



Understanding Toxic Stress and Trauma

September 15, 2022

Housekeeping



We encourage participation. Please use the chat function and/or reaction buttons for questions, thoughts, etc.



This session will be recorded and posted to the FPWA website.



You will receive a follow-up email with the PPT slides, resources, and a link to a short post-session survey. **The survey will also pop-up immediately after this session**



Please take care. This session includes information and discussion about trauma.



About FPWA

- **FPWA** is an **anti-poverty policy and advocacy organization** with a membership network of over 170 human services and faith-based organizations.
- We **promote the social and economic well-being** of individuals and communities by **advocating for just public policies** and **strengthening human services organizations**.

How we support nonprofits

- FPWA supports nonprofit and faith-based organizations, by **building their capacity** to use a **trauma-informed** and **people-centered approach** to service delivery, organizational effectiveness, and civic engagement.

Why the focus on being trauma-informed?

Nonprofit and faith-based organizations play an **integral role in supporting the needs** of individuals and communities.



Often, these **needs stem from** generational, interpersonal, systemic, and/or community **trauma**.



Ultimately, we believe that a trauma-informed approach will result in an **effective and impactful human services sector**, best positioned to serve their communities and **interrupt the cycle of trauma and poverty**.



To **support organizations in addressing both the root causes and manifestations of trauma**, FPWA offers a core set of trainings and resources, focused on trauma-informed practices.

POLL:

My work primarily focuses on.....

- a. Children's Services / Youth Development
- b. Workforce Development / Adult Education
- c. Faith-Based Initiatives or Programs
- d. Mental Health Services
- e. Legal Services
- f. Housing
- g. Other Community Support/Programs
- h. None of the above or "other"

POLL:

My knowledge of toxic stress and trauma is....

- a. **Advanced** (*I've been doing this work for years*)
- b. **Developing** (*I have some knowledge of the subject*)
- c. **Beginner** (*This is a new subject for me*)

Today's Objectives

Participants will understand...

- The definition and prevalence of trauma.
- The impact of trauma on a person's brain, body, and behavior.
- The importance of a trauma-informed approach within human services organizations.

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Stress vs. Trauma

We all experience stress. But for some, our experiences go beyond everyday stress and cross the line into toxic-stress and even trauma.

**Positive
Stress**

Brief increase in heart rate, mild elevations in stress hormone level.

**Tolerable
Stress**

Serious, temporary stress response, buffered by supportive relationships.

**Toxic
Stress**

Prolonged activation of the stress response system and the absence of protective relationships.

Trauma
encompasses feelings of
helplessness or terror.



It's the **frequency** and **duration** of these feelings that can have severe and long-lasting impact.

Definition of Trauma

“Individual trauma results from an **event, series of events, or set of circumstances** that **is experienced** by an individual **as physically or emotionally harmful** or life threatening and that has **lasting adverse effects** on the individual’s functioning and mental, physical, social, emotional, or spiritual well-being.”

- SAMSHA (*Substance Abuse and mental Health Services Administration*)

The Prevalence of Trauma

ACE = Adverse Childhood Experiences

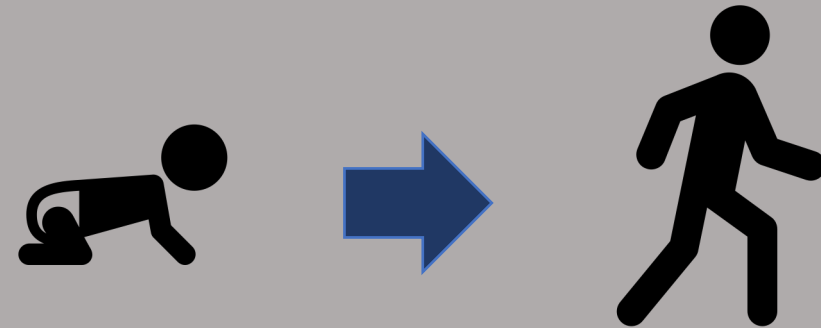
ACEs Study: A study of 10 adverse experiences within three categories:

**Household
Dysfunction**

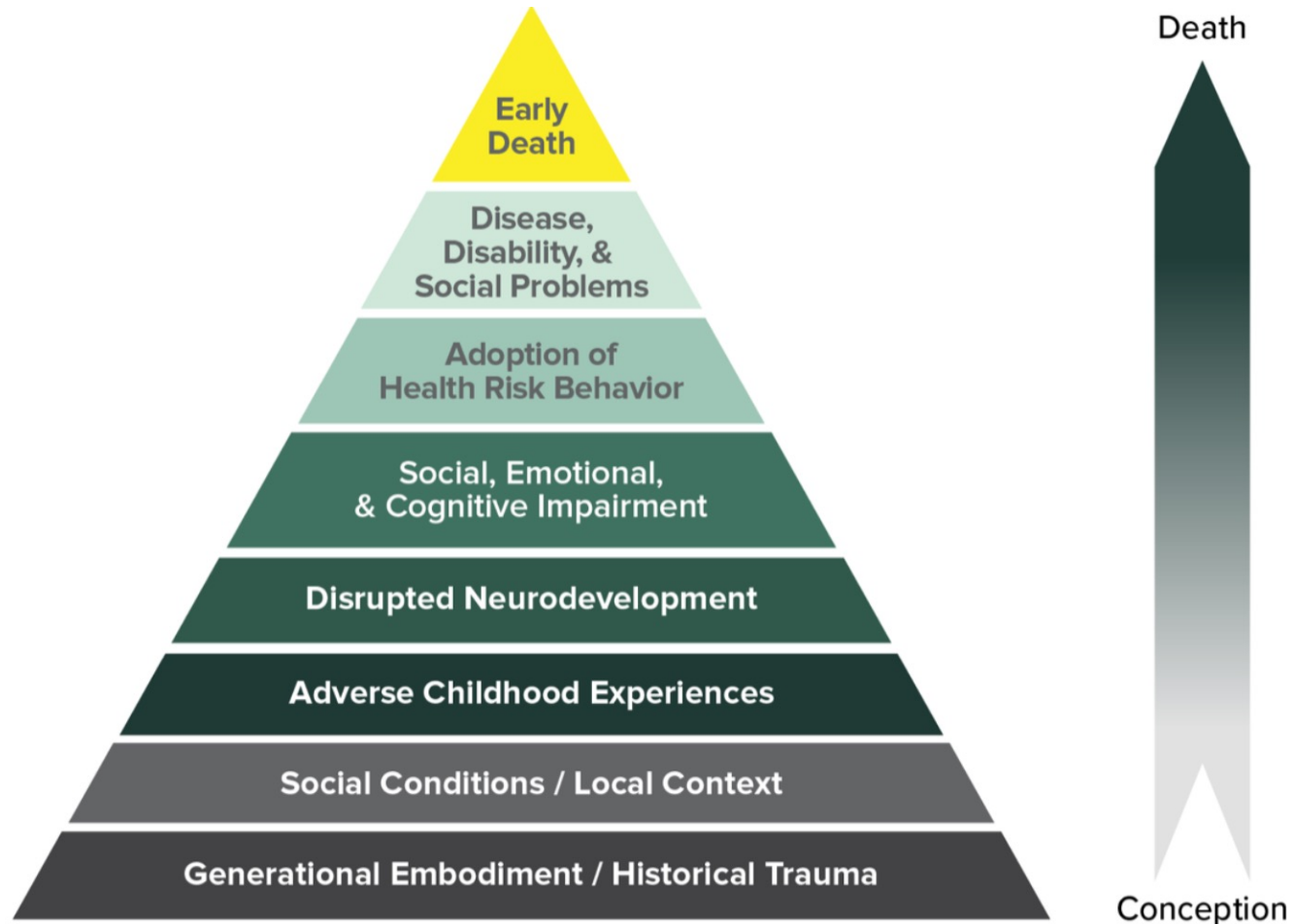
Abuse

Neglect

25 %



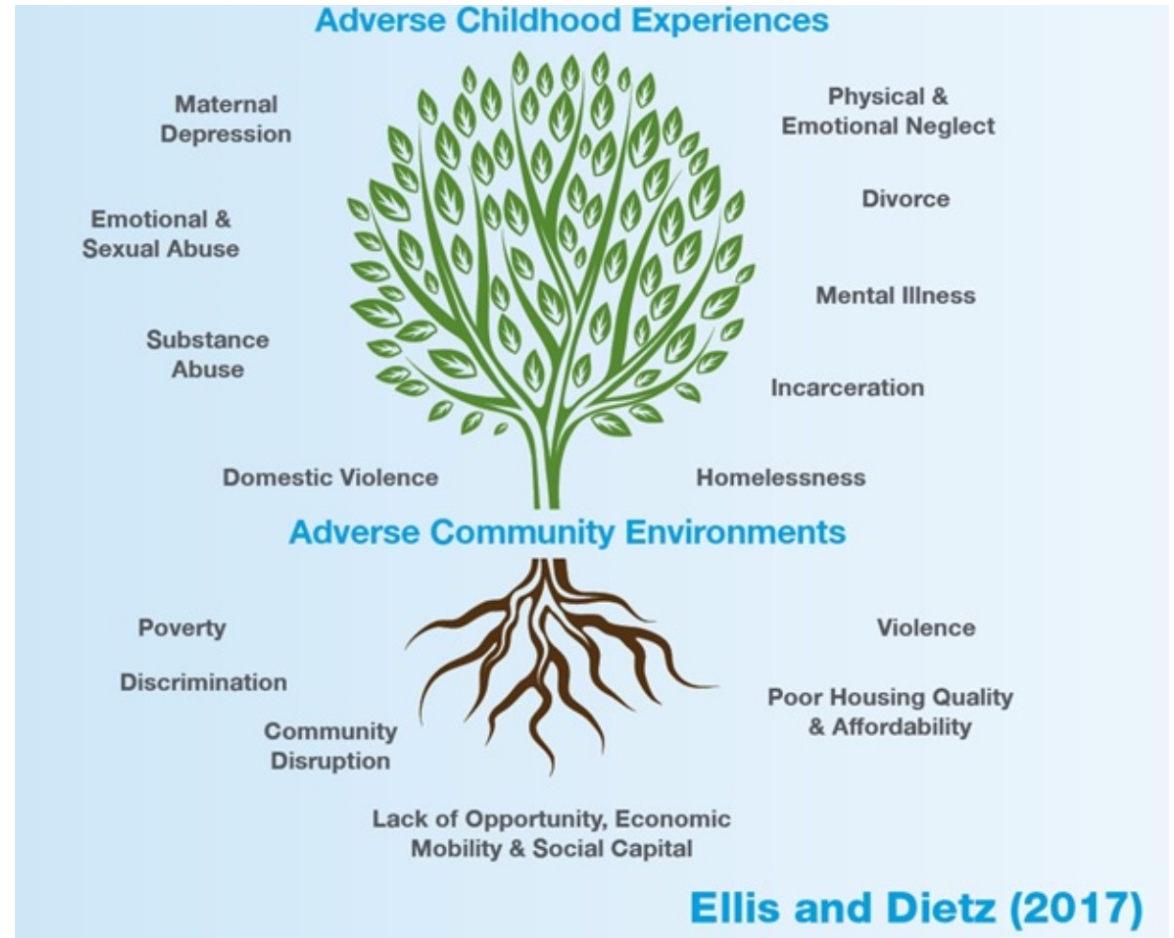
The ACE Pyramid



Mechanism by which Adverse Childhood Experiences Influence Health and Well-being Throughout the Lifespan

Traumatic and Oppressive Systems

- Racism
- Xenophobia
- Homophobia
- Unequal access to quality healthcare, housing, and education
- Employment discrimination and wage gaps
- Involvement with public systems such as criminal justice or foster-care



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POLL:

Individuals who have experienced toxic stress or trauma often “act-out” for “no reason.”

- a. True**
- b. False**

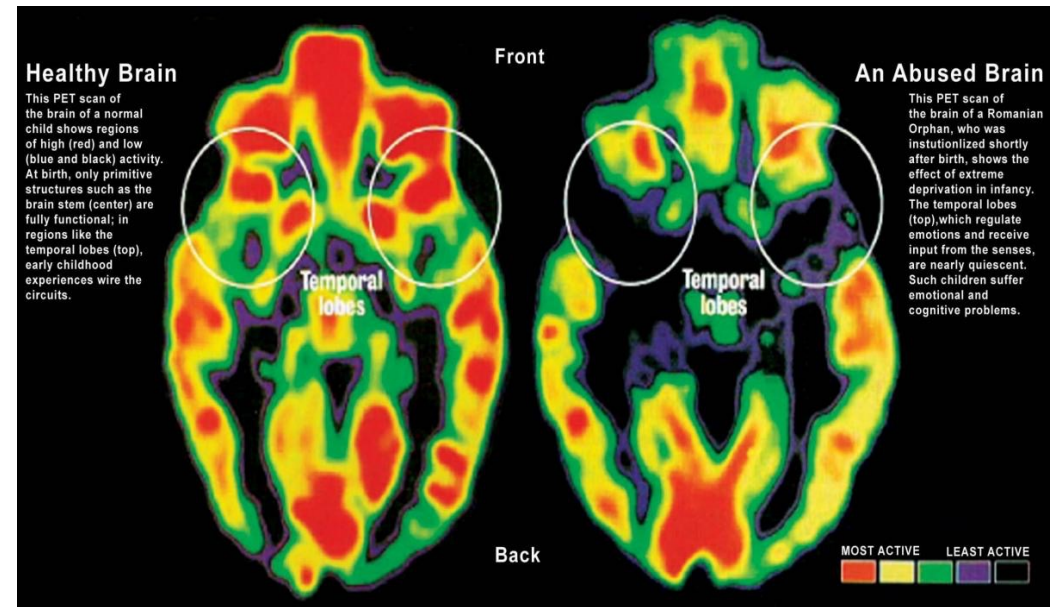
The Impact of Trauma on the Brain

*"Early experiences affect the development of **brain architecture**, which provides the foundation for all future learning, behavior, and health. Just as a weak foundation compromises the quality and strength of a house, adverse experiences early in life can impair brain architecture, with negative effects lasting into adulthood."*

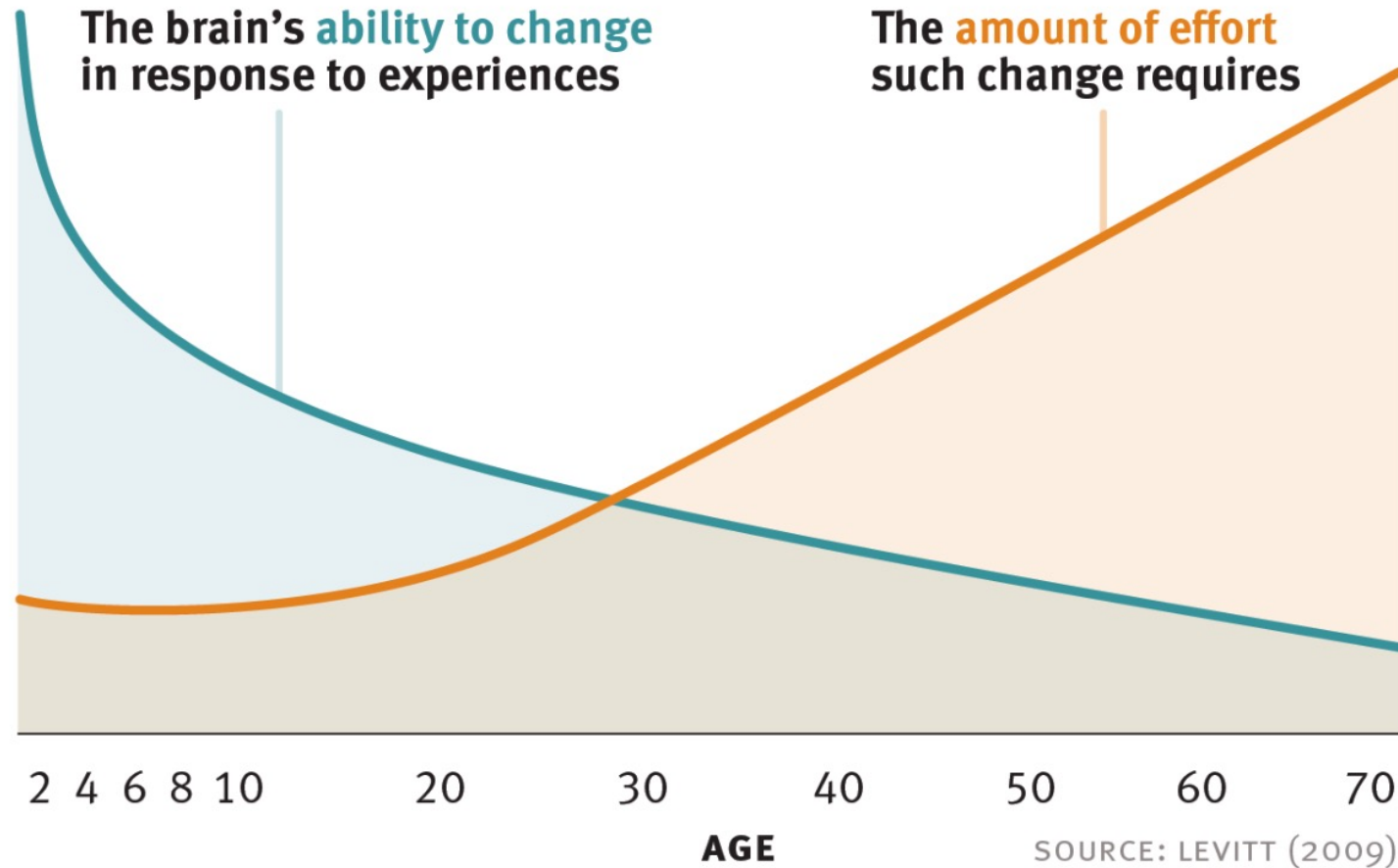
- Harvard University, Center on the Developing Child

Negative impact on...

- Brain development in early childhood
- Cognitive development and learning
- Social and emotional development
- Attachment and trust with others
- Physical health and development



The Impact of Trauma on the Brain



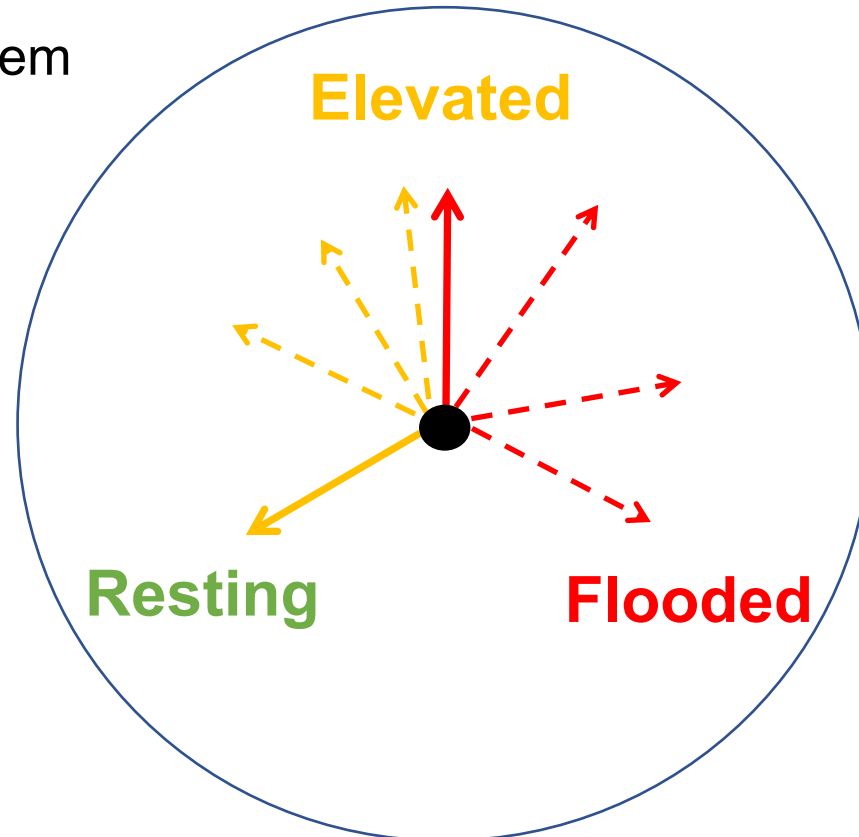
Center on the Developing Child  HARVARD UNIVERSITY

www.developingchild.harvard.edu

The Impact of Trauma on the Body

- Increased adrenaline (hormones)
- Faster heartbeat
- Higher blood pressure
- Sleep disturbances
- Weakened immune system

**Healthy
Nervous
System**



**Traumatized
Nervous
System**

The Impact of Trauma on Behavior

Understanding “Triggers”



Being asked questions

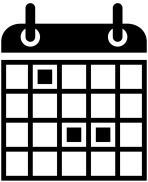
Loss of supportive relationships



Touch

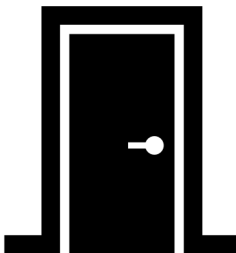
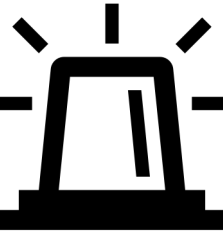


Punitive consequences



Change in schedule/plans

Sensory overload



Isolation

Helping or Harming?

“...public institutions and service systems that are intended to provide services and supports to individuals are often themselves trauma-inducing. The use of coercive practices, such as seclusion and restraints, in the behavioral health system; the abrupt removal of a child from an abusing family in the child welfare system; the use of invasive procedures in the medical system; the harsh disciplinary practices in educational/school systems; or intimidating practices in the criminal justice system **can be re-traumatizing for individuals who already enter these systems with significant histories of trauma.** These program or system practices and policies often interfere with achieving the desired outcomes in these systems.”

- SAMSHA, *“Concept of Trauma and Guidance for a Trauma-Informed Approach”* (pg. 2)

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POLL:

What is a Trauma-Informed approach?

- a. **Clinical therapy** to support people with PTSD, anxiety, and/or other symptoms related to trauma.
- b. **A method for diagnosing trauma** amongst your program participants.
- c. **An approach intended to help individuals** feel safe, welcome, and supported.

Therapy vs. Trauma-Informed Approach

Trauma Therapy



Licensed clinical mental health professional



Intervention occurs in a therapist/counselor's office, usually in 1:1 or small group sessions



Focus is on treating the symptoms of trauma (*e.g. depression, anxiety disorders, PTSD, etc.*)

Therapy vs. Trauma-Informed Approach

★ ★ ★ A Trauma-Informed approach involves... ★ ★

- ◆ **Thinking and responding differently** to a person's reactions and behaviors.
- ◆ Asking or considering "***what happened to you?***" rather than "*what is wrong with you?*"
- ◆ Moving **away from punitive consequences** and toward *next steps* that aim to build coping skills and promote healing.
- ◆ Practices that **can be used by anyone in any setting**. You do not need to be a mental-health professional.

Trauma-Responsiveness

A Trauma-Informed (or Trauma-Responsive) Organization is ...

- “ A program, organization, or system that [...]
- realizes the **widespread impact** of trauma;
 - understands **potential paths for recovery**;
 - **recognizes the signs and symptoms of trauma** in clients, families, staff, and others involved with the system; and
 - responds by fully **integrating knowledge about trauma into policies, procedures, and practices**, and seeks to actively resist re-traumatization. ”

How do we do that?

Trauma-Informed strategies, actions, and practices generally fall into two categories:

- **Creating a safe and supportive environment**
 - *Addresses the “flooded” nervous system and/or feelings of helplessness and hopelessness often associated with trauma.*
- **Fostering trusting and meaningful relationships**
 - *Addresses the feelings of isolation, blame, distrust, and shame that are often associated with trauma.*

Key Take-Aways:

- ✓ Being trauma-informed and trauma-responsive is primarily a **shift in mind frame and approach**.
It is not a “new program” or “new initiative.”
- ✓ Most of the strategies are **free of cost** and can be **effectively implemented by everyone** at your organization.
You do not need to be a licensed mental health professional.

Next Steps

Join us on **Sept. 29 at 10:00am** for our next Foundational Webinar:

“Trauma-Informed Service Delivery”

We will break it all down into specific strategies for being trauma-informed and provide suggestions for “what you can do” and “what you can say.”

The registration link will be in our follow-up email and is also available on our [website](#).

Thank You

Please remember to complete our [short post-training survey](#).