

Trauma-Aware Practice & Resilience in Juvenile Court

Jon S. Ebert, PsyD

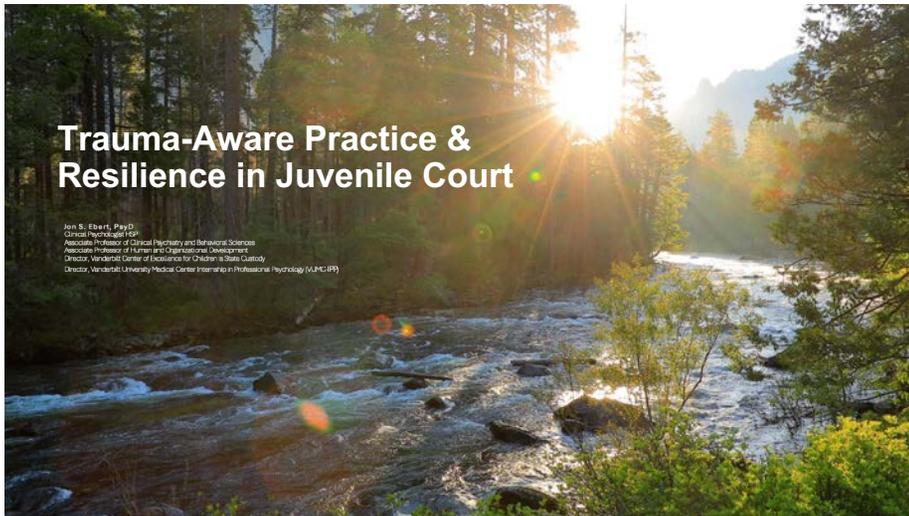
Clinical Psychologist HSP

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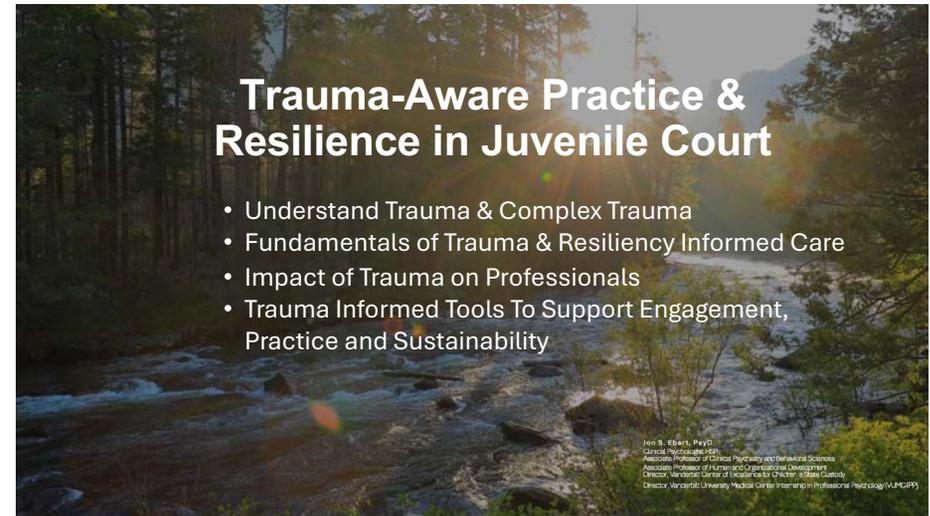
Associate Professor of Human and Organizational Development

Director, Vanderbilt Center of Excellence for Children in State Custody

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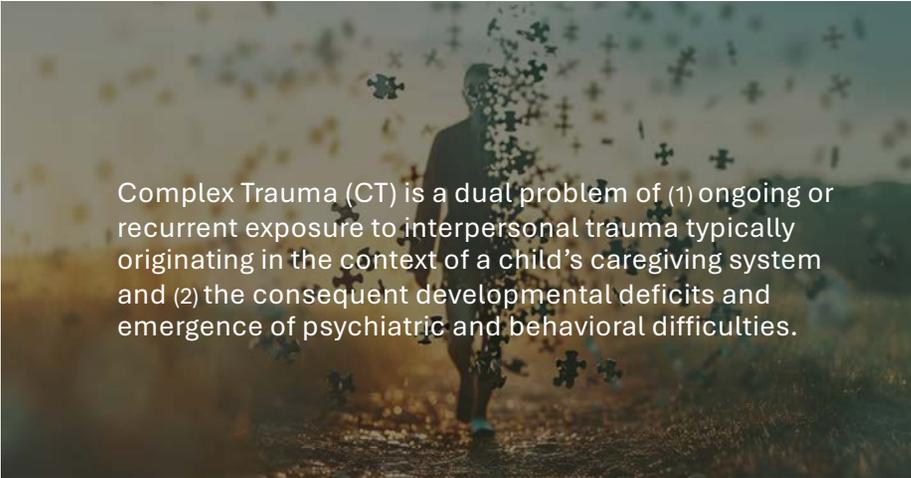
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COMPLEX TRAUMA



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Complex Trauma (CT) is a dual problem of (1) ongoing or recurrent exposure to interpersonal trauma typically originating in the context of a child's caregiving system and (2) the consequent developmental deficits and emergence of psychiatric and behavioral difficulties.



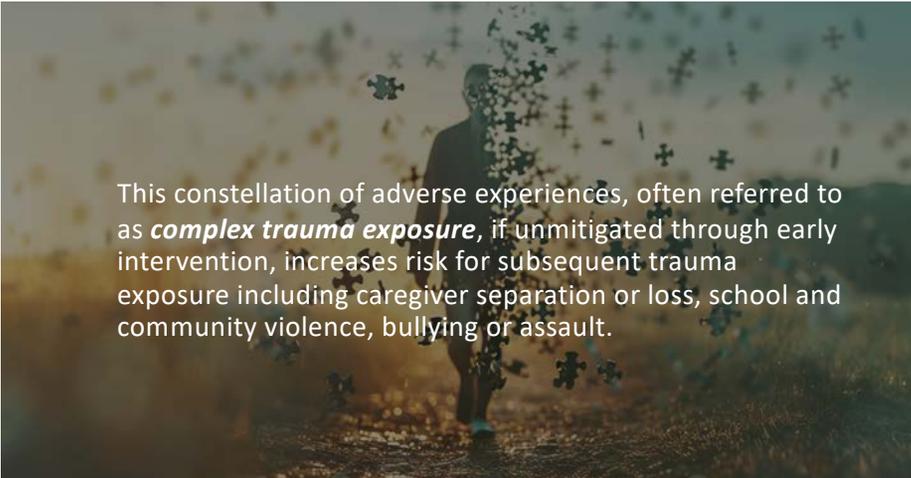
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The most prevalent risk factor caravan involves exposure to some combination of impaired caregiving (e.g., due to parental substance abuse, mental illness, or partner violence), neglect, emotional abuse, and physical abuse.



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This constellation of adverse experiences, often referred to as **complex trauma exposure**, if unmitigated through early intervention, increases risk for subsequent trauma exposure including caregiver separation or loss, school and community violence, bullying or assault.



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Public health and applied clinical research link these forms of trauma exposure to substantive developmental deficits and worsening diagnostic, functional and social impairments. Neuroscientific research indicates that these maladaptive outcomes arise in full or in part as the result of survival-based adaptations to early trauma. The array of resulting adverse outcomes is often referred to as **complex trauma adaptation**.



Complex Trauma exposure intersects with other pervasive forms of life adversity including systemic racism, poverty, intergenerational trauma, and ancestral or historical trauma.



MULTI-LAYERED NATURE OF TRAUMA



ATTACHMENT, REGULATION, & COMPETENCE (ARC)



MULTI-LAYER TRAUMA & OUTCOMES

- Safety & Trust / Expect Harm
- Problems Forming Relationships
- Difficulty Managing Feelings & Behavior
- Sense of Self /Fragmented Self
- Developmental Challenges
- Heightened Arousal System
- Difficulty with Internal Controls
- Loss of Agency /Control

Trauma's Dual Influence on Development



Prioritization of those domains of skill, competency, adaptation which help the child **survive** their environment and meet physical, emotional, and relational needs

AND



De-emphasis of domains of development which are less immediately relevant to survival



ATTACHMENT, REGULATION, & COMPETENCE (ARC)

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got competence?
SURVIVAL vs. PRO-SOCIAL

EMOTION REGULATION
INTERPERSONAL ABILITIES
INTRAPERSONAL DEVELOPMENT
COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT

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Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration
SAMHSA
www.samhsa.gov • 1-877-SAMHSA-7 (1-877-726-4727)

REALIZES
Realizes widespread impact of trauma and understands potential paths for recovery



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Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration
SAMHSA
www.samhsa.gov • 1-877-SAMHSA-7 (1-877-726-4727)

RECOGNIZES
Recognizes signs and symptoms of trauma in clients, families, staff, and others involved with the system



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Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration
SAMHSA
www.samhsa.gov • 1-877-SAMHSA-7 (1-877-726-4727)

RESPONDS
Responds by fully integrating knowledge about trauma into policies, procedures, and practices



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SAMHSA
www.samhsa.gov • 1-877-SAMHSA-7 (1-877-726-4727)

RESISTS
Seeks to actively resist re-traumatization.



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SAMHSA
GUIDING PRINCIPLES OF TRAUMA INFORMED CARE

SAFETY
Throughout the organization, staff and the people they serve feel physically and psychologically safe.

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SAMHSA
www.samhsa.gov • 1-877-SAMHSA-7 (1-877-726-4727)
GUIDING PRINCIPLES OF TRAUMA INFORMED CARE

TRUSTWORTHINESS & TRANSPARENCY

Organizational operations and decisions are conducted with transparency and the goal of **building and maintaining trust among staff, clients, and family members** of those receiving services.

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Trust Is The Foundation

74% less stress
106% more energy at work
50% higher productivity
76% more engagement
40% less burnout

Zak, P. (2017) The Neuroscience of Trust; management behaviors that foster employee engagement. Harvard Business Review. Jan-Feb 2017. p 85-90

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SAMHSA
www.samhsa.gov • 1-877-SAMHSA-7 (1-877-726-4727)
GUIDING PRINCIPLES OF TRAUMA INFORMED CARE

PEER SUPPORT & MUTUAL SELF HELP

These are integral to the organizational and service delivery approach and are understood as a key vehicle for building trust, establishing safety, and empowerment.

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Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration
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 www.samhsa.gov • 1-877-SAMHSA-7 (1-877-726-4227)
 GUIDING PRINCIPLES OF TRAUMA INFORMED CARE

COLLABORATION & MUTUALITY

There is true partnering and leveling of power differences between staff and clients and among organizational staff from direct care staff to administrators. **There is recognition that healing happens in relationships and in the meaningful sharing of power and decision-making.** The organization recognizes that everyone has a role to play in a trauma-informed approach. One does not have to be a therapist to be therapeutic.



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 GUIDING PRINCIPLES OF TRAUMA INFORMED CARE

EMPOWERMENT VOICE AND CHOICE

Throughout the organization and among the clients served, individuals' strengths are recognized, built on, and validated and new skills developed as necessary. The organization aims to strengthen the staff's, clients', and family members' experience of choice and recognize that every person's experience is unique and requires an individualized approach. This includes a belief in resilience and in the ability of individuals, organizations, and communities to heal and promote recovery from trauma. This builds on what clients, staff, and communities have to offer, rather than responding to perceived deficits.



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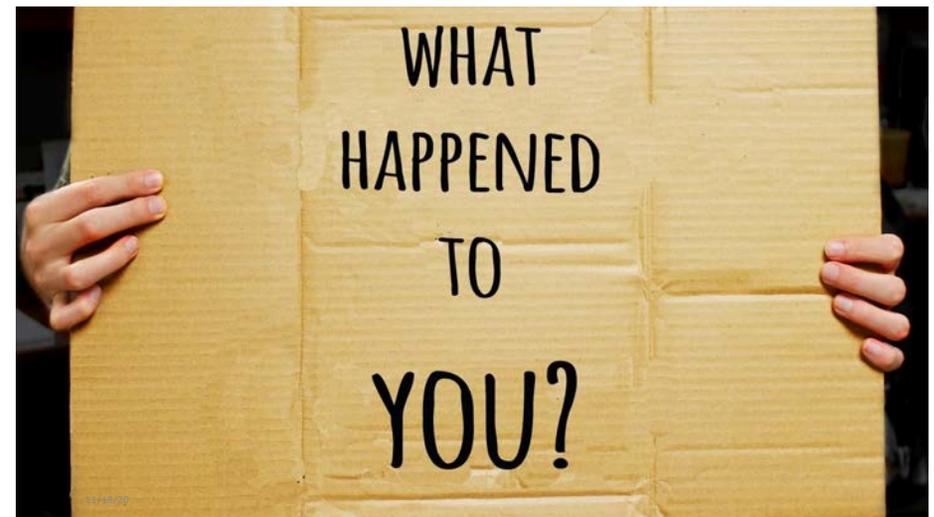
Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration
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 GUIDING PRINCIPLES OF TRAUMA INFORMED CARE

CULTURAL, HISTORICAL & GENDER ISSUES

The organization actively moves past cultural stereotypes and biases (e.g., based on race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, age, geography), offers gender responsive services, leverages the healing value of traditional cultural connections, and recognizes and addresses historical trauma.



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KIDS

- Feels Unsafe
- Angry/Aggressive
- Helpless
- Hopeless
- Hyperarousal
- Fragmented
- Overwhelmed
- Confused
- Depressed

Adapted from Sanctuary Model - Bloom

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CAREGIVERS

- Feels Unsafe
- Angry/Aggressive
- Helpless
- Hopeless
- Hyperarousal
- Fragmented
- Overwhelmed
- Confused
- Demoralized



Adapted from Sanctuary Model - Bloom

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ORGANIZATION

- Is Unsafe
- Punitive
- Stuck
- Missionless
- Crisis Driven
- Fragmented
- Overwhelmed
- Valueless
- Directionless

Adapted from Sanctuary Model - Bloom

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Secondary Traumatic Stress

Secondary exposure to traumatically stressful events, resulting from empathic engagement with traumatized clients, as well as exposure to traumatic stories and events, characterized by symptoms of *intrusion, avoidance* and *arousal*

Compassion Fatigue

The profound emotional and physical exhaustion that helping professionals can develop over the course of their career as helpers

Burnout

Physical and emotional exhaustion a helper experiences due to low job satisfaction, feelings of powerless and being overwhelmed



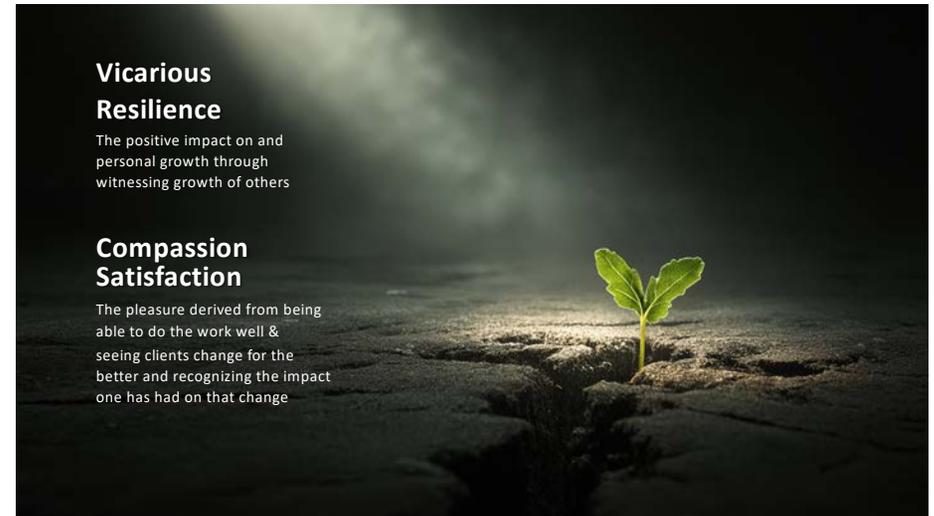
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Vicarious Resilience

The positive impact on and personal growth through witnessing growth of others

Compassion Satisfaction

The pleasure derived from being able to do the work well & seeing clients change for the better and recognizing the impact one has had on that change



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RESILIENT LEGAL & ADVOCATE PROFESSIONALS ARE

RARE

REGULATE

ATTUNE

RESPOND

EFFECTIVELY

Credit: Jeremy Karpen MA, LCPC – Mercy Home Chicago, IL

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RESILIENT LEGAL & ADVOCATE PROFESSIONALS ARE

RARE

REGULATE ATTUNE RESPOND EFFECTIVELY

Credit: Jeremy Karpen MA, LCPC – Mercy Home Chicago, IL

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GOOD TOOLS...



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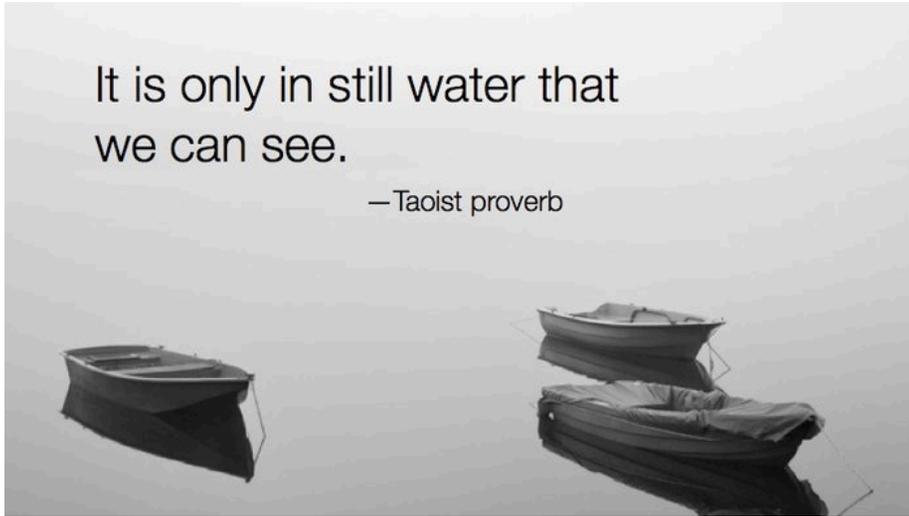
**THROWN INTO
TORNADOS
CAN
BECOME
DESTRUCTIVE**

39



We cannot see our reflection
in running water...

40



41



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44



45



- Stress can be managed and used for growth
- Regulated Stress can activate healthy engagement
- " Best Zone for Problem Solving

Siegel, D. J. (2020). *The developing mind: How relationships and the brain interact to shape who we are* (3rd ed.). The Guilford Press.

46



Siegel, D. J. (2020). *The developing mind: How relationships and the brain interact to shape who we are* (3rd ed.). The Guilford Press.

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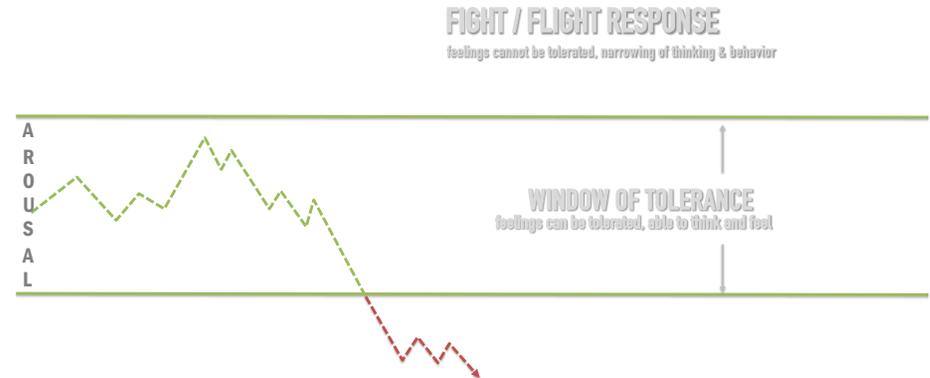


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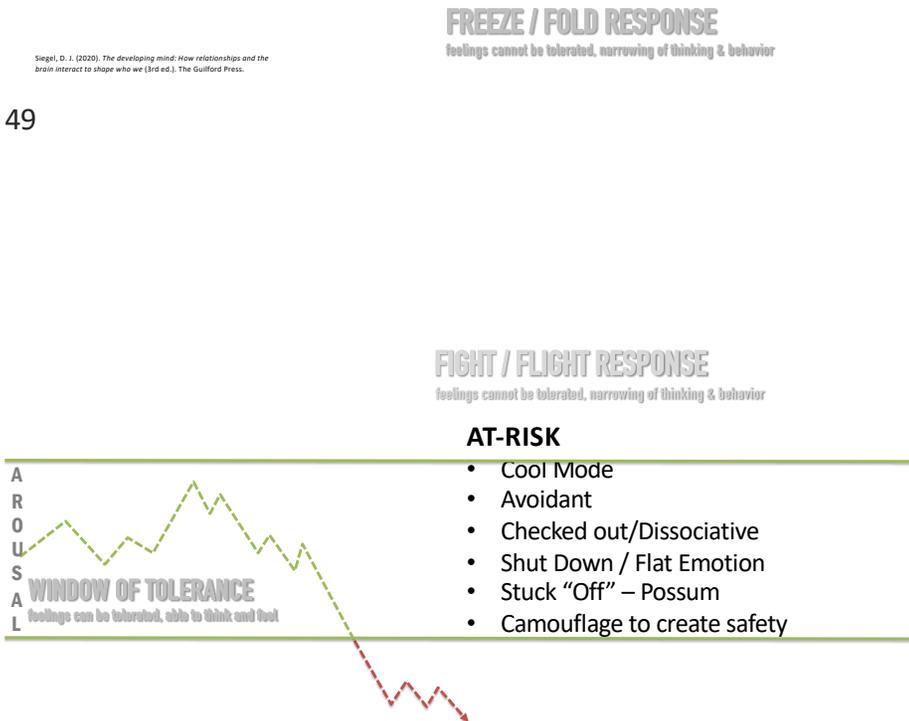
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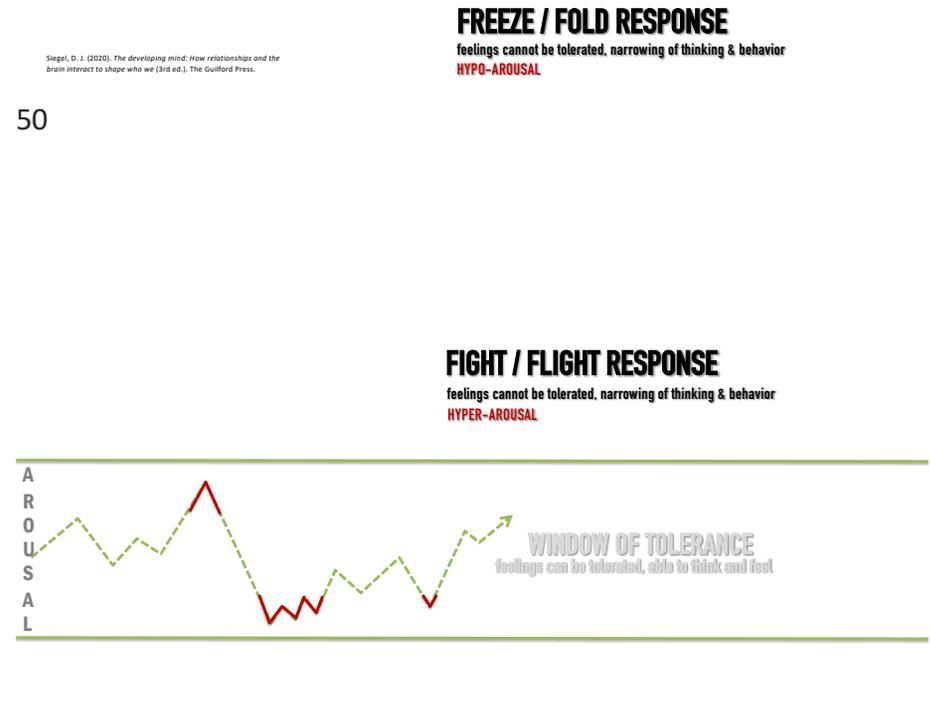
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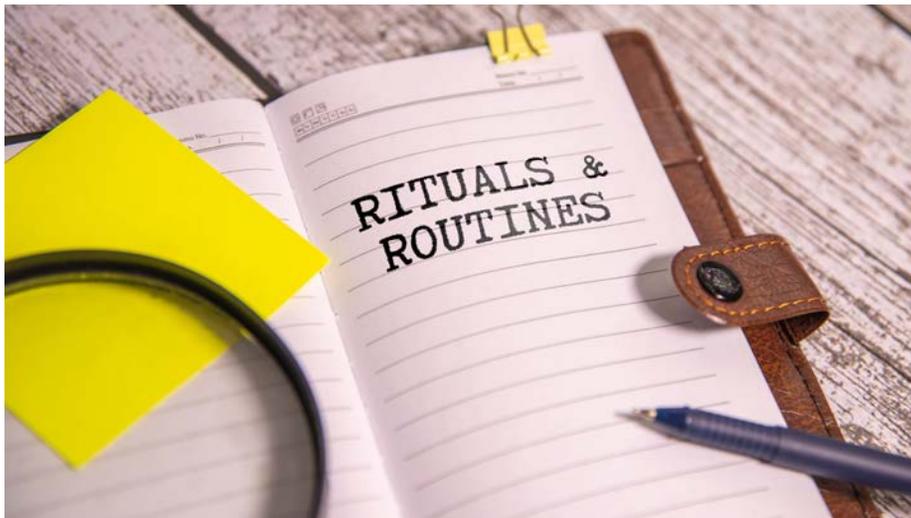
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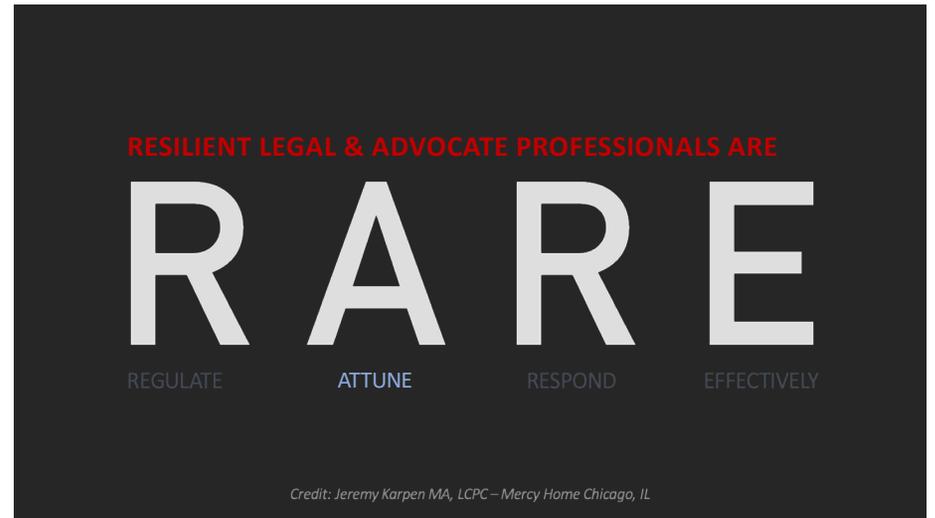
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JOHN GOTTMAN ON BUILDING TRUST

ATTUNE

- AWARENESS OF CHILD/YOUTH'S EMOTION & THINKING**
- TURNING TOWARD THE CHILD/YOUTH'S EMOTION & THINKING**
- TOLERANCE OF THE CONFLICT & EMOTION**
- TRYING TO UNDERSTAND CHILD/YOUTH PERSPECTIVE**
- NON-DEFENSE RESPONSES IN THE INTERACTION**
- RESPOND WITH EMPATHY**

The Science of Trust: Emotional Attunement for Couples, John Gottman, Ph.D., W.W. Norton & Company, 2011

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Installing Emotional System

Caregiver and Co-Regulation available .
Please be patient as the system configures - This might take several years.

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Installing Emotional System

Setup was unable to find a safe & available caregiver, may need to run properly.

ADVERSE
CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES



MALTREATMENT

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GET CURIOUS, NOT FURIOUS



ATTACHMENT, REGULATION, & COMPETENCE (ARC)

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Be Kind

For the person
across from you is
fighting a battle you
know nothing about.

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Jimpa, T. (2012) The Science of Compassion: Origins, Measures, and Interventions

65



Jimpa, T. (2012) The Science of Compassion: Origins, Measures, and Interventions

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Jimpa, T. (2012) The Science of Compassion: Origins, Measures, and Interventions

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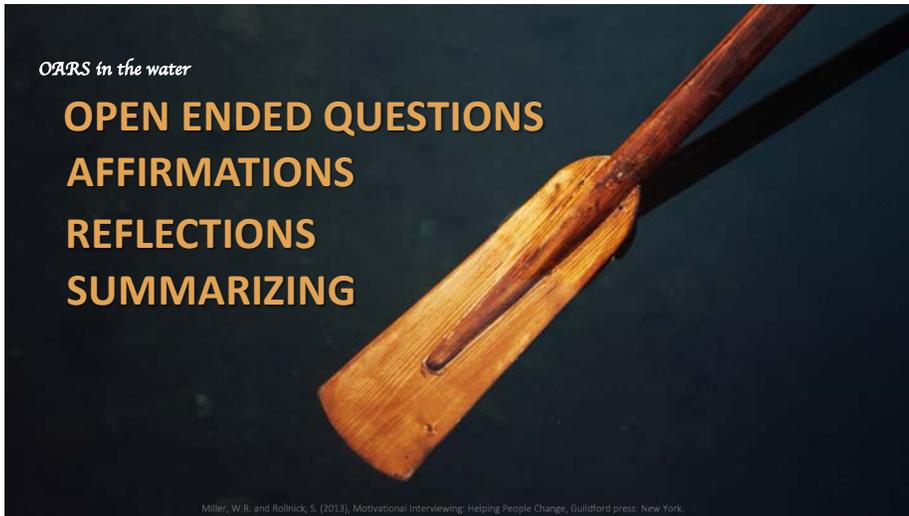
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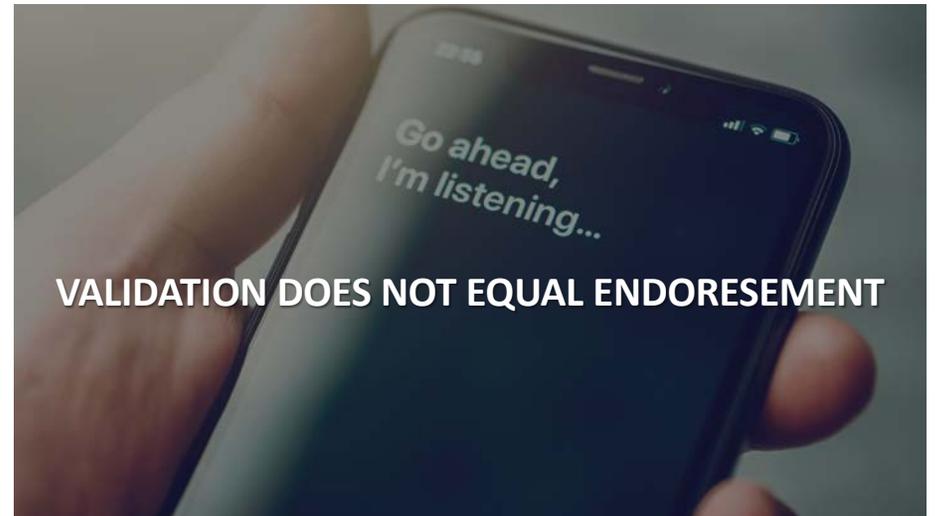
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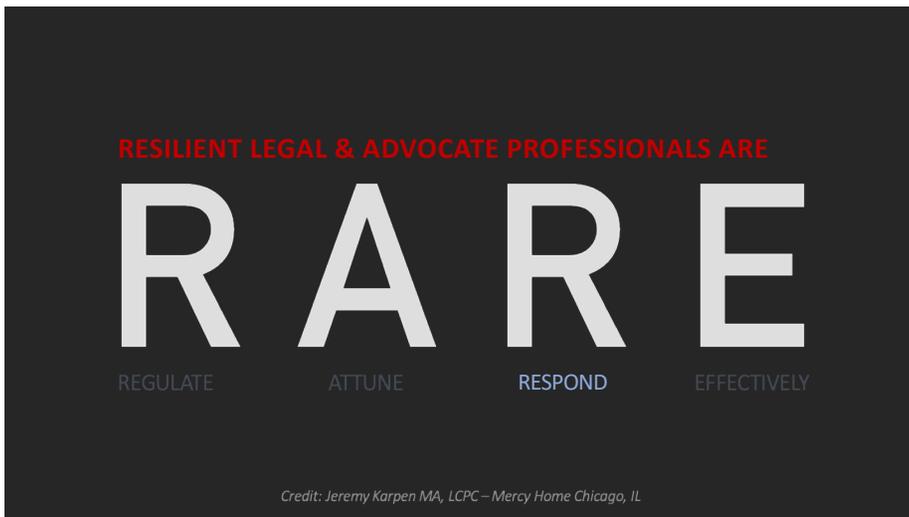
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THREAT
DEFENSIVE | CLOSED

SAFETY
REWARDING | OPEN

Rock, D. (2009). sCARF: a brain-based model for collaborating with and influencing others.

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STATUS
CERTAINTY
AUTONOMY
RELATEDNESS
FAIRNESS

Rock, D. (2009). sCARF: a brain-based model for collaborating with and influencing others.

78



STATUS
Importance relative to others

VALUABLE **CRITIQUE**

Rock, D. (2009). sCARF: a brain-based model for collaborating with and influencing others.

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CERTAINTY
Ability to predict the future

CLEAR, ASSURANCE & AFFIRMATION
UNCLEAR & UNCERTAIN CHANGE AHEAD

Rock, D. (2009). sCARF: a brain-based model for collaborating with and influencing others.

80



AUTONOMY
Exerting control over events

I HAVE CHOICE
CONTROLLED

Rock, D. (2009). sCARF: a brain-based model for collaborating with and influencing others.

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RELATEDNESS
Sense of connection with others

INVITATION & INCLUSION
ISOLATION & EXCLUSION

Rock, D. (2009). sCARF: a brain-based model for collaborating with and influencing others.

82



FAIRNESS
Fair exchanges between people

I AM BEING TREATED FAIR
I AM BEING TREATED UNFAIR

Rock, D. (2009). sCARF: a brain-based model for collaborating with and influencing others.

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STATUS
CERTAINTY
AUTONOMY
RELATEDNESS
FAIRNESS

Rock, D. (2009). sCARF: a brain-based model for collaborating with and influencing others.

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88



LET GO OF THE ROPE

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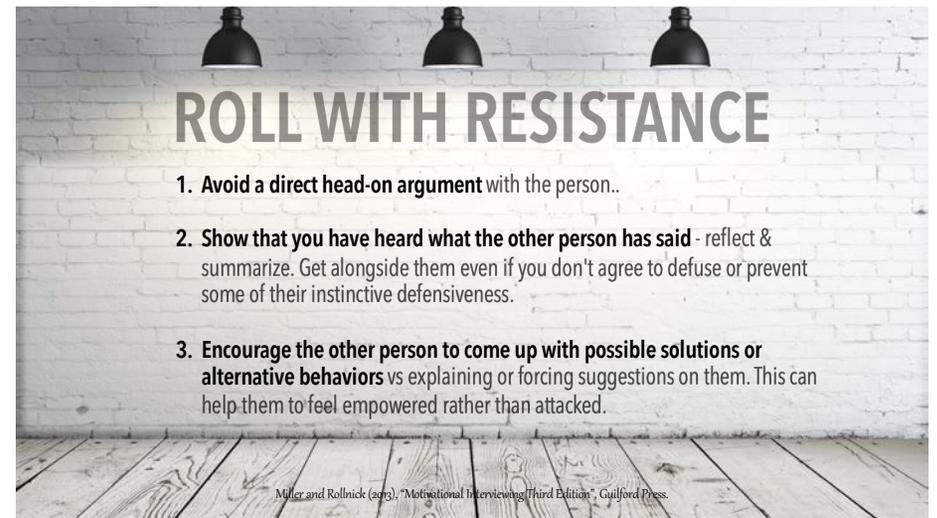


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Miller, W. R. and Rollnick, S. (2002). 'Motivational Interviewing: Helping People Change', Guilford Press, New York.

91



ROLL WITH RESISTANCE

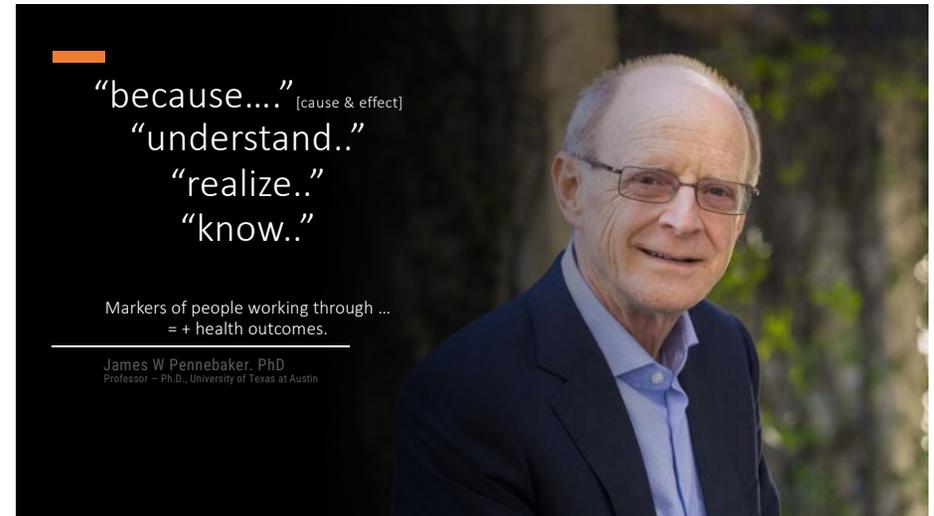
1. **Avoid a direct head-on argument** with the person..
2. **Show that you have heard what the other person has said** - reflect & summarize. Get alongside them even if you don't agree to defuse or prevent some of their instinctive defensiveness.
3. **Encourage the other person to come up with possible solutions or alternative behaviors** vs explaining or forcing suggestions on them. This can help them to feel empowered rather than attacked.

Miller and Rollnick (2002), 'Motivational Interviewing (Third Edition)', Guilford Press.

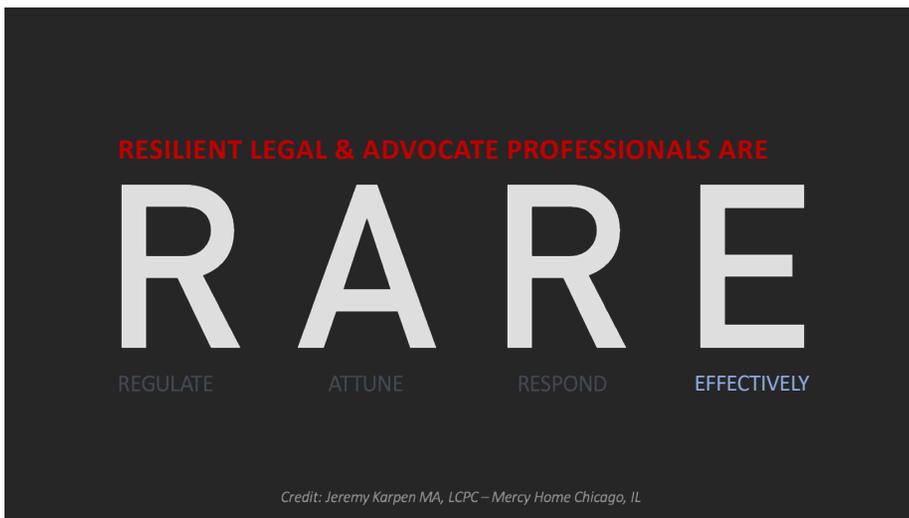
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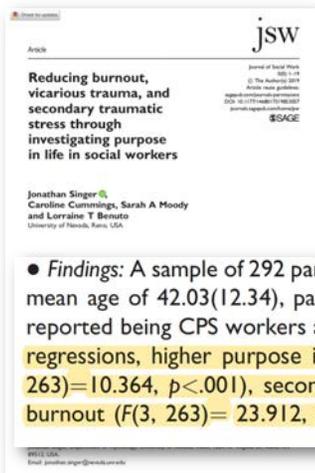
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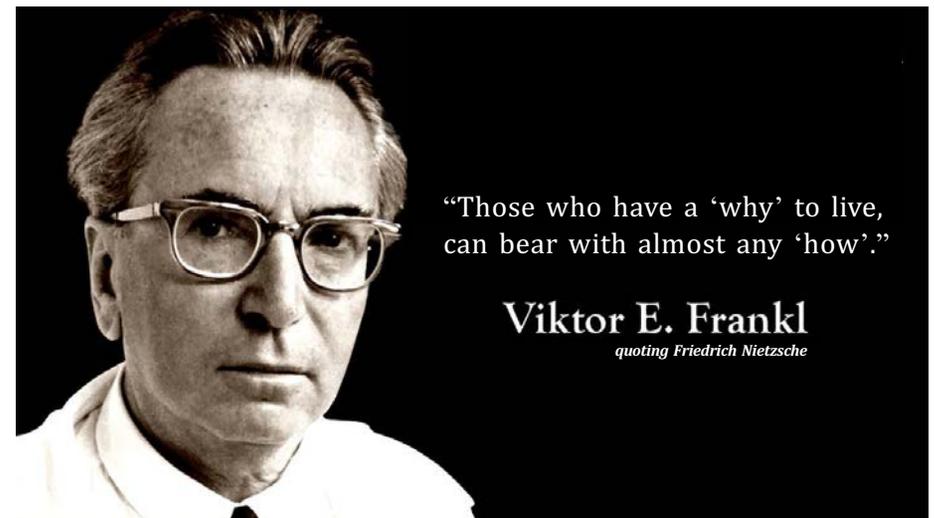


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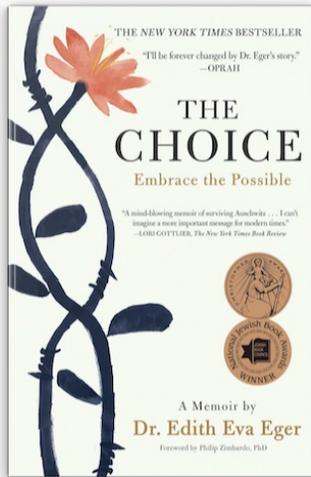


● **Findings:** A sample of 292 participants ranging in age from 18 to 58 years of age, with a mean age of 42.03(12.34), participated in this study. Of the 292 social workers, 126 reported being CPS workers and 166 reported being AEPS workers. In all three linear regressions, higher purpose in life resulted in lower rates of vicarious trauma ($F(3, 263)=10.364, p<.001$), secondary traumatic stress ($F(3, 263)=16.548, p<.001$), and burnout ($F(3, 263)= 23.912, p<.001$) when controlling for number of hours worked

99



100



“We can’t choose to vanish the dark, but we can choose to kindle the light.”

“Here you are! In the sacred present. I can’t heal you—or anyone—but I can celebrate your choice to dismantle the prison in your mind, brick by brick. You can’t change what happened, you can’t change what you did or what was done to you. **But you can choose how you live now.** My precious, you can choose to be free.”

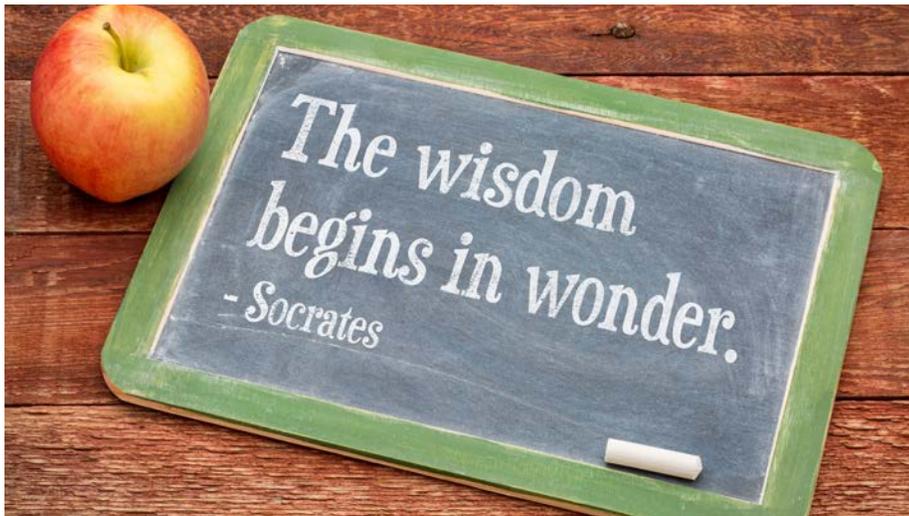
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WE ALSO NEED GLIMMERS

small moments when our biology is in a place of connection or regulation, which cues our nervous system to feel safe or calm

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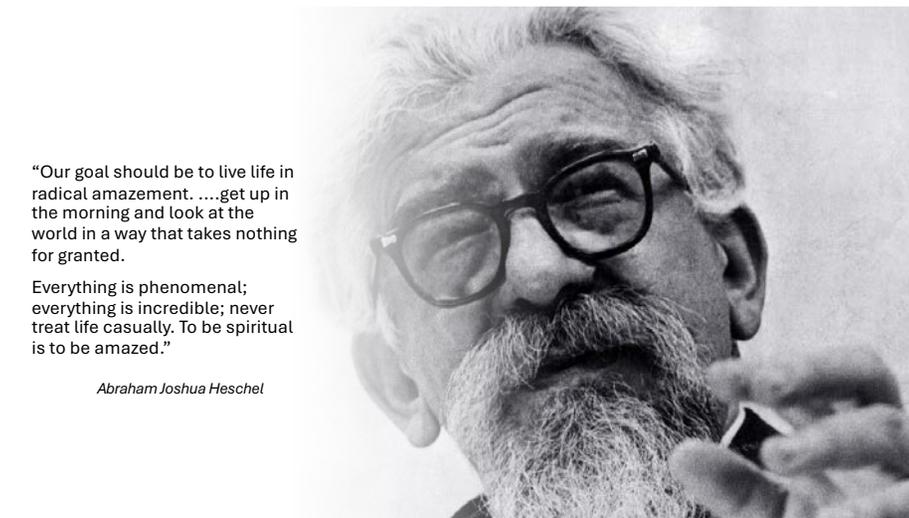
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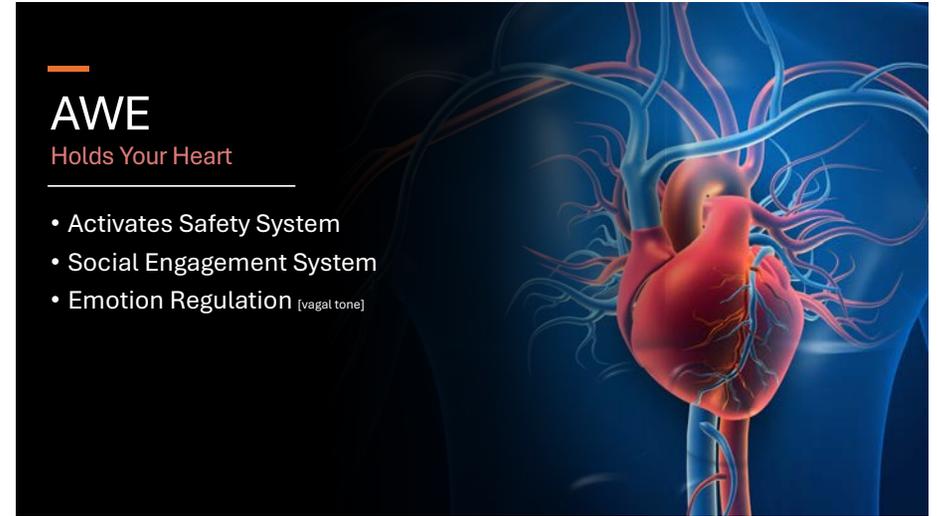
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1. **Moral beauty:** Acts of courage, kindness, or compassion
2. **Collective effervescence:** Shared experiences like concerts or religious ceremonies
3. **Nature:** The natural world and its phenomena
4. **Music:** Powerful musical experiences
5. **Visual design:** Art, from great paintings to street art
6. **Spirituality:** Mystical experiences and religious insights
7. **Epiphanies or big ideas:** Moments of revelation or understanding
8. **Life transitions:** The beginning and end of life, such as birth and death

Dacher Keltner

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AWE

Holds Your Heart

- Activates Safety System
- Social Engagement System
- Emotion Regulation [vagal tone]

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Spontaneity
Connection
Purpose
Perspective
Gratitude
Awe

RECIPE FOR
JOY

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MANAGING YOURSELF



How the Busiest People Find Joy

Five research-backed strategies.

by Leslie A. Perlow, Sari Mentser, and Salvatore J. Affinito

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LIFE SATISFACTION

Achievement Meaningfulness Joy

"Why is joy—this third pillar of life satisfaction—so elusive for so many?"

Perlow, Leslie A., Sam Mendler, and Salvatore J. Affrino. "How the Busiest People Find Joy." Harvard Business Review 103, no. 4 (July-August 2021): 135-139.

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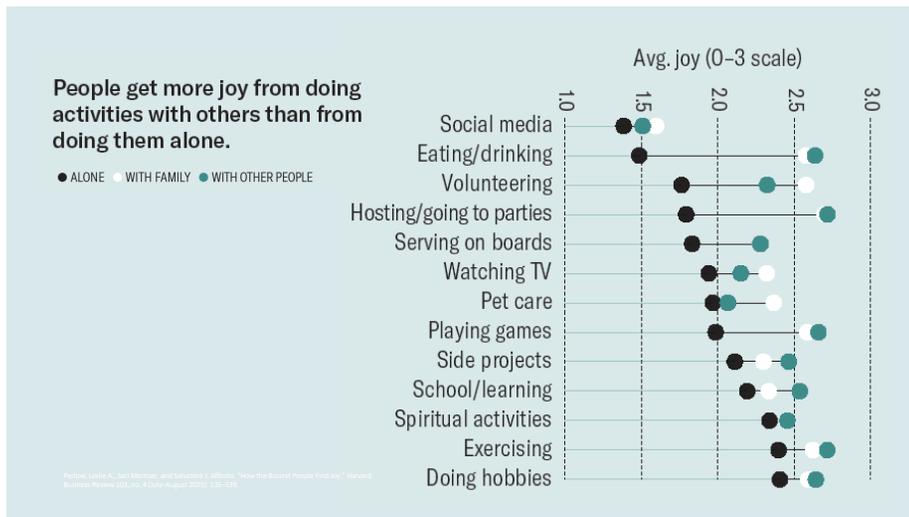
1 ENGAGE WITH OTHERS

the most powerful predictor of life satisfaction is strong, meaningful relationships with accepting, supportive people.

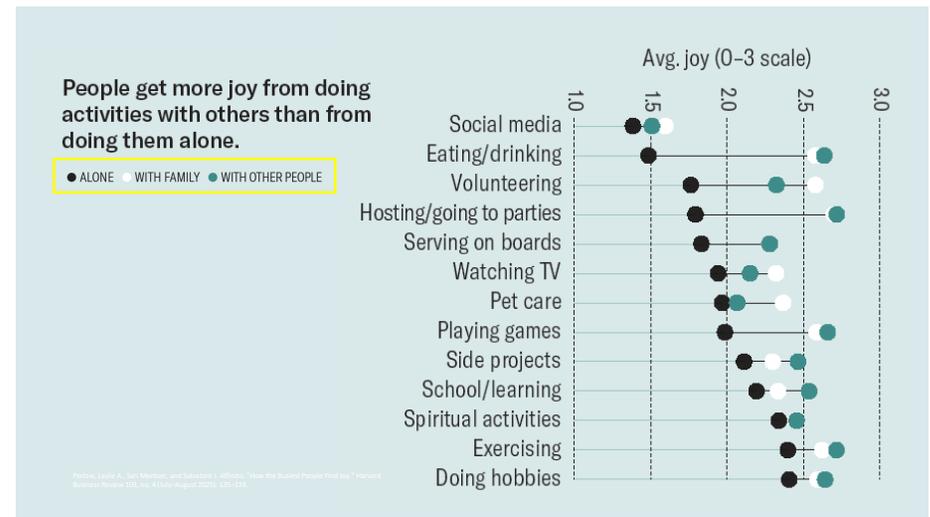
Shared experiences amplified joy.

Perlow, Leslie A., Sam Mendler, and Salvatore J. Affrino. "How the Busiest People Find Joy." Harvard Business Review 103, no. 4 (July-August 2021): 135-139.

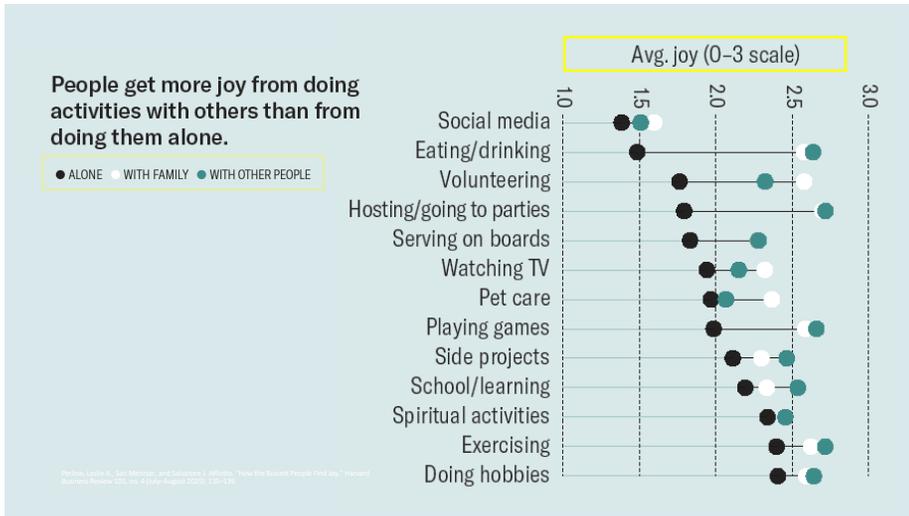
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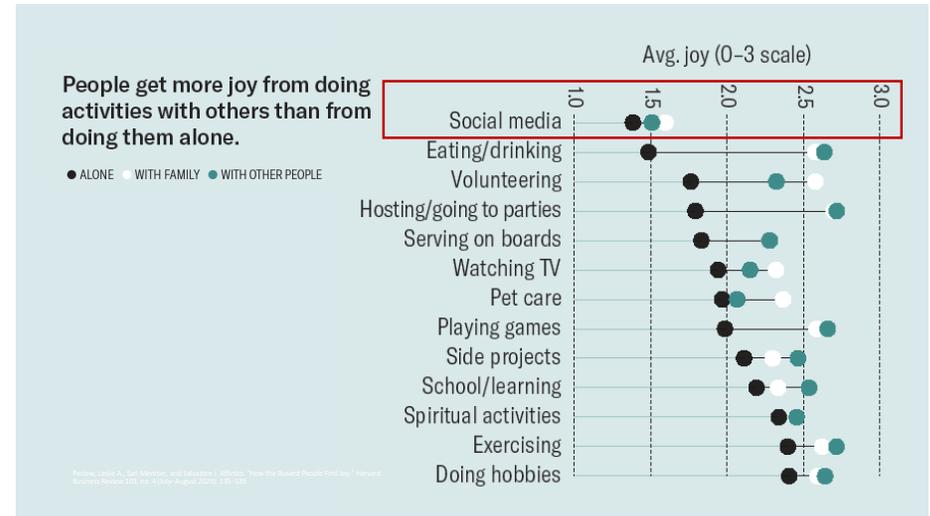
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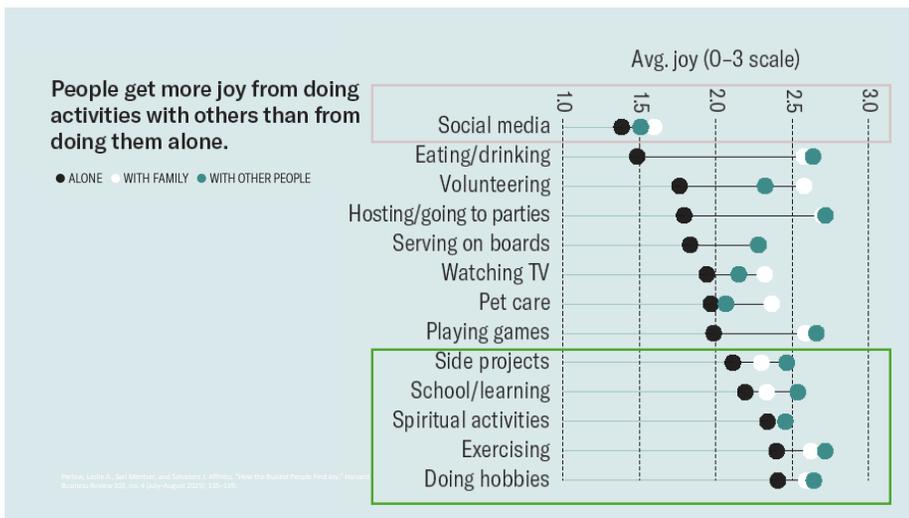
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2 AVOID PASSIVE PURSUITS

Active pursuits such as exercising, exploring hobbies, and volunteering

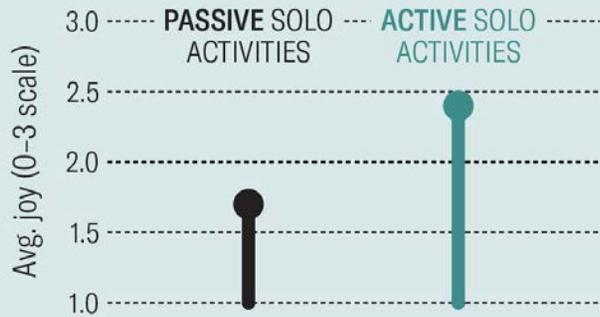
vs

Passive = from napping, watching TV, gaming, or using social apps.

Perlow, Leslie A., Sari Mencher, and Salvatore J. Affinito. "How the Busiest People Find Joy." Harvard Business Review 103, no. 4 (July-August 2025): 131-139.

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People find more joy in active solo activities than in passive ones.



Perlow, Leslie A., Sari Menzies, and Salvatore J. Affinito. "How the Busiest People Find Joy." Harvard Business Review 103, no. 4 (July-August 2025): 135-139.

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3 FOLLOW YOUR PASSION

Pursuits that align with **what you find personally rewarding** will boost your life satisfaction **four times** more than activities that are considered generally good for the typical person.

Perlow, Leslie A., Sari Menzies, and Salvatore J. Affinito. "How the Busiest People Find Joy." Harvard Business Review 103, no. 4 (July-August 2025): 135-139.

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4 DIVERSIFY YOUR ACTIVITIES

the more time someone dedicates to one leisure pursuit, the less joy it delivers.
Variety—not depth—is what boosts happiness.

Perlow, Leslie A., Sari Menzies, and Salvatore J. Affinito. "How the Busiest People Find Joy." Harvard Business Review 103, no. 4 (July-August 2025): 135-139.

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5 PROTECT YOUR TIME

Sabine Sonnentag and others have also found that "psychological detachment from work," or the **ability to mentally disconnect from professional demands during off-hours, improves well-being and even increases job engagement.**

For every additional hour people devoted to work each week, their sense of joy in life decreased, whereas when they used that hour for leisure activities like hobbies, exercise, catching up with others, or eating and drinking with friends and family, they experienced greater happiness.

Perlow, Leslie A., Sari Menzies, and Salvatore J. Affinito. "How the Busiest People Find Joy." Harvard Business Review 103, no. 4 (July-August 2025): 135-139.

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- 1 ENGAGE WITH OTHERS
- 2 AVOID PASSIVE PURSUITS
- 3 FOLLOW YOUR PASSION
- 4 DIVERSIFY YOUR ACTIVITIES
- 5 PROTECT YOUR TIME

Petlow, Leslie A., Sari Mehta, and Salvatore J. Affinito, "How the Busiest People Find Joy," Harvard Business Review 83, no. 4 (July-August 2005): 130-139.

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AMERICAN PSYCHOLOGIST

Positive Psychology Progress Empirical Validation of Interventions

Martin E. P. Seligman and Tracy A. Steen
University of Pennsylvania
Christopher Peterson
University of Michigan



Positive psychology has flourished in the last 5 years. The authors review recent developments in the field, including books, meetings, courses, and conferences. They also discuss the newly created classification of character strengths and virtues, a positive curriculum in the revised editions of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, and the American Psychiatric Association, 1995 present some cross-cultural findings that suggest a role for optimism in mental health. Finally, the authors focus on psychological interventions that increase well-being and happiness. In a rigorous, randomized, placebo-controlled Internet study, the authors tested 3 positive psychology interventions and 3 placebo controls. They found that 3 of the interventions (writing three good things, positive character strengths, and character strengths) increased happiness and decreased depressive symptoms. The interventions are supported by empirical evidence and may contribute to the practical legacy of positive psychology.

Five years have passed since the American Psychologist devoted its multivolume issue to the emerging science of positive psychology: the study of positive emotions, positive character, and positive institutions (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). Drawing on methods effectively used to advance the science of mental disorders, positive psychologists have been studying mental health

application (Lentley & Joseph, 2004). Can psychologists take what they have learned about the science and practice of treating mental illness and use it to create a practice of making people lastingly happier? That is, can they create an evidence-based practice of positive psychology?

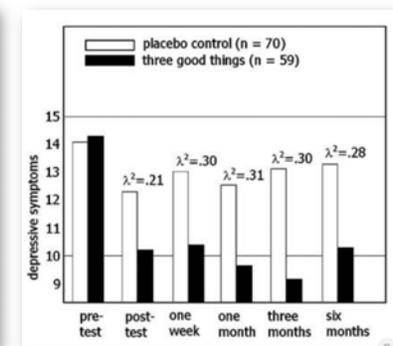
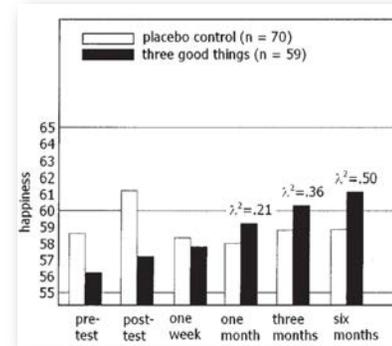
Three good things in life. Participants were asked to write down three things that went well each day and their causes every night for one week. In addition, they were asked to provide a causal explanation for each good thing.

positive emotions, positive character traits, and enduring institutions. Research findings from positive psychology are intended to supplement, not necessarily to replace, what is known about human suffering, weakness, and disorder. The intent is to have a more complex and balanced scientific understanding of the human experience—the peaks, the valleys, and everything in between. We believe that a complete science and a complete practice of psychology should include an understanding of suffering and happiness, as well as their interaction, and validated interventions that both relieve suffering and increase happiness—two separable endeavors.

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THREE GOOD THINGS

Seligman, Steen, Park, & Peterson (2005)



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RESILIENT LEGAL & ADVOCATE PROFESSIONALS ARE

RARE

REGULATE

ATTUNE

RESPOND

EFFECTIVELY

Credit: Jeremy Karpen MA, LCPC – Mercy Home Chicago, IL