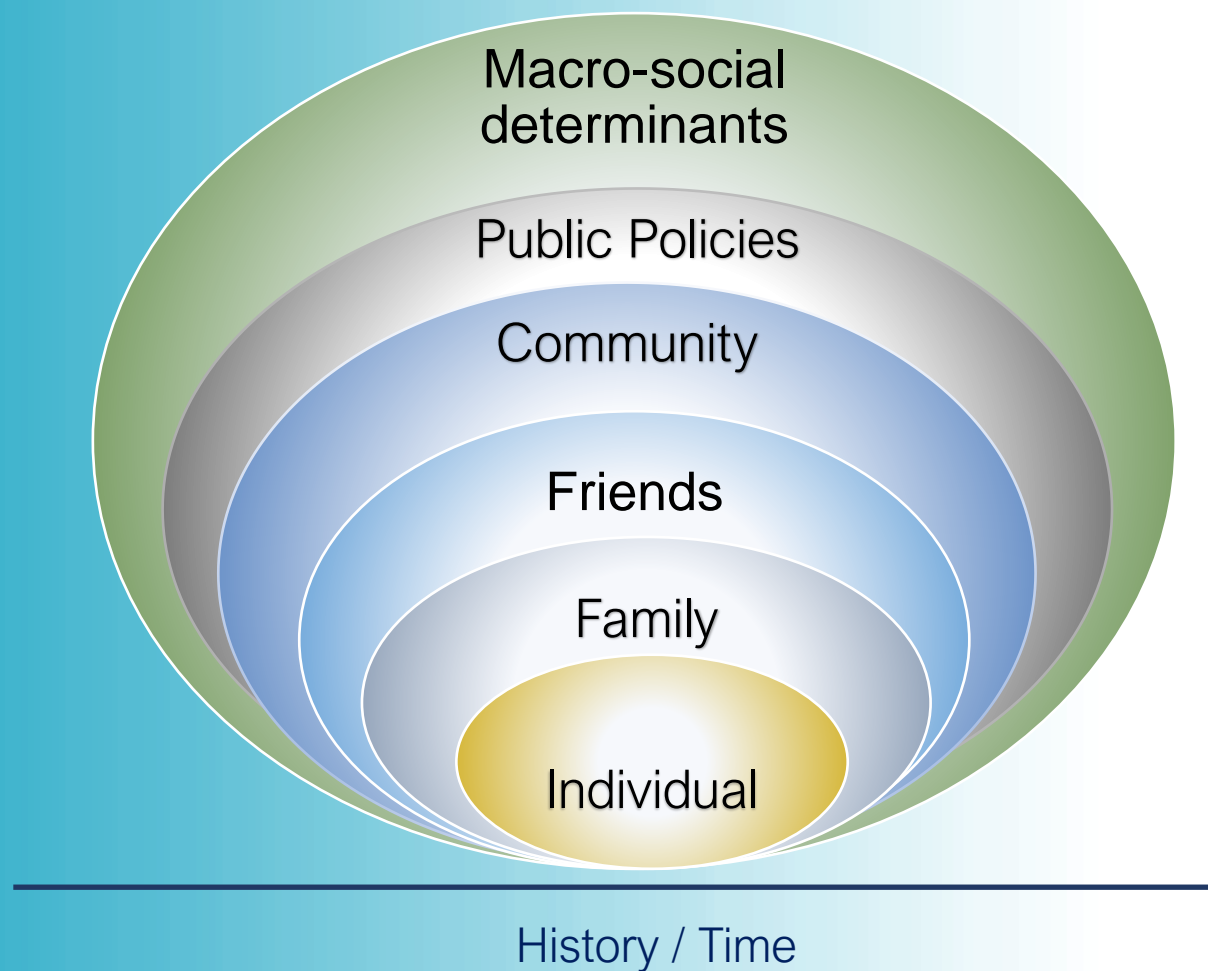
Seek to create a **structured and predictable** learning environment

- minimize unnecessary trauma and loss reminders

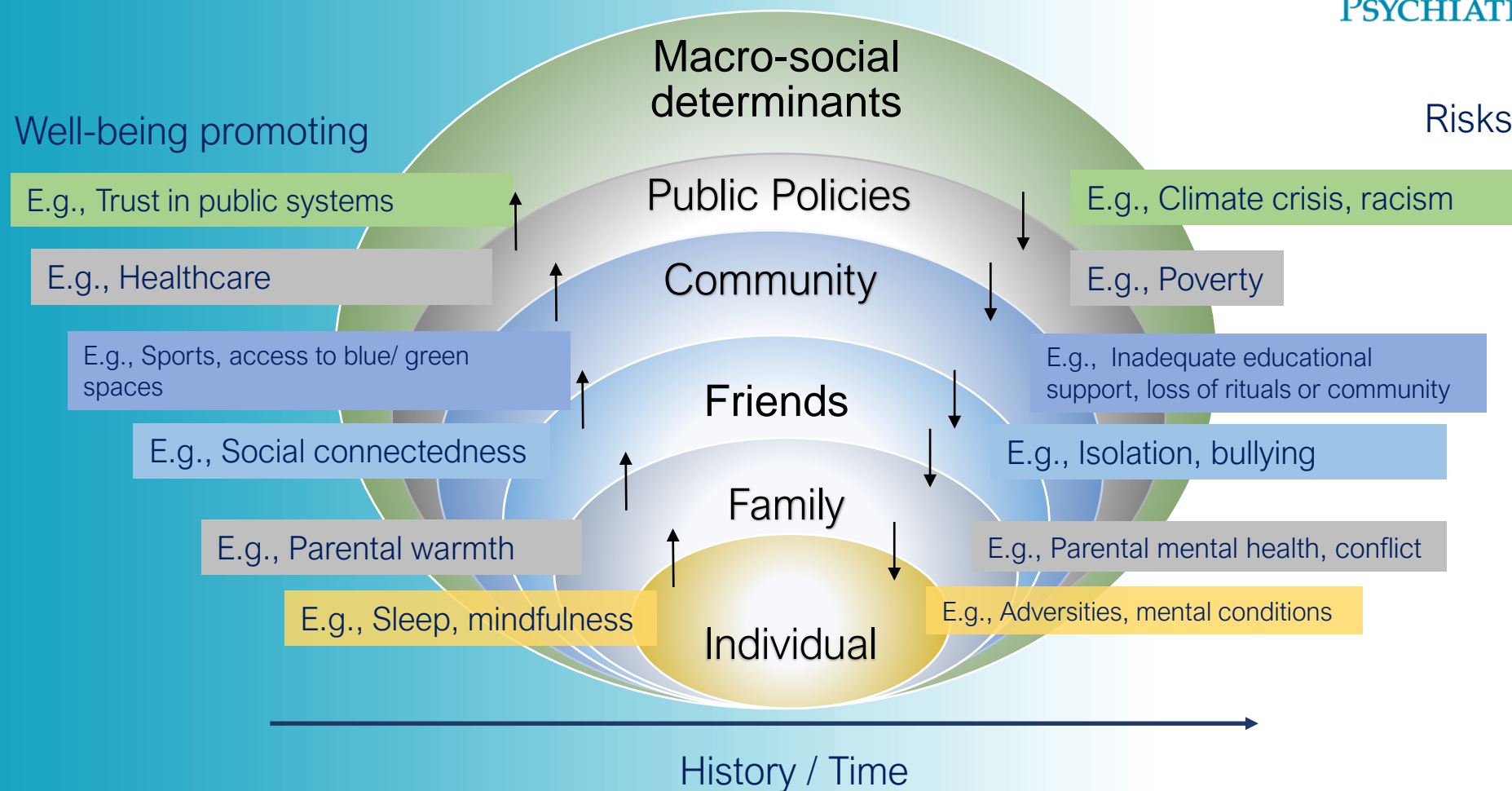
Focus on building **positive and attuned relationships** between teachers and students, and among school staff

Anti-bullying and suicide prevention programs

Uses a **balanced restorative justice** (a.k.a. restorative practices) approach to conflict and conflict mediation with appropriate disciplinary action.



Basu, A (2020) Conceptual model adapted from Brofenbrenner (1977)



Basu, A (2020) Conceptual model adapted from Brofenbrenner (1977)



Learn more

Adverse Childhood Experiences (Cleveland Clinic)

<https://my.clevelandclinic.org/health/symptoms/24875-adverse-childhood-experiences-ace>

Trauma is ‘written into our bodies’ – but teachers can help (Nadine Burke Harris interview, Edutopia)

<https://www.edutopia.org/article/trauma-written-our-bodies-educators-can-help/>

Creating, Supporting, and Sustaining Trauma-Informed Schools (National Child Traumatic Stress Network)

https://www.nctsn.org/sites/default/files/resources/creating_supporting_sustaining_trauma_informed_schools_a_systems_framework.pdf



Thank you!

Acknowledgements:

Archana Basu, PhD and Emily Blevins, PhD

Special thanks for sharing slides, resources, and expertise