



# Meeting them where they are: Applying a Trauma-Informed lens to advising

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# Agenda

Together, we will:

- Discuss adverse childhood experiences & their potential influence across the lifespan
- Examine the prevalence of trauma among
- Define a Trauma-Informed Approach (TIA) & strategize ways to engage TIA principles to co-create trauma-sensitive spaces




## But first...

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Please listen to your body, mind, and heart and give it what it needs during our time together





What are you  
carrying with you?

Just for a moment,  
take notice



What do you think  
students are  
carrying with them  
today?

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# Bandwidth

According to Google Dictionary, bandwidth means:

- “ 1. the range of frequencies within a given band, in particular that used for transmitting a signal.
- 2. the energy or mental capacity required to deal with a situation.”

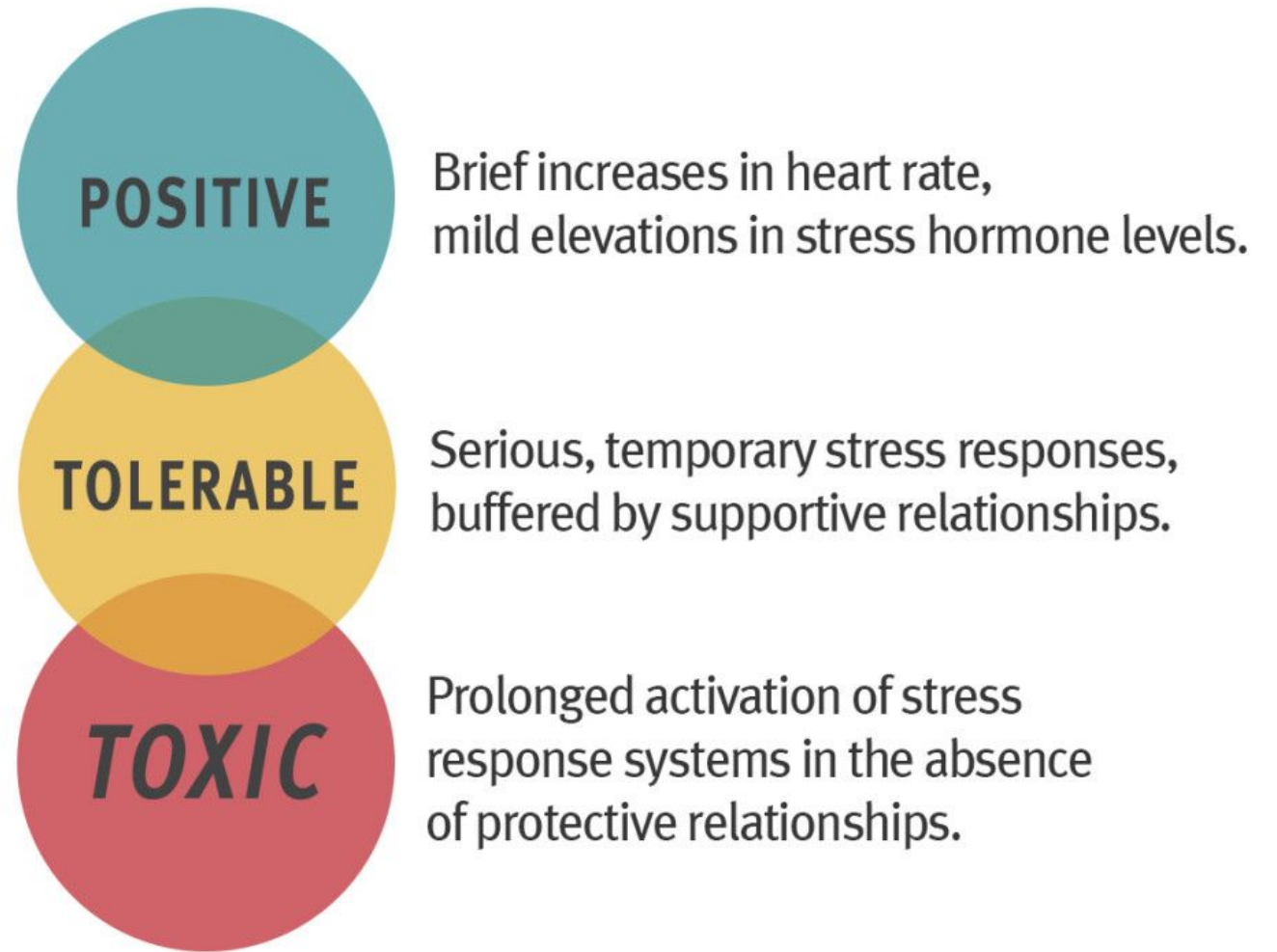
Ideas42:

<http://www.ideas42.org/blog/project/poverty-interrupted/>

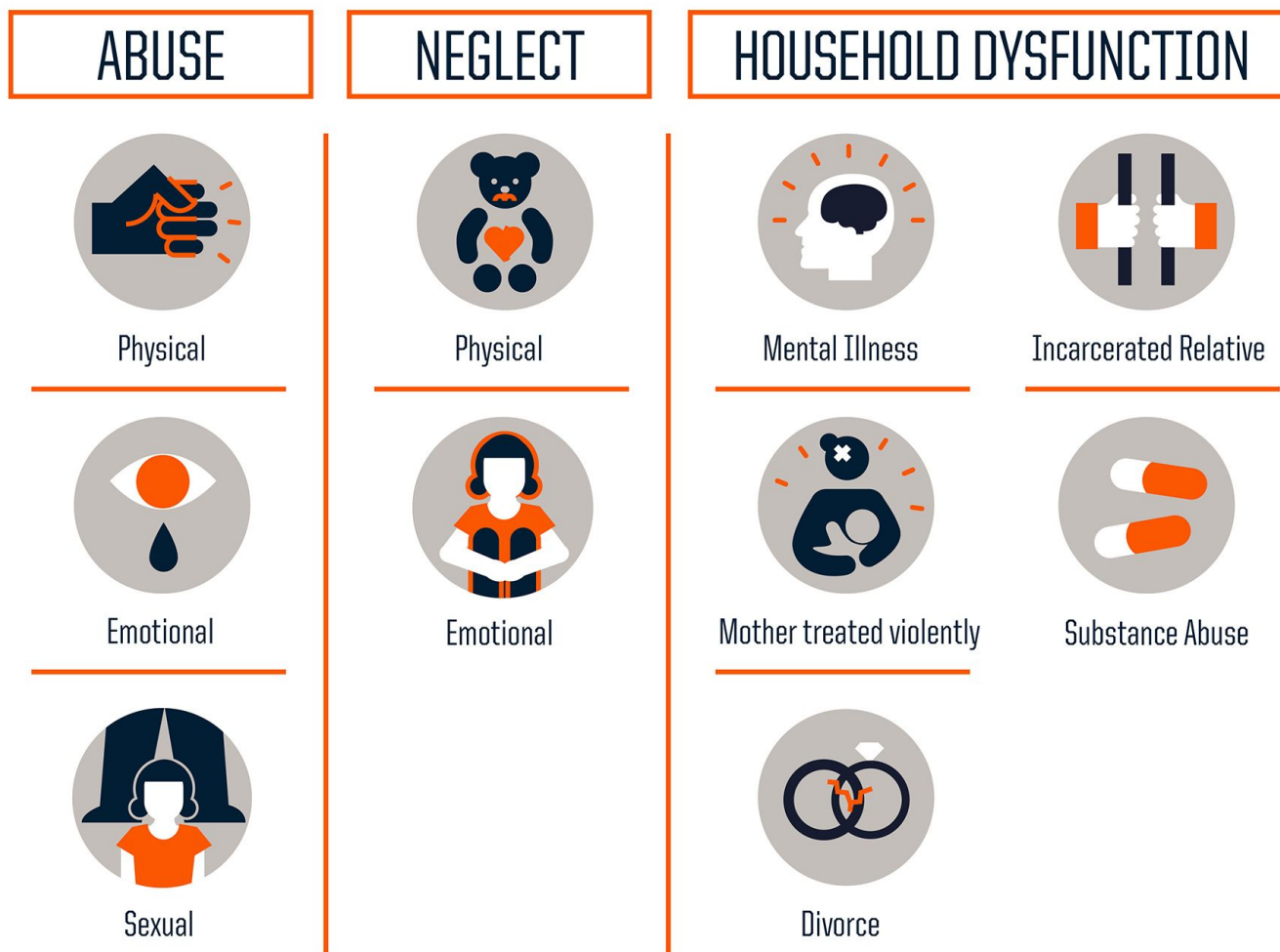


# Stress Continuum

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# Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)

Landmark study by Felitti et al. (1998)



# ACES can have lasting effects on....



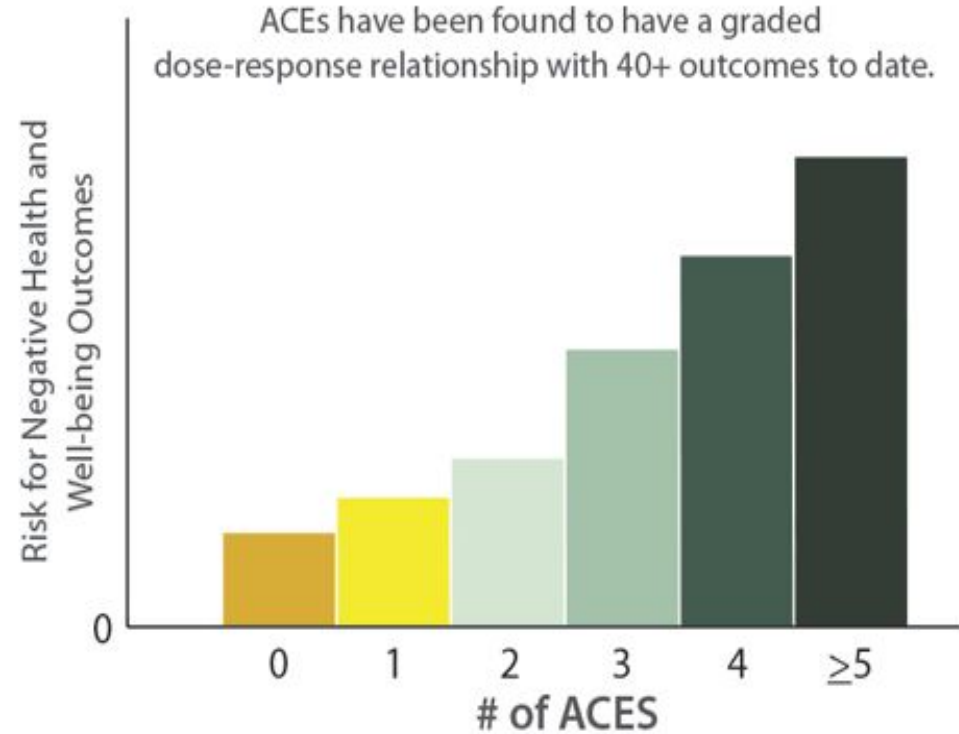
Health (obesity, diabetes, depression, suicide attempts, STDs, heart disease, cancer, stroke, COPD, broken bones)



Behaviors (smoking, alcoholism, drug use)



Life Potential (graduation rates, academic achievement, lost time from work)



\*This pattern holds for the 40+ outcomes, but the exact risk values vary depending on the outcome.

CDC, [https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/acestudy/about\\_ace.html](https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/acestudy/about_ace.html)

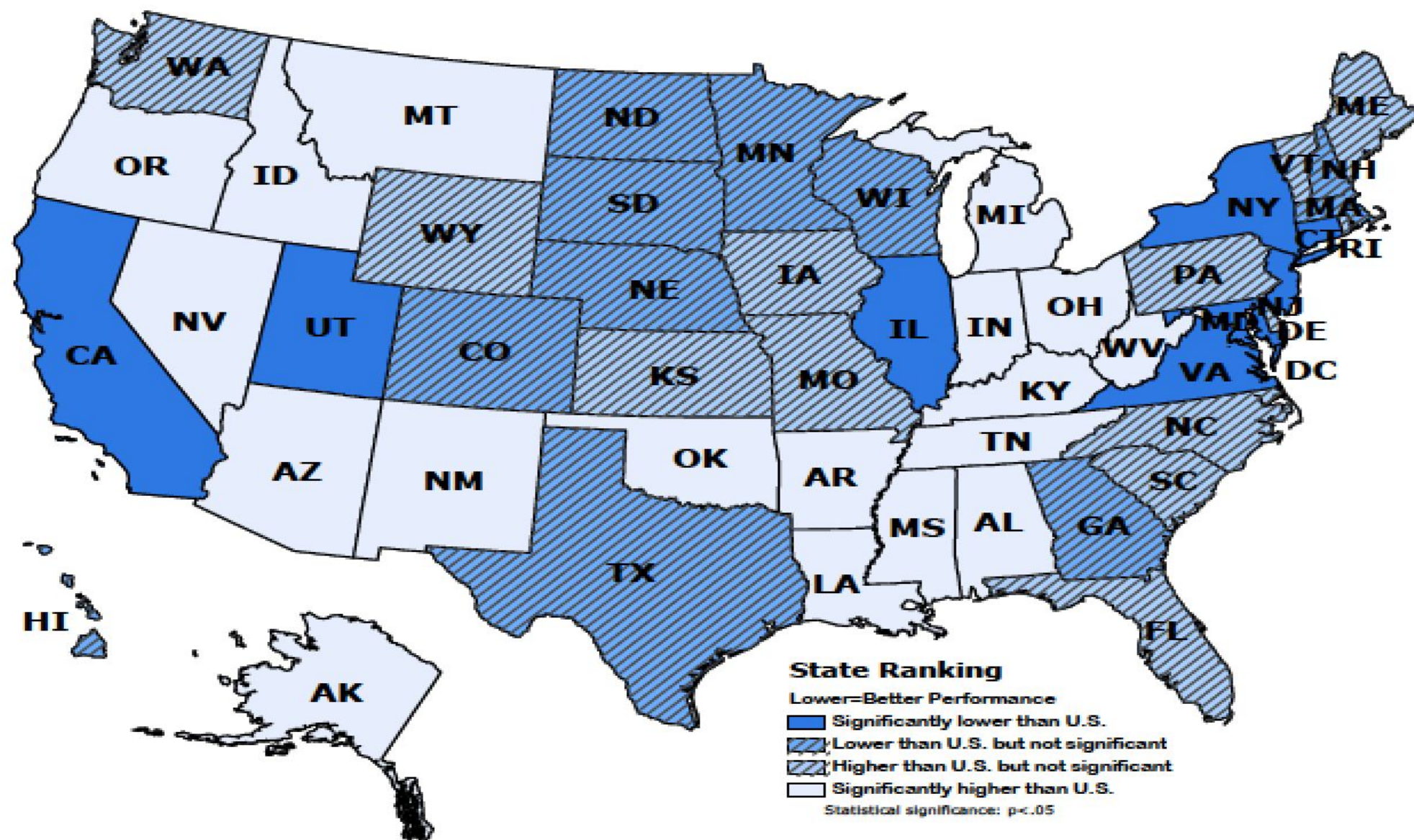
# Adverse Childhood Experiences in the U.S.

According to the 2016 National Survey of Children's Health (NSCH) :

- "One in ten children nationally has experienced three or more ACEs, placing them in a category of especially high risk."
  - "In five states—Arizona, Arkansas, Montana, New Mexico, and Ohio—as many as one in seven children had experienced three or more ACEs."
- Across the nation, ACEs disproportionately affect children
  - 61% of black non-Hispanic children & 51% of Hispanic children have experienced at least one ACE
  - Compared to 40% of white non-Hispanic children and only 23% of Asian non-Hispanic children



**Figure 3. Exploring Disparities between States:  
State Ranking Map of the Proportion of Children with  $\geq 2$   
ACEs**



If this is what kids are  
facing, so are families and  
communities

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# Trauma

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" the human experience of an actual or perceived threat of danger that overwhelms a person's usual coping ability"

James, 1994, p.9

# Simple & Complex Trauma

"Simple" Trauma: Short term, unexpected event

- Examples: one time rape, car accident, natural disaster
- Likely to result in typical post-traumatic stress disorder symptoms

Complex Trauma: Sustained, repeated stressors

- Examples: ongoing abuse, combat, domestic violence, prostitution, captivity, torture
- More likely to result in long-standing characterological & interpersonal problems, dissociation, substance abuse



# Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)

*According to the DSM-V, these symptoms must last more than one month*

## Intrusion:

Recurrent involuntary memories, nightmares, 'triggers', etc.

## Avoidance:

Avoidance of thoughts, people, places that remind person of the trauma

Dissociative Subtype  
-depersonalization  
-derealization

## Negative Alterations in Cognitions:

- Distorted worldview
- Dissociative amnesia
- Feeling alone/different in the world
- Diminished interest in pre-trauma activities

## Changes in arousal and reactivity:

- Irritable/aggressiveness
- Self-destructive/recklessness
- Hypervigilance
- Hyperstartle
- Concentration issues
- Sleep problems

# What can trauma look like in students?

Students who :  
are experiencing homelessness  
living in foster care  
have lost a loved one  
are hungry  
are taking care of things back home  
are refugees  
have been exposed to community violence  
who don't feel safe...

- Difficulty with relationships
- Difficulty paying attention or focusing attention
- Emotional outbursts
- Difficulty with memory recall
- Withdrawn
- Aggressive behaviors toward peers and teachers
- Startles easily
- Lack of trust in others
- Cannot stay awake
- Cannot sit still...

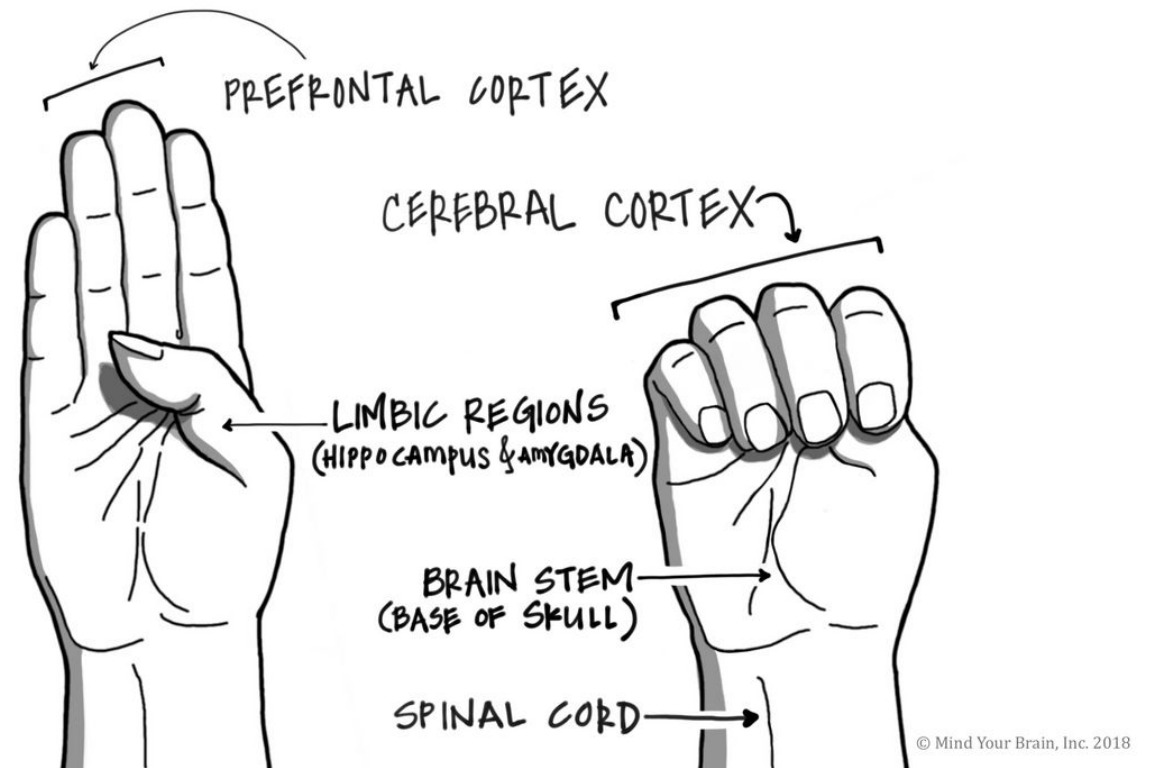
Students are commonly labeled with:

- ADHD
- Conduct Disorder
- Depression
- Laziness or Disinterest
- Anxiety...



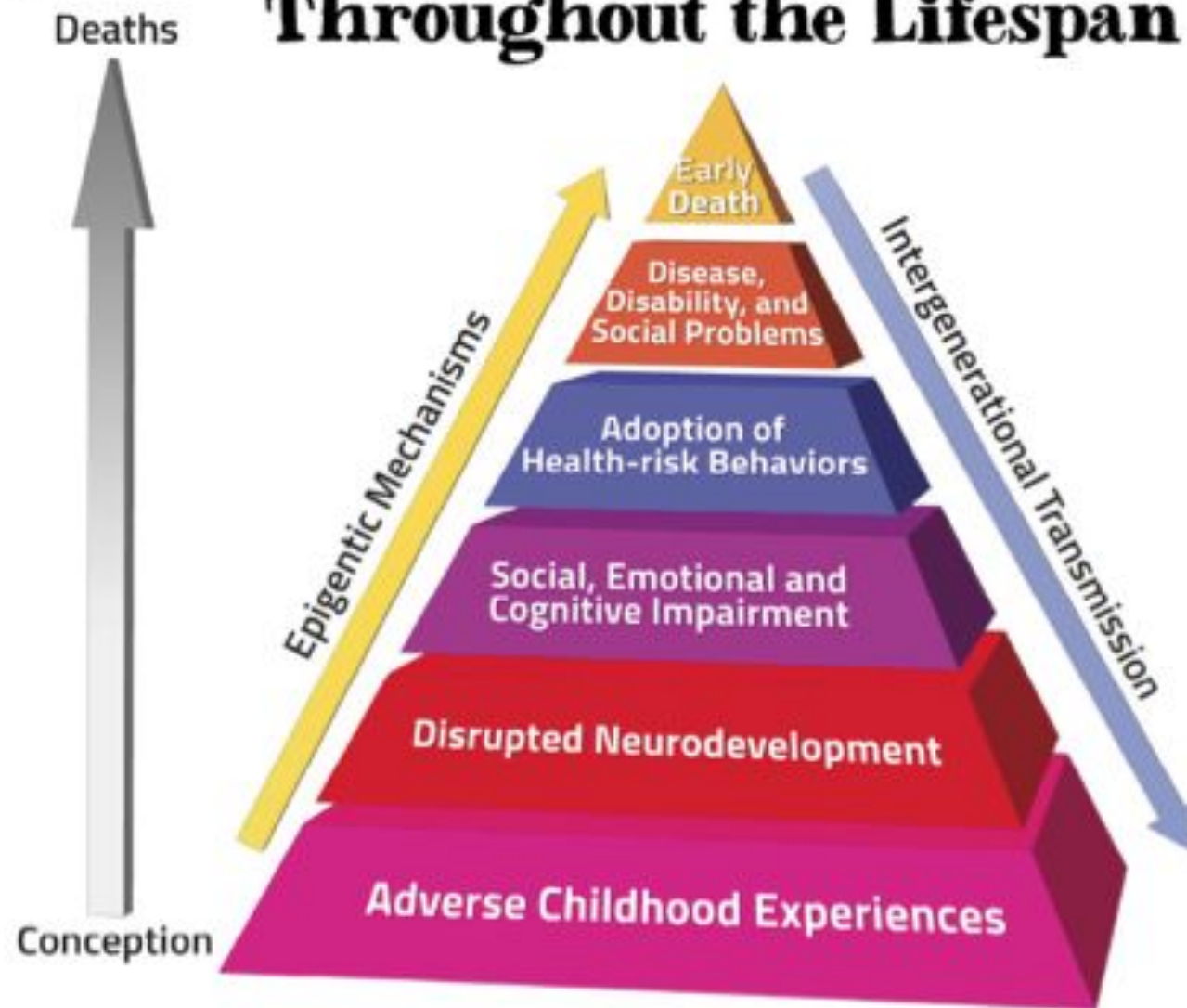
# Dan Siegel's hand model of the brain

## Hand Model of the Brain



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gm9CIJ74Oxw>

# Mechanisms by which Adverse Childhood Experiences Influence Health and Well-being Throughout the Lifespan



Slide Courtesy of Rob Anda, MD, MS



# College Students & ACEs

“Universities consider other criteria, such as first-generation or low-income status, as risk factors and develop programs aimed at such students. The time may have come for ACEs to be considered as a significant risk factor as well that might impact student learning and to develop programs targeting students with high levels of ACEs”

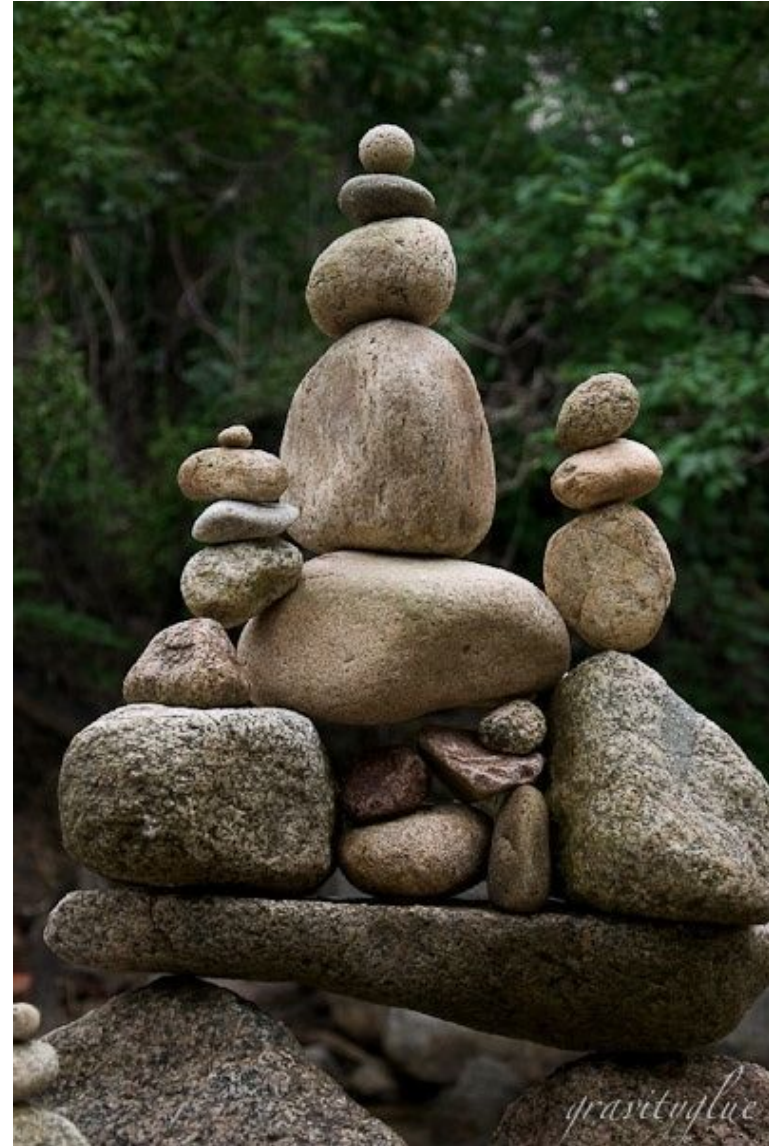
(Karatekin, 2017)



In order for us to understand and help them, we need to understand and help ourselves

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We are all  
beautiful and  
precarious  
balancing acts







Each one of us is a nesting doll







Intergenerational  
Trauma

Artist: Eva  
Bee  
E. BEE LEFT





# A Trauma-Informed Approach (TIA)

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It's a practice



# A Trauma-Inform ed Approach makes the assumption that:

Everyone you meet  
Everywhere you go  
Has a trauma history





# TIA means shifting our focus

Individual

Individual in Environment

~~What is *wrong*  
with you?~~

What has  
*happened* to  
you?


Trauma as Disorder

Trauma as Injury

# A Trauma-Informed approach helps us to:

- Realize the widespread prevalence and impact of trauma
- Recognize signs and symptoms of trauma
- Respond empathically
- Resist retraumatization

In ourselves, our students, our clients, our colleagues...



## 6 Guiding Principles of a Trauma-Informed Approach

- Safety – physical and psychological
- Trustworthiness & Transparency – decisions and processes are conducted with transparency with the intention of building trust
- Peer Support & Mutual Self-Help – integral organizational approach that supports building trust, establishing safety, and empowerment
- Collaboration & Mutuality – leveling of power differences; shared decision-making
- Empowerment, Voice, & Choice – individuals' strengths are validated and build upon; prioritizing skill/capacity building. Belief in resilience and ability of individuals
- Cultural, Historical, & Gender Issues – recognizes and addresses cultural stereotypes, biases, and historical trauma



# How to Support Someone Who Has Experienced Trauma



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A Trauma-Informed Approach is an organizational culture change model




Systemic change is what is needed

# Trauma sensitive schools:


- “Have a shared understanding among all staff that adverse experiences in the lives of children are more common than many of us ever imagined, that trauma can impact learning, behavior, and relationships at school, and that a “whole school” approach to trauma-sensitivity is needed;
- Support all to feel safe physically, socially, emotionally, and academically;
- Address students needs in holistic ways, taking into account their relationships, self-regulation, academic competence, and physical and emotional well-being;
- Explicitly connect students to the school community and provides multiple opportunities to practice newly developing skills;
- Embrace teamwork and staff share responsibility for all students; and
- Anticipate/ adapt to the ever-changing needs of students” (Trauma & Learning Policy Initiative, 2016)





## Creating trauma-sensitive spaces

- Help create safety through predictability:
  - Daily routines
  - Heads up - if something out of the ordinary will be happening
- Build in choice so that students feel that they have a voice and a say in what is happening
- Anticipate difficult transitions and offer extra support
- Use breathing or mindfulness techniques to help students connect with their mind and body in a safe space (for you and for the kids)

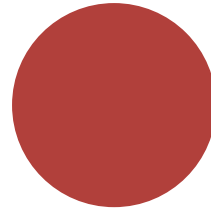


## Creating a trauma-sensitive spaces

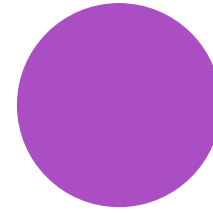
- Ask yourself- what is the meaning of the behavior? (reframe behavior)
  - Count to 5 before responding
- Help students soak up small special moments
- Help students name emotions they are experiencing
- Help students strategize what to do with an emotion they are having

# Where are you already doing the work?

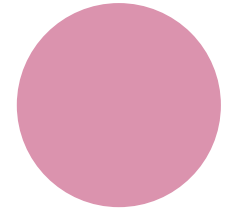
## What can we do to co-create bandwidth?



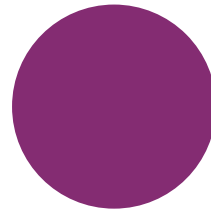
Safety



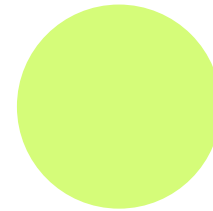
Trustworthiness  
Transparency



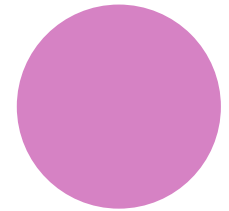
Choice



Collaboration




Empowerment



Gender/Historical/  
Cultural Issues





“Although the world is full  
of suffering, it is also full of  
the overcoming of it”

Helen Keller



# Resilience

Definitions according to Merriam Webster:

1 : the capability of a strained body to recover its size and shape after deformation caused especially by compressive stress.

2 : an ability to recover from or adjust easily to misfortune or change.



# Center on the Developing Child


Harvard University

Predisposing factors to positive outcomes (resilience):

- “Facilitating supportive adult-child relationships
- Building a sense of self-efficacy and perceived control
- Providing opportunities to strengthen adaptive skills and self-regulatory capacities
- Mobilizing sources of faith, hope, & cultural traditions”

“The single most common factor for children who develop resilience is at least one stable and committed relationship with a supportive parent, caregiver, or other adult”



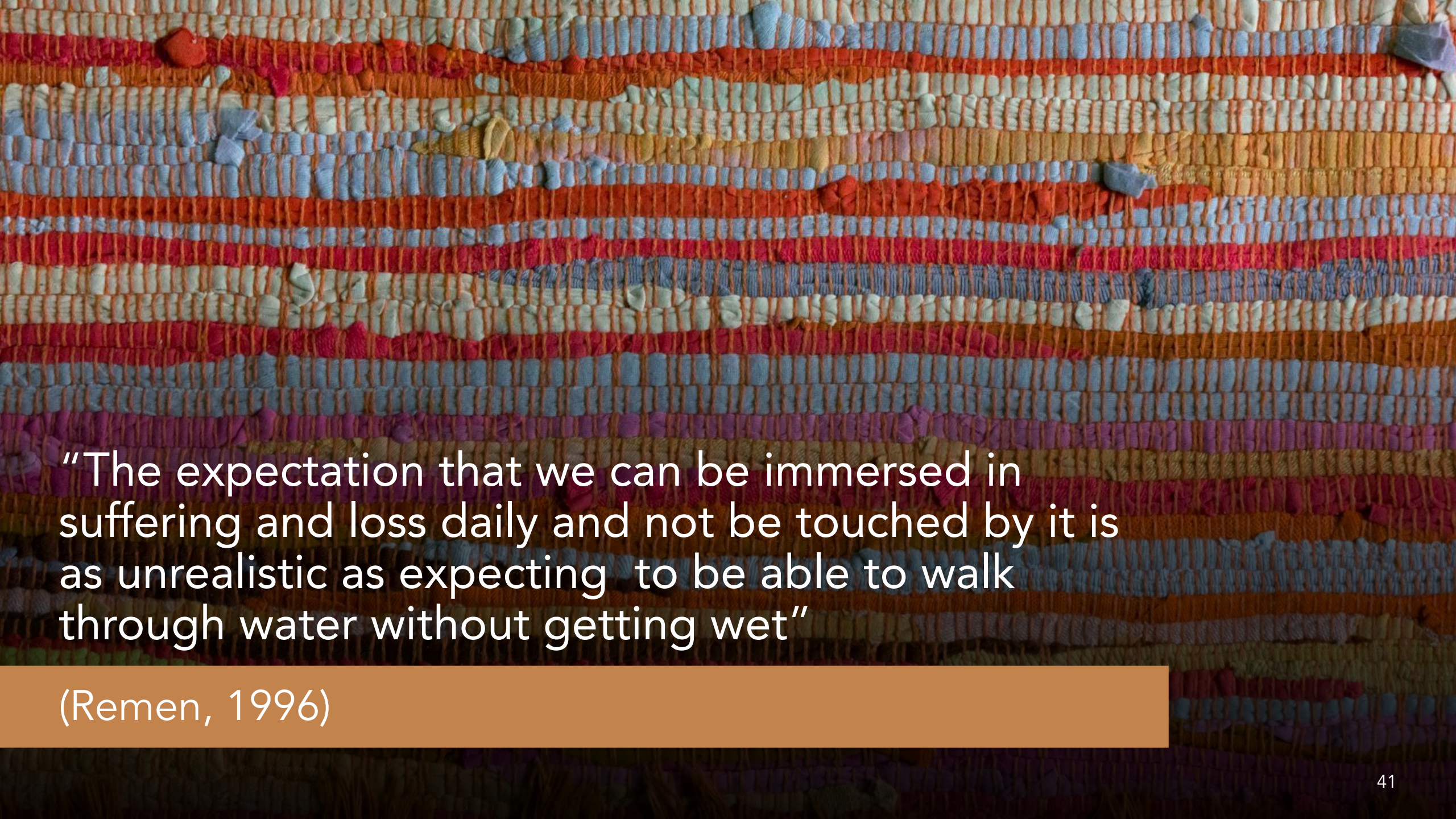


# How many students in a day see you as that one supportive adult?

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How does that feel for you?





“The expectation that we can be immersed in suffering and loss daily and not be touched by it is as unrealistic as expecting to be able to walk through water without getting wet”

(Remen, 1996)





Potential  
costs of  
caring

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Stress

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Burnout

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Vicarious Trauma

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Compassion Fatigue







# The ABC's of Self-Care

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## Awareness

- Awareness of your own personal needs, wants, and capacities

## Balance

- Balancing awareness and action
- Staying

## Connection

Connected to others, to your community at work, and to the meaning of the work you do



# The ABC's of Managing Vicarious Trauma

## Awareness

Work to understand your trauma map  
Check in with yourself regularly


## Balance

Maintain healthy boundaries  
Give yourself permission to fully experience emotional reactions  
Recognize how you are coping and what you can do to cope

## Connection

Avoid professional isolation  
Listen to your colleagues, friends, and family members  
Debrief after difficult cases





➔ Inhale ...2 ...3 ...4

⬇ Hold ...2 ...3 ...4

# Breathe.

Rest ...2 ...3 ...4

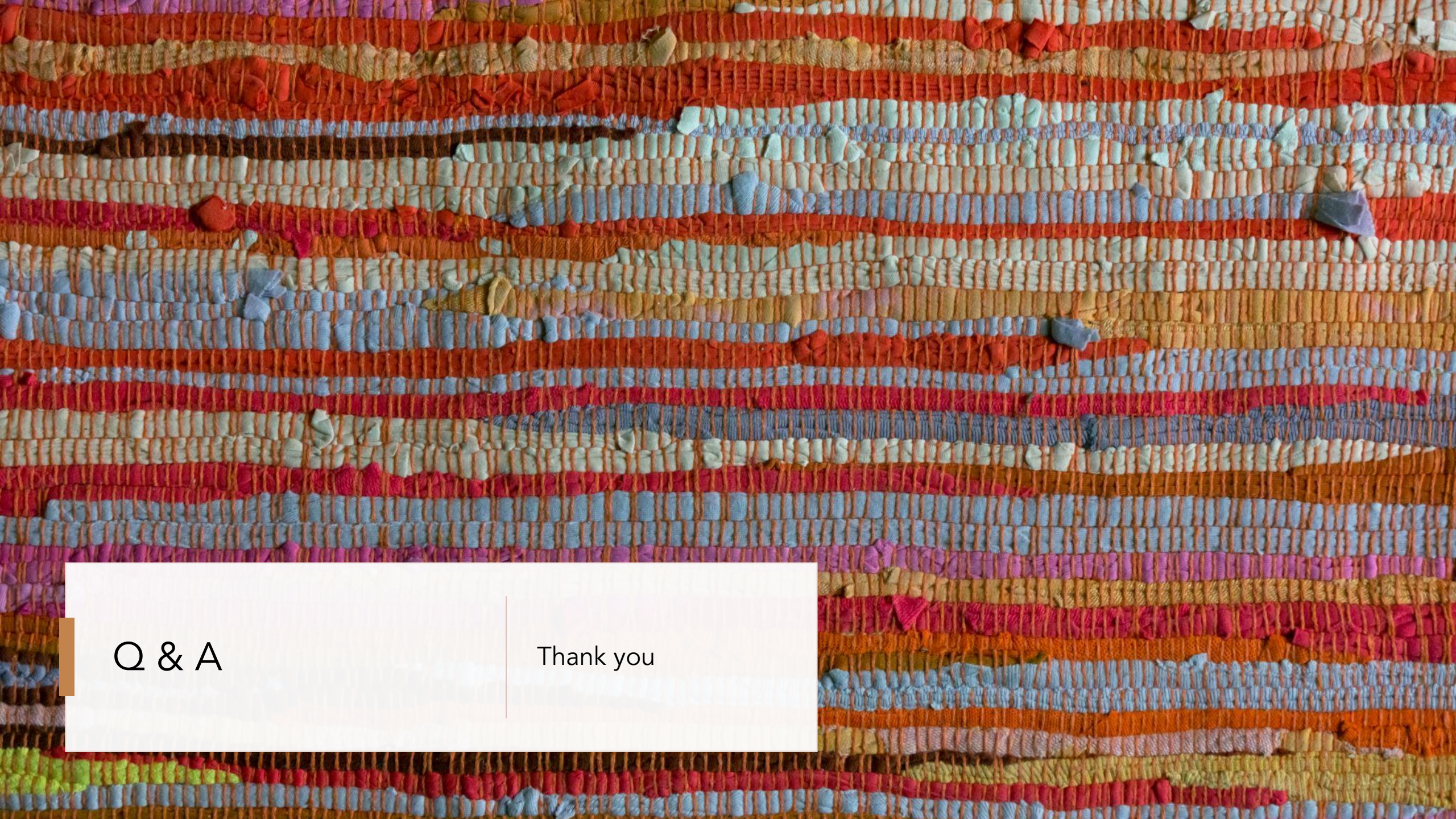


⬆ Exhale ...2 ...3 ...4

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Are we breathing?





Q & A

Thank you





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Thank you