

Understanding Trauma

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Today's Presenter



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What is Trauma?

Definition (SAMHSA Experts 2012) includes **three key elements**

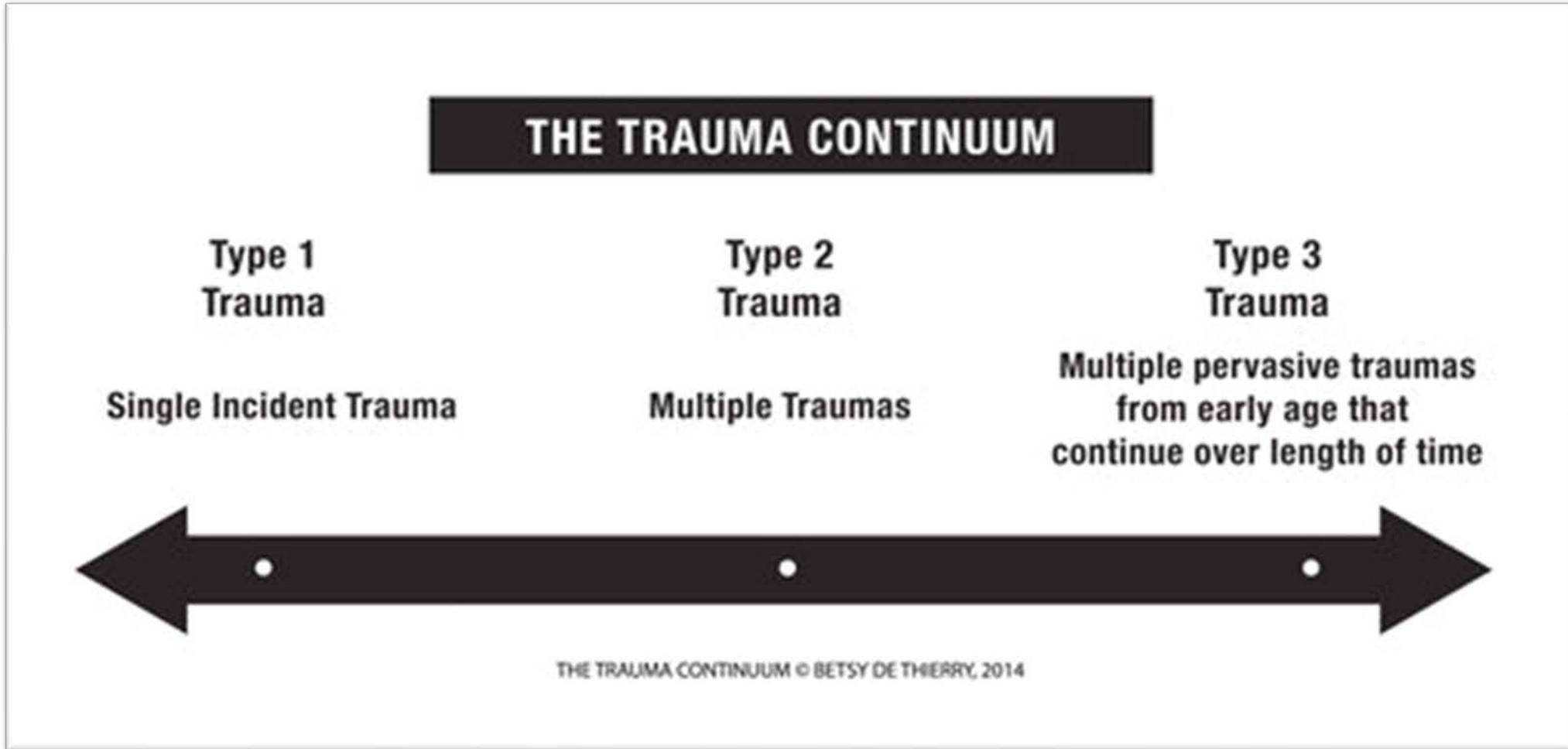
*Individual trauma results from an **event**, series of events, or set of circumstances that is **experienced** by an individual as overwhelming or life-changing and that has profound **effects** on the individual's psychological development or well-being, often involving a physiological, social, and/or spiritual impact.*



Types of Trauma



The Trauma Continuum





Typical Development

- I live in a predictable & benevolent world
- I am worthwhile
- I am hopeful & optimistic about my future
- I have the ability to impact & change my life

Trauma

- People want to hurt me
- I am not safe
- I am afraid
- No one will help me
- I am not good/smart/worthy enough for people to care about me
- It will never get better
- I need to establish personal power & control

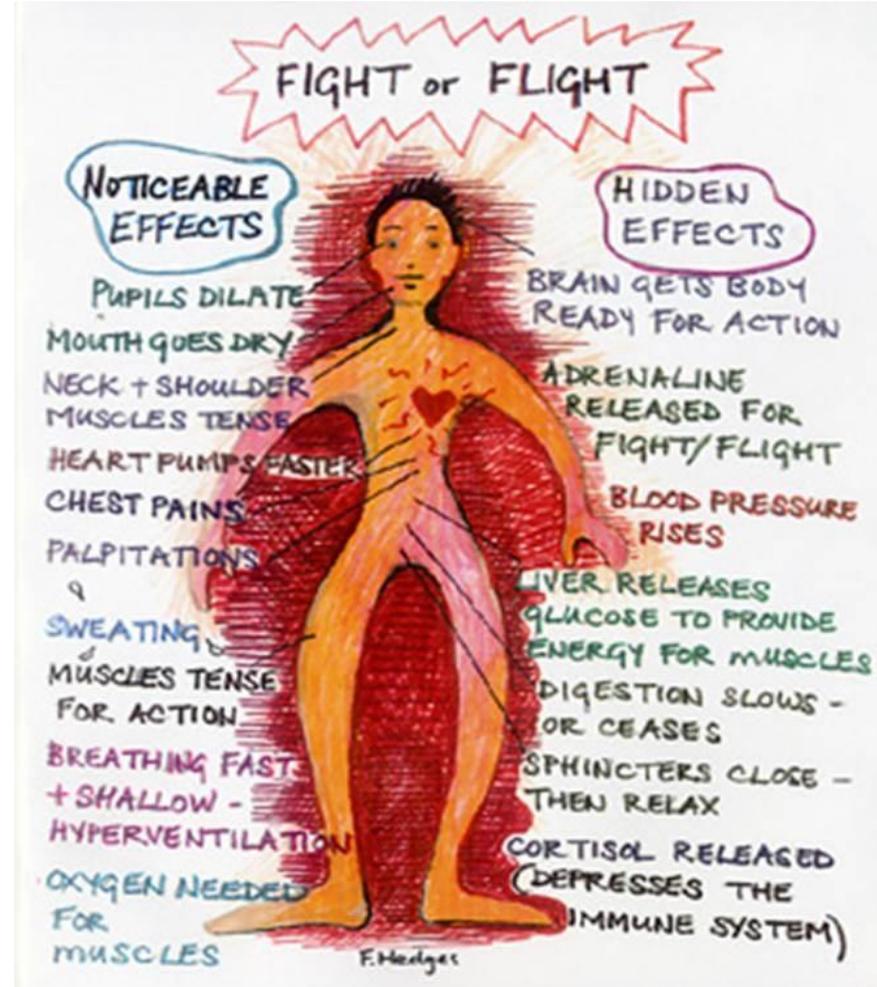
Survival Mode Response



Inability to

- Respond
- Learn
- Process

Trauma's Impact on the Body



Impact of Trauma on Behavior Triggers

External reminders of traumatic event

- *Smell*
- *Sound*
- *Sight*
- *Touch*
- *Taste*

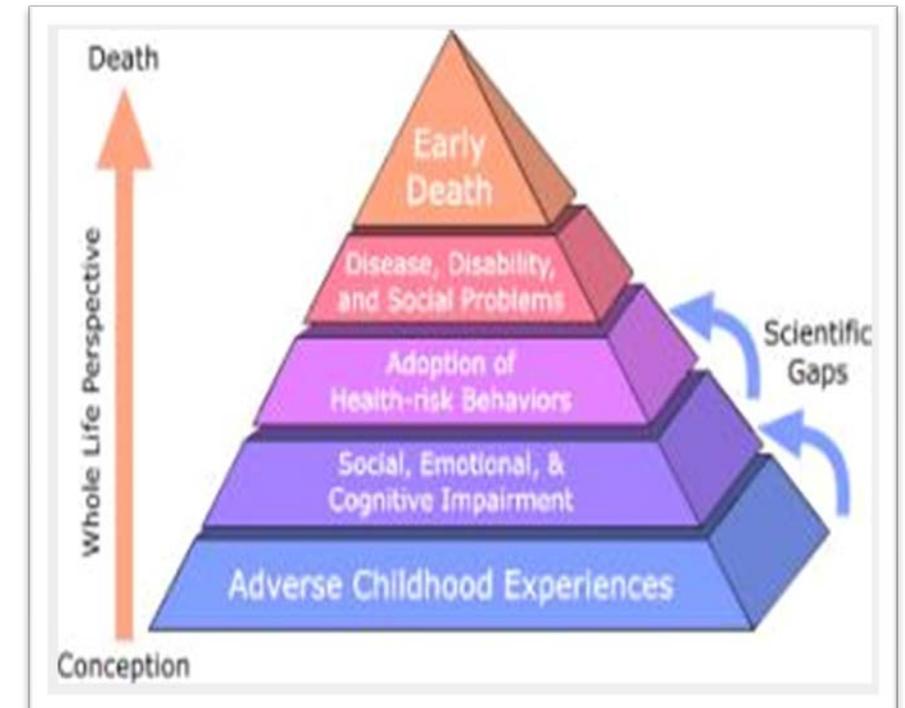
Internal reminders of traumatic event

- *Emotions*
- *Thoughts*

The Adverse Childhood Experience Study- Behavioral Health at the Foundation of all Health

- Over 17,000 adults studied from 1995-1997
- Almost 2/3 of participants reported at least one ACE
- Over 1/5 reported three or more ACEs, including abuse, neglect, and other types of childhood trauma
- Major links identified between early childhood trauma and long term health outcomes,
 - Including increased risk of many chronic illnesses and [early death](#)

"Major Findings," Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)



Child physical
abuse

Child sexual
abuse

Child emotional
abuse

Physical neglect

Emotional
neglect

Mentally ill,
depressed or
suicidal person
in the home

Drug addicted or
alcoholic family
member

Witnessing
domestic
violence against
the mother

Loss of a parent
to death or
abandonment,
including
abandonment by
divorce

Incarceration of
any family
member

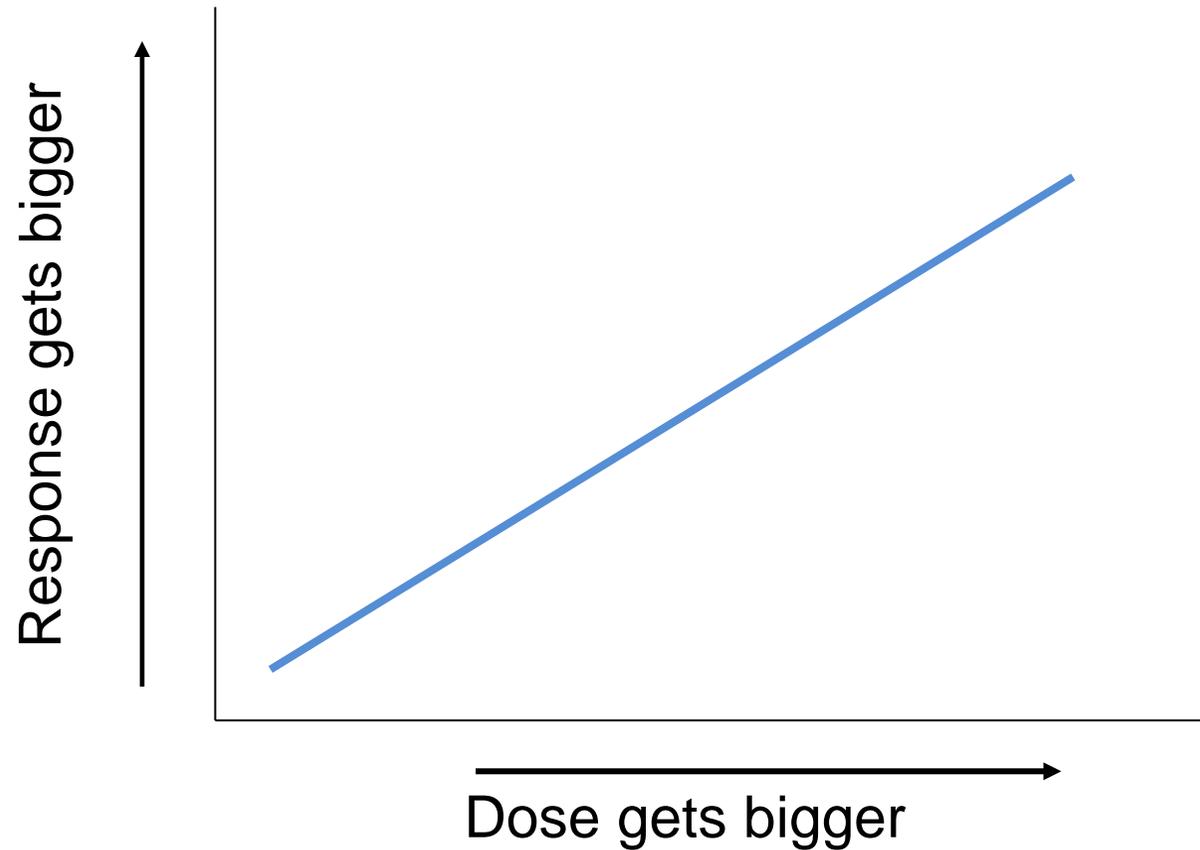
Adverse Childhood Experiences

People who have experienced trauma are:

- **Up to 15 times** more likely to attempt suicide
- **4 times** more likely to have an alcohol dependency
- **4 times** more likely to inject drugs
- **3 times** more likely to be absent from work
- **3 times** more likely to experience depression
- **3 times** more likely to have serious job problems
- **2.5 times** more likely to smoke
- **2 times** more likely to develop chronic obstructive pulmonary disease
- **2 times** more likely to have a serious financial problem

U.S. Dept. of Health & Human Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. 2011.

Dose-Response Relationship: More ACEs = More Disease



Life-Long Health Outcomes Linked to ACEs

- Alcohol, tobacco & other drug addiction
- Auto-immune disease
- Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease & ischemic heart disease
- Depression, anxiety & other mental illness
- Diabetes
- Multiple divorces
- Fetal death
- High risk sexual activity, STDs & unintended pregnancy
- Intimate partner violence—perpetration & victimization
- Liver disease
- Lung cancer
- Obesity
- Self-regulation & anger management problems
- Skeletal fractures
- Suicide attempts
- Work problems—including absenteeism, productivity & on-the-job injury

ACEs and its Effects on Children

According to Dr. Chris Blodgett, children with three or more ACEs are:

- 3 times more likely to **fail school**
- 5 times more likely to have **severe attendance problems**
- 6 times more likely to have **severe behavior problems**
- 4 times more likely to have **self-reports of poor health**

According to SAMHSA, children with 2 or more ACEs are:

- 3 times more likely to **repeat a grade**
- 2 times more likely to have a **special health care need**

What is PTSD?

- PTSD is a disorder that develops in some people who have experienced a shocking, scary, or dangerous event. Nearly everyone will experience a range of reactions after trauma, yet most people recover from initial symptoms, naturally. Those who do not, may be diagnosed with PTSD.
- PTSD is “a psychiatric disorder that can occur in people who have experienced or witnessed a traumatic event such as a natural disaster, a serious accident, a terrorist act, war/combat, rape or other violent personal assault.”

National Institute on Mental Health. <https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/post-traumatic-stress-disorder-ptsd/index.shtml>

Prevalence of PTSD

- PTSD can occur in all people, in people of any ethnicity, nationality or culture, and any age.
- PTSD affects approximately 3.6 percent of Americans (about 5.2 million).
- An estimated one in 11 (7.8 million) people will be diagnosed PTSD in their lifetime.
- Women are twice as likely as men to have PTSD.

Diagnostic Criteria

- A diagnosis of PTSD requires exposure to an upsetting traumatic event. However, exposure could be indirect rather than first hand.
- For a person to be diagnosed with PTSD, however, symptoms last for more than a month and often persist for months and sometimes years.
- For people with PTSD, the symptoms cause significant distress or problems functioning. PTSD often occurs with other related conditions, such as depression, substance use, memory problems and other physical and mental health problems.

<https://www.psychiatry.org/patients-families/ptsd/what-is-ptsd>

Typical Reaction to Trauma

- People react to experience of trauma in a variety of ways, such as sadness, irritability and confusion. In the immediate aftermath of a major traumatic event most people complain of stress, difficulty concentrating, sleeping or getting along with others.
- With PTSD, the troubling symptoms worsen, affect social and school/work functioning, and persist longer than a month.

<https://www.psychiatry.org/patients-families/ptsd/expert-q-and-a>

PTSD Symptoms

- People with PTSD have intense, disturbing thoughts and feelings related to their experience that last long after the traumatic event has ended. They may relive the event through:
 - Flashbacks, nightmares, and/or poor sleep
 - Feel sadness, severe anxiety, fear and/or anger;
 - Feel detached or estranged from other people;
 - Avoidance of groups
 - Uncontrollable thoughts about the event.
- Symptoms may start within one month of a traumatic event, but sometimes symptoms may not appear until years after the event.

<https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/post-traumatic-stress-disorder/diagnosis-treatment/drc-20355973>

Physical Problems Commonly Associated with PTSD

- Increased blood pressure and heart rate, fatigue, muscle tension, nausea, joint pain, headaches, back pain or other types of pain
- The person in pain may not realize the connection between their pain and a traumatic event.
- Chronic pain may actually serve as a reminder of the traumatic event, which in turn may intensify PTSD symptoms.
- Some people who develop PTSD and chronic pain also experience depression and alcohol and prescription medication misuse.
- Chronic PTSD has been shown to increase the risk of having a variety of health issues and decreased life expectancy.

<https://www.psychiatry.org/patients-families/ptsd/expert-q-and-a>

Children Experiencing PTSD

Do children react differently than adults?

Children and teens can have extreme reactions to trauma, but their symptoms may not be the same as adults. In very young children (less than 6 years of age), these symptoms can include:

- ▶ Wetting the bed after having learned to use the toilet
- ▶ Forgetting how or being unable to talk
- ▶ Acting out the scary event during playtime
- ▶ Being unusually clingy with a parent or other adult

Older children and teens usually show symptoms more like those seen in adults. They may also develop disruptive, disrespectful, or destructive behaviors. Older children and teens may feel guilty for not preventing injury or deaths. They may also have thoughts of revenge. For more information, see the NIMH booklet series, **“Helping Children and Adolescents Cope with Violence and Disasters.”** These are available on the NIMH website, www.nimh.nih.gov.

Children Experiencing PTSD

- The loss of a parent through death or by separation, especially if sudden, may be stressful for a young child. Physical and sexual abuse may also lead to traumatic symptoms in children and adolescents.
- Helping a child with PTSD generally involves assisting the child, parents and caregivers, creating a feeling of safety, helping the child speak about his or her feelings and experiences directly or through art and play, and teaching the child relaxation and coping skills.

<https://www.psychiatry.org/patients-families/ptsd/expert-q-and-a>

Trauma-Informed Screening & Assessment

Screening - brief, focused inquiry to determine what is an individual's

- Experience of traumatic events or current events that might be traumatizing
- Experiencing of invasive thoughts, feelings or behaviors associated with trauma

Assessment - more in-depth exploration of the nature and severity of the traumatic events and the consequences on a person's life including current distressing symptoms

How can you help?

Sleeping / Nightmares: no touching

No “fooling around”: Don’t sneak up on someone, don’t make sudden noises behind them

Understand the impact of TV

Consider special requests: light, noise, large groups

How can you help?

Encourage the person to:

- Tell others what they need
- Identify sources of support
- Take care of themselves
- Use coping strategies that have helped in the past
- Spend time somewhere in a safe and comfortable place
- Seek trained professional help for support

Encourage positive coping strategies.

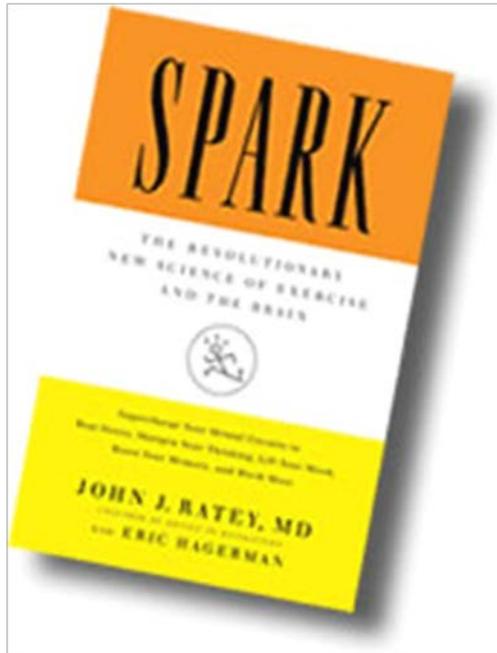
Professional Help

- Know when to refer
- Be knowledgeable about PTSD treatments and aware that they work
- Encourage keeping appointments
- Acknowledge that it will be HARD but it is worth it
- Ask what the alternative is
- Be wary of splitting

Trauma Treatment

- **Physical/Somatic Approaches**
- **Cognitive-Behavioral Approaches**
- **Skills Training**
- **Mindfulness Training**
- **Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing***
- **Narrative Exposure Therapy***
- **Animal Assisted Therapy**
- **Psychodynamic Psychotherapy**
- **Group Therapy**
- **Peer Support**

Understand the Mind/Body Connection



Defining Resilience

1. Emotional regulation: The ability to control our emotions, attention, and thus our behavior
2. Impulse control: The ability to manage expression of our feelings
3. Accurate identification of the cause of adversity
4. Self-efficacy: The sense that we can solve problems and succeed
5. Realistic optimism: Being positive about the future *and* realistic
6. Empathy: Able to read others behavior, to understand their states, and build relationship
7. Reaching out: The continued drive to take on more challenges and opportunities



Thank you!

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