





# Trauma Resilience

# Vocabulary

- TRAUMA (& TOXIC STRESS)
- ADVERSE CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES (A.C.E.)
- RESILIENCE
- SOCIAL COHESION

# Dave Brown's (Auto) Bio

Dave Brown is a failure. He couldn't be loved by his biological mother so he was put up for adoption at birth. When adopted, he couldn't be a good boy and focus, so when he asked his parents why they didn't adopt another child he was told "one was enough." Growing up biracial in an African-American family, with roots in the deep south, he couldn't convince some in his family that he deserved to be loved equally. For too long he failed to develop a sense of self that allowed him to maintain healthy relationships with others. He was too white for many black women, and too black for many white women, so he failed to establish many enduring relationships. Finding someone who loved him, scars and all, he got engaged...then called off the wedding the month the invitations were to be mailed out. (Foolishly, his now wife, took him back, married him and parent their two girls and Dave). Still unfocused and looking for himself, he took 9 years to get his undergraduate degree in psychology. While obtaining his Advance Professional Certificate in Special Education Grades K-Adult and Middle School Social Studies, and completing all of the coursework and testing needed to get his Master's in Special Education, he hasn't taken that last step. He taught at and ran nonpublic schools for severely emotionally disabled students, yet still many students did not graduate and others were killed in the community. He ran a privately owned juvenile justice program but left after one year. The high recidivism rate persisted. He spent almost 9 years running and developing education and treatment programs at a residential treatment program for children. The children left with emotional band aids as treatment for chronic trauma, social-emotional, and mental health diseases. In 2015, he took an opportunity to feed his ego and demonstrate hubris by starting his own nonprofit with a mission to build safe, healthy communities. While he believes strengthening social infrastructure and cohesion is the key to building those safe, healthy and resilient communities, Rome continues to burn. The opioid epidemic surges. Poverty, violence, and poor health outcomes remain pervasive.

# What is trauma?

- ▶ **Definition (SAMHSA Experts 2012)** includes three key elements:
- ▶ *Individual trauma results from an **event, series of events,***
- ▶ *or set of circumstances that is **experienced by an individual** as overwhelming or life-changing*
- ▶ *and that has profound **effects on the individual's psychological** development or well-being, often involving a physiological, social, and/or spiritual impact.*

# What is trauma?

An event or experience that causes physical, emotional, psychological distress or harm.

An ongoing event that is perceived and experienced as a threat to one's safety, or to the stability of one's world.

*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.*

# How it can happen...

Growing up (prior to age 18) in a household with:

Recurrent Physical Abuse

Recurrent Emotional Abuse

Sexual Abuse

Emotional or Physical Neglect

# Causes of Toxic Stress

- ▶ Poverty
- ▶ Depression
- ▶ Homelessness
- ▶ Poor nutrition/Hunger
- ▶ Lack of Healthcare
- ▶ Chronic medical conditions
- ▶ Witness to Homicide
- ▶ Anti social peer groups
- ▶ Witness to accidental death
- ▶ Generational Patterns of Inadequate Parenting
- ▶ Learning Disabilities
- ▶ Running Away
- ▶ Transience

# Causes of Toxic Stress

**HISTORY OF SUICIDE**

**ANXIETY**

**UNEMPLOYMENT**

**BIRTH DEFECTS (FETAL ALCOHOL)**

**PHYSICAL DISABILITIES**

**DIVORCE**

**TEEN PREGNANCY**

**MULTIPLE CHANGES IN CAREGIVERS**

**LOSS OR ABSENCE OF PARENTS**

**GENDER IDENTIFICATION ISSUES**

**EXPLOITATION**

**LOSS OF PARENT: DEATH, ABANDONMENT,  
DIVORCE**

**EMOTIONAL ABUSE**

# How it can happen...

## Simple Trauma

- ▶ Car Accident
- ▶ House Fire
- ▶ Earthquake
- ▶ One time victim of a crime
- ▶ Physical Injury

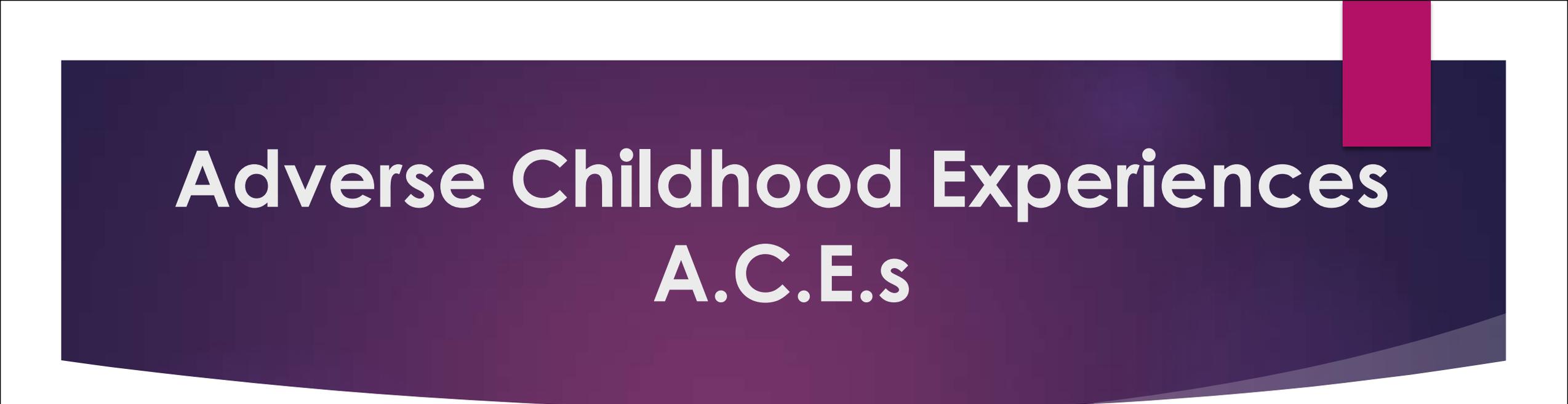
## Complex Trauma

- ▶ Ongoing Physical Abuse
- ▶ Emotional Abuse
- ▶ Domestic Abuse
- ▶ Untreated Mental Illness (Impacts parenting)
- ▶ Sexual Abuse
- ▶ Placement Disruptions

# Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE)

A study by Drs. Felitti and Anda to better understand the relationship of health risk behavior and disease in adulthood to the breadth of exposure to childhood emotional, physical, or sexual abuse.

**Am J Prev Med 1998; 14(4)**



# Adverse Childhood Experiences

## A.C.E.s

The CDC-Kaiser Permanente Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) Study is one of the largest investigations of childhood abuse and neglect and later-life health and well-being.

The original ACE Study was conducted at Kaiser Permanente from 1995 to 1997 with two waves of data collection. Over 17,000 Health Maintenance Organization members from Southern California receiving physical exams completed confidential surveys regarding their childhood experiences and current health status and behaviors.

# Adverse Childhood Experiences

## Of the surveyed, 17,000:

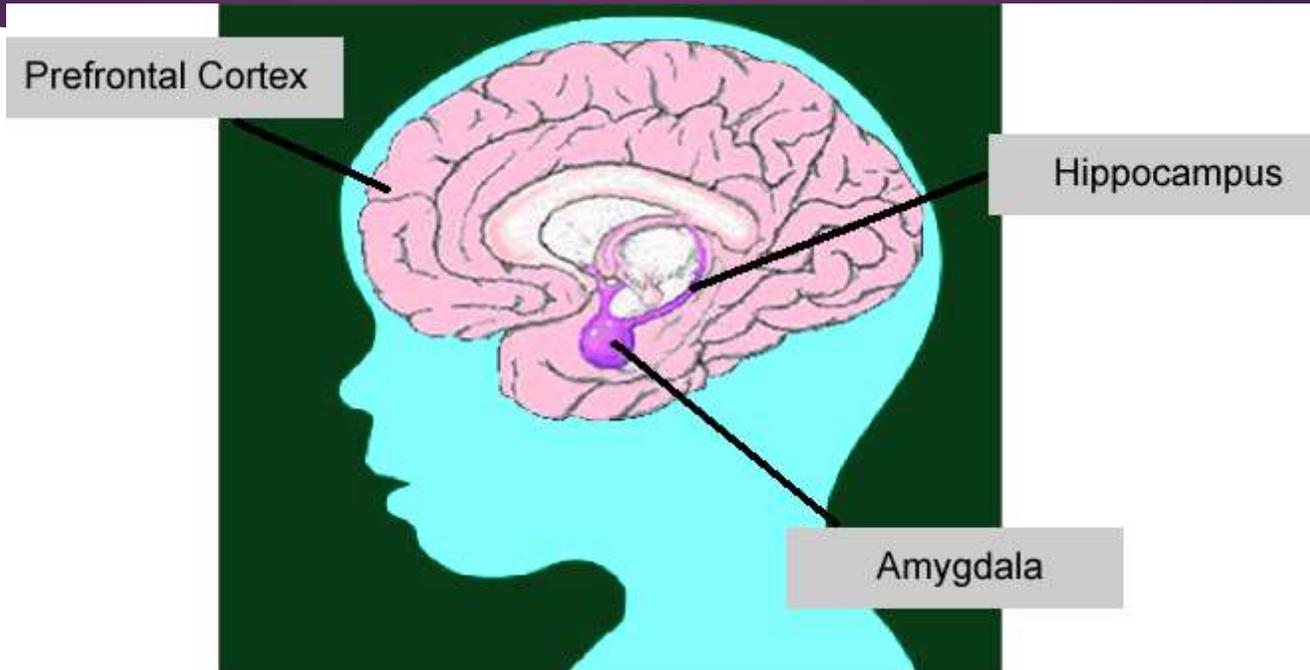
- ▶ Persons who had experienced four or more categories of childhood exposure, compared to those who had experienced none, had 4 – 12 fold increased health risks for alcoholism, drug abuse, depression, and suicide attempts
- ▶ A strong relationship was found between exposure to abuse during childhood and multiple risk factors later in life

Am J Prev Med 1998; 14(4)

# The Impact....



# Imbalance in Brain Development



Graphic Courtesy of ECMHC..ORG

# Consequences of Trauma

- ▶ Trauma shapes a child's basic beliefs about identity, worldview, and spirituality
- ▶ *Symptoms are adaptations*
- ▶ A person often gets stuck in a vicious loop of re-experiencing events and keeps them from being able to move forward in their lives
- ▶ Using a trauma framework, the effects of trauma can be addressed and a person can go on to lead a "normal" life

# Children impacted by trauma may experience physical and emotional distress

## Physical symptoms like headaches and stomachaches

- Poor control of emotions
- Inconsistent academic performance
- Unpredictable and/or impulsive behavior
- Over or under-reacting to bells, physical contact, doors slamming, sirens, lighting, sudden movements
  - Intense reactions to reminders of their traumatic event:
    - Thinking others are violating their personal space, i.e., “What are you looking at?”
      - Blowing up when being corrected or told what to do by an authority figure
        - Fighting when criticized or teased by others
          - Resisting transition and/or change

# Trauma Social-Behavioral Responses

- ▶ Reactivity and Impulsivity (externalizing behaviors); reacting impulsively to a perceived threat.
- ▶ Aggression: verbal and/or physical
- ▶ Defiance: refusing to follow directions or complete tasks.
- ▶ Withdrawal: reluctance to engage, spacing out, not participating.
- ▶ Perfectionism: having unrealistic expectations; afraid to disappoint; long-term anxiety.

# Social-Behavioral Response cont....

## Toxic Content

- ▶ Impulsive
- ▶ Hyper Vigilant
- ▶ Hyper Reactive
- ▶ Hard to shift Gears
- ▶ *Withdrawn*
- ▶ *Emotionally Detached*
- ▶ *Numb*

## Protective Content

- ▶ Laid Back
- ▶ Relationship Orientated
- ▶ Reflective
- ▶ Able to shift Focus
- ▶ Can seize Opportunities
- ▶ Can follow the process over seeking power

# Social-Behavioral Response cont....

- ▶ Hyperarousal: Constantly observing the situation for signs of danger.
- ▶ Trigger/Re-experiencing the event: Feeling as though the trauma is still happening physically/emotionally.
- ▶ Automatic physiological response: Fight, Flight, or Freeze.
- ▶ Avoidance: Avoiding anything that the person associated with the trauma. EX. shut down response in academic environments

# Trauma and Relationships

Relationships with helper professionals (teachers, counselors, social workers etc):

- ▶ May be distrustful of adults
- ▶ Show an inability to attach
- ▶ Child may try to gain a sense of control and challenge authority (THE TEST).
- ▶ The child can learn to feel safe when relationships are predictable and non-threatening.

# How some cope...

“A male child with an ACE score of 6 has a 4600% increase in likelihood of later becoming an IV drug user when compared to a male child with an ACE score of 0. Might heroin be used for the relief of profound anguish dating back to childhood experiences? Might it be the best coping device that an individual can find?”

*(Felitti et al, 1998)*

**THE KIDS WHO NEED  
THE MOST LOVE  
WILL ASK FOR IT IN  
THE MOST UNLOVING  
OF WAYS.**



www.love.org.uk



# Behavior is a Form of Communication

WE ARE ALL TRANSLATORS

# Effects of Trauma...

## Physical Impact of Trauma on Health

### How childhood trauma affects health across a lifetime

Childhood trauma isn't something you just get over as you grow up. Pediatrician Nadine Burke Harris explains that the repeated stress of abuse, neglect and parents struggling with mental health or substance abuse issues has real, tangible effects on the development of the brain. This unfolds across a lifetime, to the point where those who've experienced high levels of trauma are at triple the risk for heart disease and lung cancer. An impassioned plea for pediatric medicine to confront the prevention and treatment of trauma, head-on.

## **Emotional Trauma and Attachment**

### The Still Face Baby Experiment

In 1975, Edward Tronick and colleagues first presented the "Still Face Experiment" to colleagues at the biennial meeting of the [Society for Research in Child Development](#). He described a phenomenon in which an infant, after three minutes of "interaction" with a non-responsive expressionless mother, "rapidly sobers and grows wary. He makes repeated attempts to get the interaction into its usual reciprocal pattern. When these attempts fail, the infant withdraws [and] orients his face and body away from his mother with a withdrawn, hopeless facial expression." It remains one of the most replicated findings in developmental psychology.

# Trauma & Toxic Stress can impact school performance

- Lower GPS
- Higher rate of school absences
  - Increased drop-out
- More suspensions and expulsions
  - Decreased reading ability

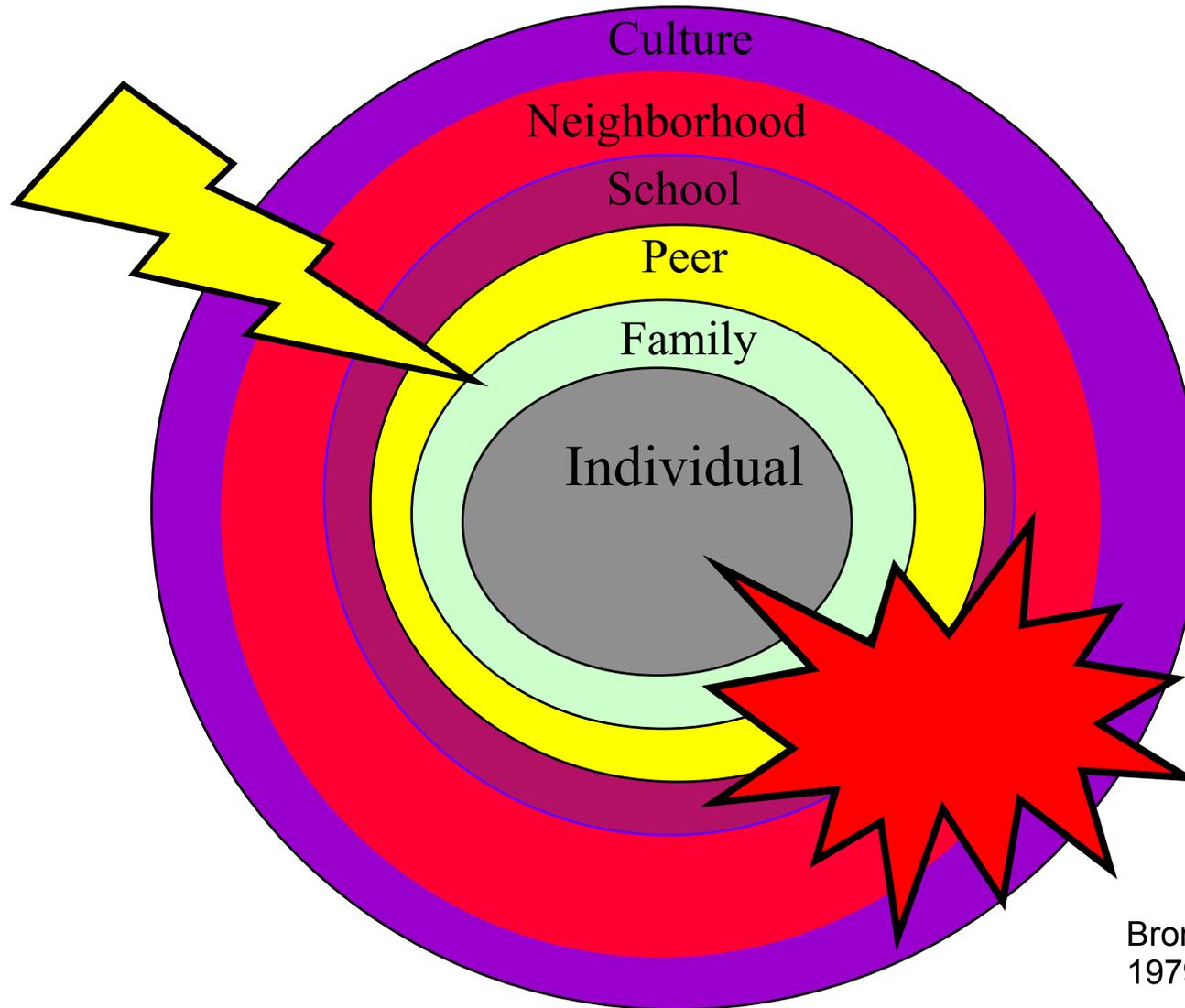
# Trauma can impair learning

Single exposure to traumatic events may cause jumpiness, intrusive thoughts, interrupted sleep and nightmares, anger and moodiness, and/or social withdrawal—any of which can interfere with concentration and memory.

Chronic exposure to traumatic events, especially during a child's early years, can:

- Adversely affect attention, memory, and cognition
- Reduce a child's ability to focus, organize, and process information
  - Interfere with effective problem solving and/or planning
  - Result in overwhelming feelings of frustration and anxiety

# Social-Ecological Model



Bronfenbrenner,  
1979

# Social connectedness





# Resilience

WHY TRAUMA ONLY MATTERS IF WE ARE TRULY ALONE!

# Attachment

A positive emotional bond between an individual and an attachment figure (caregiver)

Attachment aids in survival and gives a sense of security.

# Tribe: On Homecoming & Belonging When Trauma Builds Resilience & Health

“When people are actively engaged in a cause their lives have more purpose...with a resulting improvement in mental health,” Lyons wrote in the Journal of Psychosomatic Research in 1979.

- ▶ Blitzkreig
- ▶ 9/11
- ▶ Post-Civil War Reconstruction

# What is your resilience score?

- ▶ Please circle the most accurate answer under each statement:
- ▶ 1. I believe that my mother loved me when I was little.  
▶ Definitely true Probably true Not sure Probably Not True Definitely Not True
- ▶ 2. I believe that my father loved me when I was little.  
▶ Definitely true Probably true Not sure Probably Not True Definitely Not True
- ▶ 3. When I was little, other people helped my mother and father take care of me and they seemed to love me.  
▶ Definitely true Probably true Not sure Probably Not True Definitely Not True
- ▶ 4. I've heard that when I was an infant someone in my family enjoyed playing with me, and I enjoyed it, too.  
▶ Definitely true Probably true Not sure Probably Not True Definitely Not True
- ▶ 5. When I was a child, there were relatives in my family who made me feel better if I was sad or worried.  
▶ Definitely true Probably true Not sure Probably Not True Definitely Not True
- ▶ 6. When I was a child, neighbors or my friends' parents seemed to like me.  
▶ Definitely true Probably true Not sure Probably Not True Definitely Not True
- ▶ 7. When I was a child, teachers, coaches, youth leaders or ministers were there to help me.  
▶ Definitely true Probably true Not sure Probably Not True Definitely Not True
- ▶ 8. Someone in my family cared about how I was doing in school.

# What is your resilience score?

- ▶ Definitely true Probably true Not sure Probably Not True Definitely Not True
- ▶ 9. My family, neighbors and friends talked often about making our lives better.  
Definitely true Probably true Not sure Probably Not True Definitely Not True
- ▶ 10. We had rules in our house and were expected to keep them.  
Definitely true Probably true Not sure Probably Not True Definitely Not True
- ▶ 11. When I felt really bad, I could almost always find someone I trusted to talk to.  
Definitely true Probably true Not sure Probably Not True Definitely Not True
- ▶ 12. As a youth, people noticed that I was capable and could get things done.  
Definitely true Probably true Not sure Probably Not True Definitely Not True
- ▶ 13. I was independent and a go-getter.  
Definitely true Probably true Not sure Probably Not True Definitely Not True
- ▶ 14. I believed that life is what you make it.  
Definitely true Probably true Not sure Probably Not True Definitely Not True
- ▶ How many of these 14 protective factors did I have as a child and youth? (How many of the 14 were circled "Definitely True" or "Probably True"?) \_\_\_\_\_
- ▶ Of these circled, how many are still true for me? \_\_\_\_\_

# Empathy

- ▶ The skill of understanding a person's feelings and perspectives without judging, criticizing or blaming
  - ▶ This does not mean that a worker agrees with or endorses that perspective.
  - ▶ It means that when the helper can support a person while accepting him/her as they are, power struggles and defenses are minimized, and people feel freer to change

# Compassion Fatigue

Is the emotional exhaustion that comes from “living” an individuals stresses, struggles, and fears day in and day out.



Behavior is a form of communication

# High Expectations with Support:

- ▶ With clear and set expectations the student has a goal to aim for that is predictable.
- ▶ When the child meets the expectation, they develop a positive sense of accomplishment and positive sense of self.
- ▶ Children develop independent skills
- ▶ Giving children support “a boost” is appropriate.
- ▶ Too much support does not allow growth.

# Children succeed with teachers/staff who:

- ▶ Who understand the importance of being Authoritative
- ▶ Who can manage their own behavior and emotions (not get tipped over)
- ▶ Who can manage and tolerate children's behavior
- ▶ Who can provide acceptance
- ▶ Who know the difference between being authoritative and authoritarian
- ▶ Have an adequate support system
- ▶ Who have a clear sense of their own identity and how they facilitate the safe structure of a classroom for everybody

# Concrete Practices That Work:

- ▶ Predictability in the Classroom and school environment
- ▶ Have Expectations and Help Students meet them (Resilience Building)
- ▶ Clear Directives / Precise Words to minimize questioning
- ▶ Neutral Tone of Voice and Directives (antennas are up)
- ▶ Neutral Expression on face (again, antennas are up)
- ▶ Don't Over Direct / Make a Directive and Step Away / Hold the Line
- ▶ Strength Based Approach – Directives that set up success

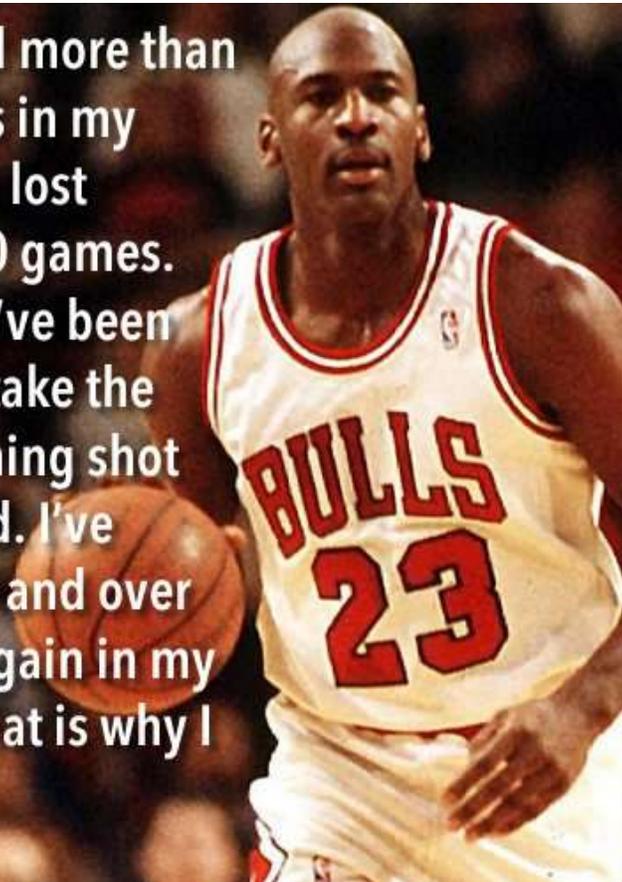
# What can I do...

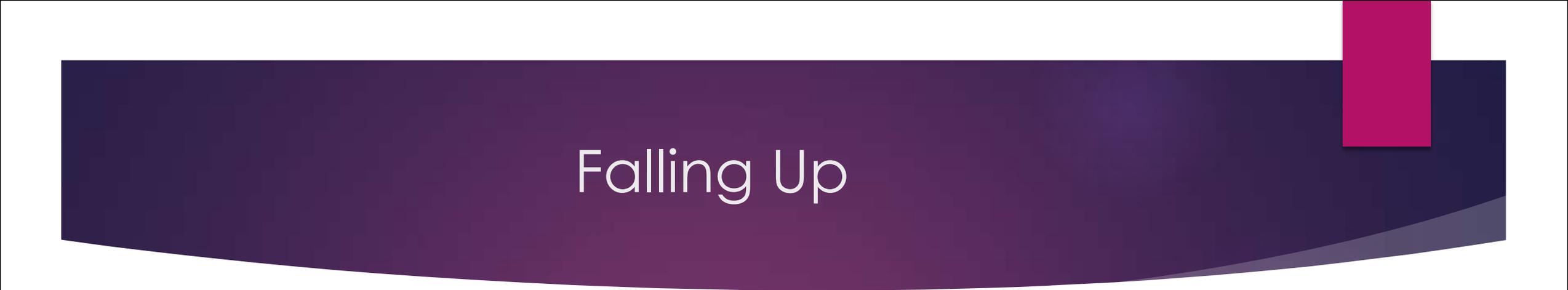
- ▶ Ask the right question?
- ▶ Ask students “What do I need to know about you today that I didn’t know about you yesterday?”
- ▶ Ask students for help understanding what they are thinking and feeling? “Help me understand...?”
- ▶ Reinforce typical prosocial behaviors on a individualized social-developmental level
- ▶ Make it safe for a youth to fail! Make it safe for them to fail, get up and try again.
- ▶ Empower a child by asking “What did you do to change the world today?” (I could not choose the world into which I was born, but I can choose how I leave the world from which I will one day pass.”

Successful students are created by making it safe for them to fail, rise and try again.

I've missed more than 9000 shots in my career. I've lost almost 300 games. 26 times, I've been trusted to take the game winning shot and missed. I've failed over and over and over again in my life. And that is why I succeed.

Michael Jordan





# Falling Up

**To ensure a child's success we  
must make it safe for them to fail,  
rise up and try again.**



I should not dare to be so sad

1197

I should not dare to be so sad  
So many Years again—  
A Load is first impossible  
When we have put it down—

The Superhuman then withdraws  
And we who never saw  
The Giant at the other side  
Begin to perish now.

# What happens in schools that implement trauma informed care and instruction....

Three years after Lincoln Alternative High School engaged in building a trauma informed system of educating the number of fights had gone down by 75% and the graduation rate had increased by 5-fold.

<http://kpjrfilms.co/paper-tigers/>

# Foundation Reading Resources

- ▶ The Tipping Point, Malcom Gladwell
- ▶ Tribe: On Homecoming and Belonging, Sebastian Junger
- ▶ The Ecology of Human Development, Urie Bronfenbrenner
- ▶ Change of Die, Alan Deutschman
- ▶ Trying Hard is Not Good Enough, Mark Friedman
- ▶ Outliers, Malcom Gladwell