

TRAUMA-INFORMED SUPPORT FOR PEOPLE WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES



► Created by Karyn Harvey Ph.D.
Psychologist in the disability
field, speaker and author.



Sources of Trauma for People with Intellectual Disabilities

- ▶ Sexual Abuse
- ▶ Physical Abuse
- ▶ Bullying
- ▶ Exclusion
- ▶ Institutionalization

Assume Trauma

- ▶ Betrayal
- ▶ Rejection
- ▶ Social Exclusion -

“Not invited to the Party”



Big T and Little

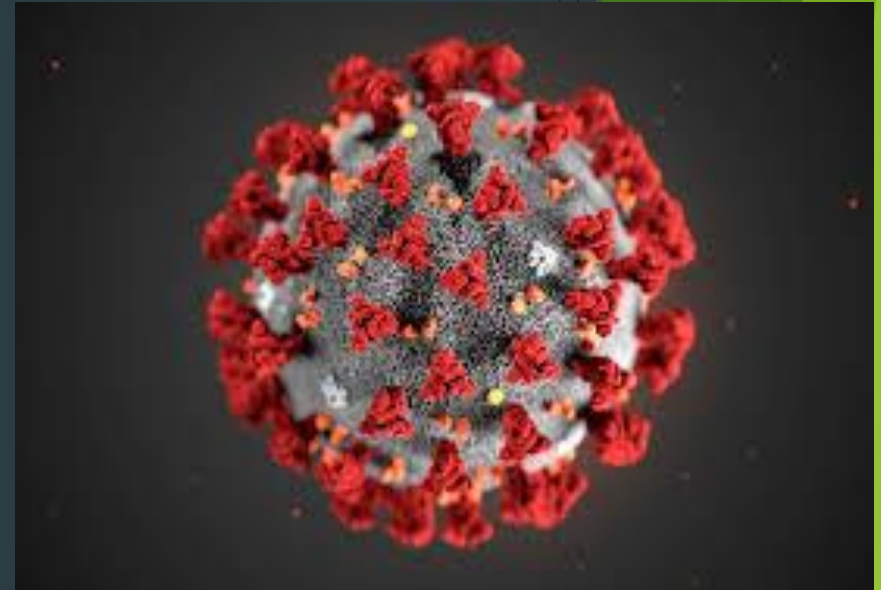
“t”

Traumas

The Smaller Traumas Add Up and Can Have Big T Impact

Single Event Trauma

COVID
Natural
Disasters
Death and Loss



Gabor Mate

“Trauma is not what happened to you, it is how what happened to you made you feel.”

What is
Needed:
Empathy
Respect
Support



A hand is shown in the foreground, palm facing forward, with fingers spread. The background is dark, with a blurred image of a child's face on the right side. The text is overlaid on the image in white boxes with black text.

EARLY CHILDHOOD TRAUMA

- **ABUSE AND NEGLECT HAVE LIFE-LONG IMPACT**

Bucharest Early Intervention Orphan Study

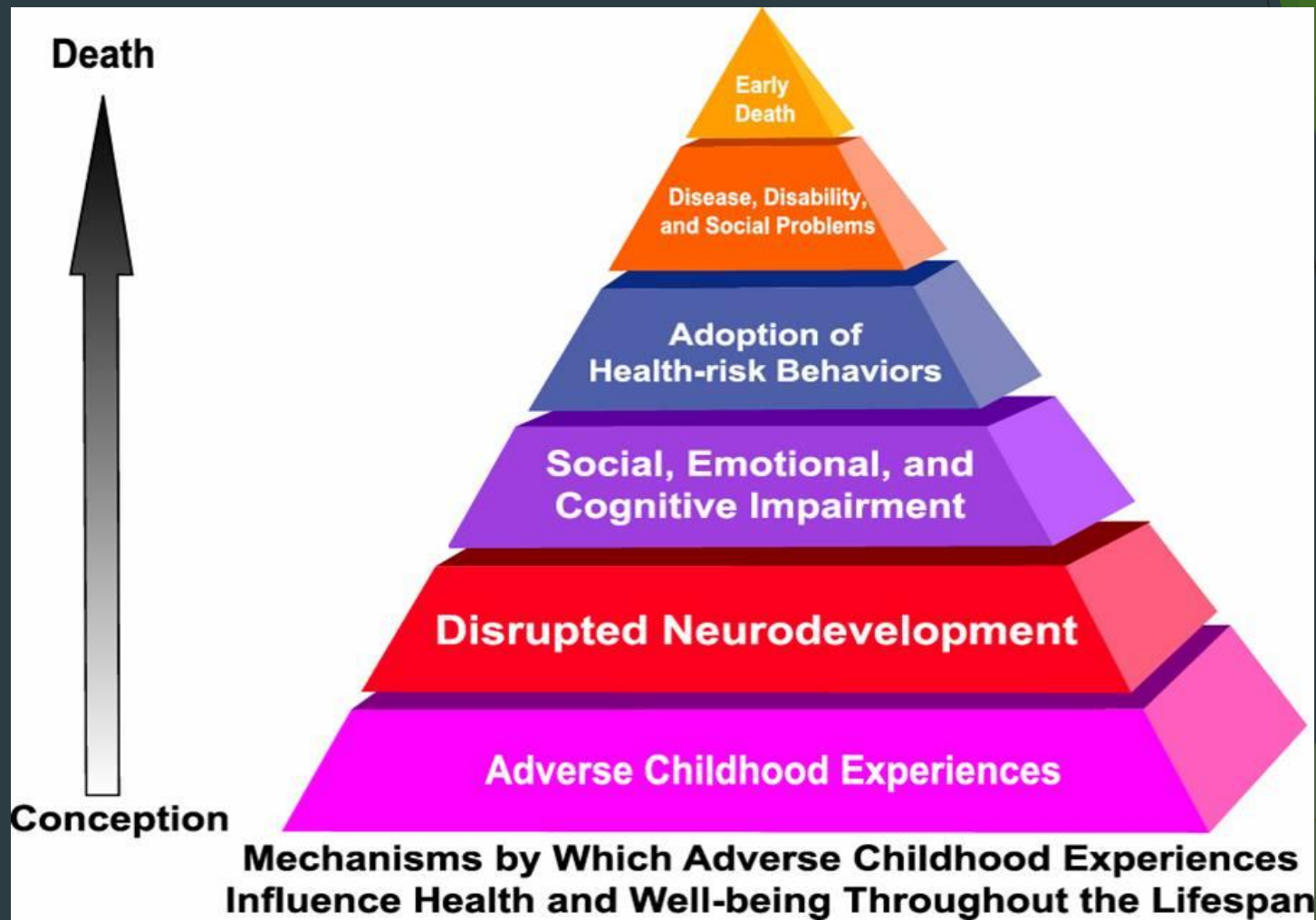
- ▶ 136 children between 6 and 31 months who were in an orphanage in Bucharest were studied
- ▶ 68 kept in institution
- ▶ 68 placed in a new foster care system - full time paid parenting
- ▶ Results: After 54 months (4 1/2 years):

Issues:	Institution	Foster Care	Biological
Axis 1 Disorders	55%	35%	13%
Emotional Disorders	49%	29%	8%
Behavioral Disorders	32%	25%	6.8%
Intellectual Disability Average IQ Score	73	85	110

Children Who are Neglected in Any Way Suffer!

- Chaotic homes
- Parents with drug/alcohol issues
- Repeated foster care placements
- Residential placements

ACE Study





Trauma of Racism and Discrimination

PTSD as Spectrum Issue



Sometimes the
“Behaviors” we see are
really symptoms of
Post-traumatic Stress
Disorder

4 Symptom Areas of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder

- ▶ Re-Experiencing
- ▶ Avoidance
- ▶ Negative Alteration in Cognition and Mood
- ▶ Arousal

Re-Experiencing

- ▶ Intrusive Memories
- ▶ Nightmares
- ▶ Flashbacks- Person can disconnect from reality and be convinced he or she is being attacked, hurt or threatened due to a memory that becomes present

Avoidance

- ▶ Phobias
- ▶ Shut down responses
- ▶ Hypervigilance- Person can become obsessive about details concerning self and safety
- ▶ Dissociation
- ▶ Selective Mutism
- ▶ Blocking Memories

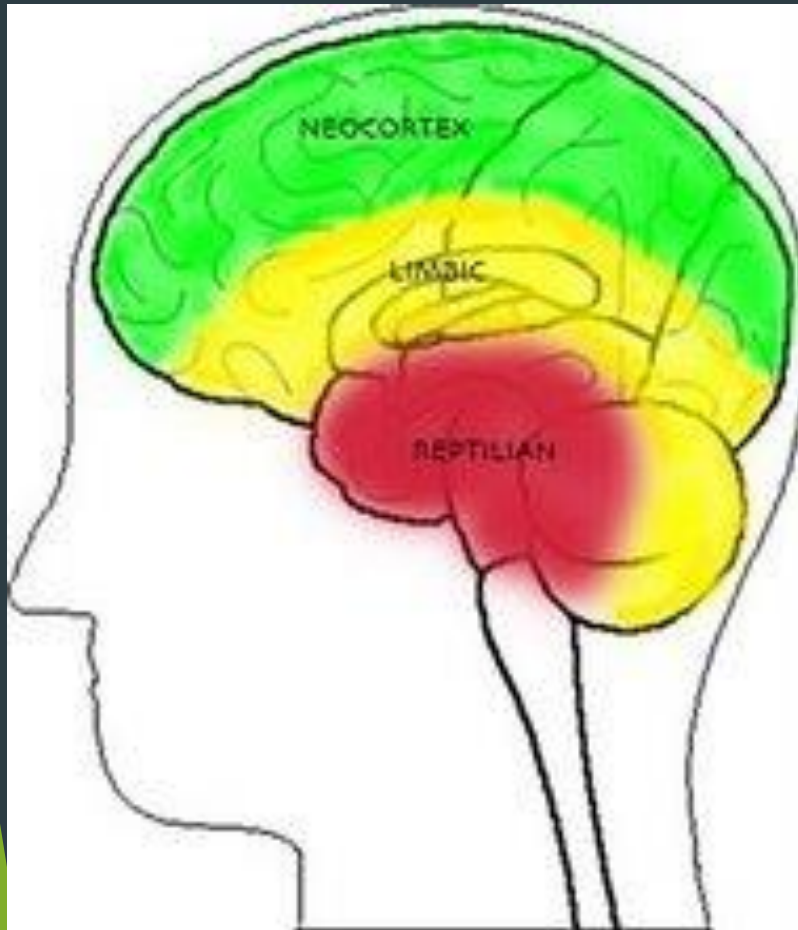
Negative Alteration in Cognition and Mood

- ▶ Sense of Impending Doom
- ▶ Hopelessness
- ▶ Helplessness
- ▶ Negative Views
- ▶ Shame
- ▶ Self-sabotage

Arousal

- ▶ Hyperarousal
- ▶ Agitation
- ▶ Aggression(best defense is good offense)
- ▶ Property Destruction
- ▶ Startle Response
- ▶ Need to protect self at all cost

The Brain



Smart Brain

Emotional Brain

Mechanical Brain

Emotional Brain

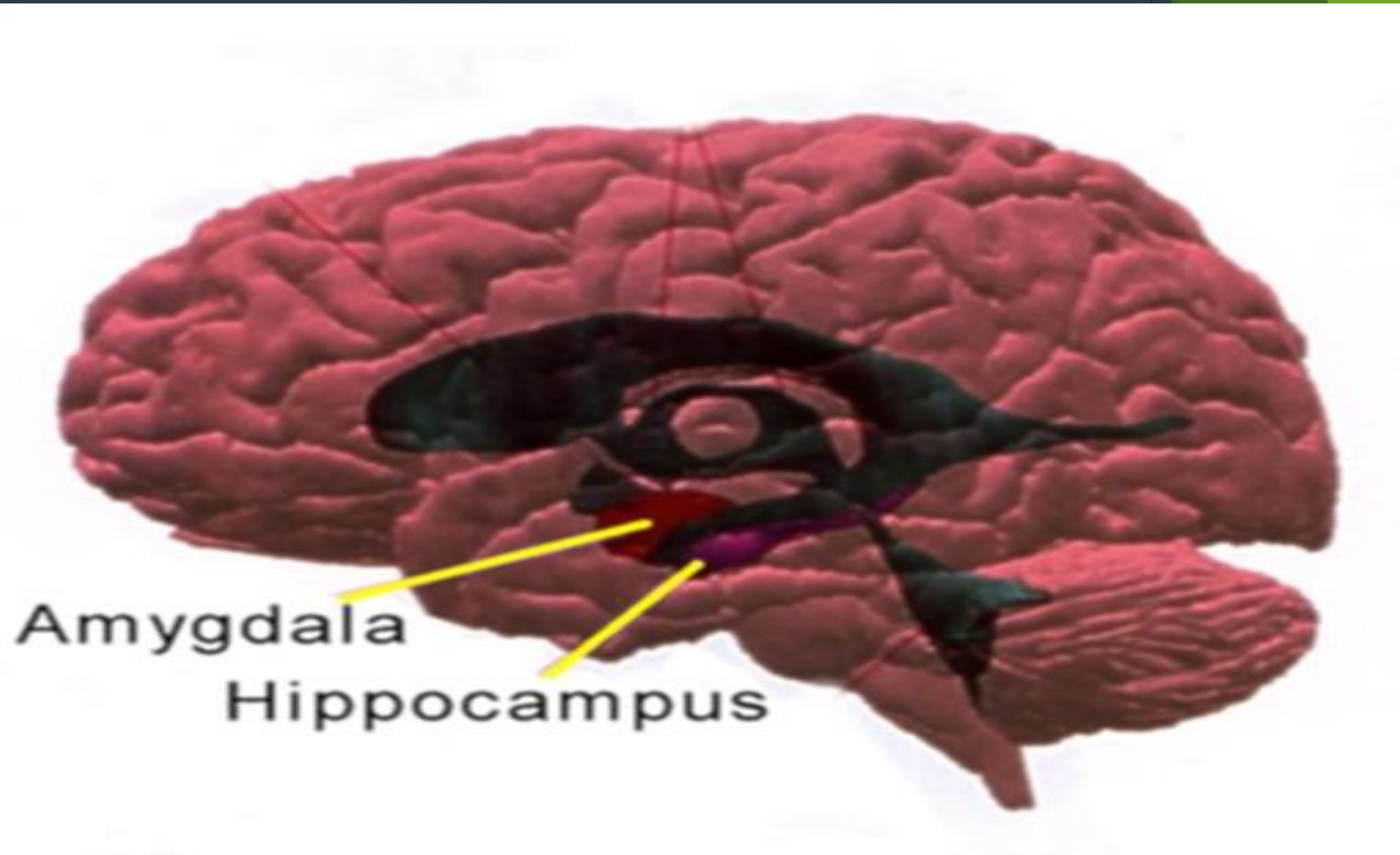
Responds in a crisis or perceived crisis and fills brain with chemicals

Shuts down smart Brain when triggered

Triggered by both signs of danger and anything that is a reminder of past dangers or traumas

Know the Triggers!

- Identify them-
- Educate both staff and person receiving supports
- Make a Safe Environment



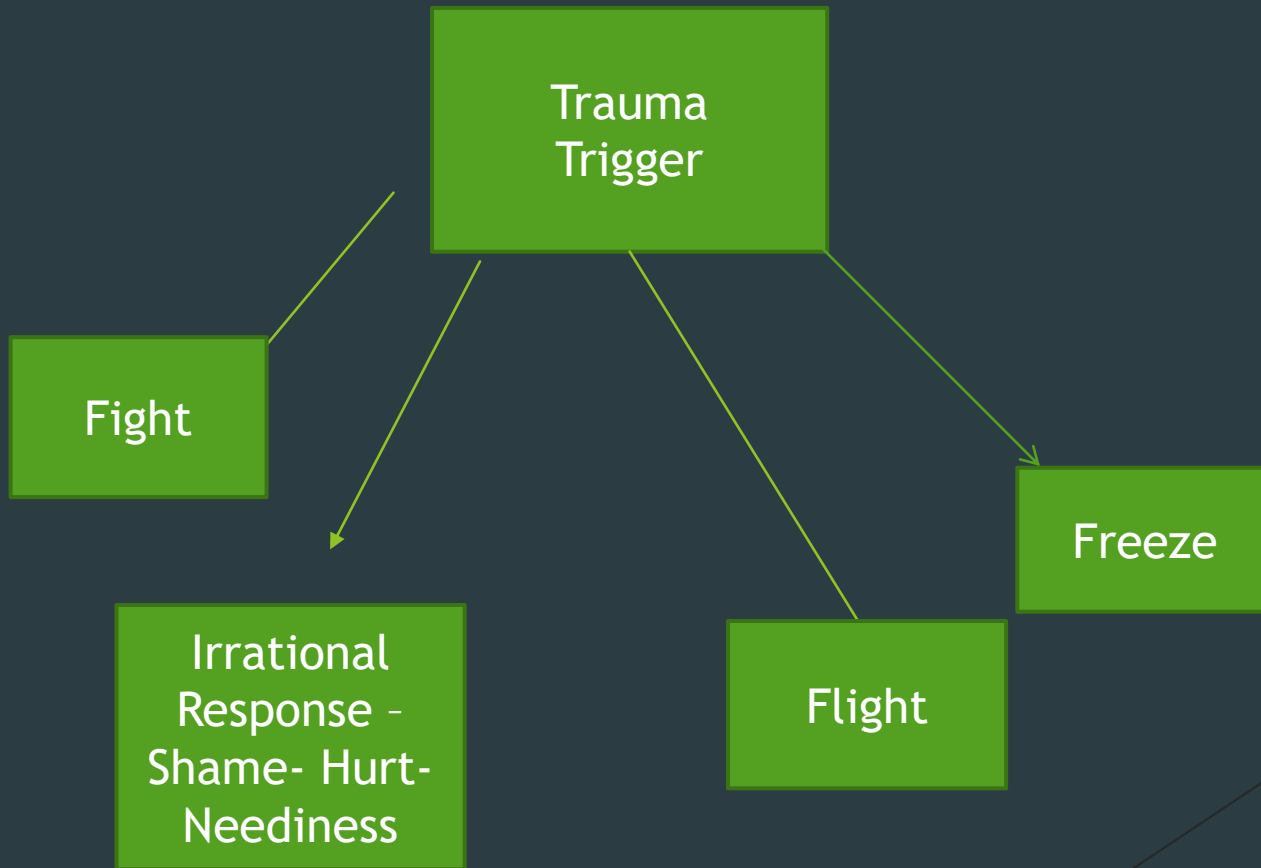
Amygdala

Hippocampus

Trauma-Mind/ Trauma Response

- ▶ Activation of Fight, Flight or Freeze trauma response -
- ▶ Rational Mind Shuts Down
- ▶ This is not the “Teachable Moment!”
- ▶ Catch it before it blows up - Get the person away from the trigger - “Walk with me, Talk with me”
- ▶ Help the person to feel safe before incident occurs

Triggering Effect/Trauma Response



What To Do When Someone is Triggered

- ▶ Cool Down System
- ▶ Calming
- ▶ Breathing
- ▶ Getting away from trigger
- ▶ Being Safe
- ▶ Providing Comfort
- ▶ Giving Reassurance

Eliminate Power Struggles



Smart Brain - Executive Functioning-
doesn't work till person feels safe -



Be Patient!

Helping the Smart Brain Process

LISTEN!

- ▶ Hearing
- ▶ Giving Empathy
- ▶ Validating feelings
- ▶ Not advising
- ▶ Not instructing
- ▶ Not shaming

ROLE EVOLUTION

CONTROLLER



CAREGIVER



SUPPORTER



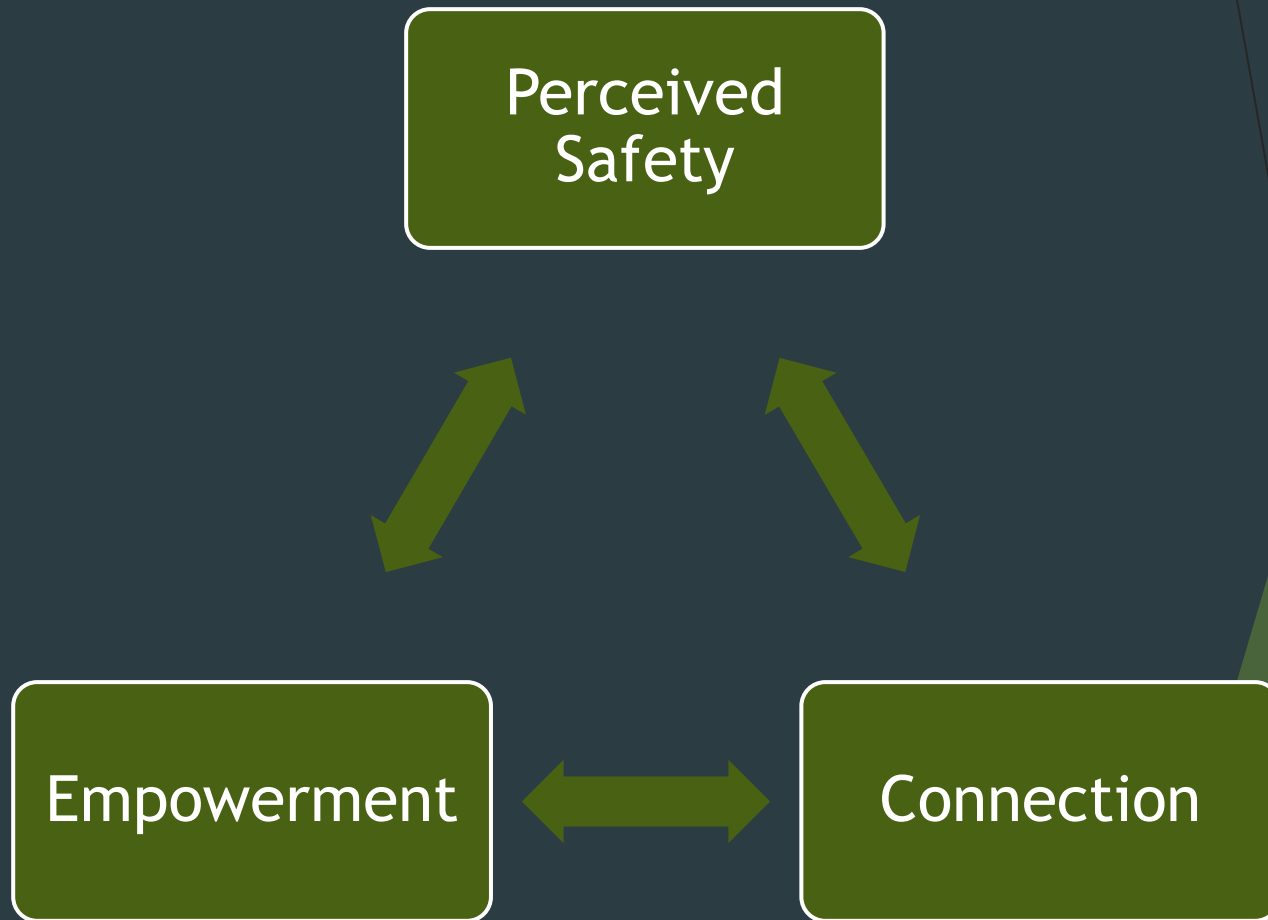


Secondary Trauma :
Staff can absorb pain or trauma of people
they are supporting without realizing it-



Self -Care Is Important!!
Take time for yourself -
Do what you love - Take good care of you!

Ingredients Necessary for Post Traumatic Recovery



What is Safe?

- ▶ Emotional Safety
- ▶ Being with people who care about you
- ▶ No surprise attacks from a house mate or co-worker
- ▶ No surprise attacks from ANYONE
- ▶ You are understood
- ▶ You can safely voice your opinion

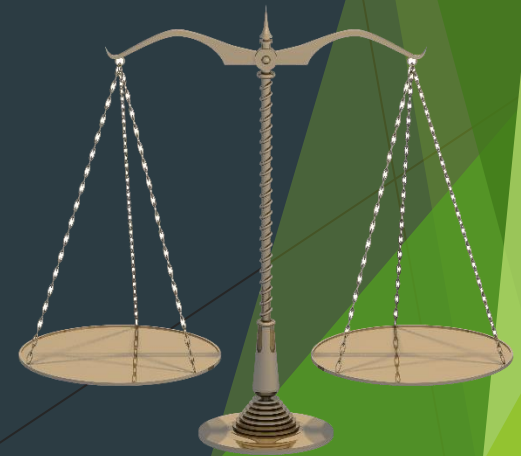
SAFETY IS NOT JUST PHYSICAL

Connections

- ▶ Friends who are not paid
- ▶ Real dates
- ▶ Consenting Relationships
- ▶ Family who are safe
- ▶ Access to phones and computers
- ▶ The ability to both succeed and fail in relationships
- ▶ The chance to repair and restore relationships

Empowerment

- ▶ Real choices - not fake ones
- ▶ Real opportunities for growth
- ▶ Ability to fail and try again
- ▶ Equitable approach to problem solving
- ▶ Not being a tourist in their lives or their community
- ▶ Genuinely meaningful daily activity
- ▶ A voice that is heard and rights that are real



Positive Identity

- ▶ Holding up a mirror of the best self to that person
- ▶ Pointing out and focusing on strengths
- ▶ Coaching positive experiences
- ▶ Helping people to feel that they make a difference
- ▶ Praise character not behavior



What
matters
most
is how
YOU
see
yourself !

“Ultimately happiness rests on how you establish a solid sense of self or being.”



Daisaku Ikeda

**Happiness
First!**

**“Flourish”
Martin
Seligman**

***Five levels of
Happiness:***

- 1. Pleasure**
- 2. Engagement**
- 3. Positive
Relationships**
- 4. Achievement**
- 5. Meaning**

A green rectangular sign with rounded corners and a white border, mounted on two wooden posts. The sign features the text "Here & Now" in a large, white, sans-serif font. The background is a bright blue sky with scattered white clouds.

Here & Now



HOPE
CHANGES
EVERYTHING.

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