

OFFICE OF JUVENILE JUSTICE  
AND DELINQUENCY PREVENTION

# 2021 TRIBAL YOUTH VIRTUAL NATIONAL CONFERENCE

Strengthening Resilience, Promoting Healing, Restoring Culture



SHAPING BRIGHTER FUTURES WITH  
AMERICAN INDIAN, ALASKA NATIVE YOUTH  
AND TRIBAL COMMUNITIES

MARCH 29 - APRIL 2



# 2021 OJJDP Tribal Youth National Conference

## **Building an Indigenous Resilience-Focused Lens, Part One**

**Monday, March 29, 2021**

**10:15am AKT/ 11:15am PT/ 12:15pm MT/ 1:15pm CT/ 2:15pm ET**

### **Session Facilitators:**

**Laura Guay, National Native Children's Trauma Center**

**Ashley Trautman, National Native Children's Trauma Center**

# Opening in a Good Way

A spark of kindness made a light.  
The light made an opening in the darkness.

*Once the World Was Perfect*  
By Joy Harjo



# Today's Facilitators



**Laura Guay**  
**Training & Technical Assistance  
Manager**



**Ashley Trautman**  
**Juvenile Justice Training &  
Technical Assistance Specialist**

# Think Trauma : A Training for Working with Justice-Involved Youth

Developed by The National Child Trauma Stress Network Juvenile Justice Consortium





## Overview

*Module One: Trauma and Justice Involvement*

*Module Two: Trauma's Impact on Development*

Module Three: Trauma in Context & Coping

Module Four: Trauma & Staff Wellness

# Why Think Trauma?

- How we explain behavior is directly linked to how we handle it.
- Trauma is not an excuse for behavior but an explanation for it.
- Understanding the impact of trauma gives us more tools to do our job, make everyone safer, and help youth build healthier lives and better futures.



# Learning Objectives

- **Define trauma** and describe how it differs from everyday stress
- View behaviors through a **trauma lens**
- Better understand the role of **resilience** and **recovery** in buffering the effects of traumatic events and promoting health and development





# What is a potentially traumatic event?

## What You Can Do

Exposure: How a person experiences a potentially traumatic event can vary from person to person, but with trauma, the event is experienced as harmful. Traumatic events can have short and/or long-term adverse effects on a person's physical, social, emotional, and spiritual health that may

- show up immediately or later in a person's life.
- ✓ Consider how experiencing a traumatic event impacts how youth feel in detention.



# Juvenile-Justice Youth Exposure to Trauma



# Preparing for Action

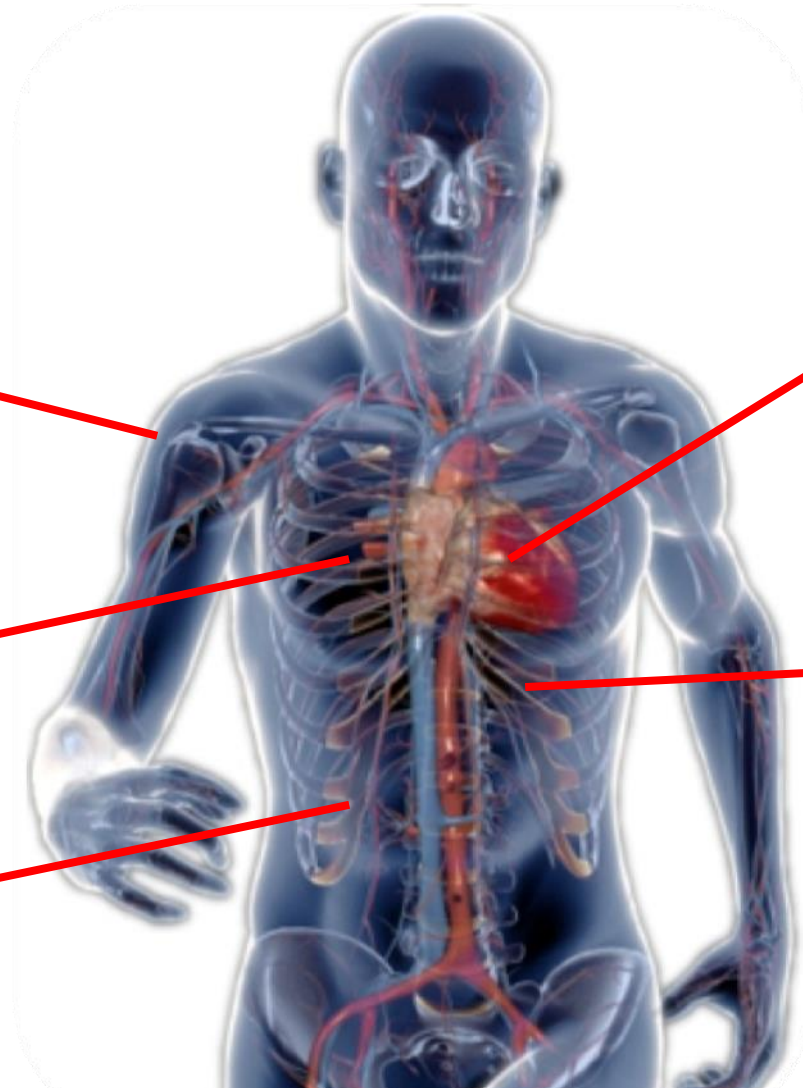
Tensed muscles

Heart rate and blood pressure increase

Breathing rate increases

Release of adrenaline and cortisol

Digestion slows



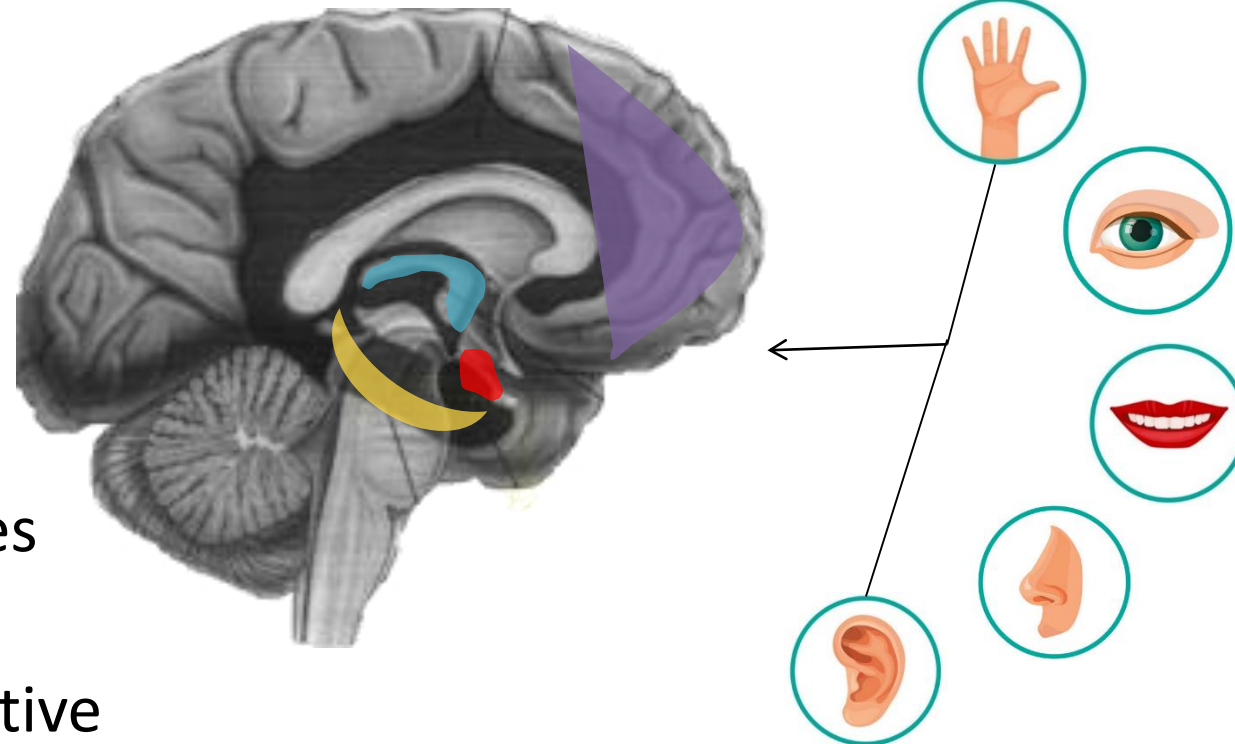
# Understanding the Brain

## Survival Brain

- Seeing threat
- Remembering danger
- Preparing to protect

## Learning Brain

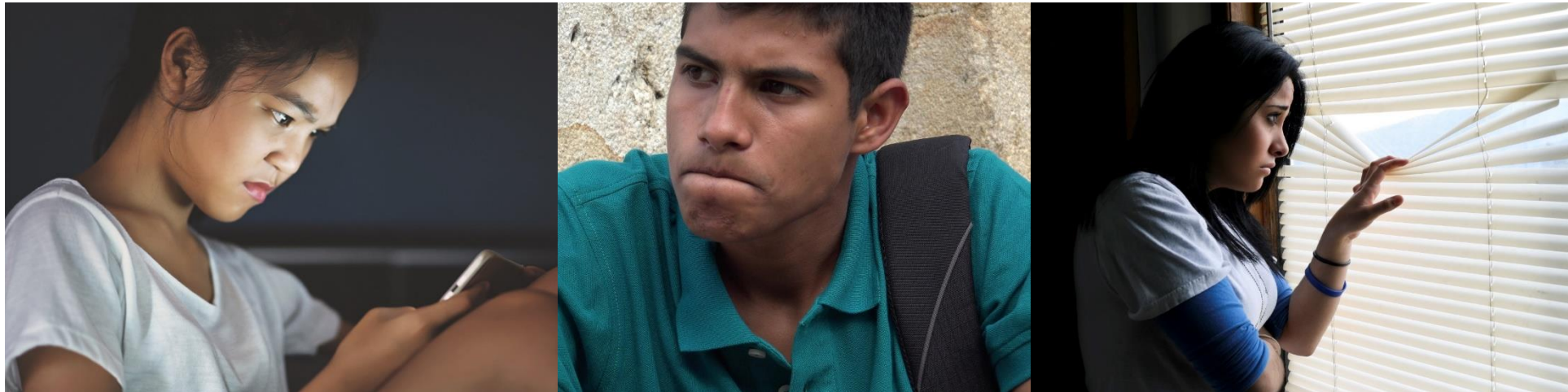
- Controlling impulses
- Thinking through decisions and effective protection strategies



# Establishing Safety

## *What You Can Do:*

- The first step to help youth feel safer with being present and engaged manner is to help them feel physically and psychologically safe.
- ✓ Create predictability
  - ✓ Balance firmness with caring



# Creating a Trauma-Informed Safety Plan



- Safety plans should include:
- A trauma-informed safety plan is one tool that all staff may use to collaborate with a youth who has experienced trauma.
  - Brief trauma history
  - Trauma reminders
  - Early warning signs of losing control
  - This is usually a plan shared between staff and youth to help youth use healthier coping strategies.
  - Calming & regulating behaviors

# Trauma Reminders or Triggers

Things, events, situations, places, sensations, and even people that a youth consciously or unconsciously connects with a traumatic event.



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# Calming the Survival Brain

Youth affected by trauma may:

## ***What You Can Do***

- Expect others to compromise their safety.
- ✓ List the actions an adult does to make youth feel unsafe and activate their survival brain.
- Try to feel safe and protect themselves in ways that are risky, dangerous, or destructive.
- ✓ Consider some ways you and your co-workers can avoid behaviors that make youth feel unsafe.
- Can learn new ways to feel safe from firm and caring adults who are aware of trauma reminders.





# How Youth Respond to Trauma: Traumatic Stress Reactions



- Re-Experiencing
- Avoidance
- Hyperarousal/Reactivity
- Negative alteration in cognition/mood
- Dissociation

# How Youth Respond to Trauma: Re-Experiencing Symptoms

Intrusive images, sensations, or memories of the traumatic event recur uncontrollably.

This includes:

- Nightmares
- Disturbing thoughts
- Flashbacks
- Physiological reactions
- Intense/prolonged psychological distress



# How Youth Respond to Trauma: Avoidance Symptoms

Avoidance of **internal reminders**:

- Thoughts, feelings, or physical sensations

Avoidance of **external reminders**:

- People, places, objects
- Activities, situations, conversations
- Avoid discussing related issues



# How Youth Respond to Trauma: Alterations in Arousal & Reactivity

- Irritable or aggressive behavior
- Self-destructive or reckless behavior
- Jumpiness or quick to startle
- Problems with concentration
- Sleep disturbance
- Hyperarousal/hypervigilance



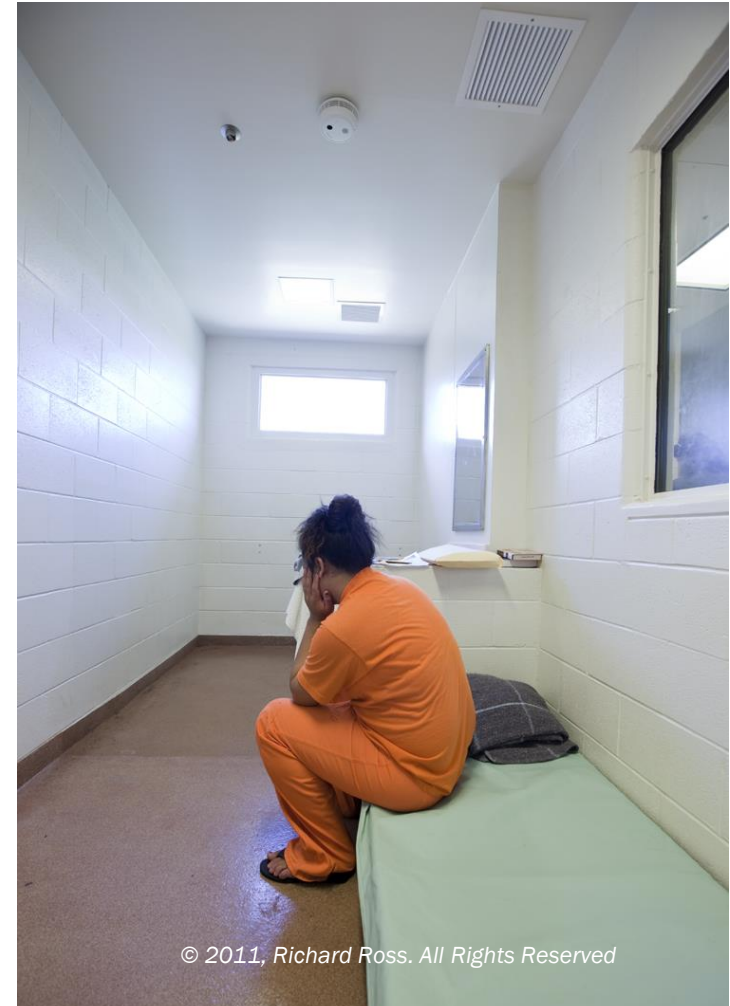
# How Youth Respond to Trauma: Negative Alterations in Cognition & Mood

- Inability to remember parts of traumatic event
- Persistent negative emotions
- Persistent difficulty experiencing positive emotions
- Decreased interest or participation in activities
- Feeling detached from others
- Persistent exaggerated negative expectations
- Persistent distorted blame of self or others




# How Youth Respond to Trauma: Dissociation

- Feeling unreal and disconnected from self
- Mentally separating the self from the experience
- May experience the self as detached from the body, on the ceiling, or somewhere else in the room
- May feel as if in a dream or unreal state



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# Rates of Trauma & PTSD in JJ Youth



93% of juvenile offenders reported at least one or more traumatic experiences and on average reporting at least 6.

Youth in the JJ population have rates of PTSD comparable to those of service members returning from Iraq.

40% of youth with trauma history are diagnosed with at least one other mood, anxiety or disruptive behavior disorder.

# Understanding Trauma & Preventing Re-Offending

Identifying trauma can improve risk assessment for further offending and lead to rehabilitative services that work.

## Risk

Determining the likelihood for re-offending and type of services that will rehabilitate.

## Need

Targeted provision of services that are matched to specific risks for re-offending using effective and proven tools.

## Responsivity

Youth's ability to rehabilitate is maximized by tailoring services to youth needs and strengths.



# Mental Health Disorders' Role in Responding to Trauma

Rates of Mental Health (MH) Disorders

Type of MH Disorder	% with MH Diagnosis
Disruptive Disorders <i>(i.e. Conduct Disorder)</i>	46.5%
Substance Use Disorders	46.2%
Anxiety Disorders	34.4%
Mood Disorders	18.3%



What are barriers to working with mental health professionals and communicating with them about youth?

What improves working with mental health professionals and helps communication with them about youth?



# Understanding Resilience & Managing Challenges

## Assets

- Self-efficacy
- Self-esteem
- Competence
- Spiritual belief

## Resources

- Family support
- Peer support
- Community connections
- School connectedness

**What specific assets or resources do you think support youth who have experienced trauma?**



# Rebuilding Beyond Survival

## *What You Can Do:*

- ✓ Not take their behavior personally.
- ✓ Youth whose functioning declines due to trauma exposure can recover when given opportunities to rebuild their lives.
- ✓ Let them know it is okay to feel upsetting feelings.
- ✓ Help translate their behavior into feelings and words they can express in a healthy way.
- ✓ Work with them to reduce or avoid unnecessary reminders.
- ✓ Invite youth to share what is most frustrating about stressful situations and brainstorm healthy ways to deal with it that addresses it directly.



# Better for Everyone



What are things  
you can do or say  
to help youth feel  
safe?



2<sup>nd</sup> Edition

# Understanding Trauma's Impact on Development



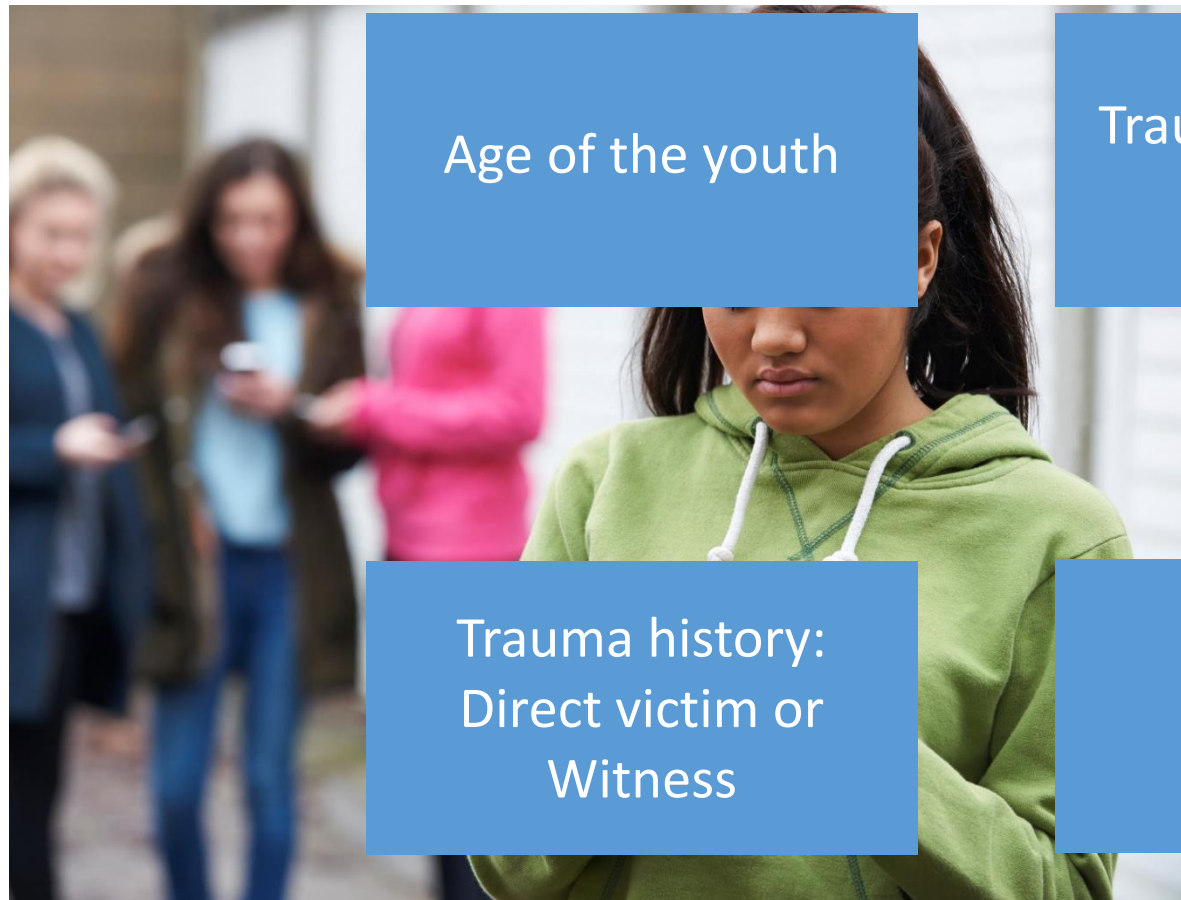
NCTSN

The National Child  
Traumatic Stress Network

# Learning Objectives

- Describe how trauma impacts *attachment* and *relationships*
- Identify key *adolescent developmental tasks* and *competencies*
- Describe how trauma can *derail developmental progression*

# Trauma and Factors that Influence Its Impact



Age of the youth

Trauma at the hand of caregivers

Trauma history:  
Direct victim or  
Witness

Secondary  
adversities

Factors that a person experiences as extremely harmful or life threatening and potentially have short term harmful effects on the person.

# Protection and Injury

- Stage of development and life experiences shape the way youth perceive protection and safety.
- Each traumatic experience can cause invisible wounds that can change how a child develops.
- Youth recover from these wounds through relationships they build with healthy adults.





# Complex Trauma: Trauma Exposure & Development Impact

## Domains of Impact:

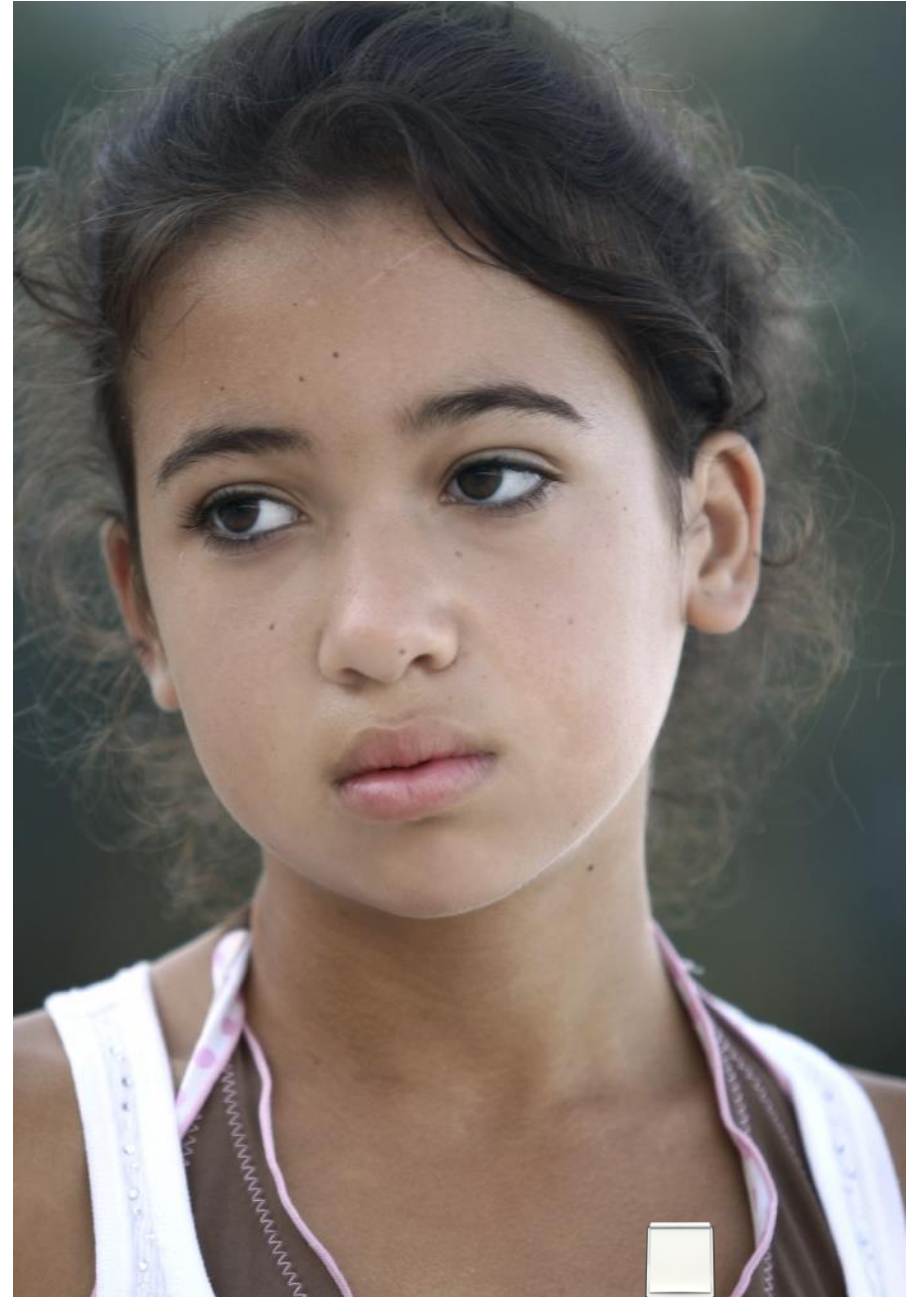
- Chronic and/or multiple traumas
- Attachment & Relationships
  - Interpersonal trauma often caused by a caregiver or other trusted adult.
- Biological & Physical
- Trauma typically begins at a very young age.
- Cognition
  - Emotion Regulation
  - Behavioral Regulation
  - Self-Concept & Future Orientation/Worldview



# Impact of Multiple Traumas: Complex Trauma & Victimization

- Bullied at School
- Complex trauma involves being victimized and often exposed to multiple types of violence.  
Living in a home with a parent who uses substances
- Exposure to community violence
- Exposure to violence and sexual victimization by a stranger or acquaintance outside of home experiences outside the home in settings such as the community or school.  
Exposure to domestic violence

Nowhere is safe or feels safe!





## Trauma's Impact on Attachment & Relationships

- Continued expectation of maltreatment or abandonment
- Persistent distrust and suspiciousness of others
- Isolation and withdrawal
- Difficulty in perspective-taking and enlisting others as allies
- Difficulty with establishing appropriate social boundaries
- Frequently marked by violence

# Trauma's Impact on Healthy Physical Development

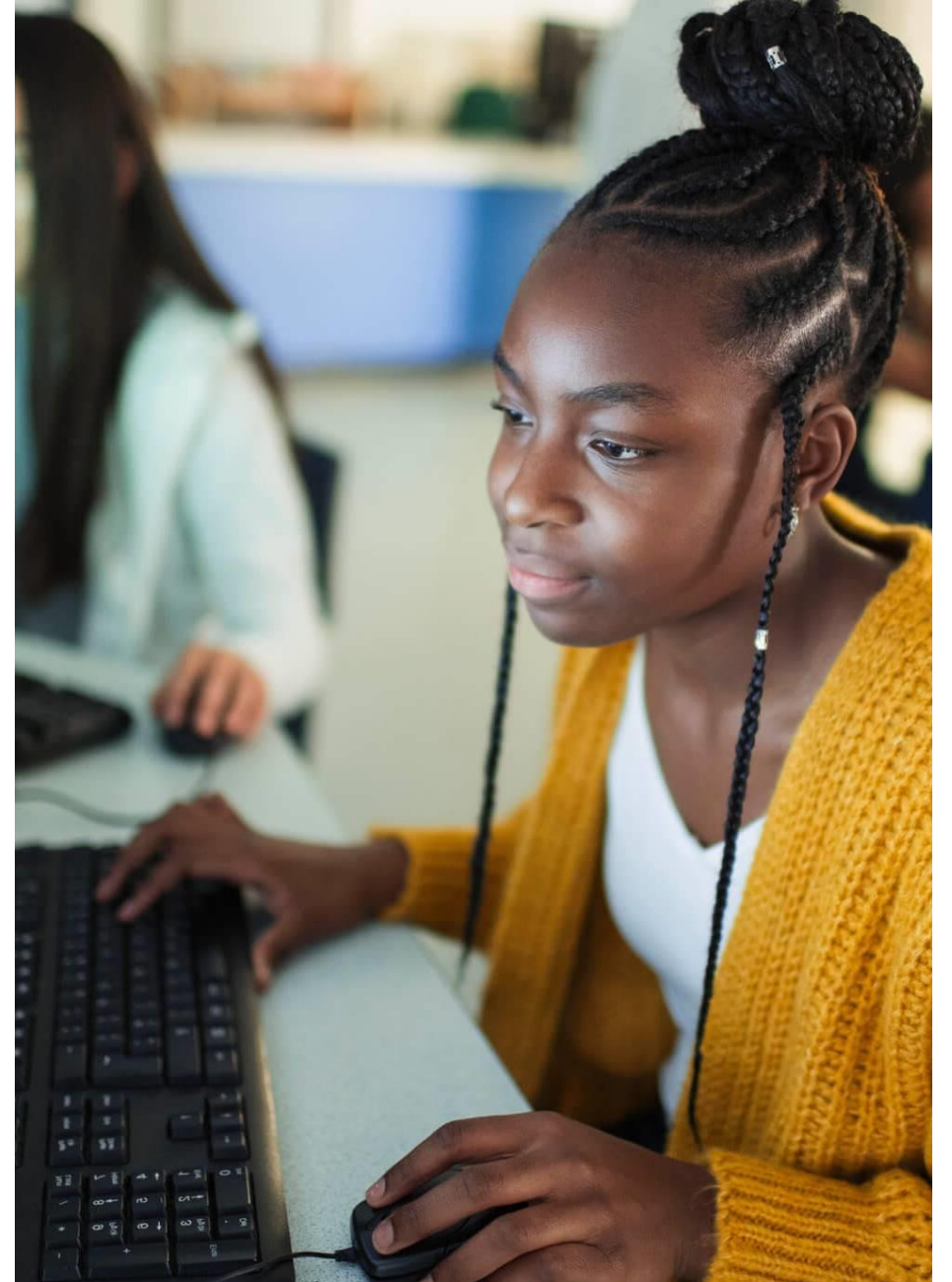
- Body development can be more distressing.
- Hormones may modify mood-behavior.
- Body may serve as a trauma reminder.
- Alcohol and substance abuse can also be ways of trying to control changing emotions and physical sensations.
- Changes in the stress response can occur.



# Key Adolescent Developmental Tasks: Cognitive Development

During adolescence, individuals:

- Develop a greater capacity for abstract thought
- Take in a great deal of new information, retain it, and apply it to effectively problem-solve and achieve academically as well as in other developmental areas



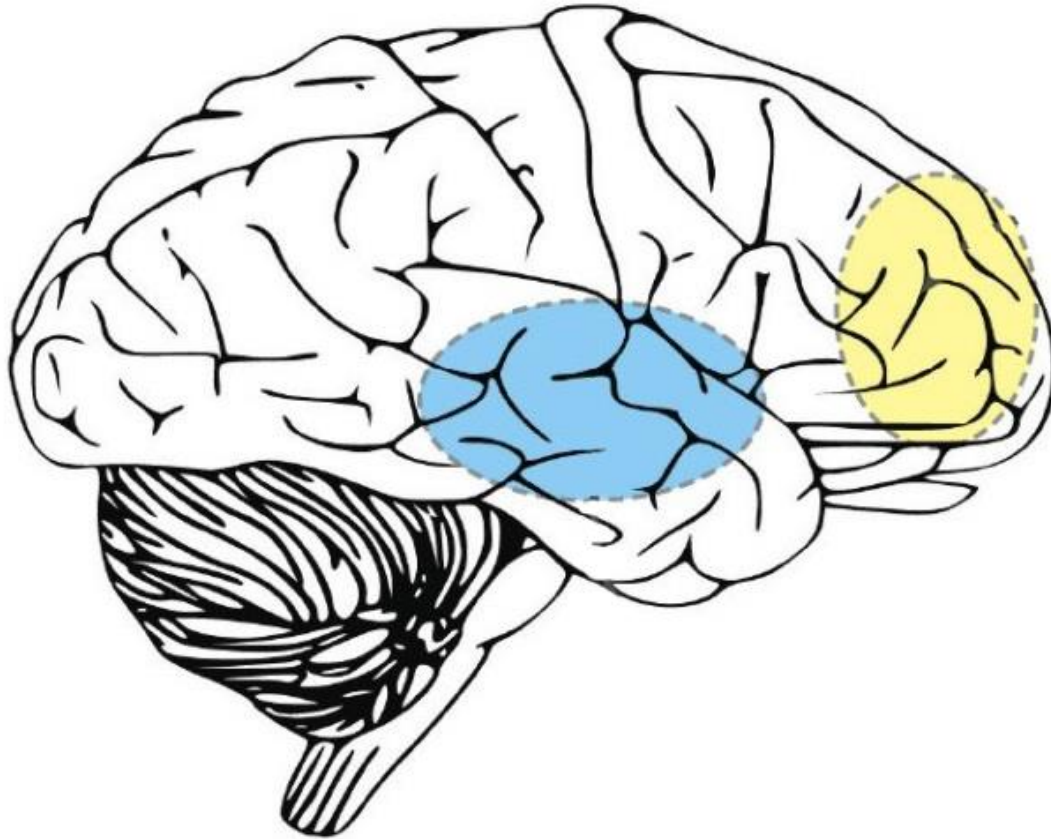
# Cognition



Cognition refers to a range of mental processes including:

- Acquiring information
- Storing information for a short or long period of time
- Manipulating the information – meaning that you can use the information to complete another task and hold on to it at the same time
- Retrieving the information when you need to use it

# Trauma Interference with Functioning & Managing Danger



- Has difficulty sustaining attention
- Has memory impairments that make it hard to hold onto information and use it to solve problems
- Has trauma reactions that interfere with test taking and the ability to learn from the outside information world.
- Looking for danger which impedes their ability to focus.

Photo Credit: <http://communityresiliencecookbook.org/your-body-brain/>

# Trauma's Impact of Decision-Making

Reasons for poor decision-making for trauma-exposed youth may include:

- Misinterprets people and situations as threatening
- Has less self-control and difficulty thinking through consequences of decisions
- Is drawn to peers may be inexperienced at dealing with problems in healthy ways
- Has increased sensitivity to rewards during adolescence may make the above worse

**Complex trauma can negatively impact short- and long-term decision making.**





# Getting Development Back on Track: Building Trust



New experiences with trusted adults and peers can help youth to develop alternative views of themselves, the world, and others.

# Activity: Building Trust



- What is the impact of trauma on their relationships?
- What is the impact of trauma on their physical and cognitive development?
- How would you build trust with your youth?



# Key Adolescent Developmental Tasks: Emotional & Behavioral Development

During adolescence, individuals:

- Have increased awareness and sensitivity to the emotional experiences of others and themselves
- Develop increased impulse control and wider range of behaviors to problem solve

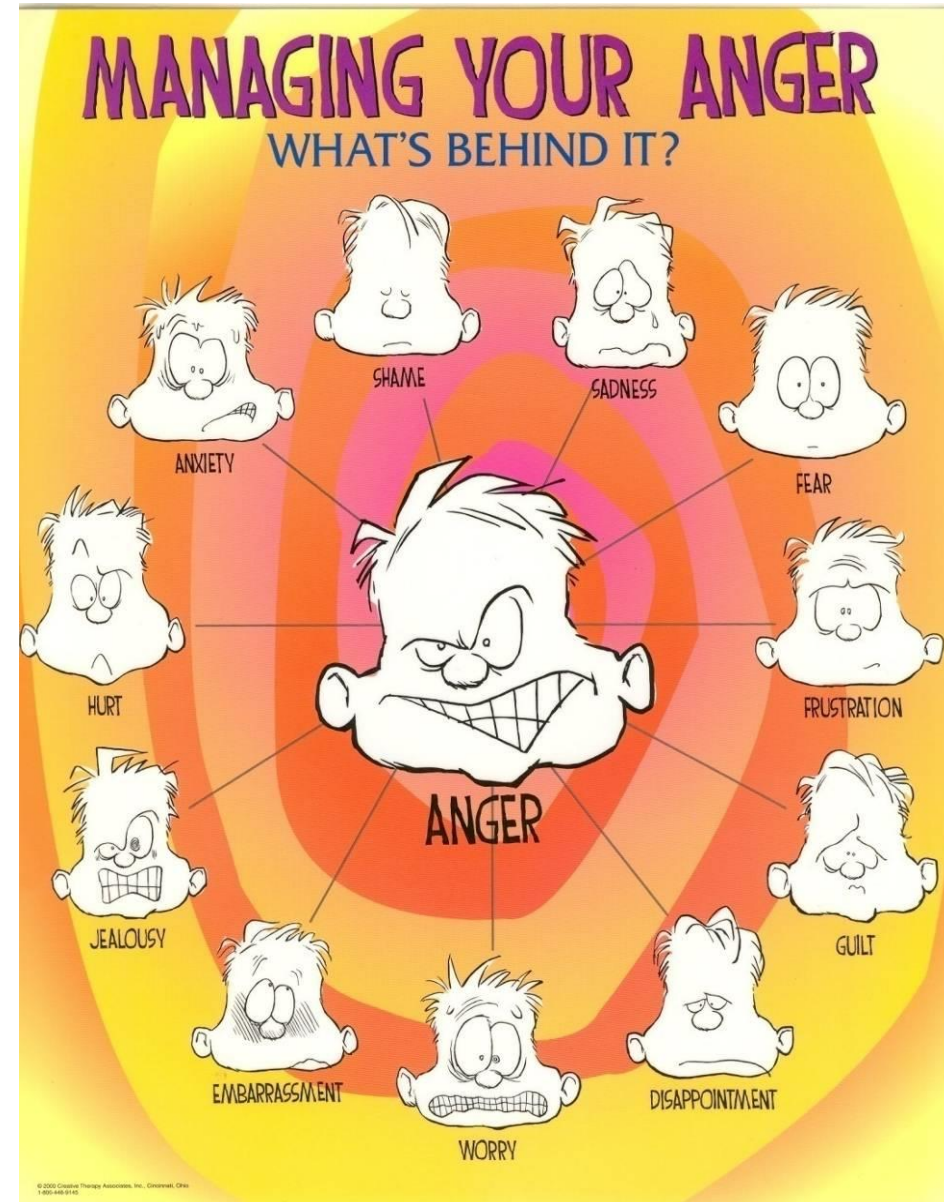


# Trauma's Impact on Emotional Development

- Difficulty with self-regulation
- Difficulty describing feelings/internal states
- Difficulty communicating wishes and desires



Is it really  
anger?



# Behavioral Regulation



# Trauma's Impact on Behavioral Development



Youth who have experienced significant trauma may have difficulty:

- Making realistic appraisals of danger and safety
- Governing behavior to meet longer-term goals

As a result, these adolescents may engage in:

- Reckless and risk-taking behavior
- Become avoidant of any risk



# Getting Development Back on Track: Promoting Empowerment



Opportunities to develop a healthy sense of control over their lives builds resilience and counters the impact of trauma on their view of themselves, others, and the world.



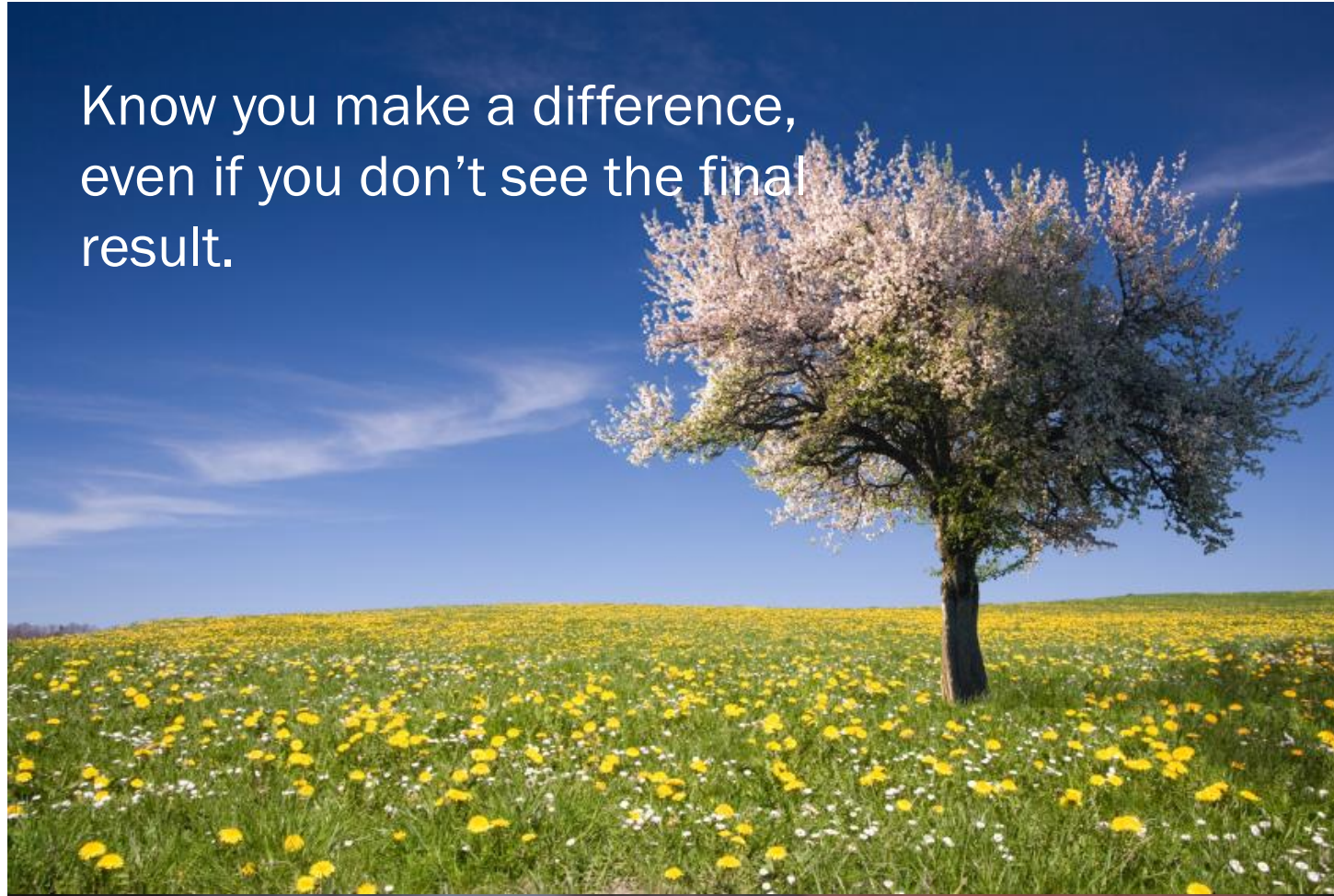
# Empowerment & Accountability Through Restorative Practices

- Traumatic experiences may explain behaviors that led to justice-involvement, but do not lessen the impact these behaviors had on victims of youth crime.
- Restorative justice provides tools to help youth repair the damage caused by their actions.
- Providing opportunities to repair damage allows youth to remain accountable while developing skills that will help them recover from the impact of their trauma.



# Helping Youth Get Back on Track

Know you make a difference,  
even if you don't see the final  
result.



**Questions or Comments?**



# THE TRIBAL YOUTH RESOURCE CENTER

[www.TribalYouth.org](http://www.TribalYouth.org)



Envisioning a future  
where Indigenous youth  
thrive through traditional  
lifeways.



The Tribal Youth Resource Center is a part of the [Tribal Law and Policy Institute](#) and is supported by Grant #2018-MU-MU-K001 awarded by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Dept. of Justice.

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# OJJDP

*Enhancing safety.  
Ensuring accountability.  
Empowering youth.*

[www.OJJDP.gov](http://www.OJJDP.gov)

# Session Evaluation

Please remember to fill out the workshop evaluation.

## **Workshop Information:**

Monday, March 29, 2021

10:15am AKT/ 11:15am PT/ 12:15pm

MT/ 1:15pm CT/ 2:15pm ET

Session A2: Building an Indigenous Resilience-Focused Lens, Part One



# Closing in a Good Way



**Everyone worked together to make a ladder.**

*Once the World Was Perfect*  
By Joy Harjo



*This project was supported by Grant #2018-MU-MU-K001 awarded by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice. The opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this publication/program/exhibition are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect those of the Department of Justice.*