



Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention Program

Building on the Strengths of Young People: A Relationship-Focused, Trauma-Sensitive Approach

National Teen Pregnancy Prevention Month
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The Division of Adolescent Medicine
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Agenda

- Welcome and Introduction of Speaker
 - LeBretia White, APP Program Manager
- Presentation
 - Dr. Kenneth Ginsburg
- Questions and Answers

Objectives

1. Positive Youth Development 101
2. Resilience-Building Strategies 101
3. Trauma-Sensitive Practices 101
4. Integrating Development, Resilience, and Trauma-Sensitive Practice into Applied Youth-building Practice
5. Giving Youth Control Over Their Decisions
6. How We Approach Our Relationships with Youth: Reframing Adolescence



The Parable of the River

“Once upon a time there was a town built just beyond the bend of a beautiful river. One day, children were playing beside the river when they noticed three bodies in the water. They ran for help and the townsfolk quickly pulled the bodies out of the river.

One body was dead, so they buried her. One was ill, so they took him to the hospital and nursed him back to health. The third was healthy, so they placed her with a family who cared for her and took her to school.

From that day on, every day bodies came floating down the river, and every day, the people tended to them – taking the sick to the hospitals, placing the healthy with families, and burying the dead.

This went on for years. The townsfolk came to expect the bodies and developed elaborate systems for recovering and attending to them. Some were generous and a few gave up their jobs to do this full time. The town developed pride in its generosity and efficiency in body tending.

However, during all these years and despite the effort, nobody thought to go up river, beyond the bend that hid what was above them, and find out why those bodies came floating down the river.”

(Ronald Rolheiser, *The Holy Longing*. NY: Doubleday; 1999, pg. 168)



A Needed Course Correction

- An integrated model that includes all we have learned from
 - Positive Youth Development
 - Resilience-Building Strategies
 - Trauma-Sensitive Practices
- A model that acknowledges pain, but sees the best in people
- A model that recognizes structural racism and the undermining forces of low expectations, but that prevents a new label from being applied to already marginalized communities
- In sharp contrast, it must recognize the inherent strengths of individuals, communities, and cultures

The Journey



At the root of all models is the *primacy and power of human relationships*, both to build strong, successful youth and to heal those who have endured hardships

Human Connection

- Protecting Adolescents From Harm: Findings From the National Longitudinal Study on Adolescent Health
 - Resnick et al., 1997
 - <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/9293990>
- The Impact of Caring and Connectedness on Adolescent Health and Well-Being
 - Resnick, Harris, & Blum, 1993
 - <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/j.1440-1754.1993.tb02257.x> 

Positive Youth Development 101

How Do We Define Success for *ALL* Young People?

Problem Free . . .

. . . is NOT Fully Prepared!

(Karen Pittman)

We Matter...

more than the buildings or programs.



Young people come for the *content*, but the *context* is what heals them.

Adults' Roles in Supporting the Fundamental Questions of Adolescence

Who am I?

Am I normal?

How do I fit in?

“Children have never been very good at listening to their elders, but they have never failed to imitate them.”

– James Baldwin

(From Ameen Akbar, YouthBuild Philly)



Resilience-Building Strategies 101

Resilience

- The ability to overcome adversity
- The capacity to bounce back

Resilience Is a Mindset



The Bottom Line

- Young people will be more resilient if the important adults in their lives believe in them unconditionally and hold them to high expectations
- Young people live up or down to the expectations we set for them

Trauma-Sensitive Practices 101

Adverse Childhood Experiences



American Journal of Preventive Medicine

Volume 14, Issue 4, May 1998, Pages 245-258



Original Articles

Relationship of Childhood Abuse and Household Dysfunction to Many of the Leading Causes of Death in Adults: The Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) Study

Vincent J Felitti MD, FACP A , Robert F Anda MD, MS B, Dale Nordenberg MD C, David F Williamson MS, PhD B, Alison M Spitz MS, MPH B, Valerie Edwards BA B, Mary P Koss PhD D, James S Marks MD, MPH B

Adverse Childhood Experiences

- Emotional abuse
- Physical abuse
- Sexual abuse
- Neglect
- Exposure to substance abuse
- Exposure to mental illness
- Exposure to domestic violence
- Parental incarceration
- Divorce
- Abandonment

What's Missing?

Adverse Childhood Experiences of Low-Income Urban Youth

AUTHORS: Roy Wade, Jr, MD, PhD, MPH,^a Judy A. Shea, PhD,^b David Rubin, MD, MSCE,^{c,d} and Joanne Wood, MD, MSHP^{c,d}

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KEY WORDS

child abuse, children of impaired parents, domestic violence, nominal group technique, poverty, sexual abuse, spouse abuse, substance abuse, urban

ABBREVIATIONS

ACE—adverse childhood experience
FPL—federal poverty level

Dr Wade conceptualized and designed the study, coordinated



WHAT'S KNOWN ON THIS SUBJECT: Adverse childhood experiences have been shown to have long-term impacts on health and well-being. However, little work has been done to incorporate the voices of youth in understanding the range of adverse experiences that low-income urban children face.



WHAT THIS STUDY ADDS: Study participants cited a broad range of adverse experiences beyond those listed in the initial adverse childhood experience studies. Domains of adverse experiences included family relationships, community stressors, personal victimization, economic hardship, peer relationships, discrimination, school, health, and child welfare/juvenile justice systems.

Childhood Trauma Affects

- The body
- The brain
- Behavior
- Genetics

Unless



Key Principles of Trauma-Sensitive Practices

1. Knowing what is about you and what is not about you
2. Changing your lens from “What’s wrong with you?” to “What happened to you?”
3. Seeing people as they deserve to be seen, not based on labels they have received or behaviors they have displayed
4. Giving control back to people from whom control has been taken away

To enable all young people, *especially those who need us most*, to reach their full potential as productive, caring, responsible citizens

Youth who need us the most

- Are often those who push us away
- Are often those who push our buttons
- May raise uncomfortable feelings in us
- Often don't give us the feedback we crave

Nobody dared go near the tower.
A fearsome dragon sat on its top.

Until one day, a knight rode up.
"Do you need help to get down?"

"Please."

(Westin. Micro SF/F Stories)

Integrating Development, Resilience, and Trauma-Informed Practice into Applied Youth-building Practice

Seeking the “Sweet Spot” that Integrates Models

We know young people need *safe, secure, sustained relationships to thrive*. We even know that such relationships can allow them to heal from hard pasts. We must guide them so they are accountable to being their best selves. When we do so, they must know that our high expectations are rooted in our caring. Ideally *our efforts at accountability must enhance, rather than disrupt, our protective relationships*.

The Power of Relationships in Protecting from Adversity and in Healing

Influence on Brain Development

- Beyond the ACE score: Examining relationships between timing of developmental adversity, relational health and developmental outcomes in Children.
 - Hambrick et al.
 - <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0883941718302851> ↗
- Center on the Developing Child, Harvard University
 - <https://developingchild.harvard.edu/> ↗
- From Innovation to Impact at Scale: Lessons Learned from a Cluster of Research-Community Partnerships
 - Schindler, Fisher, and Shonkoff
 - <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5583016/>
- The Lifelong Effects of Early Childhood Adversity and Toxic Stress
 - Shonkoff et al.
 - <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/22201156/>
- Childhood Trauma, the Neurobiology of Adaptation, and “Use-dependent” Development of the Brain: How “States” Become “Traits”
 - Perry et al.
 - [https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1002/1097-0355\(199524\)16:4%3C271::AID-IMHJ2280160404%3E3.0.CO;2-B](https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1002/1097-0355(199524)16:4%3C271::AID-IMHJ2280160404%3E3.0.CO;2-B) ↗

What Do Supportive and Healing Professional Relationships Look Like?

Respect



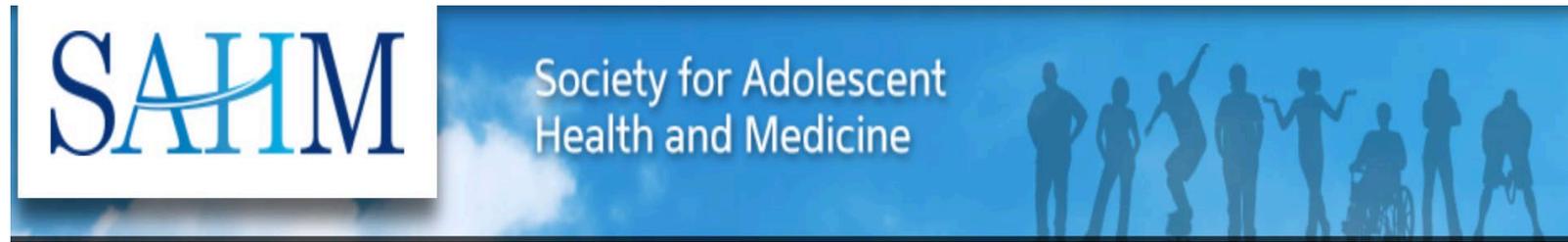
Safe...



(Leigh Wells/Ikon Images/Corbis)

Safe?

How do we make young people feel safe in the context of lives where they must navigate low expectations, structural barriers, and the “isms”?



Racism and Its Harmful Effects on Nondominant Racial–
Ethnic Youth and Youth-Serving Providers: A Call to Action
for Organizational Change

The Society for Adolescent Health and Medicine

Secure?

- Knowing that the person is not going anywhere
- Knowing that you are not reliant on their presence

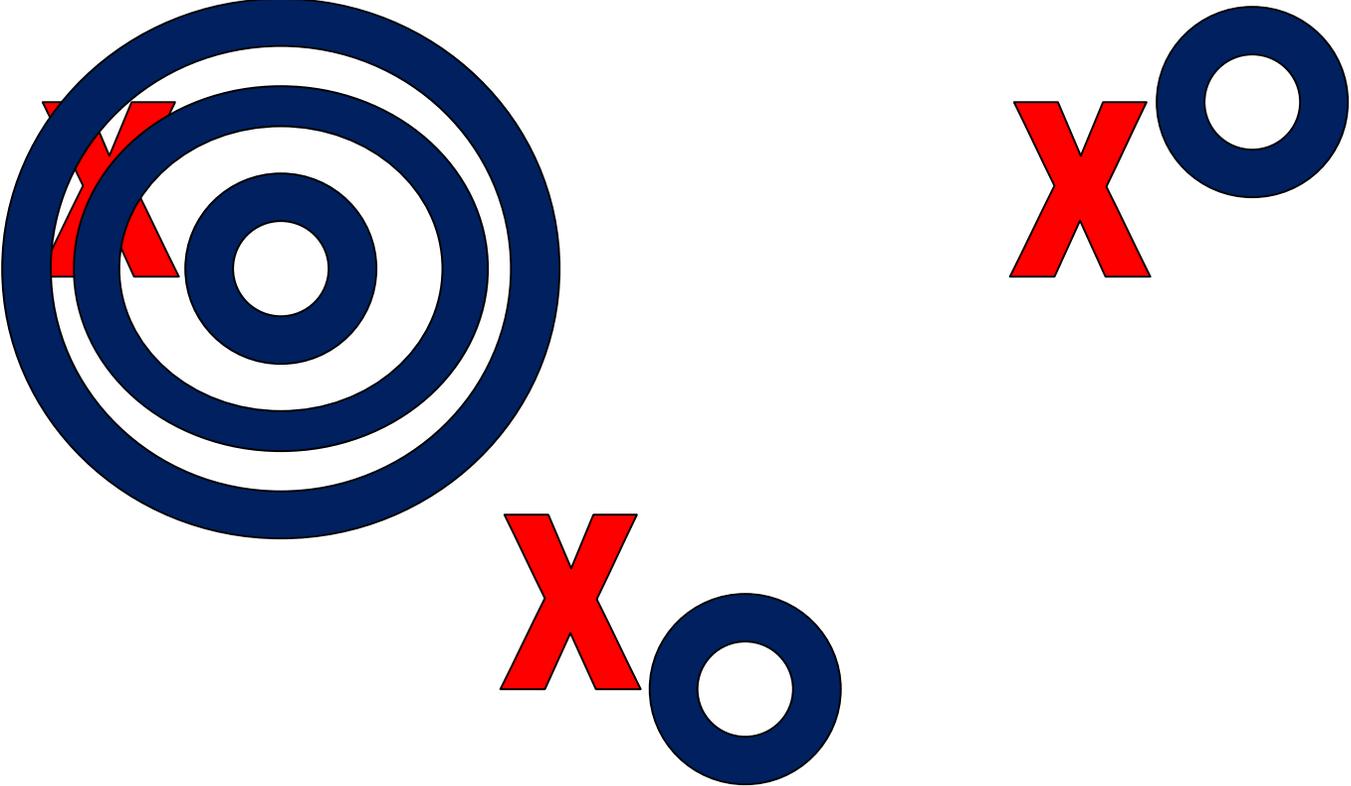
Behavioral Change

(Having a Young Person's Back)

Confidence gets it started . . .

**. . . and shame and demoralization prevent
action**

Finding Competence Building Confidence



“Love is seeing someone as they deserve to be seen, *as they really are*, not through the lens of the behaviors they have sometimes needed to display or the labels they may have received.”

-Dr. Kenneth Ginsburg

Secure and Sustained





The Power of Loving Relationships

- Brain-to-Brain Synchrony and Learning Outcomes Vary by Student-Teacher Dynamics: Evidence from a Real-world Classroom Electroencephalography Study
 - Bevilacqua et al., 2019
 - <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/29708820>
- We Feel, Therefore We Learn: The Relevance of Affective and Social Neuroscience to Education
 - Yang & Damasio, 2007
 - <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/pdf/10.1111/j.1751-228X.2007.00004.x> ↗

Sustained?

How do we support the greatest dosage of relationships?

We must acknowledge that the most critical relationships are community and family based. When we support them, we magnify impact.

Back to Respect . . .



Giving Youth Control Over Their Decisions

Learning Not to Undermine Competence

- Talking in a way young people understand
- Recognizing adolescent cognitive development
- No more lectures!!!
- Turn off **HOT** cognition

Communication for the Developing Brain

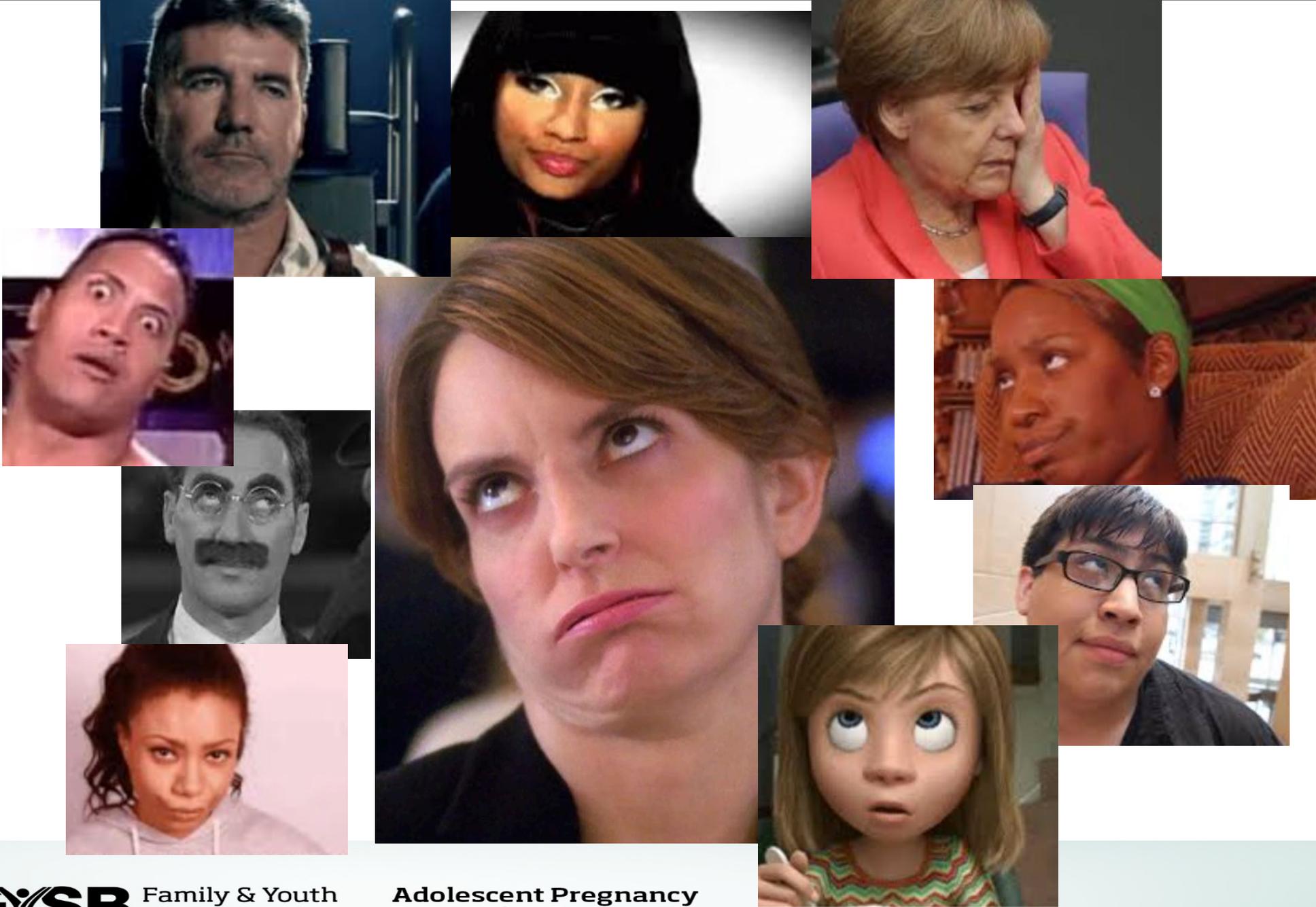
(Which incidentally is inside of a person)



Emotional Co-Regulation

- Child and Adolescent Emotion Regulation: The Role of Parental Emotion Regulation and Expression
 - Bariola, Gullone, & Hughes, 2011
 - <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10567-011-0092-5> ↗
- The Role of the Family Context in the Development of Emotion Regulation
 - Sheffield Morris et al., 2007
 - <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2743505/>
- Emotion Regulation, Coping, and Decision Making: Three Linked Skills for Preventing Externalizing Problems in Adolescence
 - Modecki, Zimmer-Gembeck, Guerra, 2017
 - <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/cdev.12734> ↗
- Review: Is Parent-Child Attachment a Correlate of Children’s Emotion Regulation and Coping?
 - Zimmer-Gembeck et al., 2015
 - <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/0165025415618276> ↗
- The Impact of Parenting on Emotion Regulation During Childhood and Adolescence
 - Morris et al., 2017
 - <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/cdep.12238> ↗

How We Approach Our Relationships with Youth: Reframing Adolescence



Flipping the Script

Shifting adolescence from a time to be survived to a time to be celebrated

Myths that Disempower Parental and Professional Engagement

- **Adolescents**
 - Think they are invincible
 - Are wired for risk
 - Don't care what parents think
 - Can't be reasoned with
 - Don't like adults

Flipping the Script from Brokenness to Empowerment

- **A different kind of credential:**
 - “Protector’s brain”
 - Brilliant amygdala



CENTER FOR PARENT & TEEN
COMMUNICATION
strengthening family connections

www.parentandteen.com/ 

How Will We Judge Our Success?

- Through easy measurements: pregnancy prevention, safe spaces, attendance, grades, and retention
- By proving adolescents are capable of healing
- **By helping youth experience that people can be worthy of trust**
- By helping young people know they are worthy of being loved
- By making it more likely that youth will be able to “pass along” our love to their children and then break the cycle of trauma and oppression

How Will We Judge Our Success?

- By making it so young people who have grown numb can again feel safe as they experience emotions
- By creating the kind of practice settings where we never forgets how to feel
- By creating communities that are *really* safer because we build our youth

How Will We Judge Our Success?

- By launching **ALL** young people into adulthood knowing they are OK . . . just the way they really are





Questions and Answers