



From the Research to the Me-Search:

The Impact of Trauma on Older Adults,
Workforce, and Leadership

Presented by:

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Founder and CEO

Radical Sabbatical

Welcome

Setting the Stage

Define trauma and its impact on older adults, employees and leaders.

Discuss research related to trauma and the workforce.

Identify strategies that foster a trauma-informed organizational culture.

TODAY'S WORK





**What words come to mind when you think
about trauma?**



“There is no greater agony
than bearing an untold
story inside of you.”

Maya Angelou

What is Trauma?

An emotional response to a terrible event.

Trauma (trau·ma)
late 17th century: from Greek,
literally '**wound**'

A large iceberg floats in a dark, stormy sea. The tip of the iceberg is visible above the water, while the vast, jagged, and dark underside is submerged. The sky is filled with heavy, grey clouds, and the water is a deep, dark blue. The overall mood is somber and mysterious.

What you know →

What some might know →

**What you really
should know** →

**What you may
never know** →

IF TRAUMA WERE AN ICEBERG

The Public Health Model for Trauma Informed Care



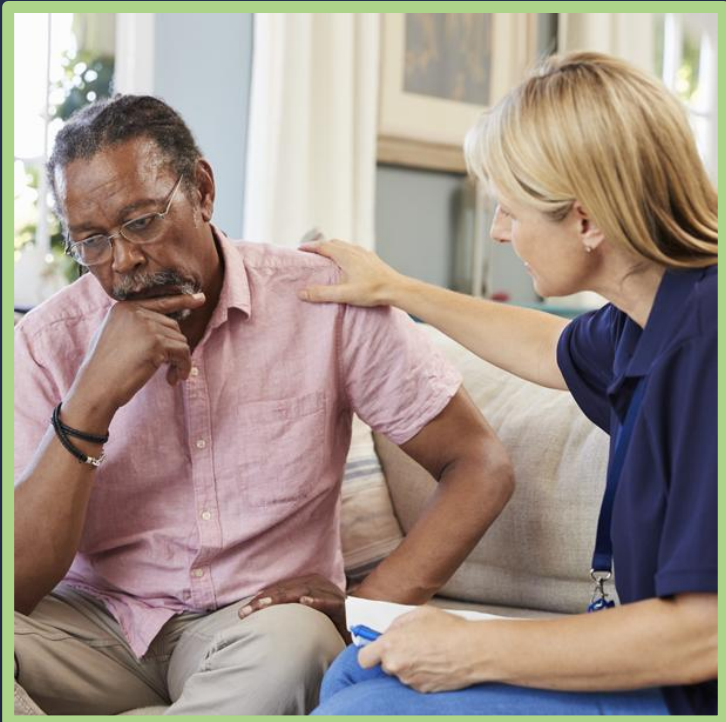
Trauma Informed Care in LTC

Why Now?

✓ CMS
Required

§483.25(m): The facility must ensure that residents who are trauma survivors receive culturally competent, trauma-informed care in accordance with professional standards of practice and accounting for residents' experiences and preferences in order to eliminate or mitigate triggers that may cause re-traumatization of the resident.

Trauma in Older Adults



- Up to **90% of older adults** have experienced at least one traumatic event in their lifetime.
- **2nd highest rate of death** by suicide occur in adults 85 years and older.

Study: Mental health problems plague nearly half of nursing home staff

DONNA SHRYER

AUGUST 4, 2025

SHARE ▾

NEWS

New policies 'urgently needed' to address nursing home staff's mental health challenges



JOHN ROSZKOWSKI

AUGUST 9, 2025

SHARE ▾

[AIMS Public Health](#)

2025, Volume 12, Issue 1: 91-105. doi: [10.3934/publichealth.2025007](https://doi.org/10.3934/publichealth.2025007)

Research article | [Special Issues](#)

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A highly effective mindfulness intervention for burnout prevention and resiliency building in nurses

Maryanna Klatt , Jacqueline Caputo, Julia Tripodo, Nimisha Panabakam, Slate Bretz, Yulia Mulugeta, Beth Steinberg

Center for Integrative Health, Department of Family and Community Medicine, The Ohio State University College of Medicine, Columbus, Ohio, USA

BUSINESS DAILY NEWS

Many of your employees could be caring for family members with dementia



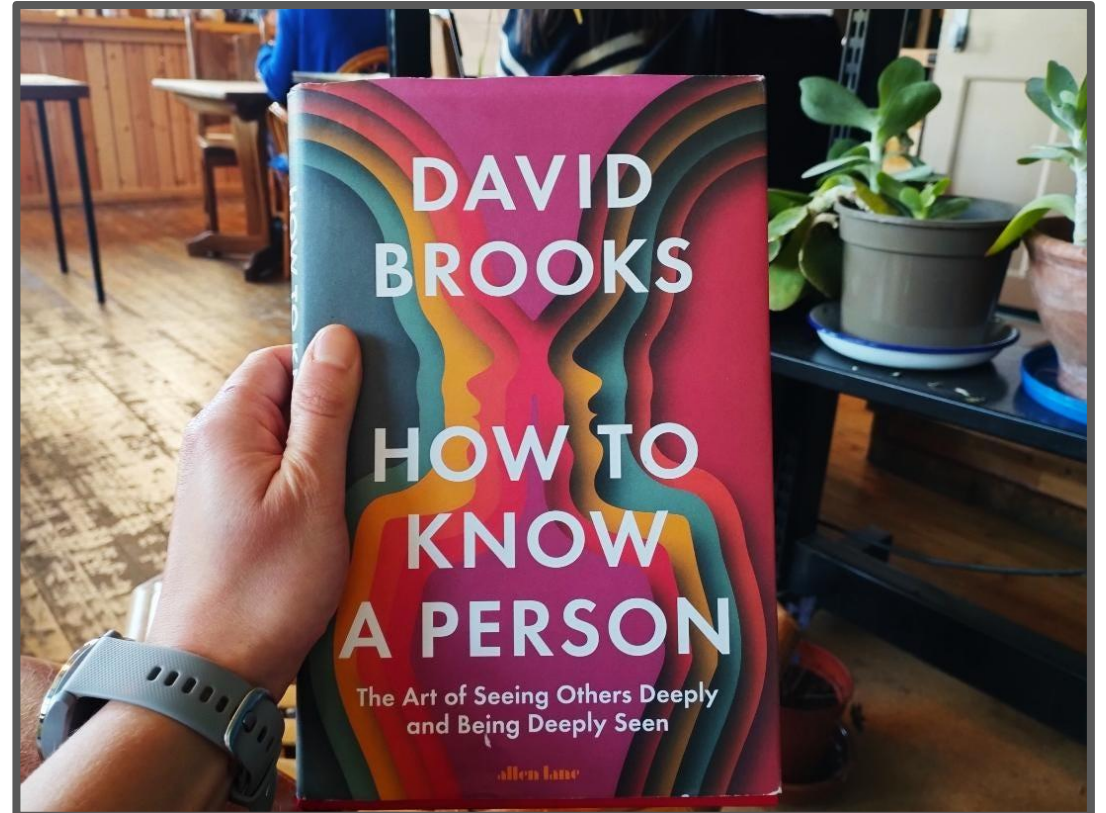
KATHLEEN STEELE GAIVIN

AUGUST 13, 2025

SHARE ▾

Epidemic of Blindness

- 36% of Americans report loneliness.
- 45% of teenagers report feeling hopeless and despondent.
- The number of people who report having no close friends has quadrupled since 2020.
- Rates of suicide are up 30%.
- Americans who rate themselves in the lowest category of happiness has increased 50%.



Section One

Trauma and Older Adults

More on Trauma

“Individual trauma results from an **event**, series of events, or set of circumstances that is **experienced** by an individual as physically or emotionally harmful or life threatening and that has **lasting adverse** effects on the individual’s functioning and mental, physical, social, emotional, or spiritual well-being.” (SAMHSA)



Event



Experience



Effects



Perceptions of Trauma Through the Ages



Situations That Can Be Traumatic

- Natural Disaster
- War/terrorism
- Accidents
- Medical procedures
- Bullying
- Abandonment
- Community violence
- Child Abuse/Sex Abuse
- Child Neglect
- Life-threatening Illness
- Car Accident
- Loss of a caregiver
- Witnessing Domestic violence

Activity #1

The Both/And Exercise



Historically, symptoms of trauma have been recorded in military and civilian populations.



Trauma was described as “soldier’s heart” and “nostalgia” and were meant to diminish the experience of soldiers.

Heavy explosives in World War I led to the attribution of symptoms like “shell shock,” giving a more physiological description of the effects from explosions.

"I don't have a tattoo, but I still have the scars."

Helga P., age 90

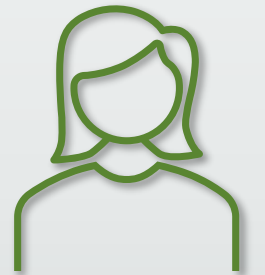
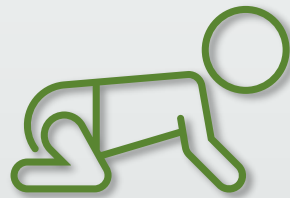
A young child with long brown hair is shown in profile, looking out a window. The child is wearing a patterned shirt. The background is a bright, slightly blurred window. The text is overlaid on the left side of the image.

ACEs STUDY

Adverse Childhood Experiences

Adverse Childhood Experiences Study

Traumatic events in childhood (0-17)



ACEs Categories

Abuse



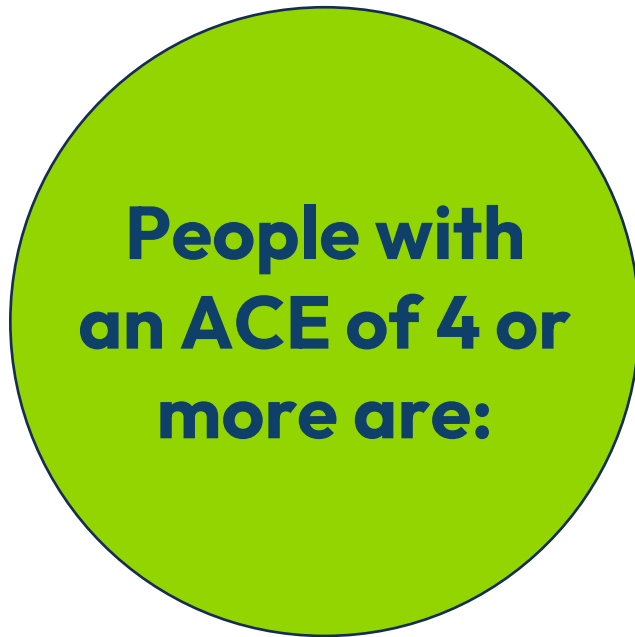
Neglect



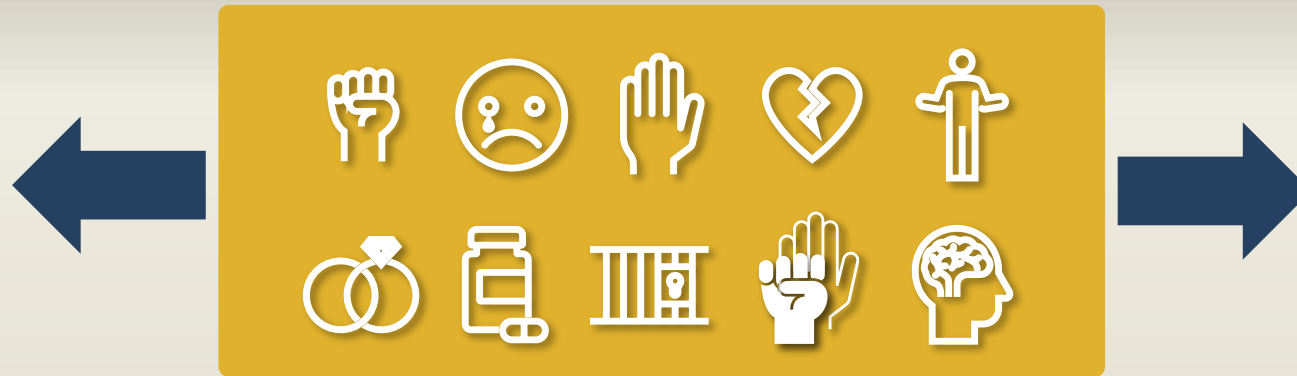
Household
Challenges



Compared to people who
have an ACE score of 0



- 10x** more likely to use **injectable drugs**
- 7x** more likely to be **an alcoholic**
- 3x** more likely to **engage in risky sexual behavior**
- 2x** more likely to **be a current smoker**
- 30x** more likely to **attempt suicide**
- 5x** more likely to **suffer from depression**
- 11x** more likely to **be diagnosed with dementia**



TOXIC STRESS

Fight

Freeze



Flight

Fawn

Trauma & Older Adults

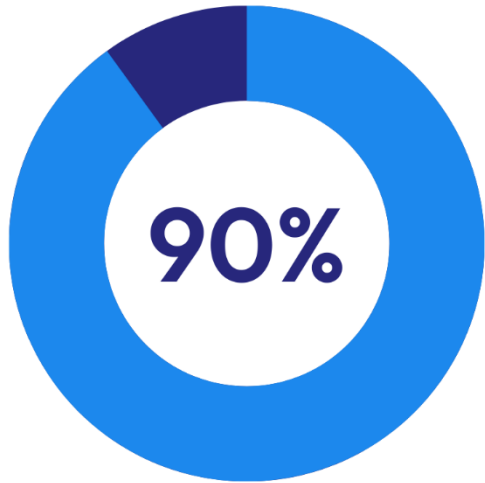
What to Know and What to Do

**How Will
We
Know?**



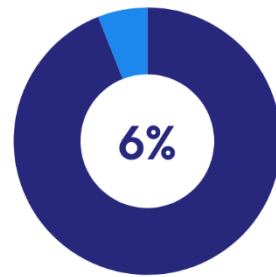
They're telling you...

How Will I Know?



90% of Americans will experience at **least one traumatic event** in their lifetime

(Kilpatrick, 2013)



6% of the American population will experience PTSD in their lifetime.

(VA, n.d.-b)



1 in 4 children in the United States will experience or witness interpersonal violence in their childhood.

(Finkelhor et al., 2009)



Approximately **1 in 10 older adults** will experience elder abuse annually.

(NCEA, 2023)



1 in 3 women and more than **1 in 4 men** in the United States will experience sexual assault, physical violence, and/or stalking by an intimate partner in their lifetime.

(Black et al., 2011)



**Understand the
Generation**

**Understand Trauma and
Age**

**Understand Trauma and
Health**

**Treating What We Cannot
See**

Misconception *versus* Reality

Previous trauma has limited impact on people as they age.

Trauma can have various impacts on health and well-being that can last a lifetime. Trauma exposure is associated with increased likelihood of developing a wide range of health conditions, as well as resilience in aging.

Misconception *versus* Reality

It is easy to know if an older adult has experienced trauma.

Many older adults never reveal their trauma histories out of fear, shame, or guilt, and screening for trauma is not universal among service providers.

Misconception *versus* Reality

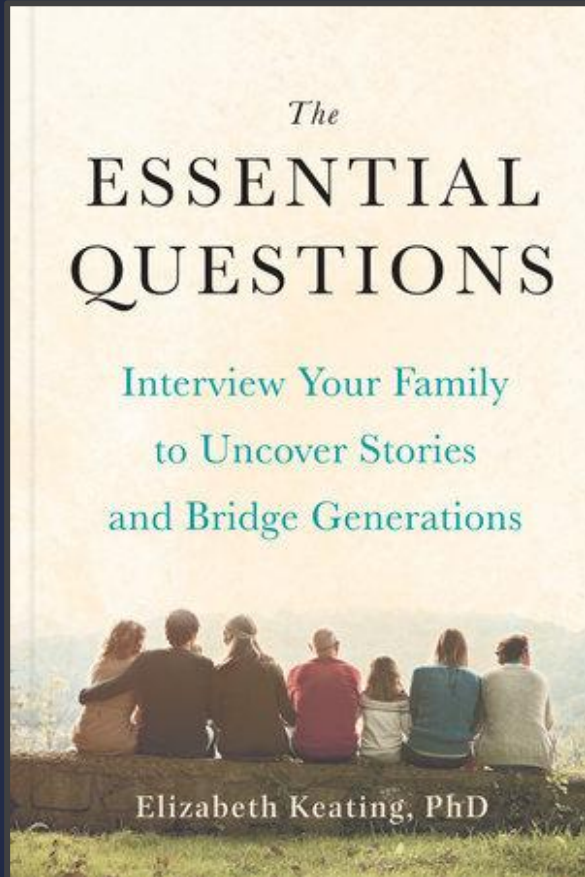
Symptoms of trauma are the same throughout the lifecourse.

Symptoms of trauma can present differently in older adults than in younger populations. These can be masked by changes and health conditions associated with the aging process.

Misconception *versus* Reality

Exposure to traumatic events or circumstances will always negatively impact individuals as they age.

While trauma exposure is linked to declining health, for some it can lead to resilience in aging. Healing techniques that previously helped address prior trauma can be adapted when adverse events occur throughout life.



Healing in Circle and Peer Support

Retraumatization

When a person relives prior traumatic experiences with as much emotional intensity as when the original event occurred. (SAMHSA, 2017)

Retraumatization can reawaken traumatic memories, experiences, and reactions.

This may cause an individual to perceive the new event as traumatic.



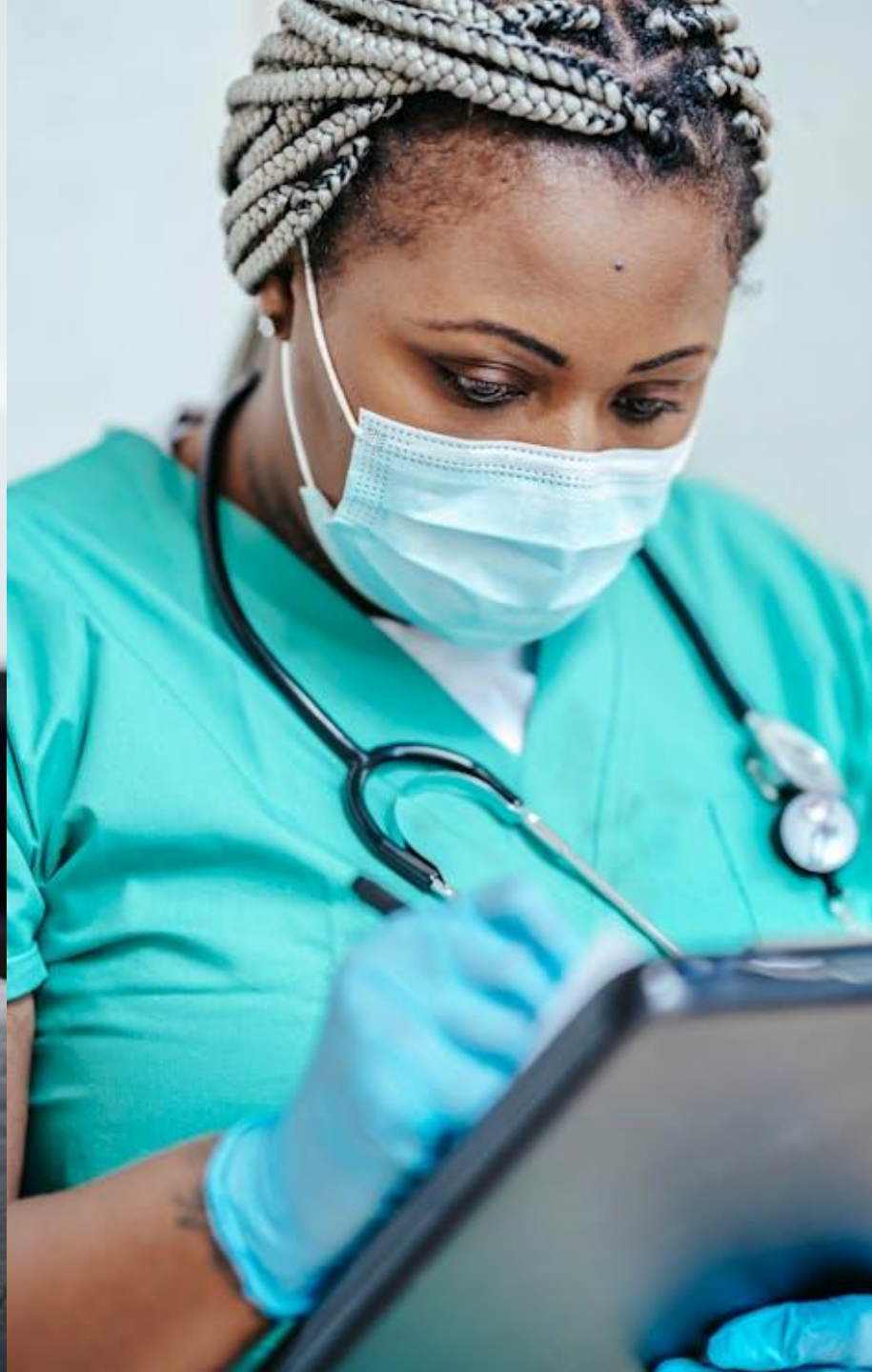


Section Two

The Careforce Under Pressure

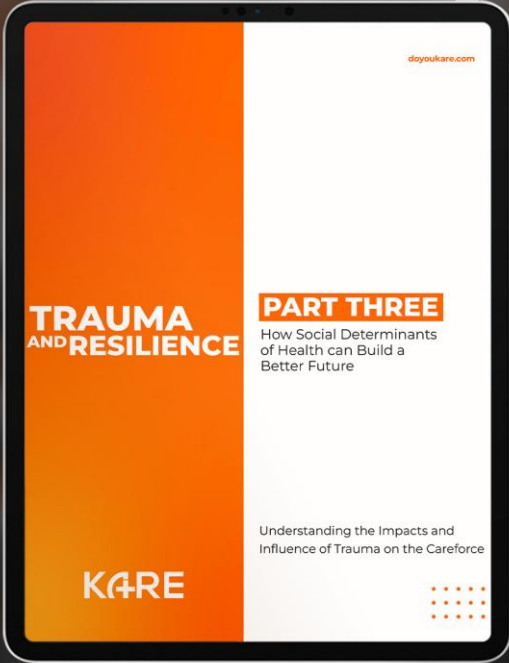
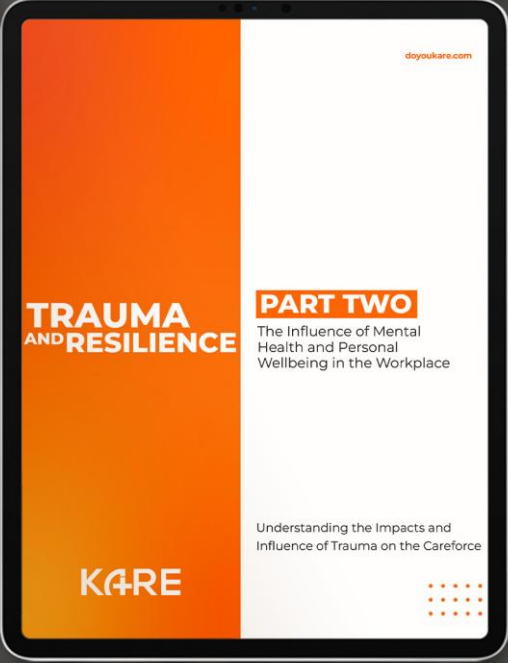
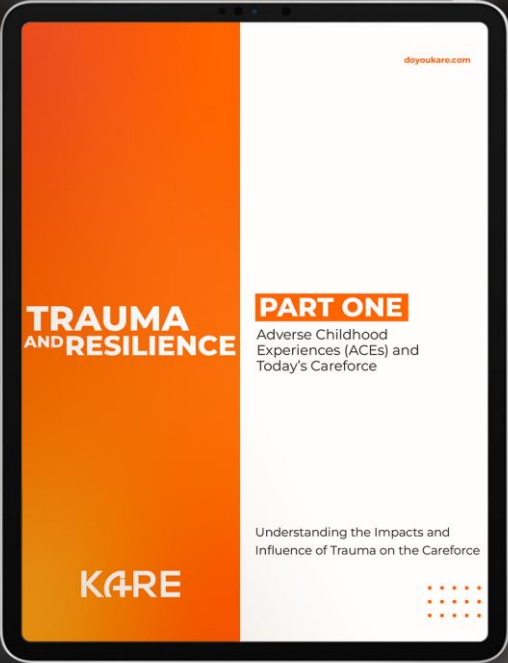
**How well
do you know
your
employees?**







Understanding the impacts and influence of Trauma on the Careforce



64%

US POPULATION

AT LEAST
ONE TYPE
OF ACE

73%

CAREFORCE

17%
US POPULATION

**FOUR OR
MORE**
types of ACE

34%
CAREFORCE

**Trauma isn't what happened
to you, it is what happens
inside of you as a result.**

(van der Kolk, 2014)

KARE Study Found: ACES Impact



1-in-4

One-in-four careforce report their ACES score negatively affected their current physical health



2-in-4

Two in four careforce report their ACES score negatively affected their current mental health

KARE Study: COVID-19 Impact



The **effects** of the Covid-19 pandemic are felt by almost **half of the careforce on physical and mental health**

KARE Study: SDOH Reality



FINANCES

75%

Do not have enough
\$\$ to pay the bills.

HOUSING

1 in 4

Are Housing or
food insecure.

SAFETY

15%

May not be safe
at home.

UTILITIES

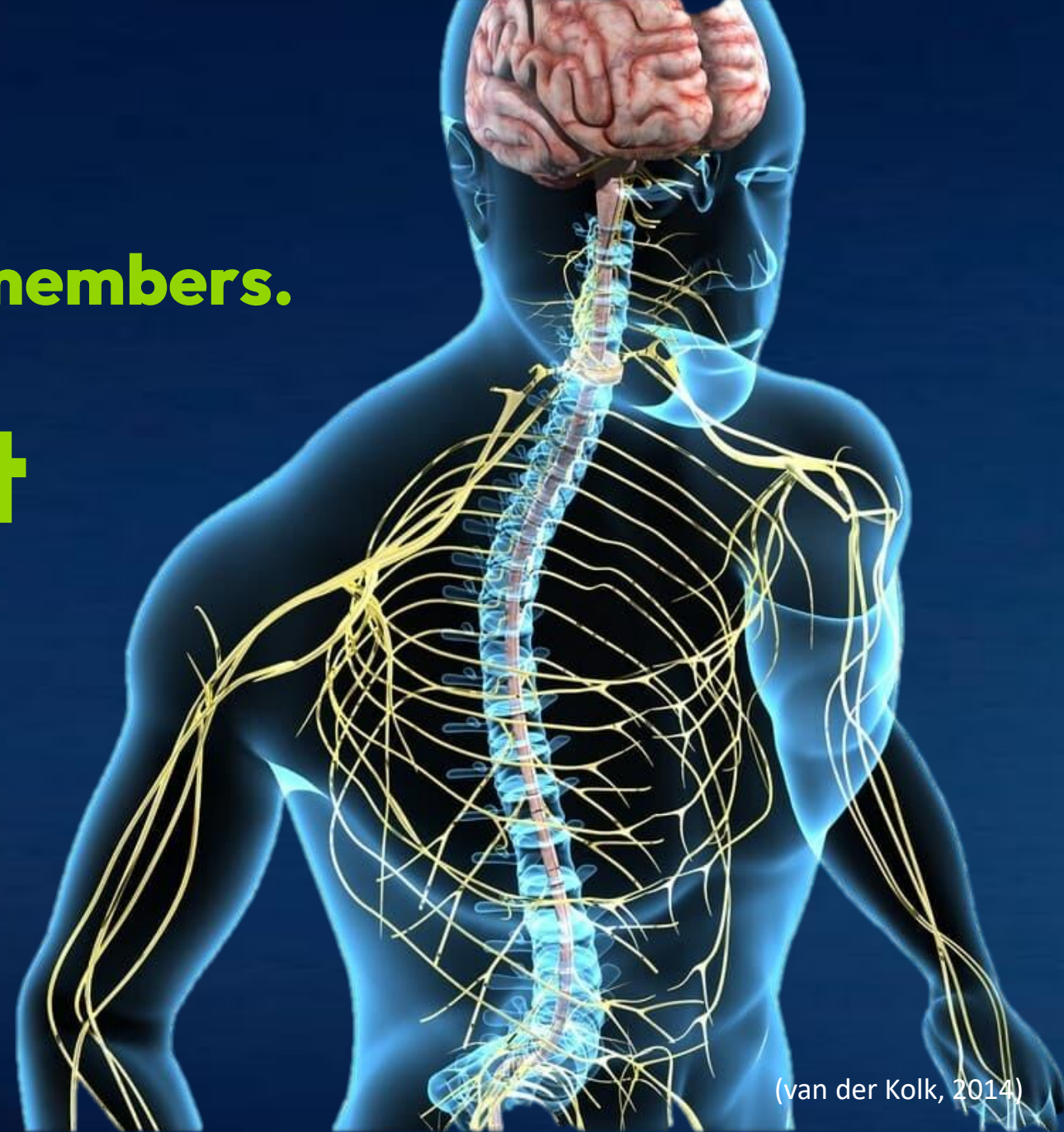
28%

Utilities threatened
to be shut off.

Trauma is not the event.

Trauma is what the body remembers.

**Trauma is what
the nervous
system learns.**



(van der Kolk, 2014)

Fight



Flight

Freeze

Fawn



~~What's *wrong* with them?~~

What *happened*
to them?



Pay
Attention
Inside
Now
Assessment



Activity #2
The PAIN
Assessment



Section Three

Leading with Trauma-Informed Principles

A trauma informed organization **realizes** the widespread impact of trauma and understands potential paths to recovery; **recognizes** the signs and symptoms of trauma in residents and staff and **responds** by fully integrating knowledge about trauma into policies, procedures, and practices to actively resist **re-traumatization**.

Substance Abuse Mental Health Services Administration

The Four Realms of ACEs

NATURAL
DISASTER

ENVIRONMENTAL
JUSTICE

CLIMATE
CHANGE

ADVERSE CLIMATE EXPERIENCES

COVID-19

SUBSTANCE
ABUSE

ADVERSE CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES

INCARCERATION

DOMESTIC
VIOLENCE

DIVORCE

MENTAL
ILLNESS

ADVERSE COMMUNITY EXPERIENCES

POVERTY
+ VIOLENCE

LACK OF
OPPORTUNITY

POOR
HOUSING

LACK OF
ECONOMIC
MOBILITY

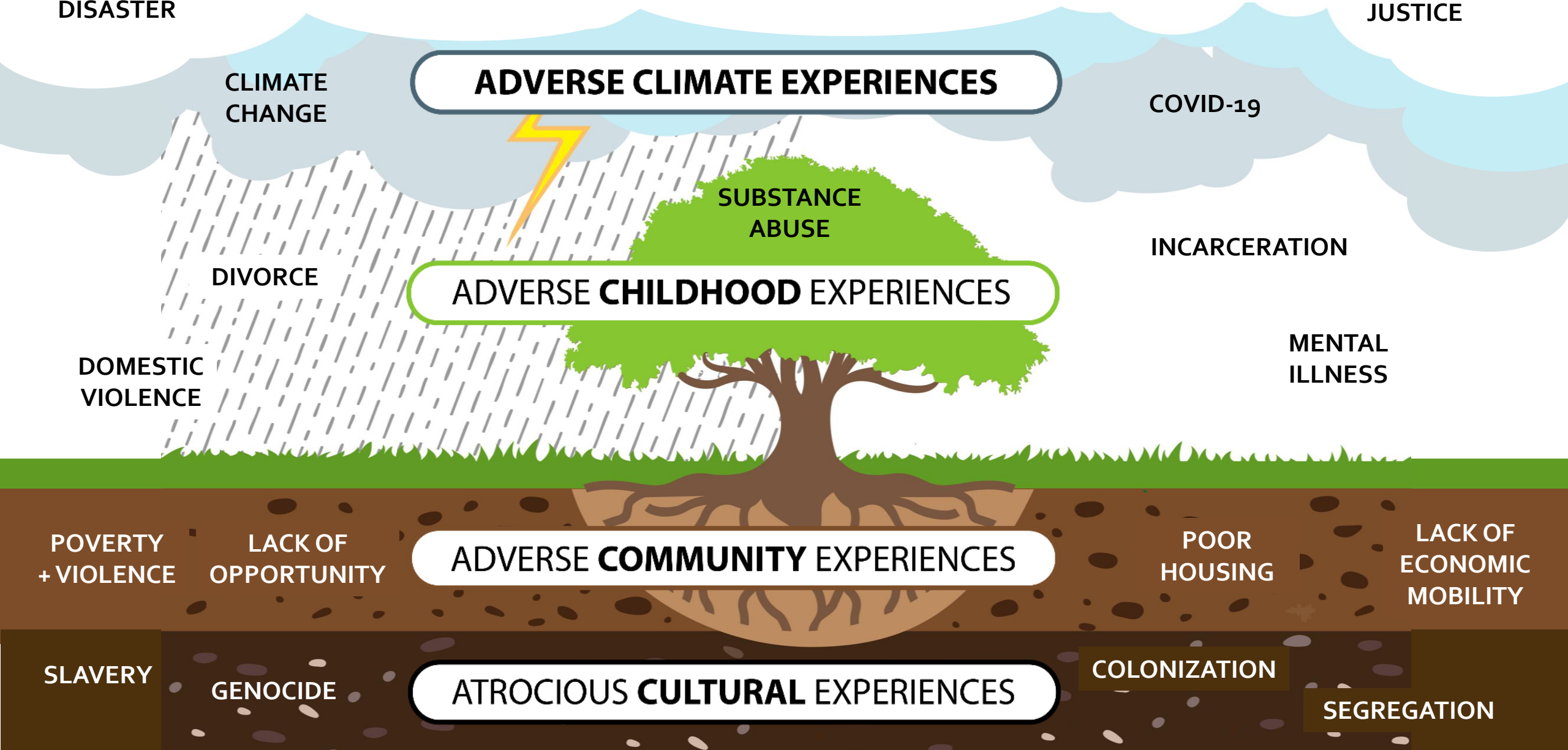
ATROCIOUS CULTURAL EXPERIENCES

SLAVERY

GENOCIDE

COLONIZATION

SEGREGATION





The “Why” as the
ROI

“I grew up in this community. I know these people. I see how badly they are struggling.

We have got to do something about this.”

Kristen Ott, CEO, Creative Care Communities

An iceberg floating in the ocean. The tip of the iceberg is above the water surface, while the much larger, jagged base is submerged. The sky is overcast and grey. The water is dark blue. The iceberg is white and blue.

What you know →

Hard Working
Smart
“Good” Family

What some might know →

Had an unplanned pregnancy.
Doesn't know where daughter is.
Can't speak of it.

What you really should know →

I grieve.
I eat to cope and soothe.
Can't maintain healthy boundaries/relationships .
I work as a way to gain value.

What you may never know →

ACTIVITY #3: Trauma as an Iceberg

“What do I do, I have all ten ACEs?” Delphina W.

Effective Leadership Buffers the Effects of
Trauma

Trauma Informed Survey



What would it look like if organizational leaders model and embody trauma informed care?

Behaviors and Actions of Trauma Informed Leaders

Emotional and Physical Safety

Empowerment, Voice and Choice

Trust and Transparency

Positive Childhood Experiences

- Able to talk about your feelings.
- Family stood by you during difficult times.
- Participated in community traditions.
- Felt a sense of belonging in high school.
- Felt supported by friends.
- Felt safe, protected by an adult in the home.



Healing in Community



Resilience

ACES are not destiny.

The body can heal.

The brain is plastic.

Relationships and
Community build
resilience.



Workplace Wellbeing a path toward healing



"Trauma aware workplaces offer a sanctuary of safety and support, a place where people can bring **their whole selves** and be valued for who they are." **Sandra L. Bloom**



Leadership Awareness

Community Services and Programs

Employee Health

Positive Workplace Wellbeing

From the Research to the Me-Search



THE RESILIENT MIND COLLECTIVE

A Year Long Book Study for Teams

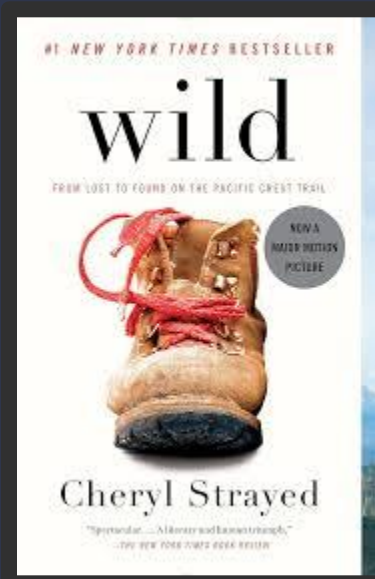
Designed by: Jeff Bell, Ashleigh Davis, Angie Gray,
Jean Hartnett and Kyle Rand



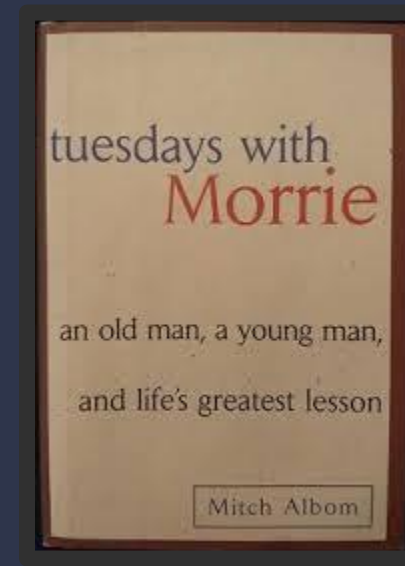
Team Building



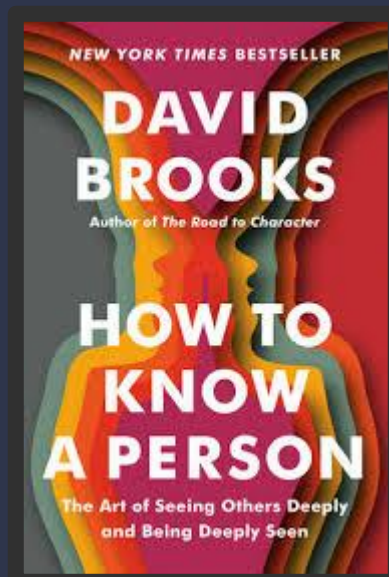
Personal Transformation



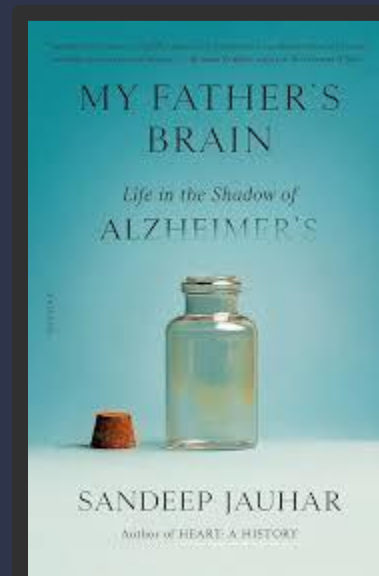
Resiliency



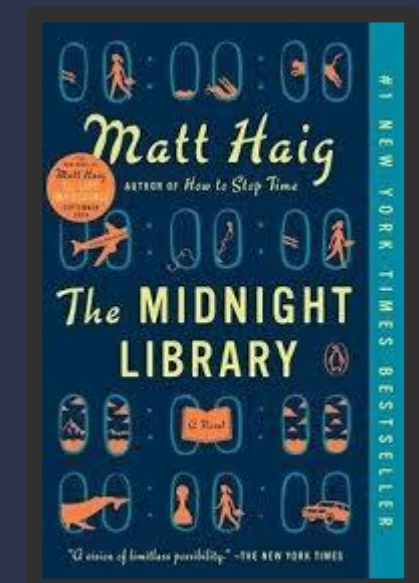
Empathy



Building Bridges



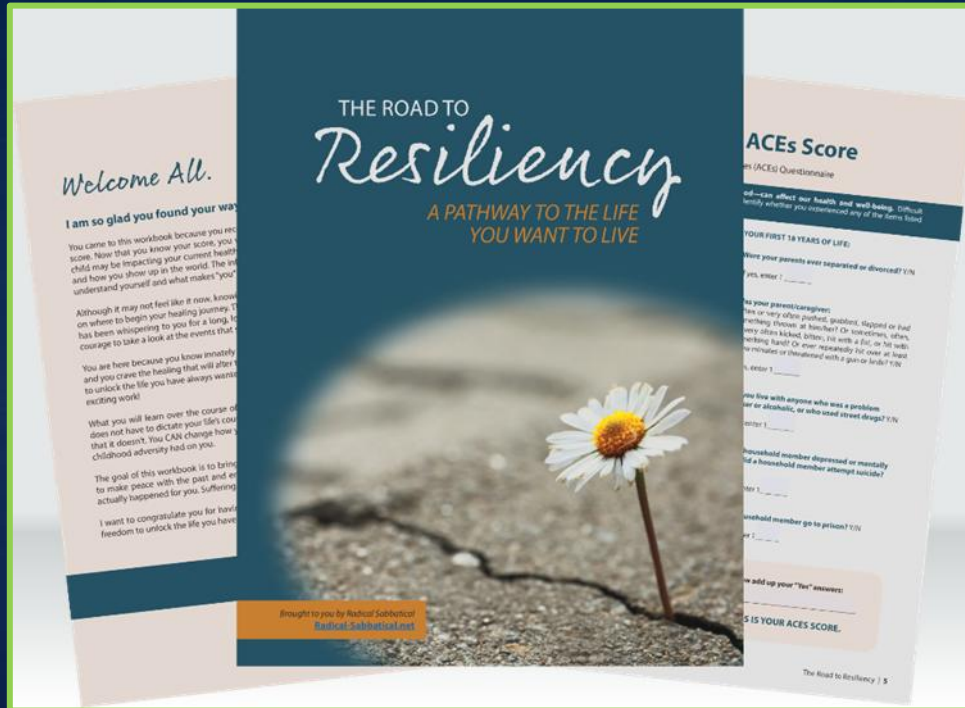
Communication



Introspection

Radical Sabbatical

“Turning Adversity into Advocacy”



www.radicalsabbaticalcare.com



“There is no greater agony
than bearing an untold
story inside of you.”

Maya Angelou



Activity Four

“An unexamined life
is not worth living.”

Socrates

*Imperfection
is beautiful.*



Kintsugi

They saw "something"
on her mammogram.



**Thank
You!!**