


National Resource Center
on Domestic Violence




ACE-DV
A project of the National Resource Center on Domestic Violence

Learning from the Voices and Experiences of
Adult Children Exposed to Domestic ViolenceCasey Keene, NRCDV Director of Programs & Prevention
Trauma Response and the Criminal Justice System
Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services | May 14, 2021

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Getting to know 10-year-old you

When I was a kid, I was
really good at _____!




2



Collective Trauma

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National Resource Center on Domestic Violence

Mission: To strengthen and transform efforts to end domestic violence.

The National Resource Center on Domestic Violence (www.nrcdv.org) provides a wide range of free, comprehensive, and individualized technical assistance, training, and specialized resource materials.

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Key Initiatives & Special Projects



Building Comprehensive Solutions



RHY TOOLKIT



VAWnet



preventIPV
tools for social change



COMMUNITY BASED PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH



SAFE HOUSING PARTNERSHIPS

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NRCDV STANDS

WE STAND with individuals and groups who have been targeted, degraded, threatened, or marginalized because they are Native Americans, people of color, immigrants, women, Muslims, LGBTQ, or people with disabilities.

WE STAND against white supremacy, racism, misogyny, anti-Semitism, homophobia, transphobia, xenophobia, and all other forms of structural oppression.

WE STAND with survivors of domestic and sexual violence, especially those most vulnerable and with limited access to services and protection.

WE STAND together in celebration of the rich diversity of people in this country and the vitality and strength they bring to our communities and society.

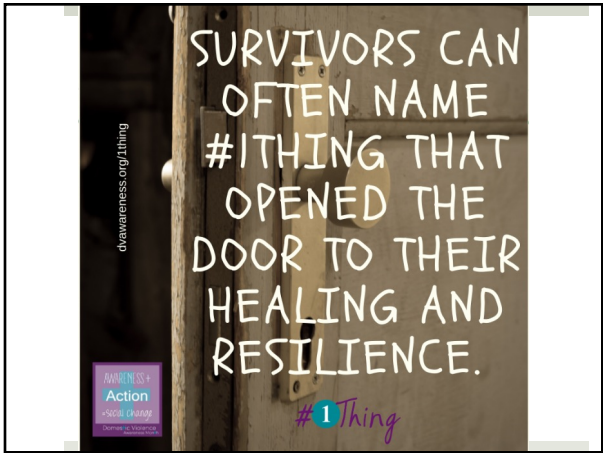
WE STAND with those who embrace self care and community connection as necessary and powerful for social change.

WE STAND with other activists and organizations who continue to work passionately for gender, racial, economic, and social justice for ALL.

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Core Beliefs

1. Children exposed to domestic violence can heal and thrive.

"That's the bravery in doing this work, that we're in our healing and we are ready to share with others."
— Rebecca

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Core Beliefs

2. Each of us should be allowed and encouraged to name our own experience.

"That's how I began my healing: When I finally understood how unique I was, and that trauma was an individual experience from the core, I knew that I should stop comparing myself to people. I am so unique, I am an individual, and my story is mine." — William

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Core Beliefs

3. There is a difference between loving an abusive person and condoning their behavior.

"Continuing the monster narrative doesn't serve justice or peace to anyone, and I really try to be mindful as a woman of color not to contribute to a narrative that may further dehumanize people in my community." — Shenna

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Core Beliefs

4. Violence is learned and reinforced by societal norms, yet accountability and commitment to change can create a new path.

"We have to invite individuals to the table when they are ready to heal." - Lenny

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Core Beliefs

5. Our non-abusive parent was faced with limited and complex choices.

"People go really quickly to demonizing members of my family... I try to lay out the complexity of what I could see that was happening in our home... It's just that this stuff is super complex... It's hard for people to sit with that kind of complexity." - Olga

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Core Beliefs

6. Our unique experiences bring added value to the movement.

"It felt like it was the first time I had a voice in the system. That I actually got to talk about how the system treated my family and what they did to discourage us from participating.... It was really empowering for me." - James


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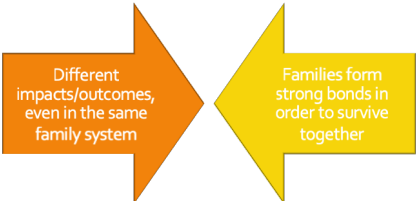
Themes from Our Stories



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Themes from Our Stories



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Themes from Our Stories



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Common human experience

"Trauma is a *common human experience* that is largely overlooked in existing explanations of and responses to human behavior."

(Joan Schladale, Resources for Resolving Violence)

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Post-traumatic growth

- Deficit model is incomplete
- Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) develop specialized skills for adaptation
- "See through the darkness to leverage what it gives us."

(Bruce Ellis, University of Arizona)

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Your ACE Assets

What did you gain?

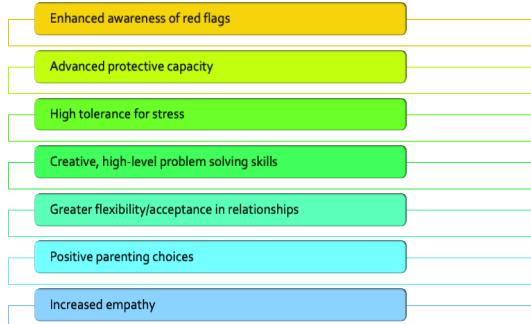
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Positive impacts of trauma

- Renewed appreciation of life
- Commitment to live life to the fullest & value each day
- Improved relationships with loved ones
- Search for new possibilities
- Enhanced personal strengths
- New spiritual changes

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ACE-DV Assets



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Parenting strengths/assets of survivors

- Increased empathy and caring for children (20% in one study)
- Children rated mothers as highly available to them – indicated nurturing behaviors such as hugging and expressing love (nearly all)
- Maternal warmth or “mothering resilience” may play a critical protective role for children exposed to perpetrator behavior

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What does "mothering resilience" look like?

- Strong communication with children
- Words of encouragement
- Loving embraces
- "Essential" strengths
- Efforts to minimize exposure
- Creating joyful moments


"When he is out of the way you think, 'Right, we've got five minutes, let's go and do something happy, let's go and get soaking wet in the garden playing with the water... or let's play hide and seek in the house.' You know, stupid things, but for five minutes, that child is happy."

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"Doña Ester was one person in my life who really helped me without even knowing that she helped me."



Olga



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"Through having us notice our surroundings, and having us carry ourselves on trails through the forest, and be together, and laugh together, and maybe even sing the same song – those things grounded us in our bodies and connected us to each other and made us feel like we had people when maybe other parts of our life were a little bit chaotic... She was bringing wholeness to us that I think maybe she recognized we weren't getting from other places."

Jonathan


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"In a Christian religion, 'faith without works is dead,' so she really had to do some work within herself. I'm just amazed that she was able to pull love and kindness out of herself when I didn't see that much being poured into her... That is really where my admiration comes from, because she got it from somewhere, and I don't know where."



Annika

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"Giving has its rewards, in the sense that when we give, it should be unconditional. And she gave unconditionally. It cost her, and she sacrificed so much to give, and the reward that I believe she got was really about seeing people happy and seeing people enjoy life... She gave of herself that way, and that's one of the biggest lessons I've learned."

William

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5 everyday gestures

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What is resilience?

The human capacity to navigate and negotiate **culturally meaningful resources** to sustain our well-being.

Resilience isn't about pushing through and past your limits. It's about building capacity and resource internally so that you have the energy to skillfully meet what life is presenting you.
-Maryam Hasnaa

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Ordinary Magic

- 1/2 to 2/3 of children exposed to trauma go on to achieve successful and well adjusted lives

(Melissa Institute)

- "The great surprise of resilience research is the ordinariness of the phenomena."

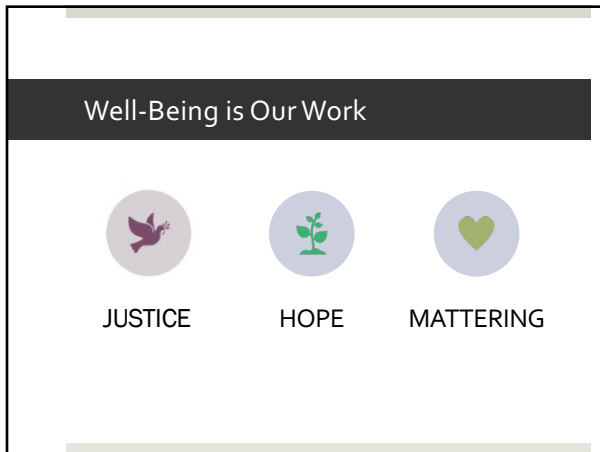
(Ann Masten, University of Minnesota)

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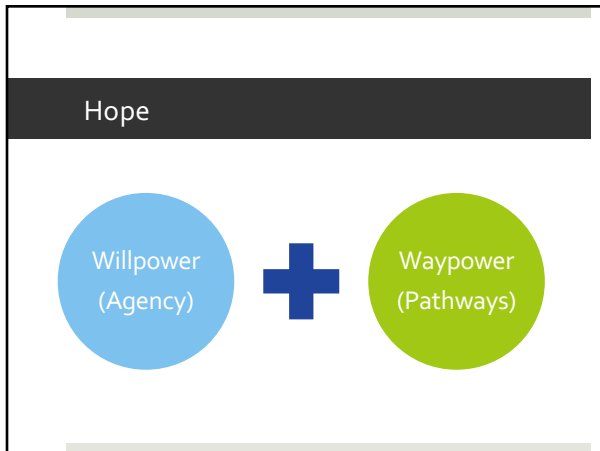
Factors promoting resilience



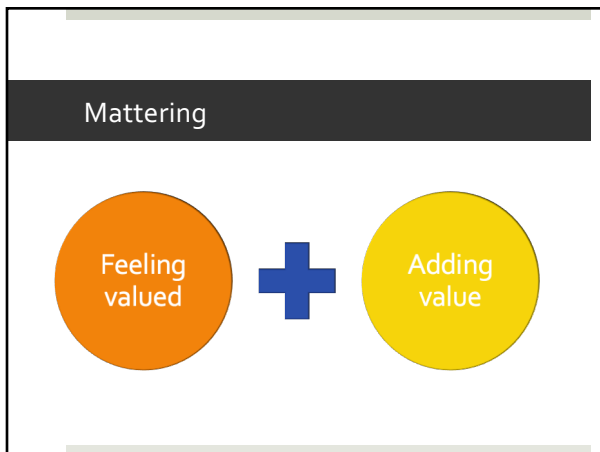
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Justice

"Justice is a proactive commitment to providing each person with the material and social conditions in which they can both survive and thrive as a healthy and self-actualized human being."

- Mychal Denzel Smith

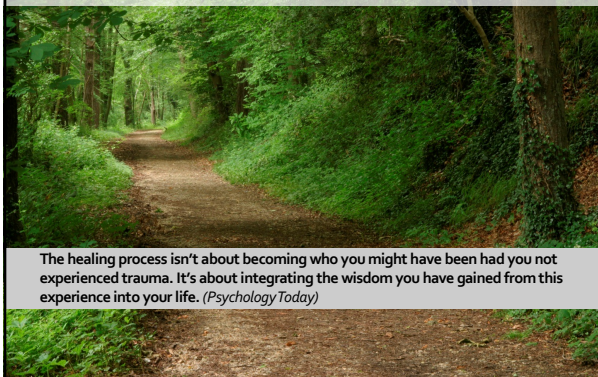
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Path to resilience




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Resilience is a *process*



The healing process isn't about becoming who you might have been had you not experienced trauma. It's about integrating the wisdom you have gained from this experience into your life. (*Psychology Today*)


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Bringing our Whole Selves

We believe that we can foster healthier individuals, families, and communities when we look to the **strengths, skills, and assets** we gain by **incorporating** our experiences of trauma into our whole selves.

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Thank you!

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