



# Schools for Mental Health, Wellbeing and Resilience

Kath Bransby

# Trigger Warning

NAPAC – National Association for People Abused in Childhood. Offers support to adult survivors of all types of childhood abuse, including physical, sexual, emotional abuse or neglect. [www.napac.org.uk](http://www.napac.org.uk)

Women's Aid - a grassroots federation working together to provide life-saving services in England and build a future where domestic abuse is not tolerated. [www.womensaid.org.uk](http://www.womensaid.org.uk)

**Trigger Warning**



# A Mental Health Crisis?

- 1 in 6 under 16s have a diagnosable mental health problem
- More than 1 in 4 young women have a diagnosable mental health problem
- England now has an 'Infant Mental Health Week'



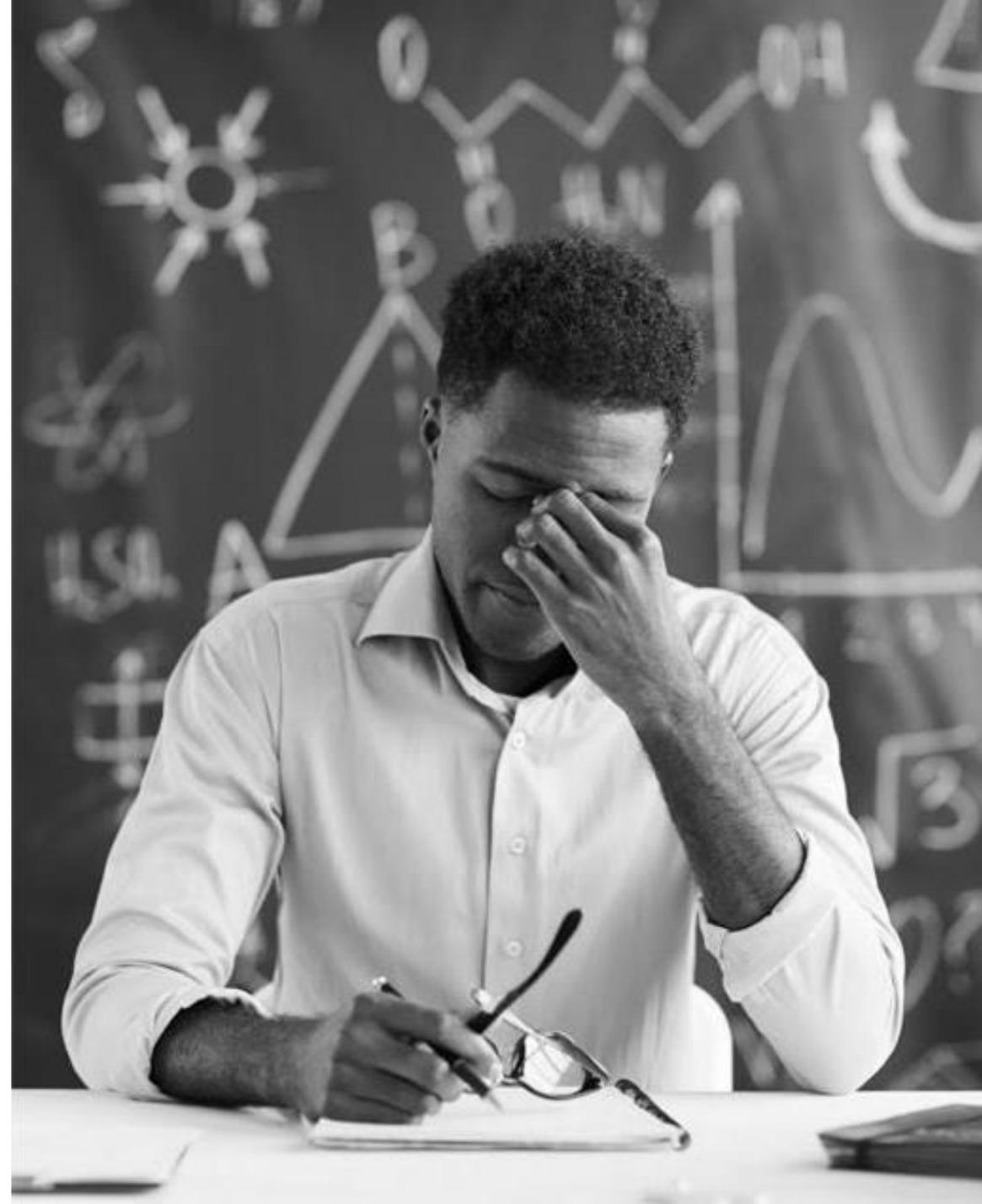
# A Mental Health Crisis?

- On average, the gap between children and young people first becoming unwell and actually getting help is **TEN YEARS**
- Between 18% and 75% of children are not seen at all when referred to CAMHS
- Average wait time to start treatment is 13 weeks
- Nearly half of children referred to CAMHS are only seen once.



# A Mental Health Crisis?

- 77% of teachers experienced symptoms of poor mental health due to their work
- 72% of teachers are stressed
- 42% of teachers think that their organisation's culture has a negative impact on their wellbeing
- 54% of teachers have considered leaving the sector in the last two years due to pressures on their mental health



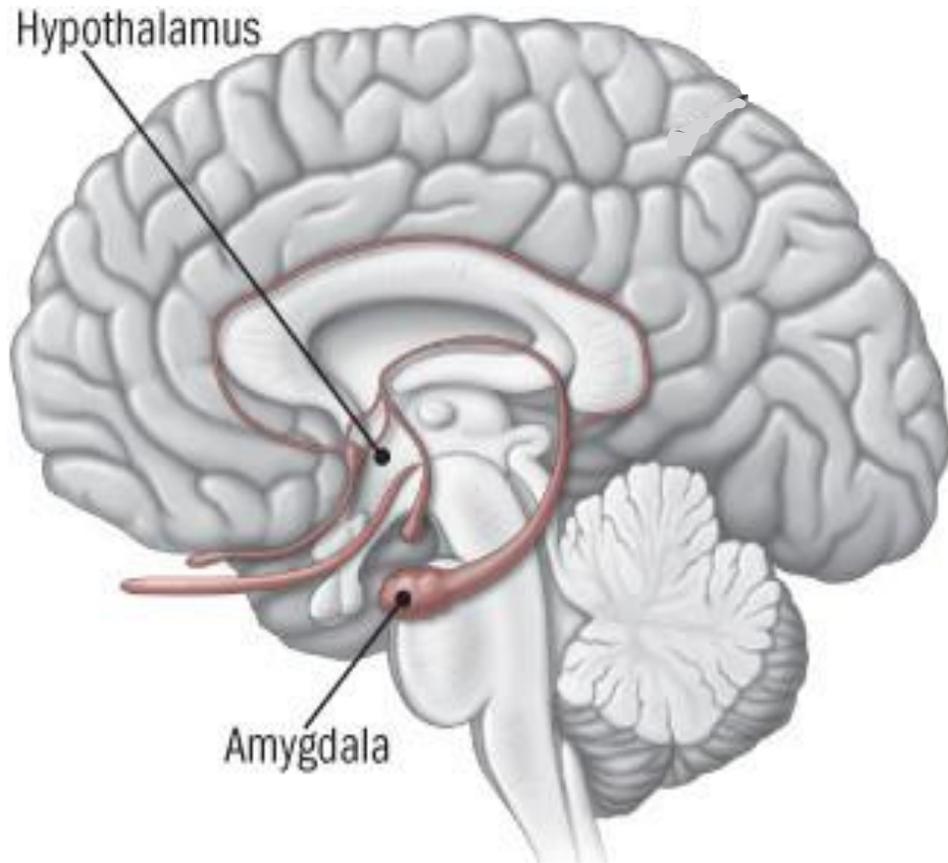


# THE TRIUNE BRAIN



- Reptilian Brain
- Limbic System
- Neocortex

# Autonomic Nervous System



- Breathing
- Blood pressure
- Heartbeat
- Dilation and constriction of bronchioles

# Autonomic Nervous System

## **Sympathetic Nervous System:**

### **THE ACCELERATOR**

- Triggers adrenal glands
- Sends epinephrine (adrenalin) into the blood
- Raises heart rate and blood pressure
- Breathing becomes rapid, bronchioles expand
- Extra oxygen to the brain
- Nutrients released

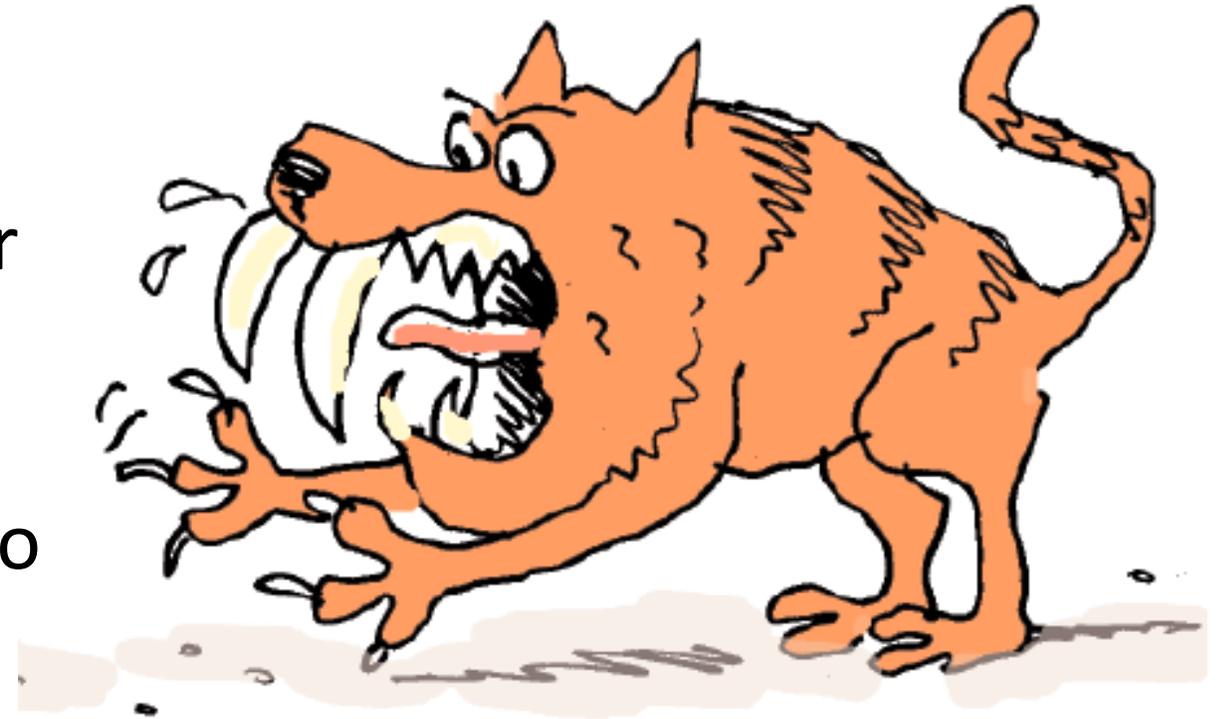
# Sympathetic Nervous System



'Fight or flight' response

# Sympathetic Nervous System

- **Fight** – attack the tiger
- **Flight** – run away from the tiger
- **Freeze** – hide from the tiger
- **Fawn** – convince the tiger not to eat you



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# Group Task

Sort the behaviours into fight, flight, freeze and fawn responses.

Being defiant

Unable to think of an answer— saying 'I don't know'

Shouting and swearing

Over-explaining

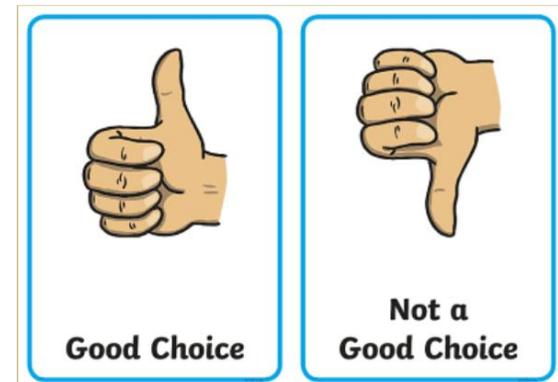
Repeated apologies

Busyness—avoiding doing what has been asked

Becoming mute

Fidgeting, restless

# The Four F's...



## **Fight**

- Shouting and swearing
- Insulting people, being unkind
- Hitting out
- Kicking
- Making demands
- Being defiant
- Angry and aggressive

## **Flight**

- Running away
- Fidgeting, restless
- Busyness—avoiding doing what has been asked
- Procrastinating
- Ignoring the source of stress
- Changing the subject
- Compulsive behaviours—counting, checking, repetition

## **Freeze**

- Becoming mute
- Shutting down
- Unable to think of an answer— saying 'I don't know'
- Zoned out, day-dreaming
- Apathy—doing nothing
- Breath holding
- Sense of dread or foreboding

## **Fawn**

- Flattery, appeasement, soothing
- Agreeing with others,
- changing one's mind
- Copying other people's responses
- Never saying no to a request
- Feeling needlessly guilty
- Repeated apologies
- Over-explaining



# Autonomic Nervous System

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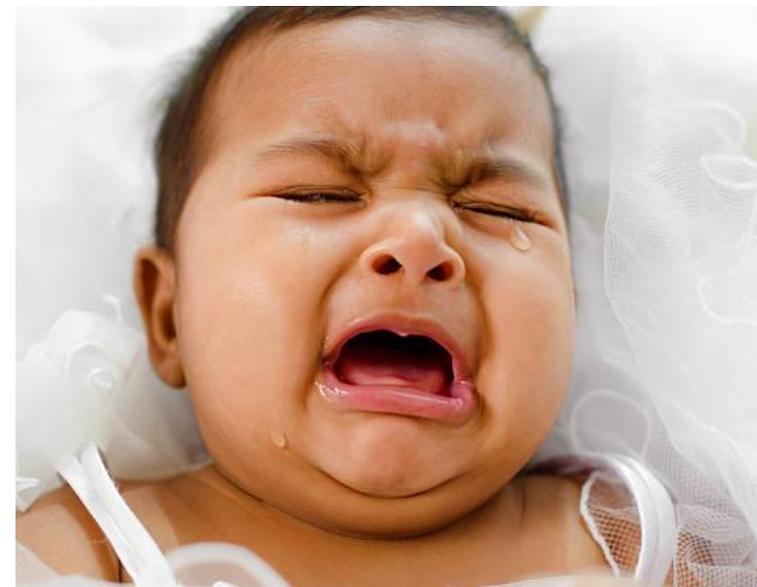
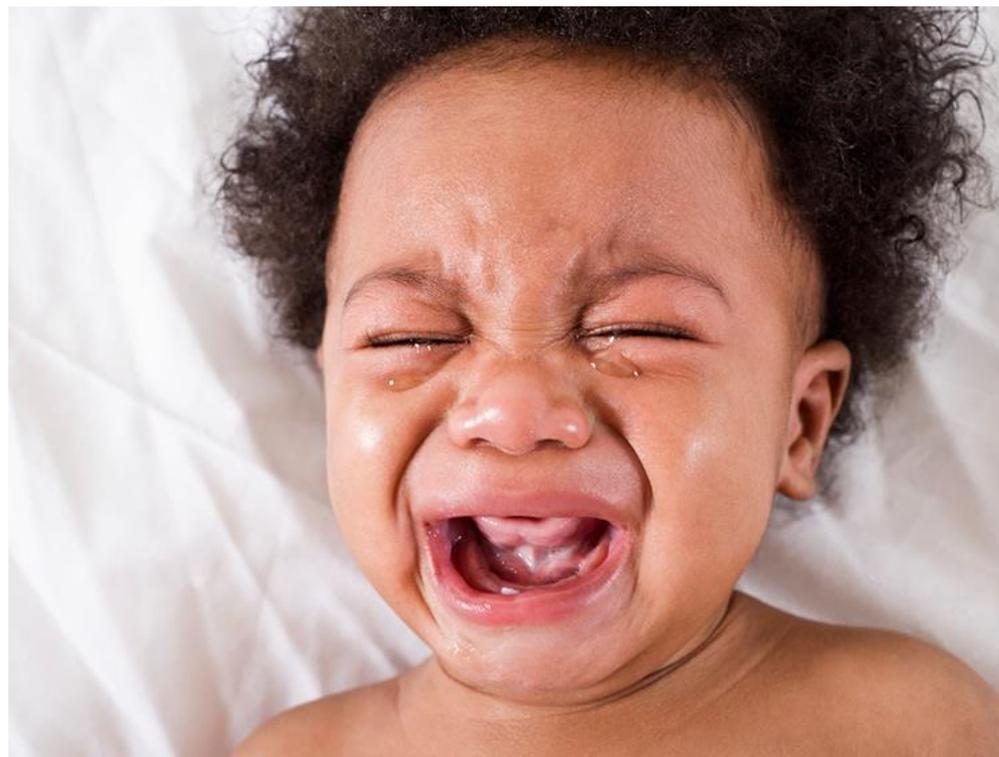
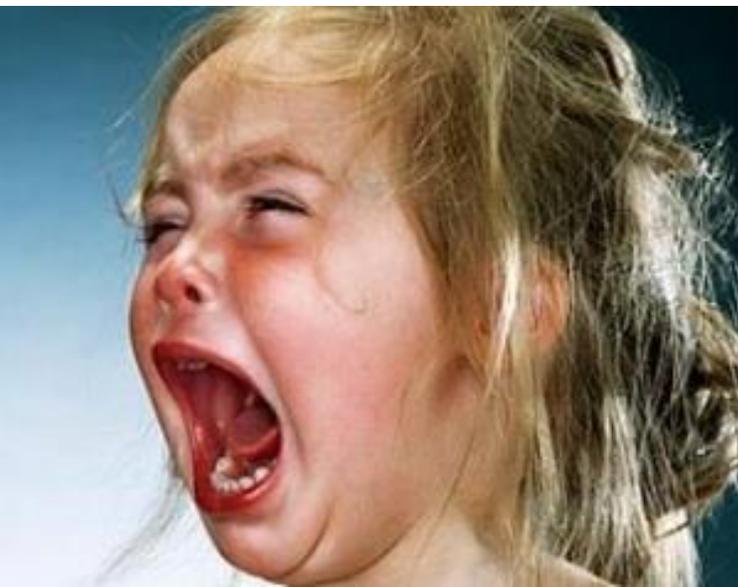
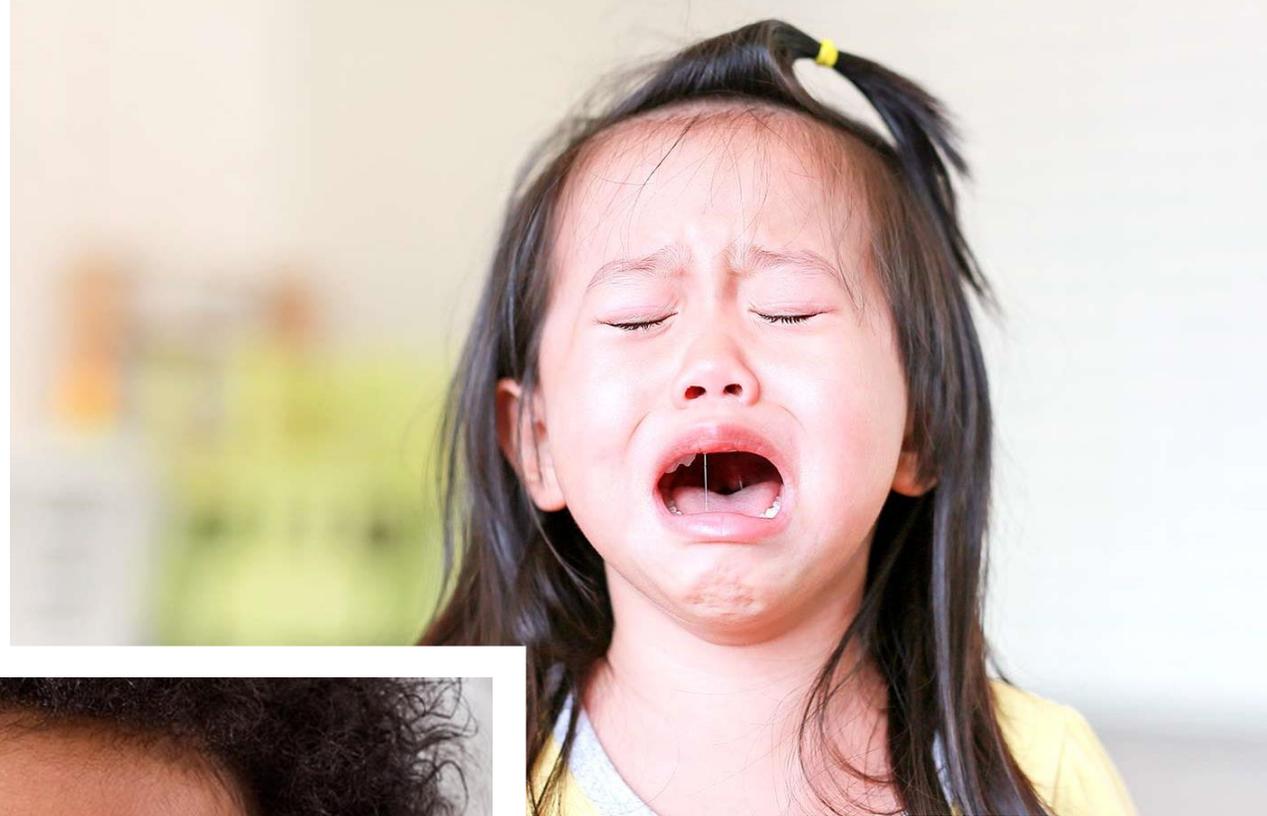
## **Parasympathetic Nervous System:**

### **THE BRAKE**

- Breathing slowly
- Moving slowly
- Safe touch – hugs, stroke a pet
- Eating/drinking
- Connection with another person (empathetic response)
- Activating the neo-cortex – rational thought

In infancy, the reptilian brain is in the driving seat most of the time...





# Co-Regulation to Self-Regulation

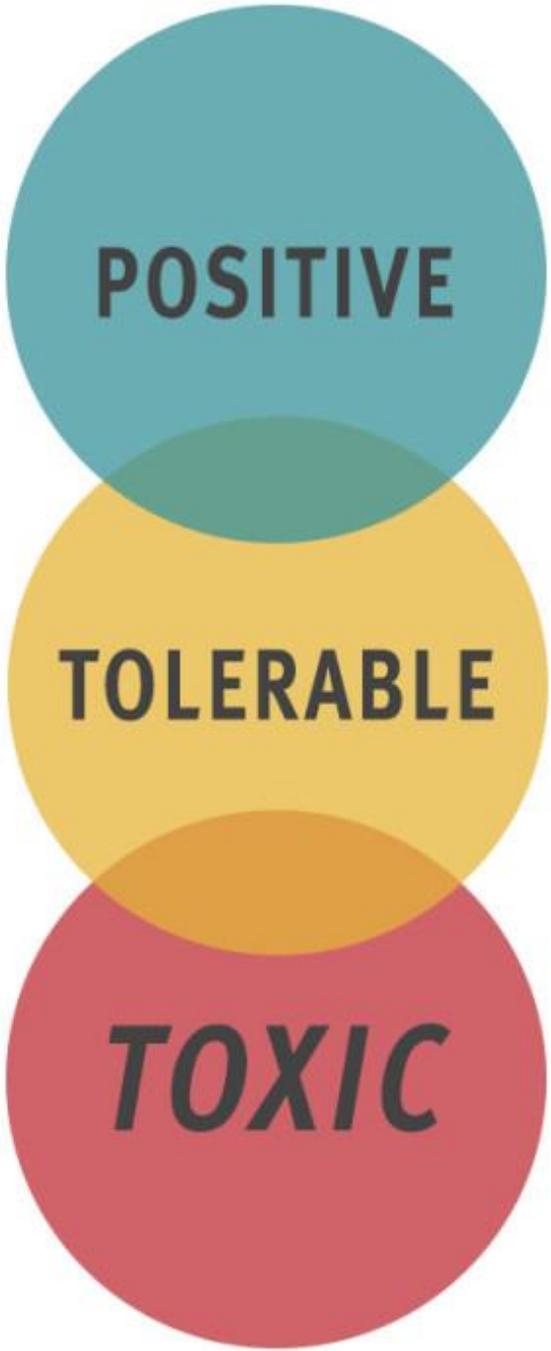
- Regulate FOR
- Regulate WITH
- SELF regulate



# Eustress vs. Distress

- Motivation
- Excitement
- Working towards goals
- Sense of achievement, fulfilment
- Confidence
- Resilience





**POSITIVE**

Brief increases in heart rate,  
mild elevations in stress hormone levels.

**TOLERABLE**

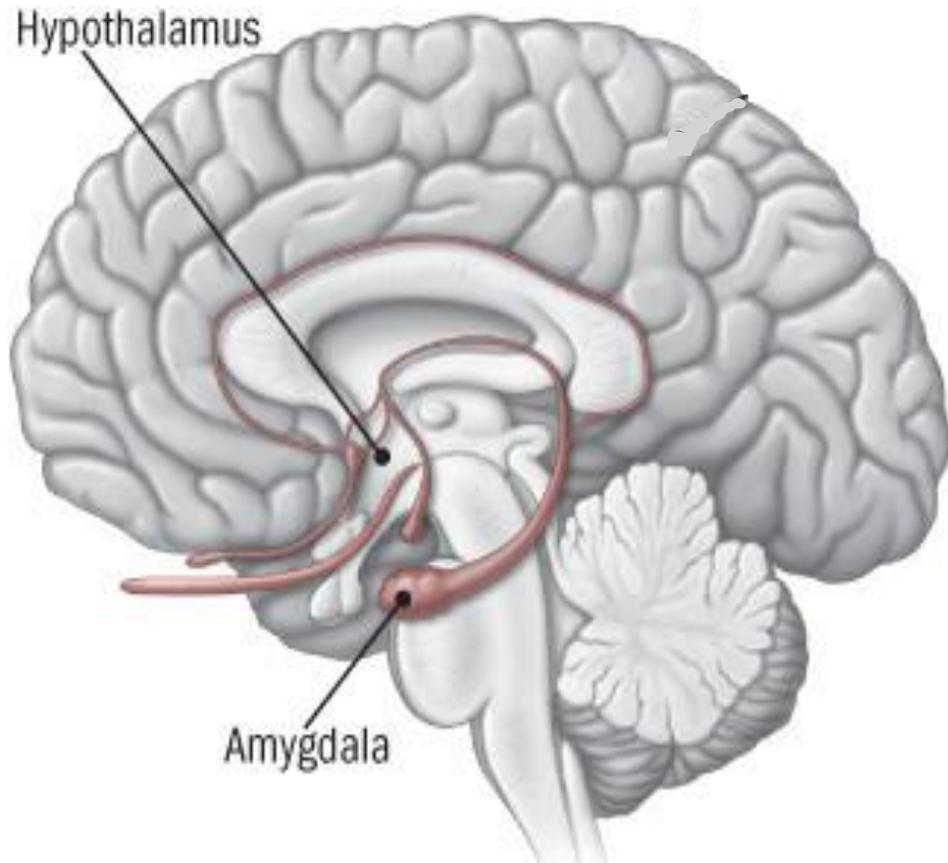
Serious, temporary stress responses,  
buffered by supportive relationships.

***TOXIC***

Prolonged activation of stress  
response systems in the absence  
of protective relationships.



# Autonomic Nervous System

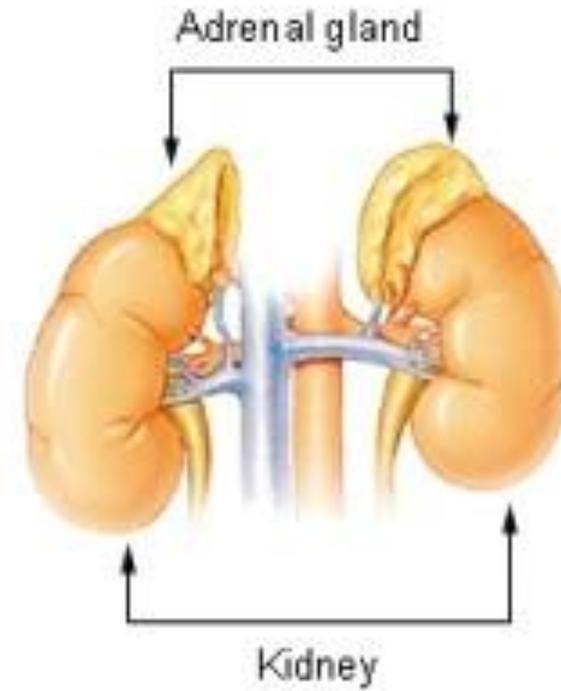
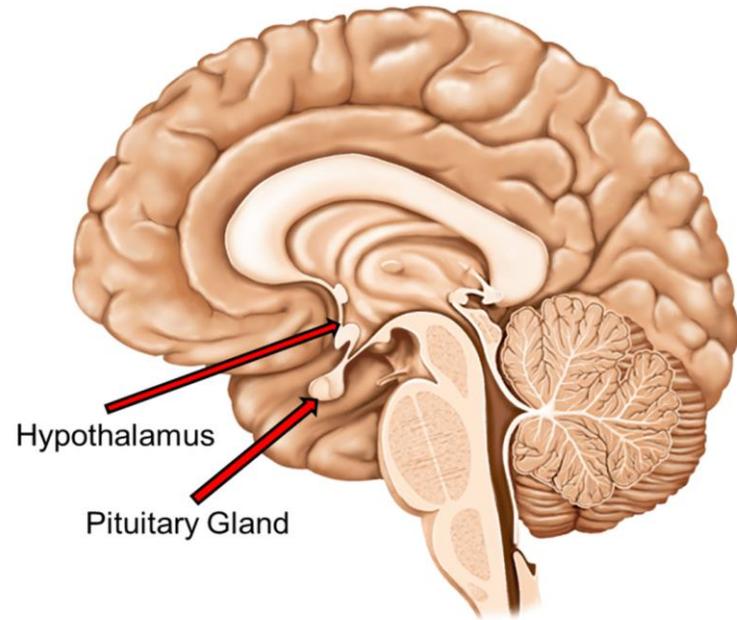


- Breathing
- Blood pressure
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# Danger?

- Initial surge of adrenalin
- Fight / flight / freeze response
- Parasympathetic nervous system
- Return to calm



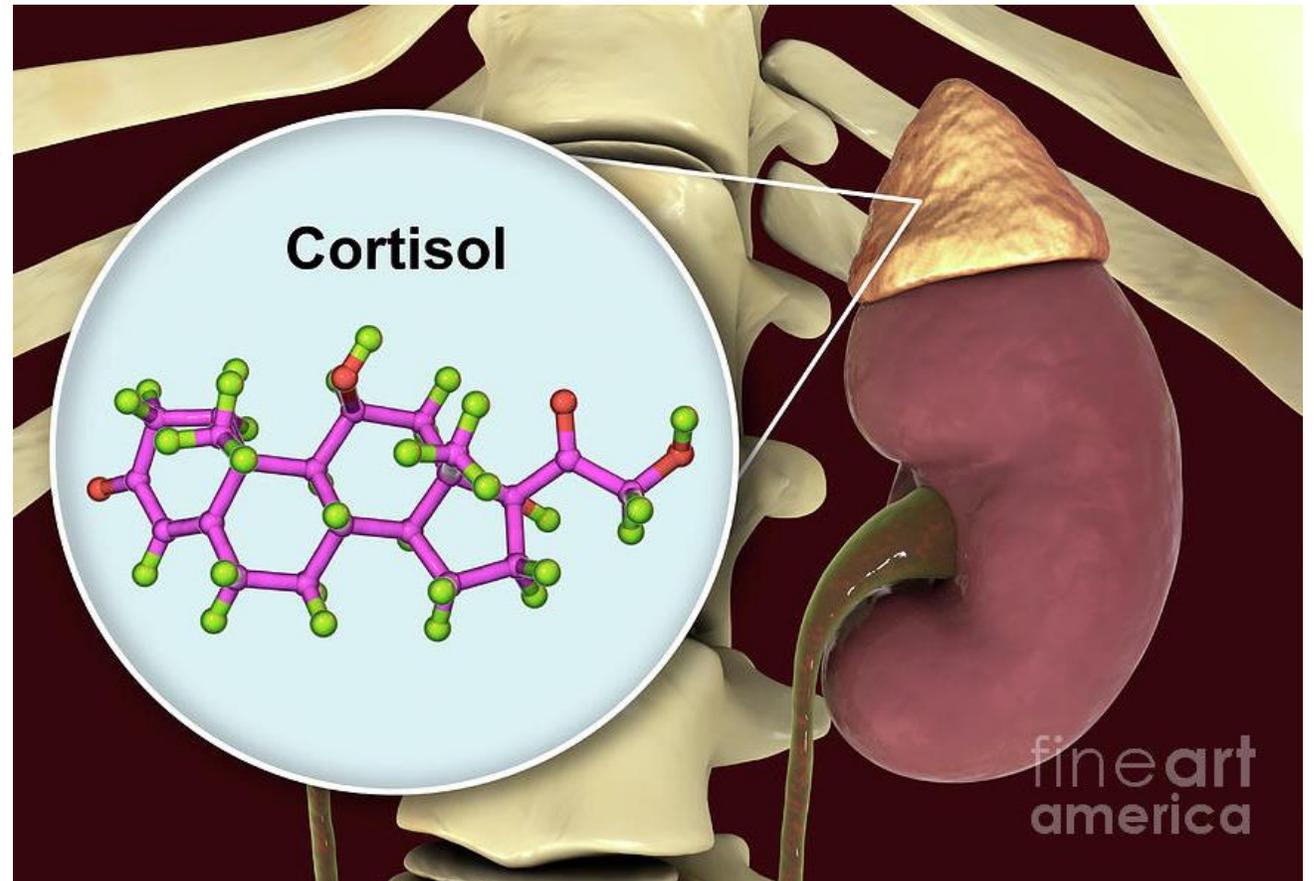


# HPA Axis

- Hypothalamus to pituitary
- Pituitary to adrenal
- Adrenal releases cortisol

# Cortisol

- Increases sugars in bloodstream
- Enhances the brain's use of glucose
- Curbs non-essential functions – digestive, reproductive, growth
- Helps brain to create links around mood, motivation and fear





# Chronic Stress

- Anxiety
- Depression
- Digestive problems
- Headaches
- Muscle tension and pain
- Heart disease, heart attack, high blood pressure and stroke
- Sleep problems
- Memory and concentration impairment
- Weight gain

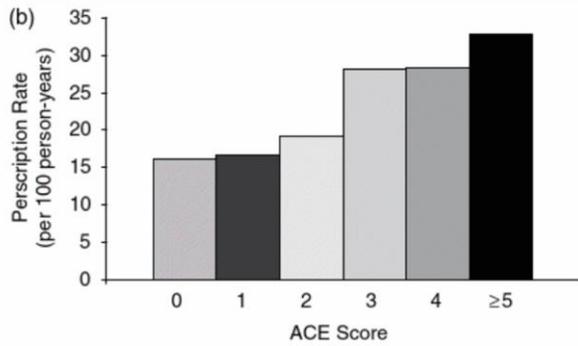


# Adverse Childhood Experiences

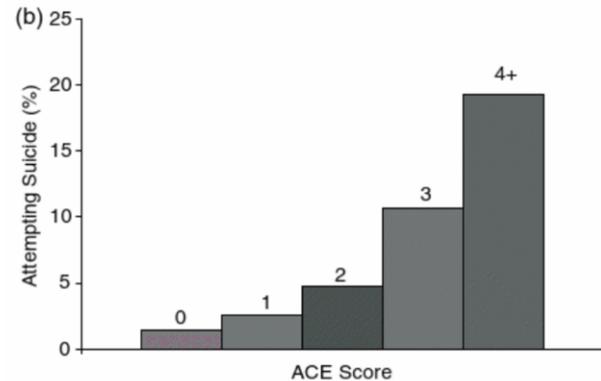
- Dr Vincent Felitti – Department of Preventative Medicine
- Patients dropping out of weight loss treatment
- Conducted patient interviews – pattern of childhood abuse
- Termed ‘Adverse Childhood Experiences’
- Felitti, V.J. et al (1998). Relationship of childhood abuse and household dysfunction to many of the leading causes of death in adults: The Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) Study. *American Journal of Preventative Medicine* 14(4), 245 - 258

# Mental Health

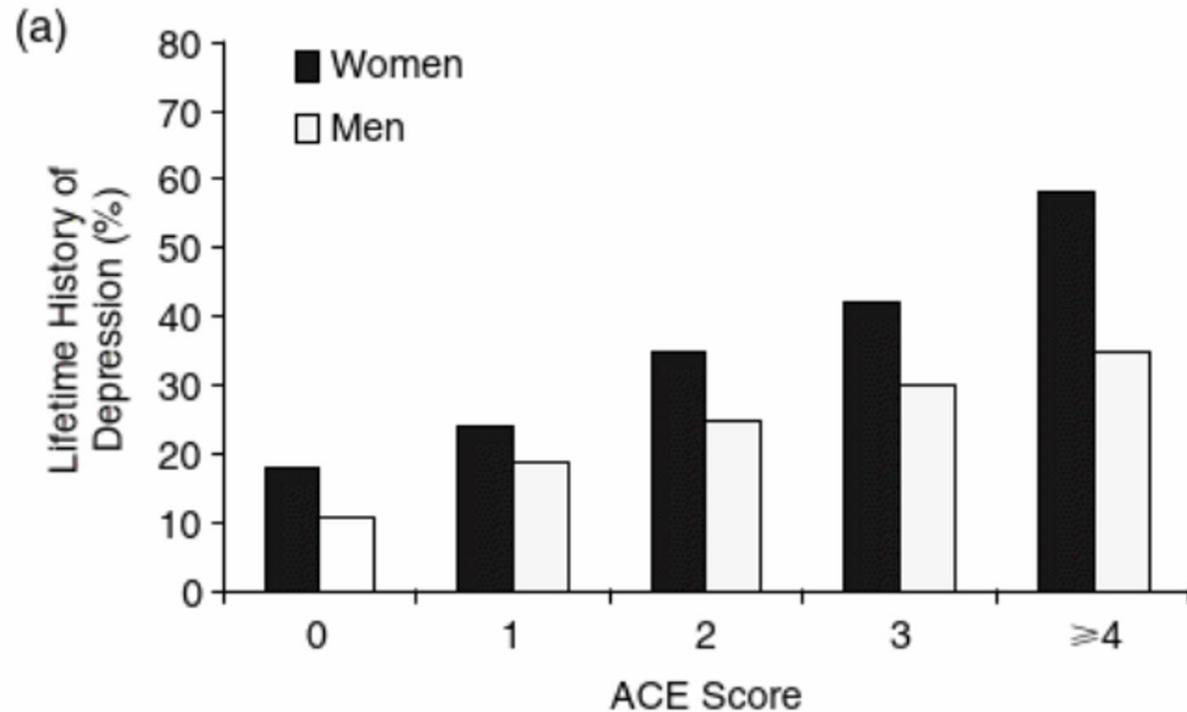
## Anxiety



## Attempting Suicide

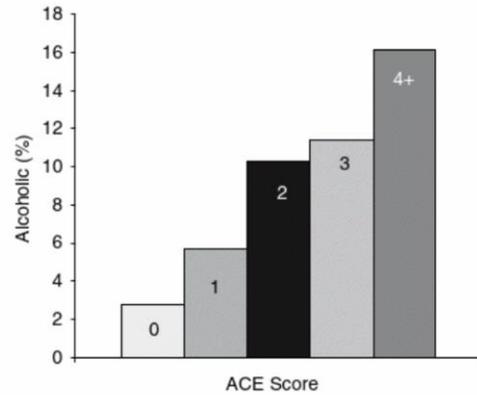


## Depression

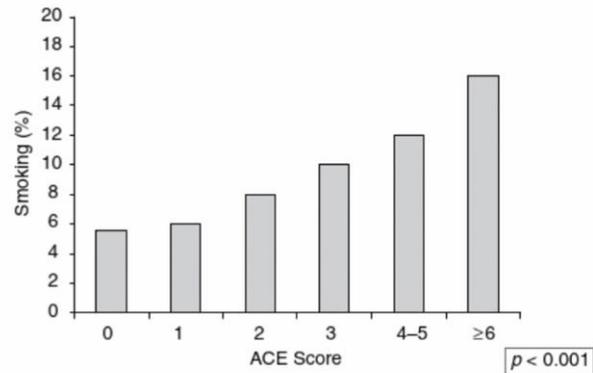


# Addictions

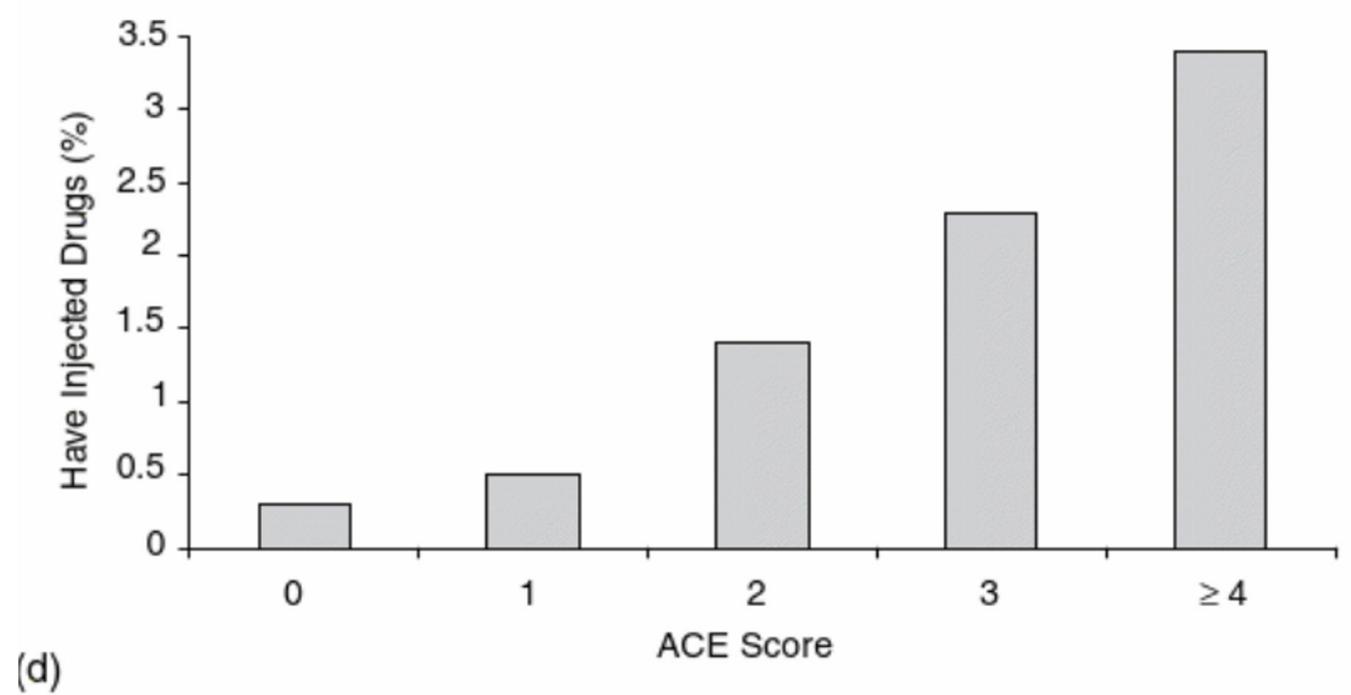
## Alcoholism



## Smoking

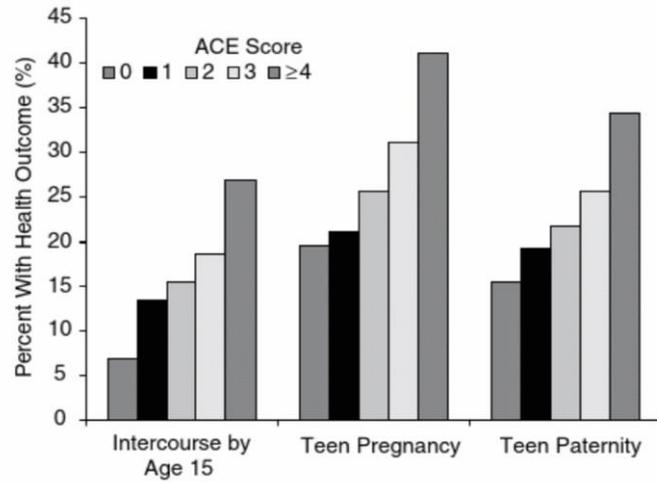


## Intravenous Drug Use



## Sexual Behaviour

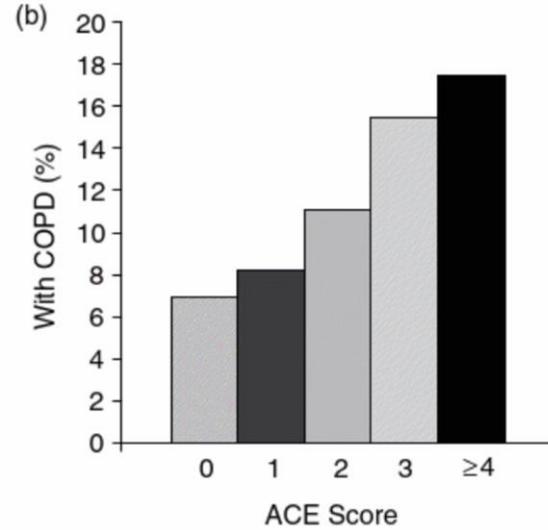
(a)



## COPD

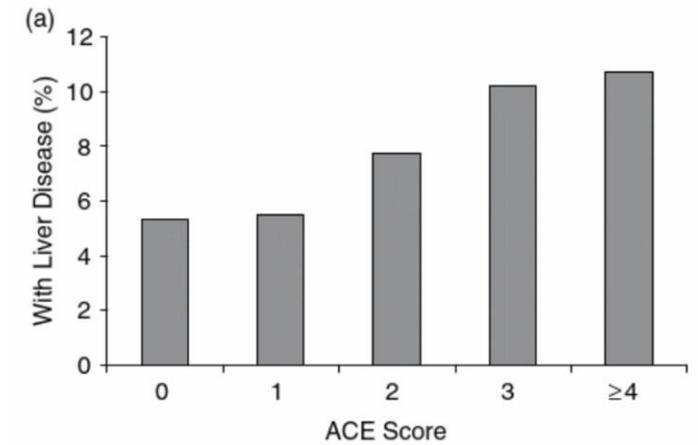
(Chronic Pulmonary Obstructive Disease)

(b)

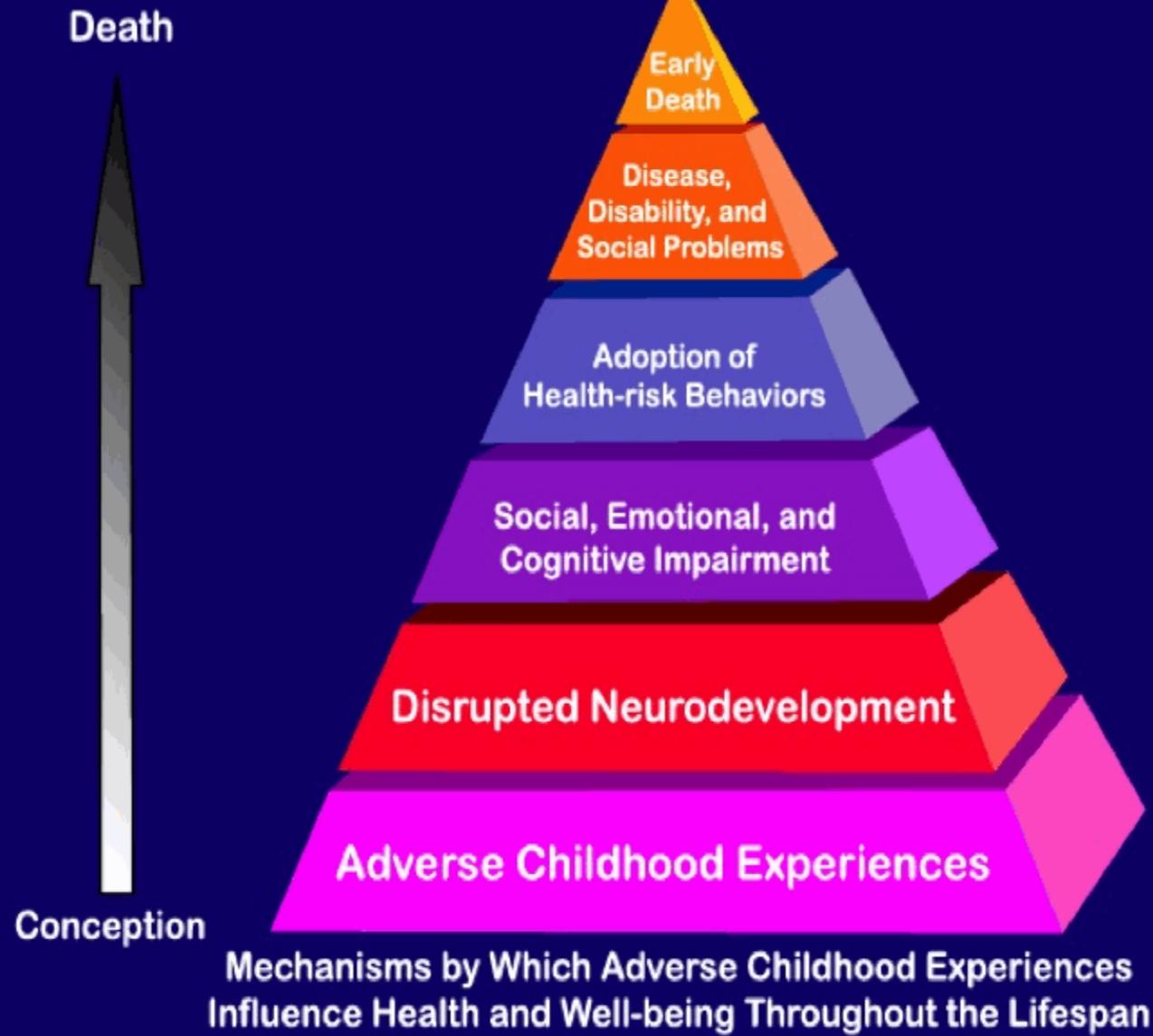


## Liver Disease

(a)



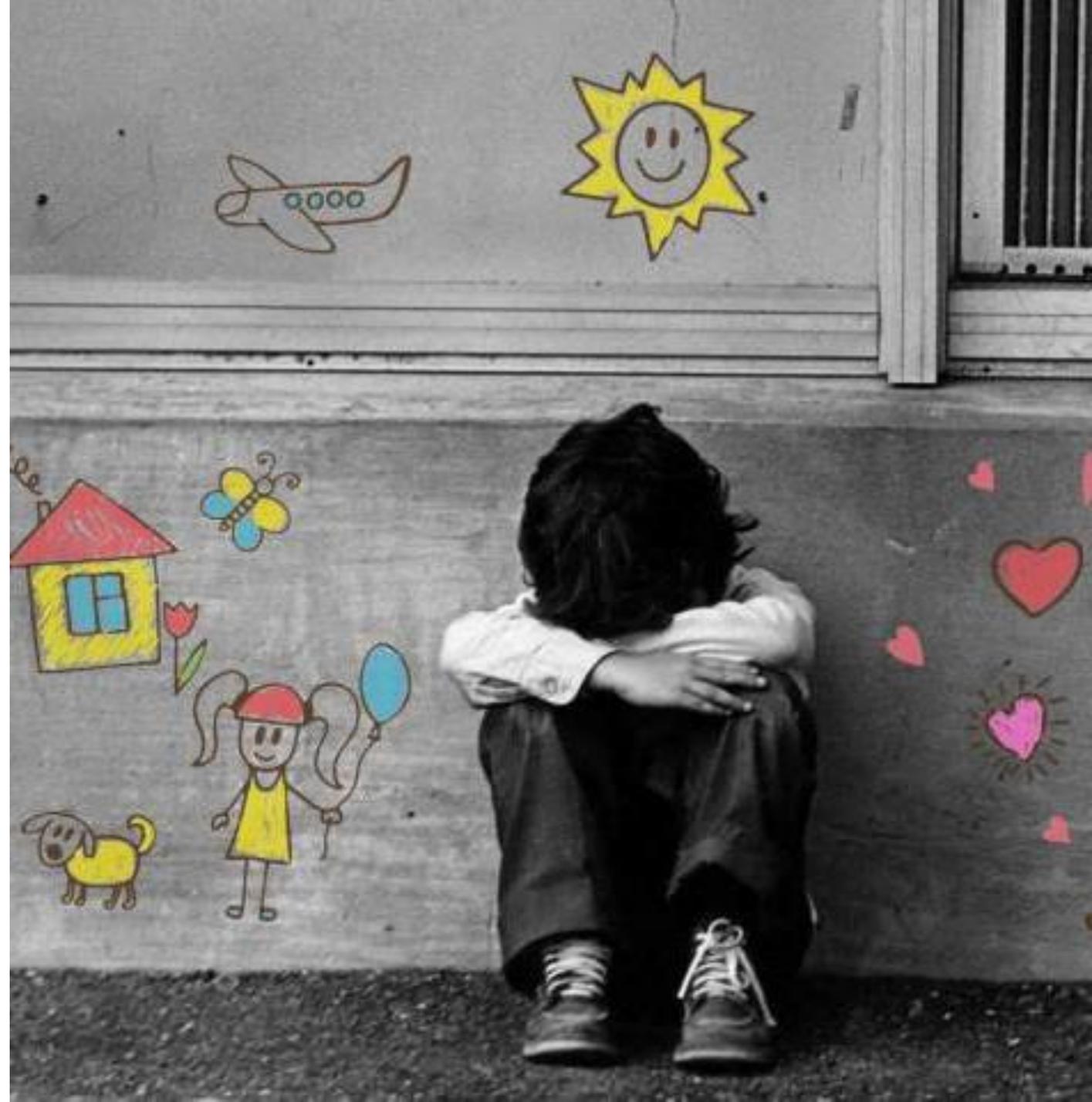
# Complex Impacts



# The Prevalence of ACES

# Abuse

One in five adults aged 18 to 74 years experienced at least one form of child abuse, whether emotional abuse, physical abuse, sexual abuse, or witnessing domestic violence or abuse, before the age of 16 years (8.5 million people)



# Sexual Abuse

An estimated 3.1 million (1 in 14) adults aged 18 to 74 years were victims of sexual abuse before the age of 16; this includes abuse by both adult and child perpetrators.

[Review of sexual abuse in schools and colleges - GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/442222/sexual_abuse_in_schools_and_colleges.pdf)  
([www.gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk))



# Domestic Abuse

“any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive, threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are, or have been, intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality. The abuse can encompass, but is not limited to psychological, physical, sexual, financial, emotional.”



# Domestic Abuse

- 1 in 4 women suffer domestic abuse at some point in their lives
- Each year nearly 2 million people in the UK suffer some form of domestic abuse - 1.3 million female victims (8.2% of the population) and 600,000 male victims (4%)
- Pregnancy is a trigger – over a third of domestic violence starts or gets worse when a woman is pregnant
- NSPCC statistics show 1 in 5 children witness domestic abuse
- 62% of children living with domestic abuse are directly harmed by the perpetrator of the abuse, in addition to the harm caused by witnessing the abuse of others



# Criminal Behaviour

- Approx 107 000 children in England and Wales are separated from a parent by imprisonment (~1 in 100 children)



## What is Trauma?

Trauma is a response to any event(s) encountered as out of control, frightening experiences that disconnect us from all sense of resourcefulness, safety, coping and/or love (Tara Brach, 2011)





Trauma is a response to any event(s) encountered as out of control; frightening experiences that disconnect us from a sense of resourcefulness, safety, coping and/or love (Tara Brach, 2011)

## Divorce or separation

Around 30% of children do not live with both of their parents.





# Substance Misuse

- 20-30% of children live with a parent who binge drinks, or drinks at a hazardous level
- 8% of children live with a parent who misuses drugs
- In the US, 1 in 8 children lives with a parent who recurrently uses alcohol or other drugs resulting in 'significant impairment'

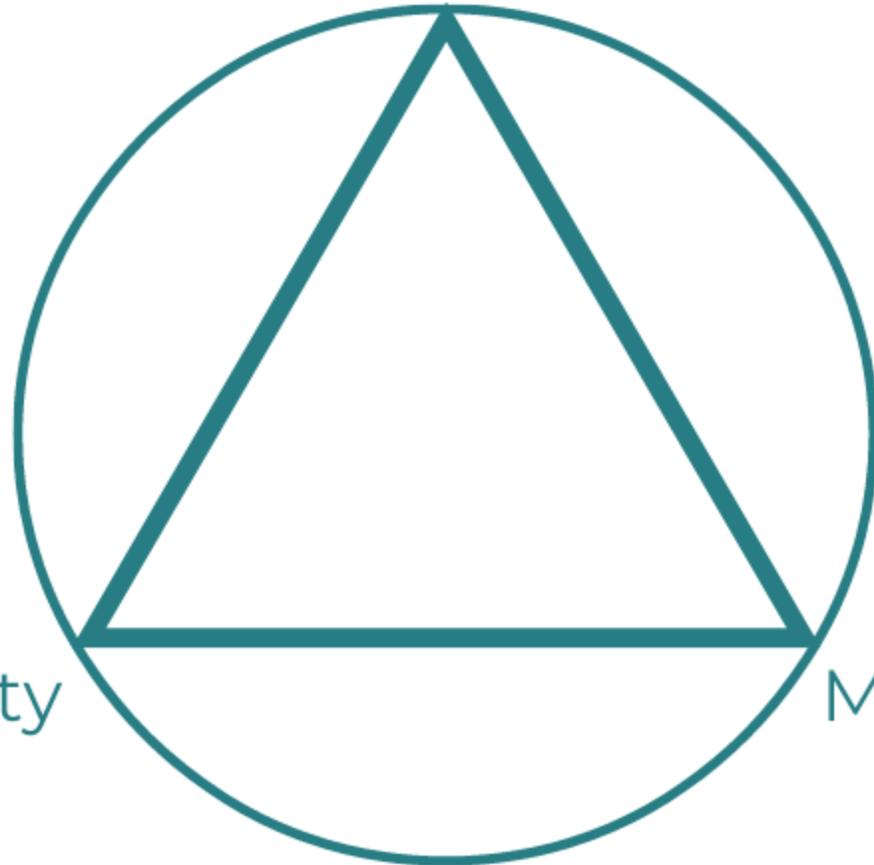


# Mental Health Problems

- 1 in 4 people will experience a mental health problem of some kind each year in England
- 1 in 6 people report experiencing a common mental health problem (like anxiety and depression) in any given week in England
- 1 in 5 people have suicidal thoughts
- 1 in 14 people self-harm
- 1 in 15 people attempt suicide.
- Approx 68% of women and 57% of men with mental health problems are parents

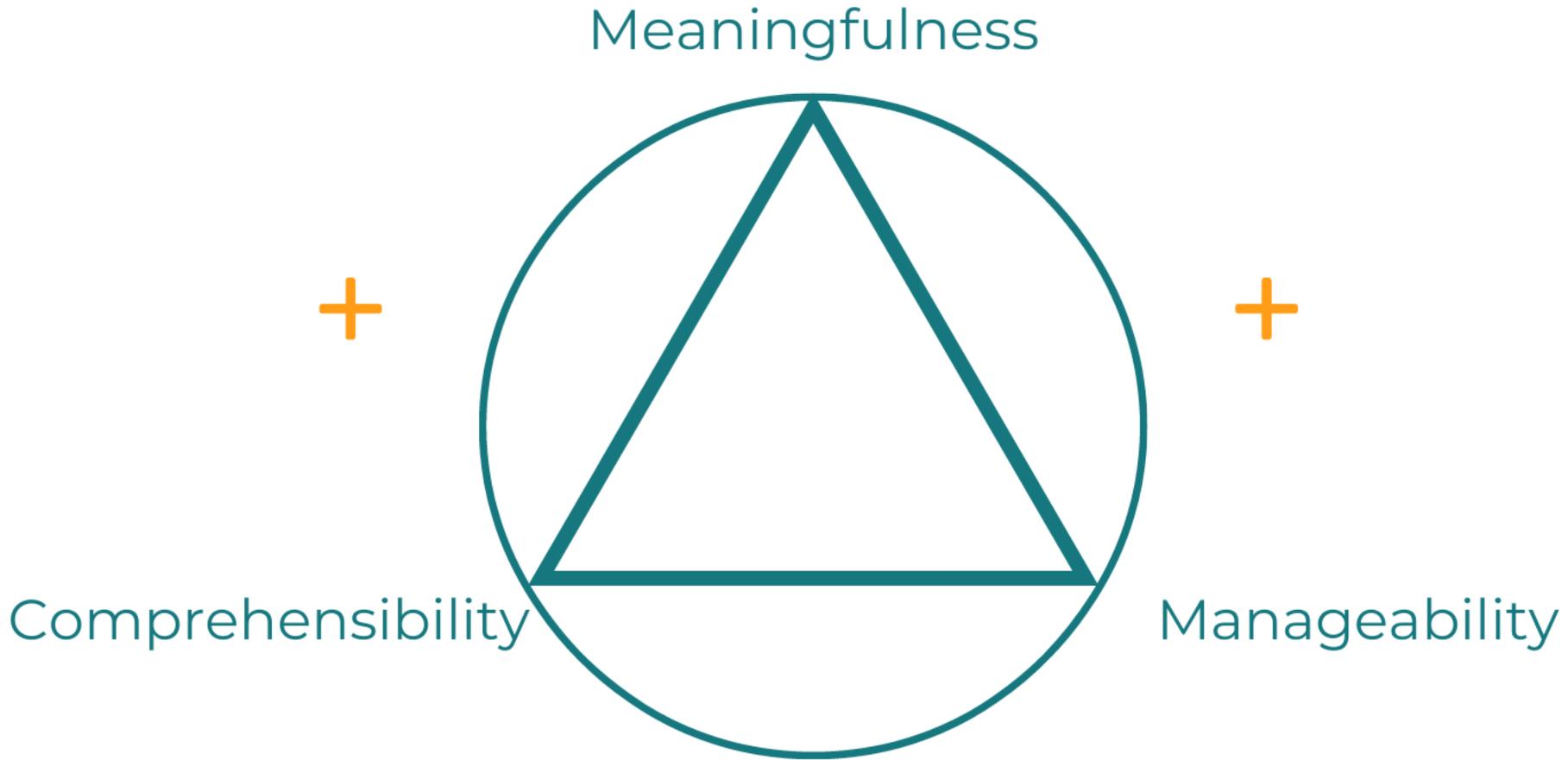
# Salutogenesis

Meaningfulness



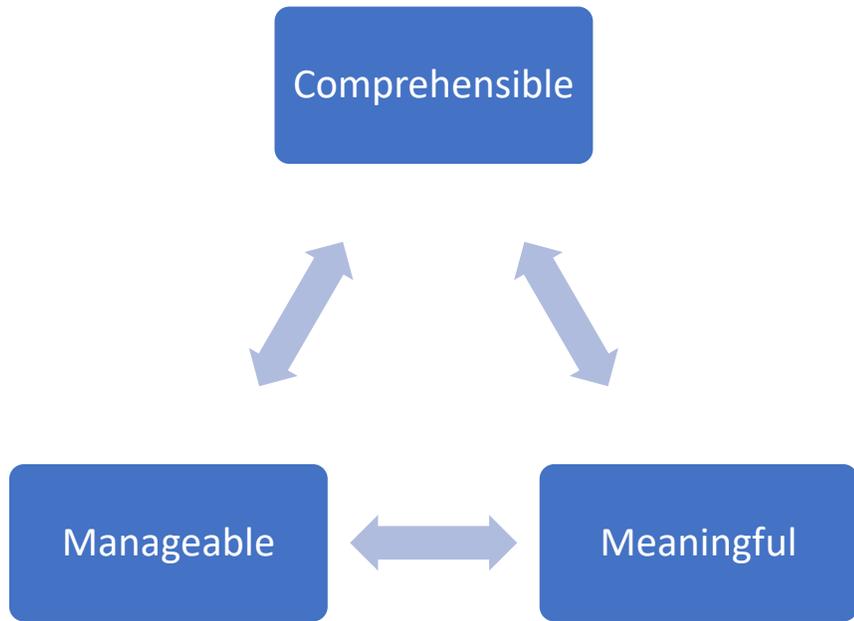
Comprehensibility

Manageability



=

Sense of Coherence



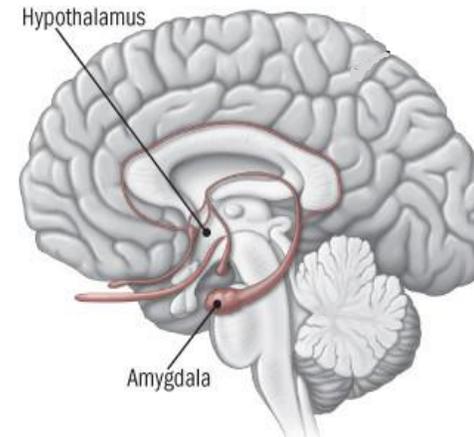
Sense of  
Coherence



Trauma is a response to any event(s) encountered as **out of control**; **frightening** experiences that **disconnect** us from a sense of **resourcefulness, safety, coping and/or love**

# The Impact of ACEs

- The world is not manageable, meaningful or comprehensible
- Cortisol poisoning, chronic stress
- Amygdala on a 'hair trigger'
- Everything perceived as a threat





# The Impact of ACEs in the Classroom

Increased ACEs increases the likelihood of a child at school having:

- Learning difficulties
  - Poor educational attainment
  - Poor attendance
  - Violent behaviour
  - A diagnosis of ADHD or conduct disorder
- 
- 97% of children with no ACEs have no learning problems

# Protective Factors

“Research shows that ‘protective factors’ can interrupt the trajectory from childhood adversity to challenging behaviour, learning difficulties, and long term mental, physical and societal ill-health”

Trauma and Mental Health  
Informed Schools, 2019



# Protective factors: Safeguarding

All those working in education and care have a legal and ethical duty to protect the welfare of the children they work with.

Schools and settings are well-placed to identify and recognise where there is a potential issue.

You have a vital role to play in ensuring that children can live free from abuse and neglect.

# Preventative Measures

- Time spent outside and in nature
- Developing emotional intelligence
- Maintaining a sense of coherence
- Creating a sense of belonging



# Resilience

- I believe my mother loved me when I was little
- I believe my father loved me when I was little
- When I was little, other people helped my mother and father take care of me and they seemed to love me
- I've heard that when I was an infant someone in my family enjoyed playing with me and I enjoyed it too
- When I was a child, there were relatives in my family who helped me feel better if I was sad or worried
- When I was a child, neighbours or my friends' parents seemed to like me
- When I was a child, teachers, youth leaders or other adults outside the family were there to help me

# Resilience

- Someone in my family cared about how I was doing in school
- My family, neighbours and friends talked often about making our lives better
- We had rules in our house and were expected to keep them
- When I felt really bad I could almost always find someone I trusted to talk to
- As a teenager, people noticed that I was capable and could get things done
- I was independent and a go-getter
- I believed that life is what you make it

# Protective Factors

“One emotionally available adult can make all the difference, and for some children that adult will be someone at school or community organisation”

Trauma and Mental Health  
Informed Schools, 2019



**WEHUSTLE**



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