Changing the Question:
A Community Empowerment Workshop Series

Thank you for joining us! While you wait:
- Please mute your screen
- Feel free to use the chat or "raise" hand function to share your thoughts or comments
- Be prepared for a survey at the end

Alive and Well Communities activates communities to heal.

We do this by:
- Elevating community wisdom, centering those who have experienced trauma as leaders of the work
- Disrupting systemic oppression and responding to the impact of historical trauma
- Acting with urgency, not waiting for another day or generation
- Leading innovative solutions based on the science of trauma, toxic stress and resiliency
Changing the Question:  
A Community Empowerment Workshop Series

Series 1 – Know Thyself – We’re More than our Experiences  
Series 2 – Self Care is the Best Care  
Series 3 – Together we Triumph over Trauma

Key Takeaways

• An understanding of chronic trauma and toxic stress  
• An understanding of the impact of chronic trauma and toxic stress on individuals  
• An understanding of individual’s behavior through a lens of trauma  
• An Introduction to the Pair of ACEs

Shifting our Lens...

What stories do we tell ourselves to explain behavior?
Stress

- Brief increase in heart rate
- Mild increase in stress hormones
- Serious and temporary stress response
- Lessoned by supportive relationships
- Long activation of stress response
- Lack of support systems

Center on the Developing Child – Harvard University

Trauma?

- Threat to someone's safety OR lacking resources needed for healthy development
- Can be a single event or repeated events
- How someone assigns meaning to the event, which depends on the perception of the individual
- Results of the person's experience of the event

Understanding Trauma

Event → Experience → Effects
Private Event Trauma
Public Event Trauma
Community Trauma

Emotional and Physical Reaction

When our safety feels threatened, our minds and bodies automatically respond in one of three ways:

Fight
Flight
Freeze

Chronic Trauma

Multiple instances of the same traumatic event
or
Multiple traumatic events happening to the same person
or
Environmental or community trauma

Chronic Trauma affects all areas of functioning from our brains to our bodies.
Adverse Childhood Experience (ACE) Study

Without intervention...

Adverse Childhood Experiences
- Child abuse
- Trauma in child's home
- Child neglect

Impact of Trauma & Health Risk Behaviors
- Mental effects of trauma
  - Ex: depression, anxiety
- Health risk behaviors
  - Ex: smoking, alcoholism

Long-Term Consequences of Trauma
- Disease
  - Ex: cancer, heart disease
- Social Problems
  - Ex: homelessness, inability to parent

Adverse Childhood Experience (ACE) Study

Image: www.liverpoolcamhs.com

Health Risk Behaviors

Adult Alcoholism

Ace Score

1 2 3 4

3/15/2021
Mental Health Effects

Chronic Depression

Social Problems

Poor Job Performance

Trauma’s Impact on the Body

• **Chronic trauma** or **toxic stress** causes damage to the body.

• **Constant use of the stress response system** (long-term release of chemicals and hormones, increased blood sugar, faster heart rate, etc.) can lead to **poor health outcomes**.
ACE Study Takeaways

1. Traumatic experiences are more common than previously thought.

2. The effects of trauma continue beyond the event itself.

3. Without intervention, events that happen in childhood can impact us in adulthood.
How common is trauma?

More than 50% of the general population have experienced at least one traumatic event.

How common is trauma in your community?

What's going on in the country?

- As adults, children who were placed in foster care have PTSD rates TWICE as high as US War Veterans.¹
- 1 in 4 children in the United States will witness or experience a traumatic event before they turn four. ²

¹ Northwest Foster Care Alumni Study, 2005
² National Center for Mental Health Promotion and Youth Violence Prevention, 2012
What’s going on in Missouri?

In High school...
• 1 in 5 reported being bullied electronically
• 1 in 5 reported experiencing bullying on school property
• 1 in 10 reported experiencing physical dating violence
• 3 in 10 reported feeling sad or hopeless for 2 or more weeks in a row

CDC Youth Online Risk Behavior Surveys for High School, 2017

Healthy Brain Development

• At birth, the brain is about a quarter the size of the adult brain in weight and volume, but contains nearly the same number of brain cells or neurons (100 billion).
• The lower brain is well developed at birth, but the higher regions are less developed.

Healthy Brain Development

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>At Birth</th>
<th>6 Years Old</th>
<th>14 Years Old</th>
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• Connections in the brain form as a child experiences the world.
• The used connections are strengthened and the unused connections begin to prune in adolescence.
Trauma’s Impact on the Brain

Trauma can...
• Strengthen survival connections
• Reduce the number of connections formed
• Reduce the size of the higher brain region

Resulting in...
• Short-term memory problems
• Attention difficulty
• Language development delays
• Emotional and behavioral problems

Triggers

Trigger - automatic association the brain makes with a traumatic or stressful event.
• Sight
• Sound
• Touch
• Taste
• Smell
• Event (body position)
Trauma and Development

• How trauma is experienced is dependent on developmental and life stages.

• Change can often result in the re-emergence of symptoms.

Early Childhood → Adolescence → Adulthood

Trauma’s Impact on Young Children

- Delayed verbal skills
- Memory problems
- Developmental regression
- Aggression
- Excessive crying or screaming
- Problems with focus or learning
- Issues with eating and digestion
- Bad temper, sadness, anxiety
- Nightmares/sleep difficulties
- Need to act out the traumatic event
- Exaggerated startle response
- Difficulty trusting others
- Lack of self-confidence
- Physical complaints
- Bed wetting

Trauma’s Impact on Adolescents

- Fear about safety
- Sudden changes in behavior
- Difficulty trusting others
- Emotional numbing
- Repeated thoughts and comments about death or dying (violent or suicidal thoughts, writing, art, or internet searches)
- Increased difficulty with authority
- Sleep difficulties
- Exaggerated startle response
- Avoidance behaviors
- Re-experiencing the trauma through nightmares or memories
Impact of Trauma on Adults

Adults may experience the impact of compounded, unaddressed childhood trauma, but also experience new traumatic experiences throughout the life span. Resulting symptoms include:

- Depression
- Lack of trust, particularly of authority
- Impaired social/sexual relationships
- Hypervigilance
- Inertia
- Substance use disorders/self-medicating
- Mental illness
- Emotional dysregulation

Applying the Lens of Trauma

- What type of trauma has affected your neighbors and/or community?
- What has been the impact of that trauma (i.e., health, how much they engage with the community)?
- What situations may have the potential to activate your neighbor's stress-response system?
- What does the "fight, flight, or freeze" response look like for them in the moment (e.g., sweating, heart racing, yelling, shutting down)?
- How might this information change how you see people?

We’re More Than our Experiences

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Intervention

Trauma is not cured, but...

- We need to **treat the trauma**, not just its symptom (mental illness, health risk behaviors, etc.).
- Many effective **clinical interventions** are available.
  - Healing doesn't require telling one's **story**.
- **2 in 3** individuals won’t need clinical intervention.
  - The support of **one caring adult** can lessen the impact of trauma.

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Changing the Question

To become **Alive and Well**, we need to change the question from...

**What’s wrong with you?**

to

**What happened to you?**

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Remember to take care of you.

- Crisis Help Text Line – 24/7
  - Text HOME to 741741
- STL Behavioral Health Response – 24/7
  - 314-677-3405
- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline – 24/7
  - 1-800-273-TALK (8255)
- National Domestic Violence Hotline – 24/7
  - 1-800-799-SAFE (7233)
- Veterans Crisis Line – 24/7
  - 1-800-223-8255 and press 1
  - Text STP255

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Evaluation - Tell Us What you Think

• Go to www.menti.com
• Enter the code provided by presenter

THANK YOU!

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