



## Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention Program

Grief, An Epidemic within the Pandemic  
Empowering Children, Youth, & Families in Urban Communities to  
Work Through Their Grief & Trauma

April 26, 2022



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# Webinar Logistics

- Mute when not talking
- Turn off video if you experience any connection issues
- Type questions in the chat
- Time reserved for Question & Answer at the end
- Transcript & recording will be available post webinar

# **Grief, An Epidemic within the Pandemic**

**Empowering Children, Youth, &  
Families in Urban Communities to  
Work Through Their Grief & Trauma**

*Roberta's* **HOUSE**   
A Family Grief Support Center

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**OUR NEW  
HOME**

**928 E North Avenue, Baltimore, MD 21202**

# Objectives

## Define

**Define grief and trauma in urban communities, especially with children and youth exposed to poverty, violence, and death.**

## Examine

**Examine the different types of stress reactions in grief and trauma.**

## Identify

**Identify how children and youth experience grief/loss.**

## Explore

**Explore healthy adjustment and adaptation theories to support bereaved children and youth.**

## Discuss

**Discuss healthy coping strategies and ways to support bereaved children and youth.**

# Poverty Living

+ Families living in poverty often encounter multiple traumas over many years. Furthermore, they are **less likely than families in more affluent communities to have access to the resources** that may facilitate the successful negotiation of their traumatic experiences. Thus, many families and individuals have difficulty adapting.

+ Source: NCTSN Family Informed Treatment Center



# African American/ Black Disparities

Shorter life span than Caucasians

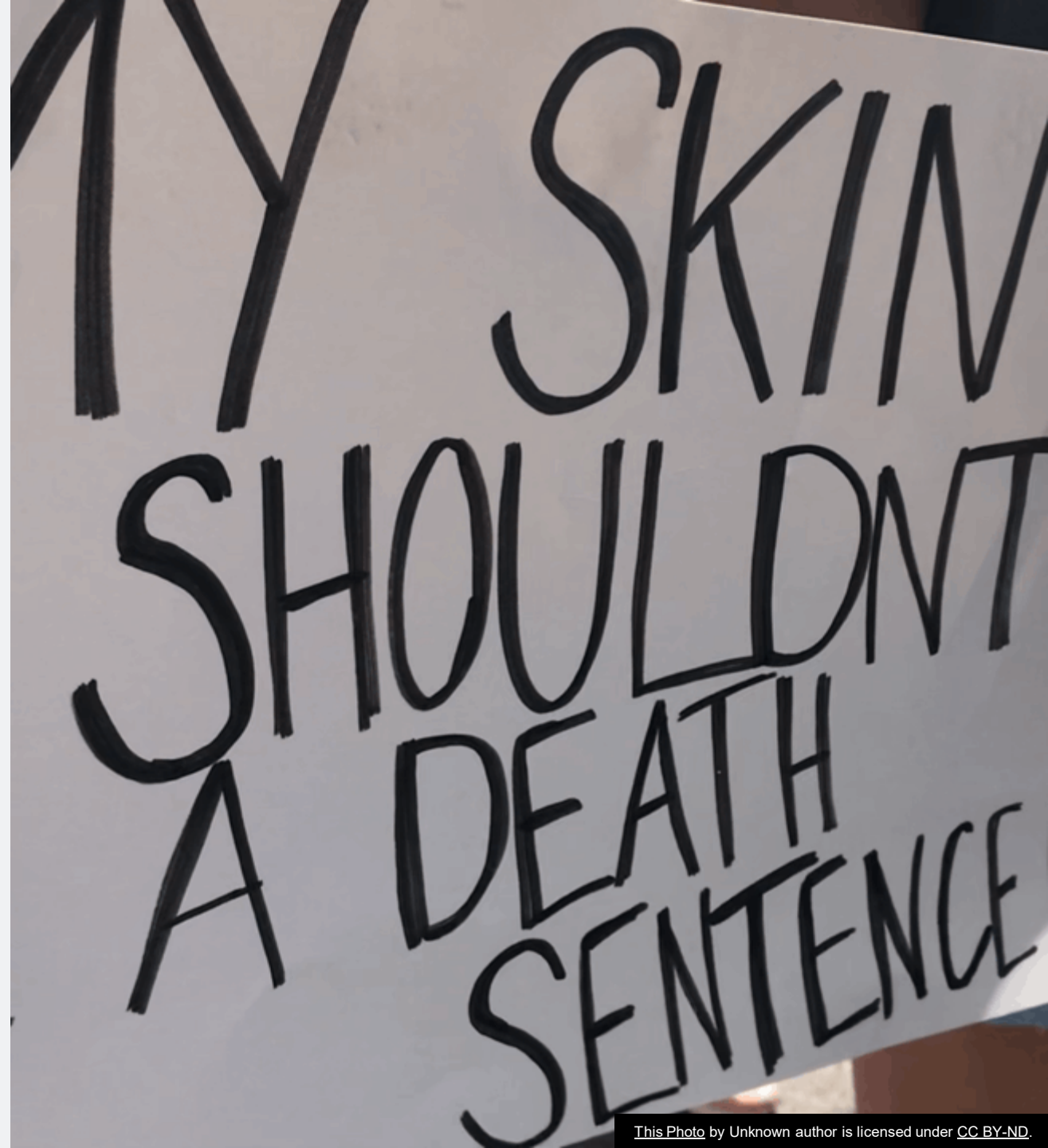
More likely to experience premature deaths

More likely to experience a death of a close family member or relative

Homicide rate 22.3 per/100,000 vs. Caucasian victims of homicide 2.3/100,000

Historically, the unemployment rate for Black/African Americans has been approximately twice the rate for Caucasians. That is the case today—6.0% for Black/African American workers and 3.1% for Caucasian workers

Black/African American children are three times as likely to live in poverty as Caucasian children







CHILDHOOD BEREAVEMENT ESTIMATION MODEL

**National 2022**

The Childhood Bereavement Estimation Model (CBEM)<sup>1</sup> approximates rates of U.S. children and youth who will experience the death of a parent or sibling by the time they reach adulthood. Results from the CBEM are updated annually using national, state, and regional vital statistics.<sup>2</sup> This report **uses data from 2016 to 2020**, the most recent years of data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.\*

## The Issue

Childhood bereavement is a critical issue and an increasingly important national priority. The death of a parent, sibling, or other important person in a child's life is one of the most frequently reported disruptive childhood experiences.<sup>3,4</sup> Understanding the number of children impacted by death is essential to help every bereaved child find hope and healing.

**1 in 13**



children in the U.S. will experience the death of a parent or sibling by age 18

**7.7% ~ 5.6M**

children will be bereaved by age 18

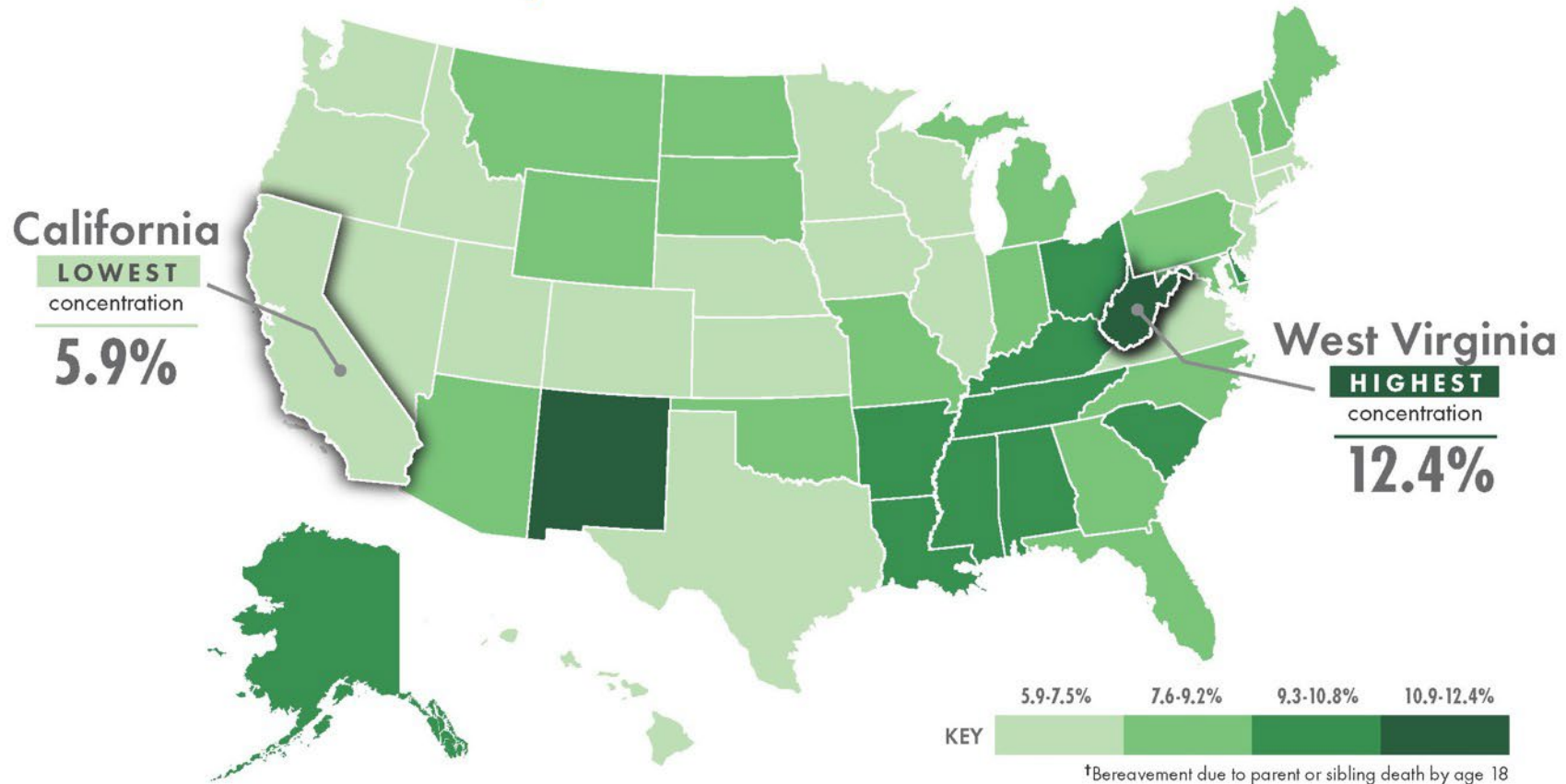


& MORE THAN  
**DOUBLES**

**13.9M**

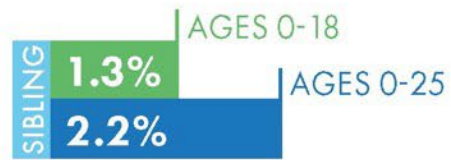
youth will be bereaved by age 25

## Childhood Bereavement by State†



## Death of a Sibling & Death of a Parent

The CBEM provides separate, independent estimates for youth who will experience the death of a parent or of a sibling.



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## Leading Causes of Death<sup>2</sup>

Percentages reflect the proportion of total deaths caused by each of the leading causes for youth and adults in the U.S. according to the CDC.

Youth Ages 0 - 24 <sup>‡</sup>		Adults Ages 25 - 60 <sup>‡</sup>
Accidents (27.4%)	#1	Cancer (21.0%)
Conditions Related to Birth (16.9%)	#2	Accidents (17.3%)
Suicide (10.5%)	#3	Heart Disease (17.2%)
Homicide (9.7%)	#4	Suicide (5.5%)
Birth Defects (8.9%)	#5	Liver Disease (4.1%)

## Why Did Childhood Bereavement Rates Increase?

The increase in *projected* bereavement due to the death of a parent or sibling from 7.3% to 7.7% for youth under 18 reflects differences in adult mortality (ages 27- 46) in 2020 compared to 2015<sup>§</sup>. There are stark differences in mortality rates for this age group contrasting 2015 and 2020 data for the specific death causes below.

Preliminary 2021 mortality data show similar direct and indirect effects of COVID-19, which will likely contribute to a continued rise in bereavement rates in next year's CBEM reports. The pandemic's impact on mortality will affect future changes in CBEM rates.

Cause of Death	2015 # of Adult Deaths	2020 # of Adult Deaths	Increase 2015 vs. 2020
All Causes	138,100	192,500	54,300 (39%)
Accidents <i>(includes overdose)</i>	37,500	62,100	24,600 (66%)
COVID-19	N/A	10,200	10,200
Homicide	7,000	10,600	3,600 (51%)
Heart Disease	17,500	19,800	2,300 (13%)
Suicide	14,000	15,400	1,400 (10%)
Diabetes	3,400	4,800	1,400 (41%)

<sup>§</sup>2021 CBEM results included mortality data from 2015 - 2019 while 2022 CBEM results include data from 2016 - 2020. The 2021 and 2022 CBEM National report results consider deaths among adults age 27-46, or adults most likely to have children 0 to 18 years old.

## Sources

1. Burns et al. (2020). *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 90(4), 391-405.
2. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics, CDC WONDER.
3. Nickerson et al. (2013). *Psychological Trauma: Theory, Research, Practice, and Policy*, 5(2), 119-127.

4. Pynoos et al. (2014). *Psychological Trauma: Theory, Research, Practice, and Policy*, 6(Suppl 1), S9-S17.

\*Please see the CBEM Technical Appendix for additional information.  
 ‡Age ranges for leading causes of death align with CBEM analyses for youth ages 0 to 25.

 <p>Judi's House JAG Institute For Grieving Children and Families</p>	<p>Judi's House/JAG Institute is a research-based nonprofit in Denver devoted solely to supporting grieving children and their families.</p>	 <p>NEW YORK LIFE FOUNDATION</p>	<p>Judi's House/JAG Institute partnered with the New York Life Foundation to create the Childhood Bereavement Estimation Model.</p>
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For more info about the CBEM and additional national, state, and local data, visit [judishouse.org/CBEM](http://judishouse.org/CBEM)

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# Children and Youth Experience Traumatic Deaths

- 1 in 5 children will experience the death of someone close to them by the age of 18.<sup>1</sup>
- 86%–92% of young people in drug and rehabilitation treatment have experienced the death of someone important.<sup>2</sup>
- In a poll of 1,000 high school juniors and seniors, 90% indicated they had experienced the death of a loved one.<sup>3</sup>



# Children and Youth's Trauma

- One out of every 20 children, age 15 and younger, will suffer the loss of one or both parents. These stats don't account for "parental figures" such as grandparents or other relatives who provide care.<sup>4</sup>
- 1.5 million children are living in a single parent household because of the death of one parent.<sup>5</sup>
- It is estimated that 73,000 children die every year in the U.S. Of those children, 83% have surviving siblings.<sup>6</sup>



# National Survey among Classroom Teachers on Students Loss of Parent/Guardian<sup>7</sup>

- Difficulty concentrating in class (observed by 87% of teachers)
- Withdrawal/disengagement and less class participation (observed by 82%)
- Absenteeism (observed by 72%)
- Decrease in quality of work (observed by 68%)
- Less reliability in turning in assignments (observed by 66%)
- 7 in 10 teachers (69%) currently have at least one student in their class(es) who has lost a parent, guardian, sibling, or close friend in the past year.

# Children, Coping With Loss, Are Pandemic's “Forgotten Grievors”

- + A bipartisan group led by two former governors is urging President Biden to help an estimated 200,000 children who have lost parents or caregivers.
- + From March 2020 to last April, over a million children worldwide [lost](#) a mother, father, grandparent, or another adult they relied on as a primary caregiver to [COVID-19](#).



# Children and youth live in toxic environments

Lack of functional secondary family systems/neglect

Family aggression/domestic violence

Community Violence

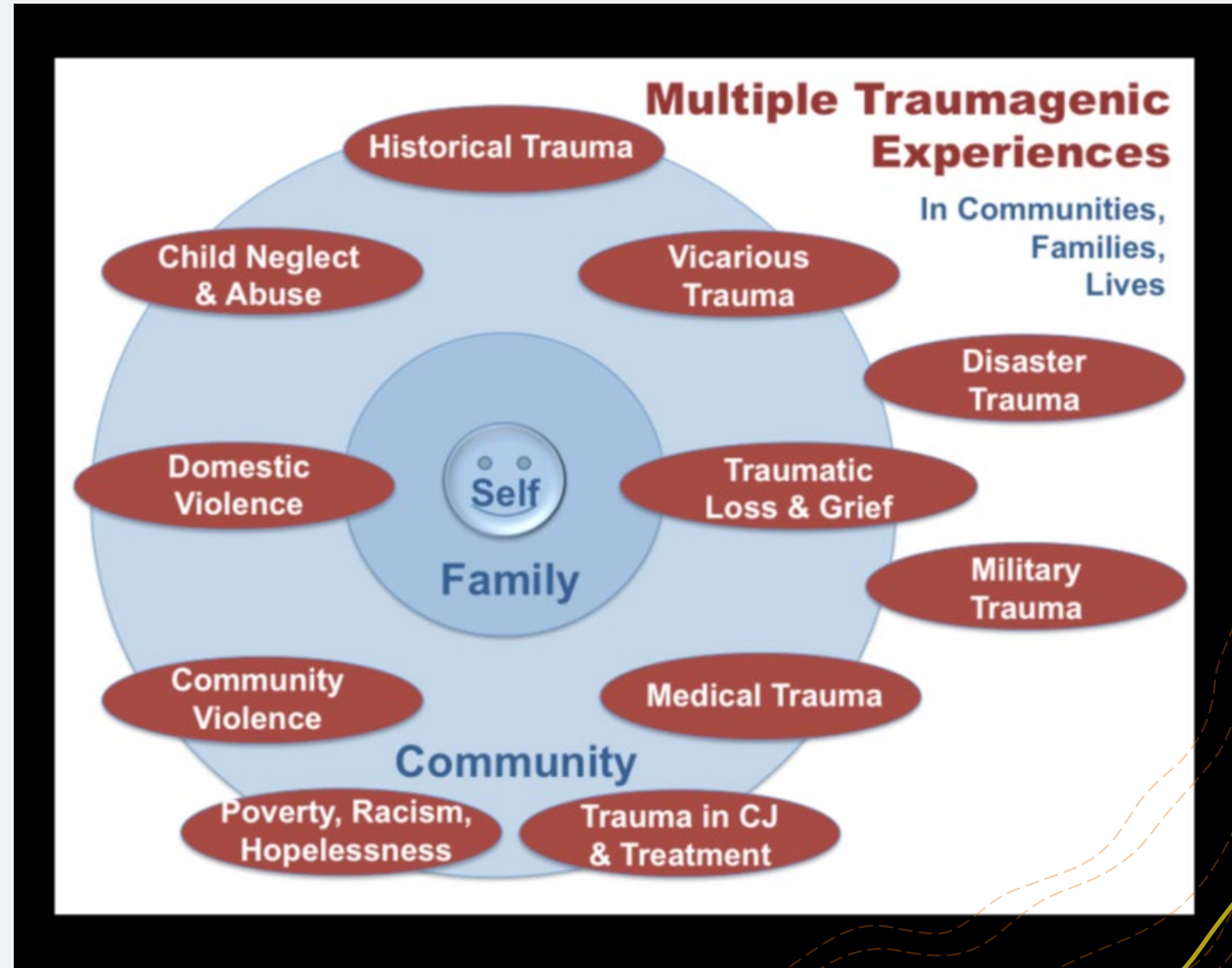
Prevalence of drugs and pervasiveness of dependency/abuse

Ineffectual educational institutions that kill hope in children

Chronic cynicism and distrust of parents, teachers, and other authority figures

# Kinds of Trauma

- Deaths, loss/traumatic grief
- Incarceration
- Physical abuse
- Crime
- Substance abuse
- School Violence
- Housing instability, living in substandard housing
- House fires
- Intergenerational history of trauma in families



# Other Kind of Traumas

- Witness or were involved in a traumatic event
- Arrived upon the scene of the event (Secondary Trauma)
- Had a “near miss” or were almost involved in the event
- Knew or know others who were killed, harmed or involved in some way
- Have a relationship with family or friends of victims (Vicarious Trauma)
- Have heard a lot about the event through the media or friends (COVID-19 deaths)
- Are reminded of other traumatic incidents in your life by an event



# **One Person's Trauma Can Impact the Entire Family and Community**

# Trauma Affects the Entire Family

**Individual (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder or Urban Traumatic Stress Disorder)**

**Adult Intimate Relationships:** difficulty with communication, expressing emotions

**Parent Child Relationships:** Compromised attachment and mistrust, parental withdrawal/worry, limited understanding of child's needs

**Parenting:** Decreased parental effectiveness, harsh discipline, neglect

**Sibling Relationships:** Become negative and conflictual, poor parental management of conflict and coping skills, no fairness

**Intergenerational Trauma:** adults with histories of childhood abuse and exposure to family violence have problems with emotional regulation, aggression, social competence, and impaired parenting that transmit to the next generation

**The Family as a Whole:** Impacted by chronic conditions of high stress and exposure to multiple traumas often experience chaotic, disorganized lifestyles

# Developmental Impact of Trauma

- + Trauma derails healthy development:
  - + Connection with healthy relationships
  - + Affect tolerance and regulation strategies
  - + Awareness that he/she has capacity to have impact on world





# **Triggers for Children Who Have Developmental Trauma**

Perception of lack of power or control

Unexpected change

Feeling threatened or attacked

Feeling vulnerable or frightened

Feeling shame

Feelings of deprivation or need

Intimacy and positive attention



# The Grief Epidemic



ROBERTA'S HOUSE 2022



# Definition of Grief

**Grief refers to the process of experiencing and working through the psychological, behavioral, social and physical reactions to the perception of loss.<sup>8</sup>**

Grief is the natural reaction to loss.

Grief is both a universal and a personal experience.

Grief is influenced by the nature of the loss.



# Grief Healing Theories

William Worden

Kubler Ross

Robert Neimeyer

Therese Rando

Kenneth Doka

Alan Wolfelt

# Healing



- To be able to integrate the grief or traumatic experience into self and learn to continue a changed life with fullness and meaning (A. Wolfelt, PhD).
- To restore to health or soundness; cure.
- To ease or relieve (emotional distress): To set right; repair: *heal the rift between us.*

# Resilience

+“The process of, the capacity for, or the outcome of successful adaptation despite challenging or threatening circumstances.”<sup>9</sup>



# The Six Reconciliation Needs of Mourning for Children

Alan Wolfelt, PhD

<b>Acknowledge</b>	Acknowledge the reality of the death.
<b>Move</b>	Move toward the pain of the loss while being nurtured physically, emotionally, and spiritually.
<b>Convert</b>	Convert the relationship with the person who has died from one of presence to one of memory.
<b>Develop</b>	Develop a new self-identity based on a life without the person who died.
<b>Relate</b>	Relate the experience of the death to a context of meaning.
<b>Experience</b>	Experience a continued supportive adult presence in future years.

# Normal Childhood Grief

- Feel very sad
- May have sleep problems
- Loss of appetite
- Decreased interest in family and friends
- Develop physical complaints regress
- Cling to parents
- Irritability, withdrawn
- Trouble concentrating
- Preoccupied with death
- Are trying to adapt to life



# Adolescents' Behavior with Grief

- Hide their feelings
- Feel embarrassed if someone in their family dies
- Fear being different.
- Have difficulty expressing sadness/hurt for fear of appearing weak
- Most likely to express anger and impulsive behavior
- Want to be in control and believe they are in control of their emotions
- Continue to have jocular view about death



# Childhood Traumatic Grief

- + Childhood traumatic grief is a condition that some children develop after the death of a close friend or family member.
- + Children with childhood traumatic grief experience the cause of that death as horrifying or terrifying, whether the death was sudden and unexpected or due to natural causes.





# The Role of the Caregiver

How well the child will adjust is determined by the functioning level of the caregiver

- +Learn the child's language
- +Recognize behaviors and triggers
- +Read the child's cues and respond in a way that helps them manage their emotions, cope with distressing situations, and make good decisions
- +Allow them to vent and express thoughts, feelings, & fears
- +Remember that safety and security are most important

An aerial photograph of a large, intricate maze made of dense, green, rounded hedges. The hedges are arranged in a complex, winding pattern, creating a labyrinthine structure. The maze is set in a garden with a dark, reflective surface, possibly a pond or a wet path, visible between the hedges. The overall scene is lush and green, with some small red flowers scattered throughout the hedges. A white rectangular text box is superimposed over the center of the image, containing the title "Complicated Grief" in a bold, black, serif font. In the bottom right corner, there is a thin, curved yellow line and some faint, dashed white lines in the top left corner.

# Complicated Grief

ROBERTA'S HOUSE 2002



# Complicated Grief

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**Accompanied by symptoms of separation, distress, and trauma**

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**The failure to accomplish one or more of the reconciliation tasks by Wolfelt**

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**Considering the amount of time since the death, there is some compromise, distortion, or failure to function**

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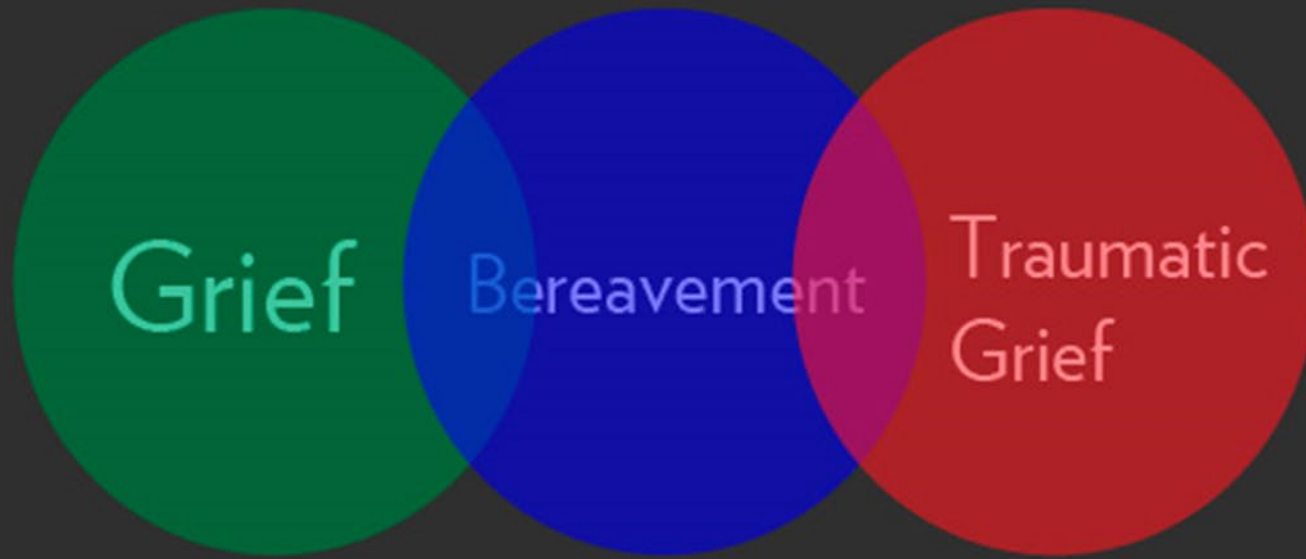
**Previous traumatic experiences complicate the mourning or grieving process**

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**The type of death can be a traumatic experience for the child**

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**Sudden death and traumatic bereavement always present with the mourner for a period of time with complicated mourning**



Major Depressive Episodes Major Depressive Disorder	Generalized Anxiety
Post Traumatic Stress Disorder Type I, II, III	Suicide
Substance Abuse Self Medication	Panic Disorder

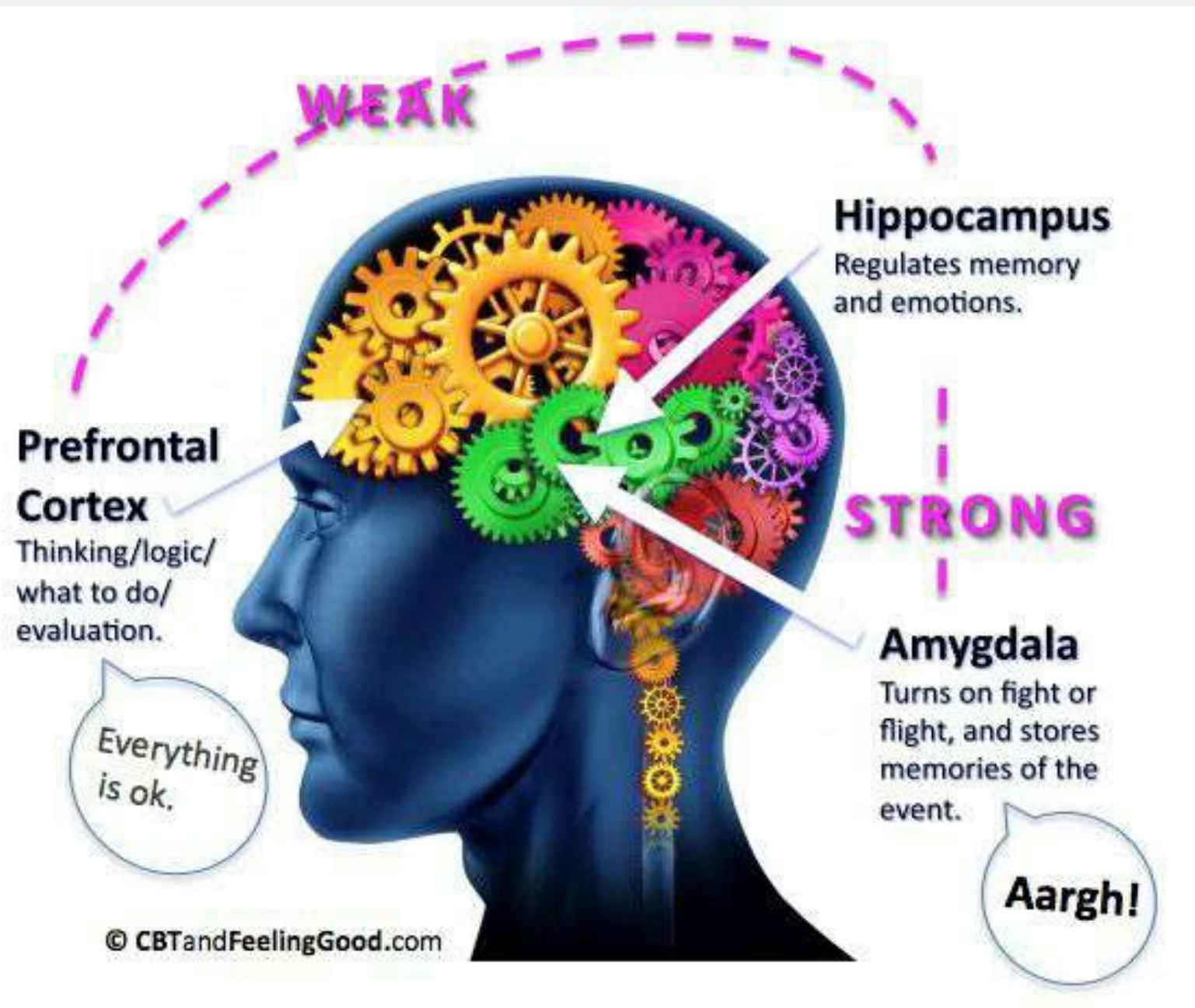
*Disorders have overlapping reactions and associated behaviors • TheAirspace.net*

# Childhood Development, Human Danger Response, and Adaptation

Signs and symptoms of a stress reaction may last a few days, weeks, or linger depending on severity

- **FIGHT** = Physiological arousal
  - Aggression, irritability/anger, trouble concentrating, hyperactivity or "silliness"
- **FLIGHT** = Withdrawal and escape
  - Social isolation, avoidance, sitting alone in class or recess, running away
- **FREEZE** = Stilling and constriction
  - Constricted emotional expression, stiling of behavior, overcompliance, and denial of needs





# Fight, Flight, or Freeze Response

## Adrenalin

Heart rate  
Blood pressure  
Blood to brain  
Respiratory rate  
Blood sugar  
Muscle tension  
Sensory



## Endorphin

Pain blocked  
Feeling of  
euphoria



Blood leaves the front of the brain and  
thinking is suppressed  
Digestive system and nonessential organs  
receive less blood flow

## Cortisol

Blood antibody  
agents  
Blood sugar  
Inflammation  
blocked



# Emotional Stress Responses

- Increased moodiness
- Withdrawal from others
- Difficulty concentrating
- Memory loss
- Increased restlessness
- Frenetic activity
- Difficulty making decisions
- Annoyed easily
- Frequent crying
- Considered suicide
- Fear of criticism
- Nightmares
- Hopeless outlook

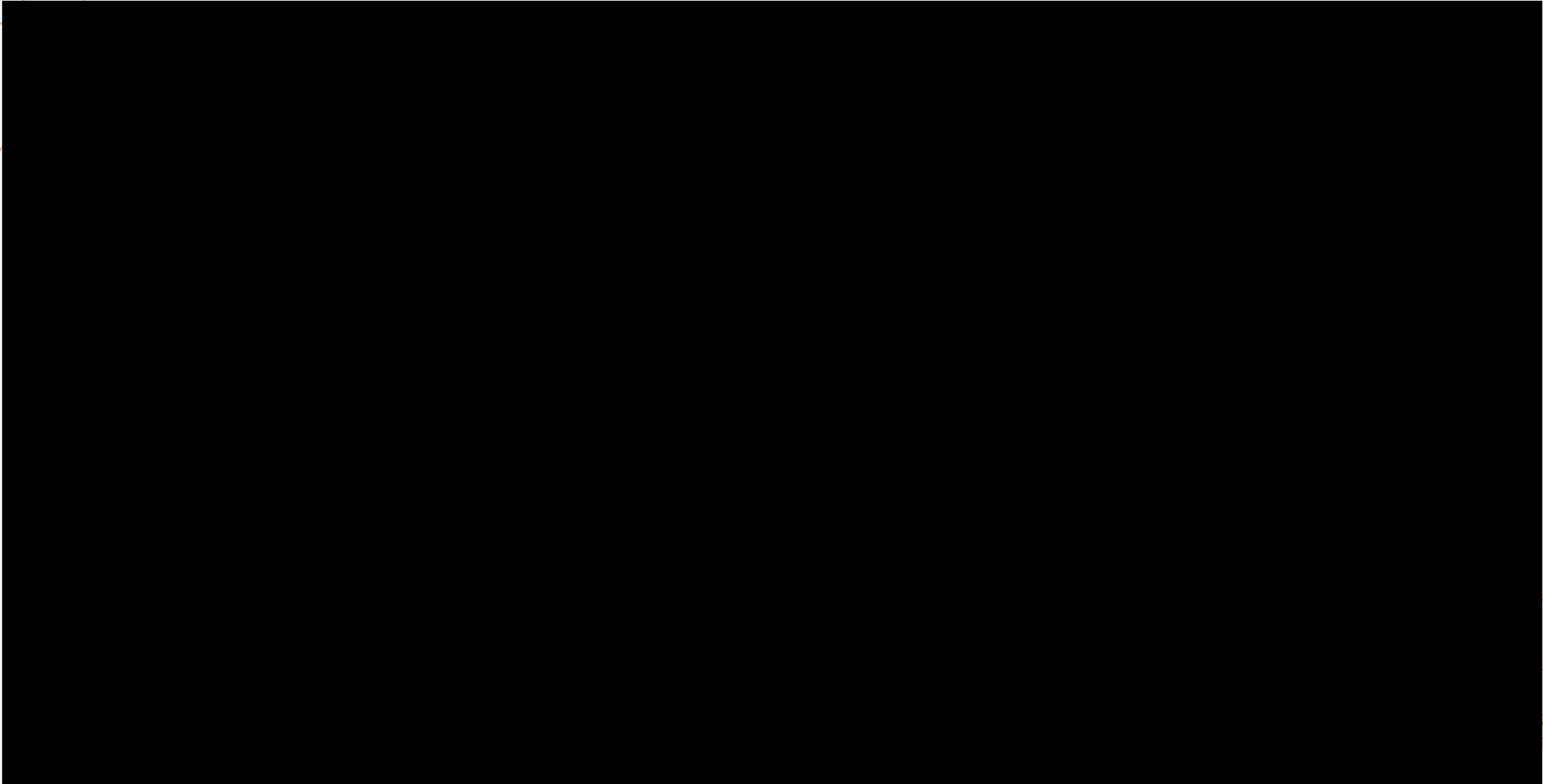


# General Adaptation Syndrome

1. Alarm Stage: “Fight or flight” response
2. Resistance Stage: The body returns to normal
3. Exhaustion Stage: Perceived danger continues and sickness occurs then possible death



# How to Teach the Brain



# Toxic Stress

Extensive research on the biology of stress now shows healthy development can be derailed by excessive or prolonged activation of stress response systems in the body and brain. Such **toxic stress** can have damaging effects on learning, behavior, and health across the lifespan.

Center on the Developing Child, Harvard University



# **When Peoples' Lives Suddenly And Drastically Change By Destructive Events**

- Experience is more than they can integrate
- Feelings of personal control, competence, security, and safety are all greatly diminished
- View environment and other people as unsafe
- On guard and ready for danger at all times
- Hypervigilance
- Social withdrawal and isolation
- Unlikely to seek assistance with their distress

# Maladaptive Behaviors due to Trauma

- Aggressive behavior
- Anxiety/Panic disorders
- Reoccurring nightmares
- Physical complaints
- Depression
- Sleep disturbance
- Emotional instability
- Isolation
- Startled reactions
- Anger
- Heightened arousal
- Flashbacks
- Passive aggressive behavior
- Substance abuse
- Eating disorders
- Impaired concentration
- Inability to feel emotion

# Elements that Make Any Loss Traumatic

1. Suddenness
2. Violence: Injury, mutilation and destruction
3. Human-caused event
4. Suffering (physical or emotional of loved one)
5. Unnaturalness
6. Preventability
7. Intent of the responsible agent(s)
8. Randomness
9. Multiple Losses
10. One's own personal encounter with major loss
11. Untimeliness
12. Loss of a child

# Post-Traumatic Growth



# Any Crisis Brings "A Choice"

## Danger

Self-destruction

Relationship breakdown

Substance abuse

Retaliation

Violence

Resignation

## Opportunity

Find

Find positive meaning in experience

Make

Make something good out of a bad experience

Discover

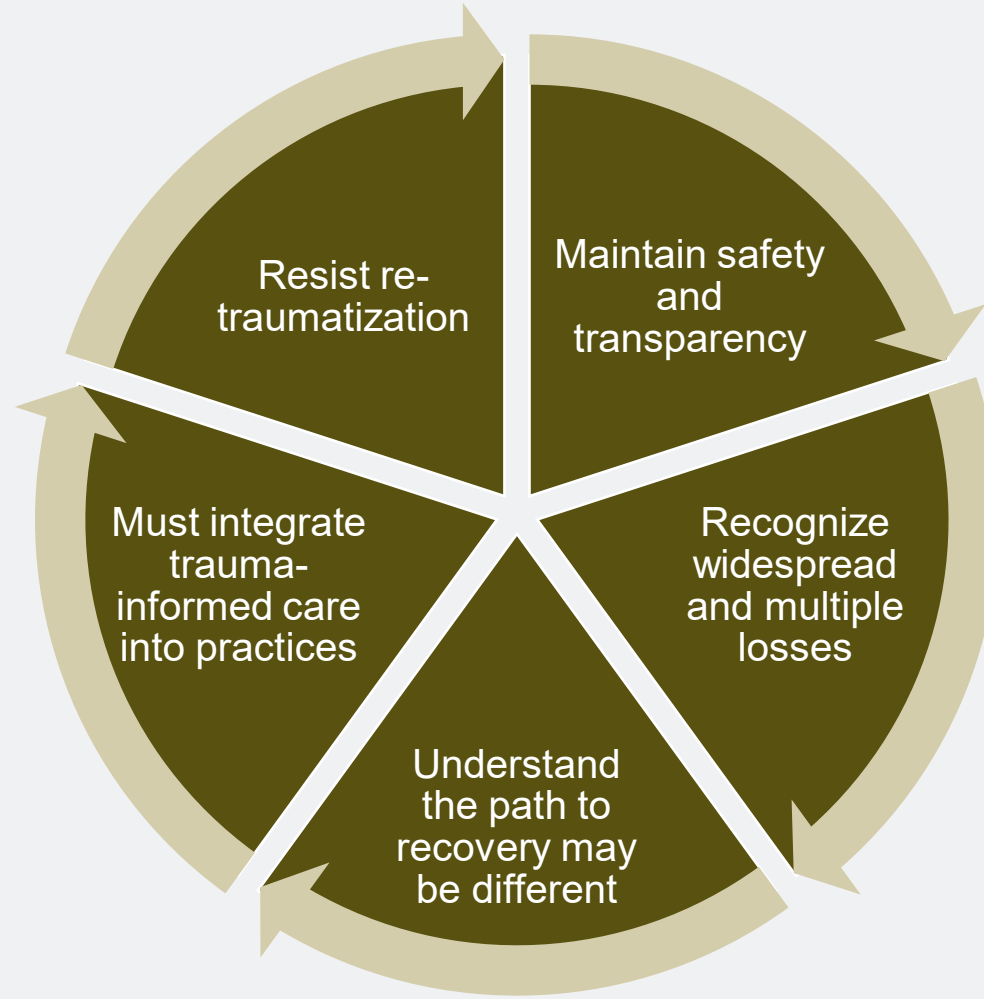
Discover purpose with self

Seek

Seek peace and consolation



# Trauma-Informed Care





# Our Central Question Must Change

"What's wrong with you?"

Instead...

"Who is this child/person, what have they experienced, and what do they believe is true?"

# Help Children and Youth with Their Grief

- Pay more attention to what is happening right now
- Understand the emotions going on inside them
- Notice all their thoughts, feelings, and behaviors without judgment
- Help them feel more in control to choose their behaviors and make their own decisions
- Ask questions to help provide words for feelings
- Reduce stress and anxiety
- Help identify healthy coping



# Meet Them Where They Are



Look beyond the behavior



Maintain confidentiality



Listen for safety concerns



Ask open-ended questions and listen to responses



Encourage to share thoughts and feelings

1. Avoid "Whys"
2. Avoid advice giving or shaming
3. Assist in problem solving
4. Allow for silence
5. Listen with an open heart
6. Ask who can they talk to?

# Recognize & Support

- + Offer physical support
- + Adhere to some kind of routine
- + May ask questions over and over
- + May regress, cling, lose potty training, baby talk
- + Death play is fine, helps to integrate the reality of the death
- + Be honest, don't tell half truths
- + Provide words for feelings: sad, angry, numb, etc.
- + Reassure the child is not responsible for death
- + Allow time
- + Offer constructive venting

# Useful Facilitation Tools

- + Using symbols, memory boxes, photos
- + Writing letters to special person
- + Keeping a journal
- + Drawing
- + Role playing to reduce fear or anxiety
- + Cognitive restructuring: thoughts influence feelings and change patterns
- + Directed imagery
- + Stress, mindfulness, yoga
- + Healthy eating
- + Exercise balanced with rest

# Be Careful of What You Say

## What Not to Say or Do

1. "I know how you feel."
2. "Don't cry."
3. "Everything happens for a reason."
4. "They are in a better place."
5. "At least they lived a full life."
6. "God wanted him/her to be with Him."
7. "I understand what you're going through."
8. "They brought this on themselves."
9. "Time heals, just give it some time."
10. "You're young enough to have another child."
11. "Aren't you over this yet? You should move on."
12. Talk about a worse situation than theirs.

## What to Say or Do

1. "I am so sorry for your loss."
2. "I wish I had the right words, just know I care."
3. "I don't know how you feel, but I am here to help in any way I can."
4. "You and your loved one will be in my thoughts and prayers."
5. "My favorite memory of your loved one is..."
6. "I am always just a phone call away."
7. Give a hug instead of saying something.
8. "We all need help at times like this, I am here for you."
9. "I am usually up early or late, if you need anything."
10. Saying nothing, just be with the person.

# Remember

- Seek to be taught
- You will never know the depth of the generational losses
- Recognize your boundaries
- Offer tools to take back into their communities
- Avoid judgment
- Mental illness remains a stigma

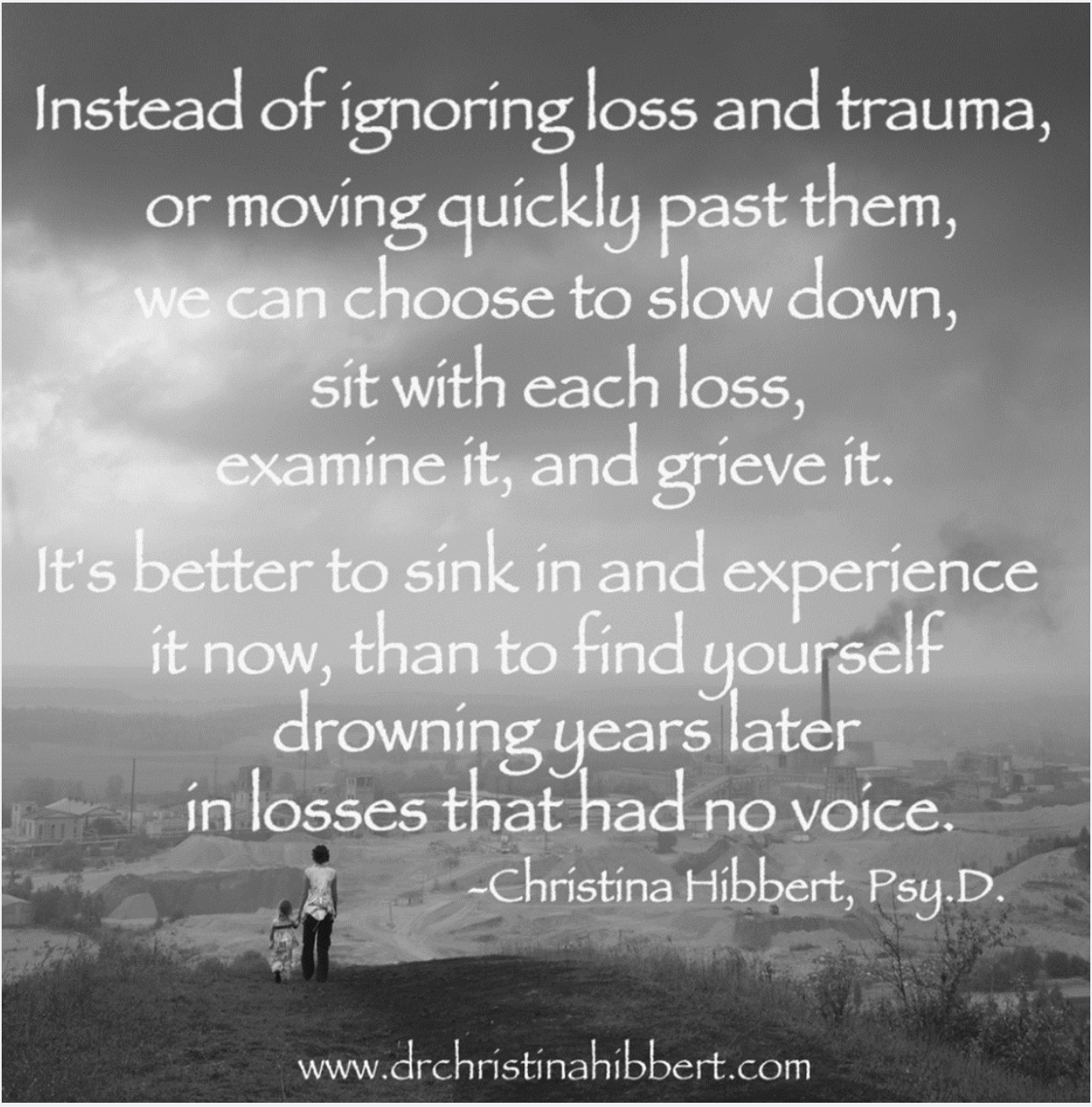




“To listen another’s soul  
into a condition of  
disclosure and discovery  
may be almost the greatest  
service any human being  
ever performs for another”

- Douglas Van Steere



A black and white photograph of a person and a child standing on a hill, looking out over a town with a factory in the background. The text is overlaid on the image.

Instead of ignoring loss and trauma,  
or moving quickly past them,  
we can choose to slow down,  
sit with each loss,  
examine it, and grieve it.

It's better to sink in and experience  
it now, than to find yourself  
drowning years later  
in losses that had no voice.

-Christina Hibbert, Psy.D.

[www.drchristinahibbert.com](http://www.drchristinahibbert.com)



### New Location

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# Questions



# Taking Action

- What is one action you will take based on what you learned?



**Thank you!**





# Let's Hear From You!

- Please complete a short survey about your experience with today's webinar.

<https://survey.alchemer.com/s3/6808102/Webinar-Feedback-Survey-Grief-and-Loss>

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