



# Understanding the Basics of Trauma



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**When I say these words, what comes to mind?**

Trauma

Trauma-Informed

Trauma-Informed Instruction



# What is Trauma?

- Trauma is anything that changes the brain's development.
- Examples include:
  - Abuse, assault, natural disaster, death of loved one.
- Really, anything can lead to trauma depending upon the person and the circumstance.



# Adverse Childhood Experiences

- The ACE study began in an obesity clinic in San Diego, CA.
- In 1985, Dr. Vincent Felitti.
- While doing face to face interviews, a client disclosed she had been raped and stated **“to be overweight is to be overlooked and that’s the way I need to be”**.
- Through further interviews, it was discovered that many patients had been using addiction and negative coping skills as a normal response to serious childhood trauma.



# Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)

## ABUSE



Physical



Emotional



Sexual

## NEGLECT



Physical

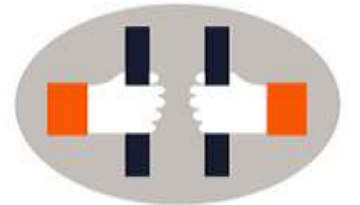


Emotional

## HOUSEHOLD DYSFUNCTION



Mental Illness



Incarcerated Relative



Mother treated violently



Substance Abuse



Divorce

# ACE Scores

- There is a strong correlation of higher ACE scores to the following issues:
- Social, emotional & cognitive impairment
- Adoption of health-risk behaviors
- Disease, disability, and social problems
- Early death
  - An ACE score of 6 or higher had a life span reduced by as much as 20 years



# ACE Score Risk Factors

- Those with a 3 or higher ACE score are considered at risk
  - Twice as likely to become a smoker
  - Seven times more likely to be an alcoholic
  - Ten times more likely to inject street drugs
  - More likely to be violent
  - Have multiple marriages
  - More broken bones
  - More drug prescriptions
  - More depression
  - More autoimmune diseases
  - More work absences



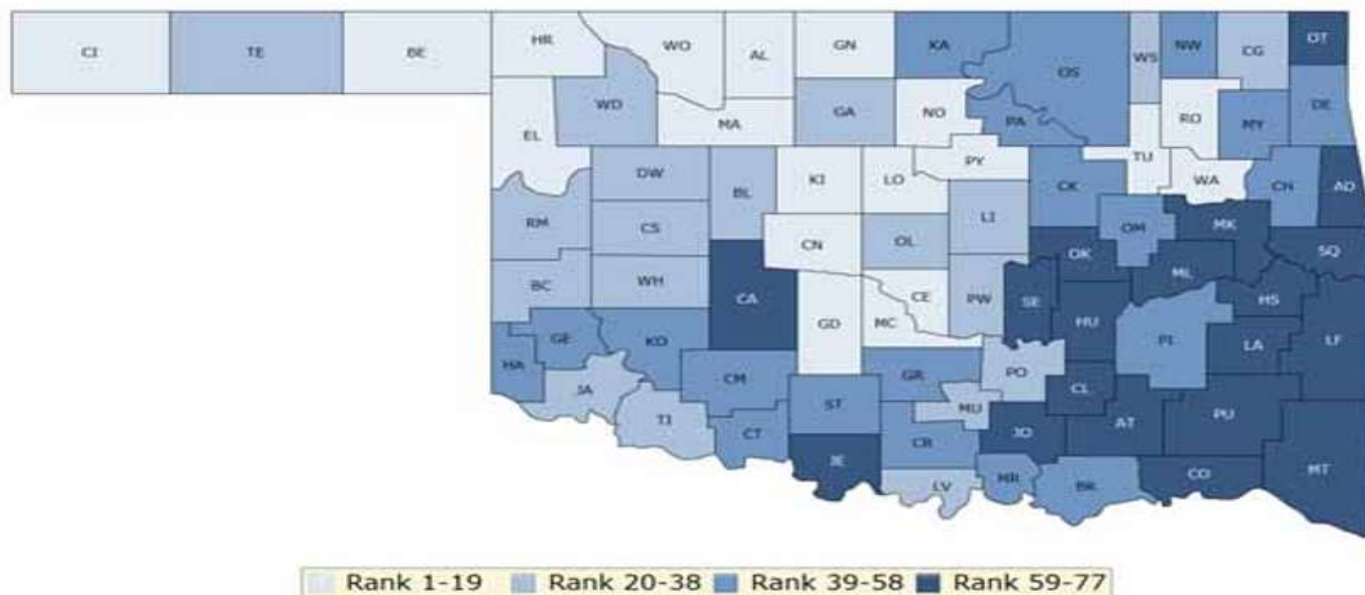


# ACEs and Brain Development

- Difficulty trusting others
- Social isolation
- Difficulty seeking help
- Hypersensitivity to physical contact
- Increase medical, emotional and mental problems
- Problems with coordination and balance
- Poor affect regulation
- Problems with academic achievement
- Oppositional/antisocial behaviors
- Difficulty planning for the future



# Health Indicators in Oklahoma



The blue map above shows the distribution of Oklahoma's **health factors** based on weighted scores for health behaviors, clinical care, social and economic factors, and the physical environment. Detailed information on the underlying measures is available at [countyhealthrankings.org](http://countyhealthrankings.org). The map is divided into four quartiles with less color intensity indicating better performance in the respective summary rankings. Specific county ranks can be found in the table on page 12.

# ACEs in Oklahoma

Assume 45% of students have an ACE score.

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Oklahoma has some of the highest ACEs in the United States.

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Oklahoma has **THE** highest percentage of youth experiencing  
4 or more ACEs.



# Intergenerational Trauma

- Passed down through parents DNA
- Historical context
- State context



# Fighting the Bear

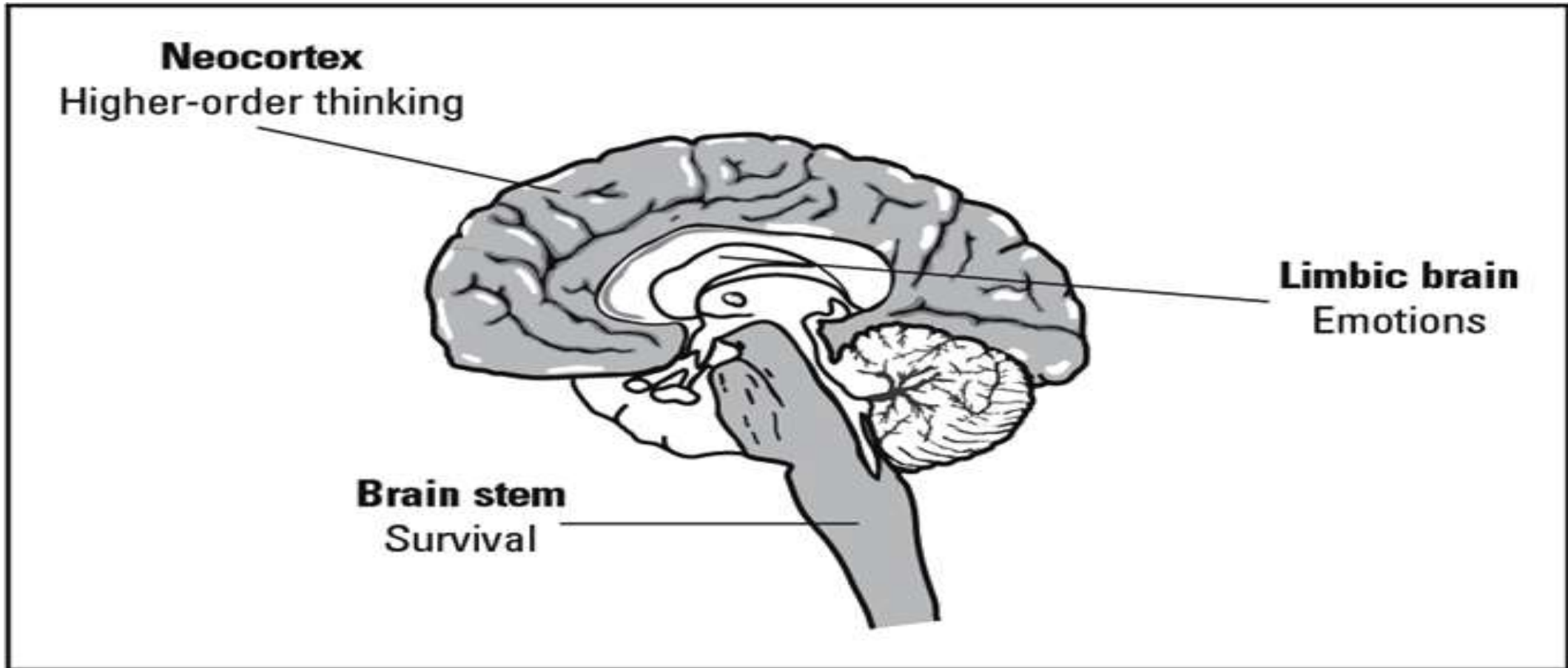


# Fighting Bears at School

- We have to gain trust of our students that we are a safe space, otherwise, learning cannot take place.
- When the brain is overwhelmed with cortisol, the brain cannot physiologically take on new knowledge or problem solve.
- Fight, flight, or freeze.



# The Brain Basics



# Why We Need Trauma-Informed Schools

- Research tells us that students who survive trauma and grow to be successful have identified one single variable:
  - A caring adult who believed in them and cared about their well-being
- Trauma-informed strategies help students feel safe and students learn how to self-regulate
  - When students learn to self-regulate, classroom disturbances go down and academic scores go up.





# Why Trauma Informed?

Becoming trauma informed requires a shift in the educational paradigm of classroom management.

It goes against what you have learned about students' behavioral challenges and classroom discipline approaches.



# Why Trauma Informed?

It changes how policies are developed and implemented in schools when encountering traumatized students.

It has a ripple effect across the school environment and culture. It involves administration, teachers, staff, students and families.



# Benefits of a Trauma Informed School

- Improved academic achievement and test scores..
- Improved teacher sense of satisfaction and safety in being a teacher. Improved retention of new teachers.
- Reduction of student behavioral out-burst and referrals to the office.
- Reduction of stress for staff and students.
- Reduction in absences, detentions, and suspensions.
- Reduction in student bullying and harassment.

(Oehlberg, 2008)



# Resilience is Greater Than ACEs

## Resilience is not inherently in children.

- Parents, teachers, and caregivers can help children by...
  - Gaining understanding of ACEs
  - Creating environments where children feel safe emotionally and physically
  - Helping children identify feelings and manage emotions
  - Creating a safe physical and emotional environment at home, in school, and in neighborhoods.



# Student Statements

“I guess I will always just be a bad kid.”

“Before I throw books in class, I just wish my body had an alarm telling me so I could stop.”

“My teacher was mad that I didn’t pay attention, but I haven’t eaten since lunch yesterday.”

“I got in trouble for sleeping in class. I had to share a futon with my three cousins last night.”

“Everyone says I just can’t control my anger and I’m a trouble-maker. So I stopped trying.”

“I just wanted someone to notice me, I guess.”

There is no greater intervention than a student having a safe relationship.





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