



# Trauma Reactions and Post Traumatic Growth in Children and Youth

# Learning Goals

- Identifying traumatic experiences in a child's life
- Understanding trauma reactions
- Fostering healing and growth in children and youth who have experienced trauma



# Trauma Informed Perspective

What **happened** to you?

*rather than*

What is **wrong** with you?

“I have never met a strong person  
with an easy past”

— Atticus

# Trauma Informed Parenting

## Understands and acknowledges:

- When a child experiences trauma, their **bodies, brains and nervous system** change and adapt in order to protect them.
- Trauma reactions often show up as behaviors
- Trauma triggers
- Trauma symptoms may overlap with specific mental health diagnoses



# Trauma Informed Parenting

Understands and acknowledges that children who experience trauma need our help to feel loved and safe again in order to heal.

And they need our help to stay safe.



[Traumainformedparent.com](http://Traumainformedparent.com)



[childwelfare.gov/pubs/factsheets/child-trauma](http://childwelfare.gov/pubs/factsheets/child-trauma)

# Brain Development



# Types of Trauma

## **Acute**

- Unexpected single event

## **Complex**

- Often in childhood
- Repetitive

## **Historical, Collective or Intergenerational**

- Effecting communities and cultural groups as a whole
- Adaptive coping patterns passed intergenerationally

# Types of Trauma



## **Vicarious**

- Secondary
- Shared story
- Witness to traumatic event

## **trauma**

- Expected part of life
- May be traumatic to some and not others



# Child Traumatic Stress

- Child traumatic stress is the physical and emotional responses of a child to events or experiences that threaten that child's sense of security. Traumatic stress can affect all areas of a child's life; in the home, school, and community.

- **Ambit Network**



# Childhood Trauma is Common

Pre-COVID data indicates that 1 out of every 4 children has been exposed to a significant traumatic event

- The impact of trauma can affect
  - Healthy development
  - School performance, attendance
  - Relationships
  - Health
- Trauma affects the ability to participate fully in a healthy life



# Adverse Childhood Experiences and Protective Factors



# Five Brain Responses to Trauma

- Flight
- Fight
- Freeze
- Flop
- Friend



# Five Brain Responses to Trauma



- Brain says “**Fight**”
  - Feeling anger, often misguided
  - Blaming others “It’s all your fault!”
  - Showing aggression
- Brain says “**Flight**”
  - Feeling anxiety, the urge to flee
  - Leaving unexpectedly, missing class
  - Spacing out or distracted

- Brain says “**Freeze**”

- Feeling panic, overwhelmed
- Giving up quickly, unable to start
- Showing frustration



- Brain says “**Flop**”

- Feeling sad, hopeless “It’s not worth trying”
- Appears disengaged, little emotion, numb

- Brain says “**Friend**”

- Feeling helpless, powerless, low confidence
- Not taking responsibility “I can’t do this on my own”
- Relying on others to solve own problems

# Trauma Reaction and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder

- Trauma reactions are typical (or expected) responses to atypical (or unexpected) experiences
- All survivors of trauma experience some of the symptoms of PTSD
- The difference between expected trauma reactions and PTSD is the length and severity of the symptoms

# Symptoms of PTSD and Trauma Reactions

- Increase in stress responses
- A change in ability to interpret and respond appropriately to social cues
- Changes in behavior, sleep or appetite
- Recreating the event
- Over or under reacting to loud noises
- Showing emotional distress
- Making statements or asking questions about death and dying
- Reoccurring nightmares
- Absenteeism



# Healing from Trauma



- Rewriting your story
- Deliberate Ruminating
- Self expression
- Hope and Optimism
- Recovering Joy

# Post Traumatic Growth

- The experience of growth and change after trauma
- A process not an expectation
- Occurs after or coexists with post-traumatic stress reactions
- Does not make the trauma any less traumatic



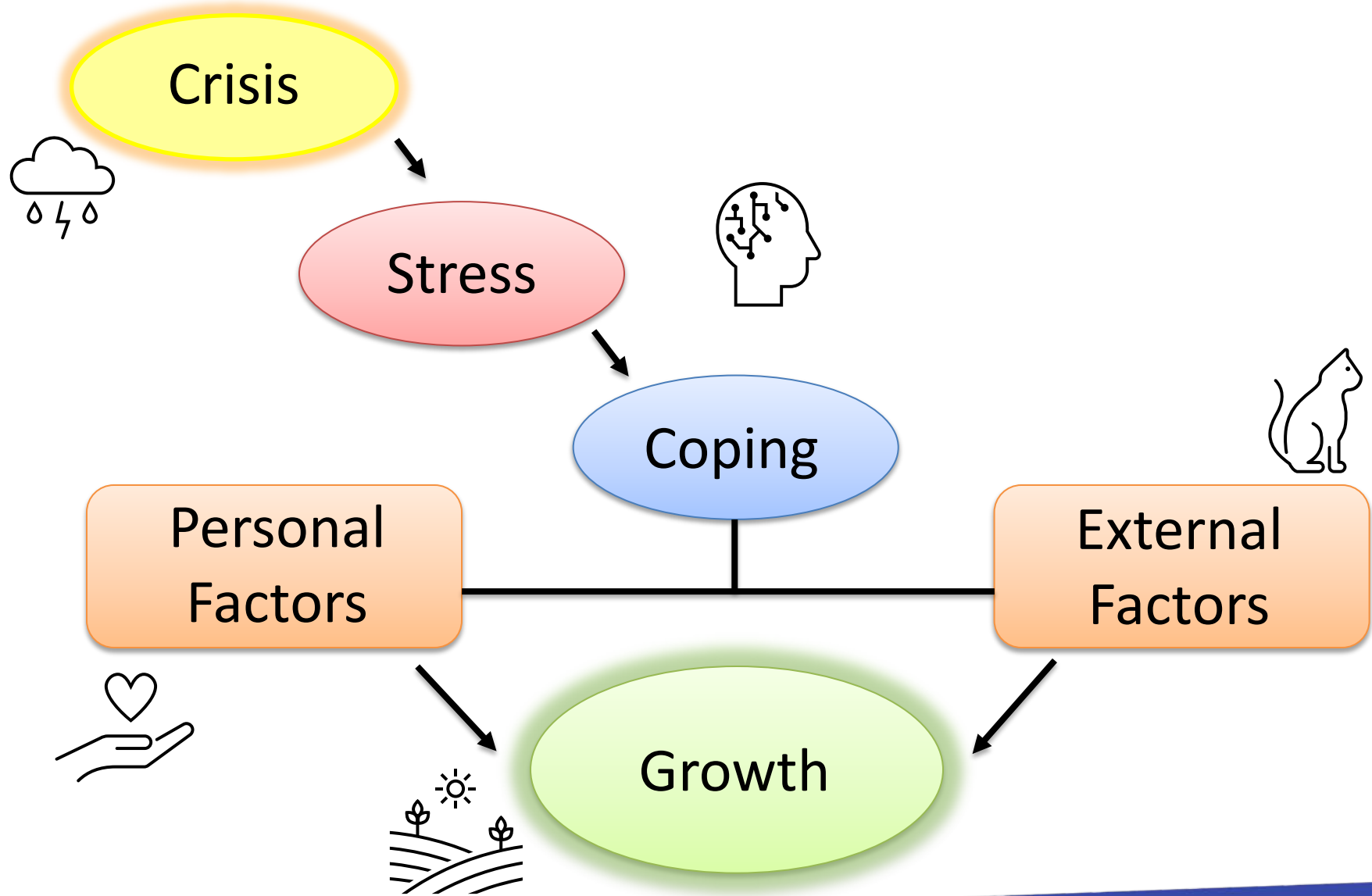
# Aspects of Post Traumatic Growth

- Openness to new possibilities
- More meaningful relationships
- Personal strengths
- Increased appreciation of life
- Spiritual, existential or philosophical changes

# Aspect of Post Traumatic Growth

- Ability to thrive
- Improved mental health
- New awareness, understanding and meaning
- Improved management of traumatic stress and reactions





# Supporting Post Traumatic Growth

- Social support
  - Peer
  - Adult or family
- Spiritual or Community Connections
- Early Intervention
- Safety
- Validation
- Healthy Coping Strategies
- Narrative Development
- Explore Culture



# Trauma Informed Support

- **Narrative** therapy
- **Trauma-Focused** Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (TF-CBT)
- **Cognitive Processing Therapy** and **Prolonged Exposure Therapy** for PTSD



# Trauma Informed Support

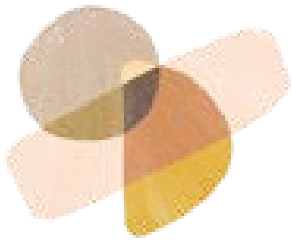
- **EMDR** for PTSD  
Eye Movement  
Desensitization &  
Reprocessing
- **Somatic** therapy
- **Acupuncture**
- **Mindfulness-based**  
Cognitive Therapy





# Trauma-Informed Mental Health Professionals

- *How do you determine if a youth's mental health symptoms are influenced by trauma?*
- *How does a child's trauma history inform your treatment approach?*
- *What trauma-focused methods are you trained in?*



[Inclusivetherapists.com](http://Inclusivetherapists.com)



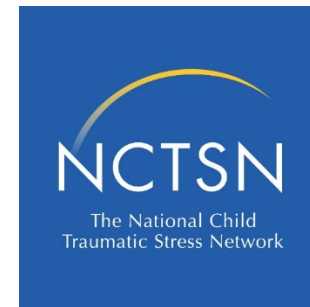
[fastrackermn.org](http://fastrackermn.org)

# Trauma Informed Support



- **Minnesota Trauma Project**

[Mntraumaproject.org](http://Mntraumaproject.org)



- **National Child Traumatic Stress Network**

[Nctsn.org](http://Nctsn.org)

# Trauma Informed Support

- **MN Department of Health:** Resources in the Wake of Community Trauma and Beyond

[www.health.state.mn.us/communities/mentalhealth/trauma.html](http://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/mentalhealth/trauma.html)

- Race and Mental Health
- Tools for talking about race and racism
- Trauma resources for children and families
- Coping with Grief and Anger

# Trauma-Informed Parents and Caregivers



- Identify trauma triggers
- Learn how to de-escalate
- Be present
- Be a good listener

# Trauma-Informed Parents and Caregivers

- Be consistent & predictable
- Help them learn to relax
- Allow children some control
- Encourage self esteem



# What We Do

- NAMI Youth Resources and Support
  - <https://namimn.org/support/youth/>
- Warmline: [parent.resources@namimn.org](mailto:parent.resources@namimn.org)
- Education classes, booklets and fact sheets
- Suicide prevention
- Support groups, Helpline
- Public awareness
- Legislative advocacy
- NAMIWalks



# Support NAMI Minnesota

- Advocate for a better Mental Health System
- Attend an event
- Sign up for a newsletter
- Join an affiliate
- Be a sponsor
- Volunteer
- Become a donor



# Contact Information

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1-888-NAMI-HELPS  
[www.namimn.org](http://www.namimn.org)

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