A close-up photograph of green leaves with water droplets on a dark, reflective surface. The leaves are vibrant green and have several small, clear water droplets on their surfaces. The background is a dark, blurred surface that reflects the light, creating a moody and serene atmosphere.

Stress, Trauma and Adversity
Helping Students Develop
Resilience

Mike Paget

Stress Trauma PTSD



Stress: mental or emotional tension resulting from adverse or demanding circumstances

Trauma: An emotional response to a distressing experience that challenges your sense of safety

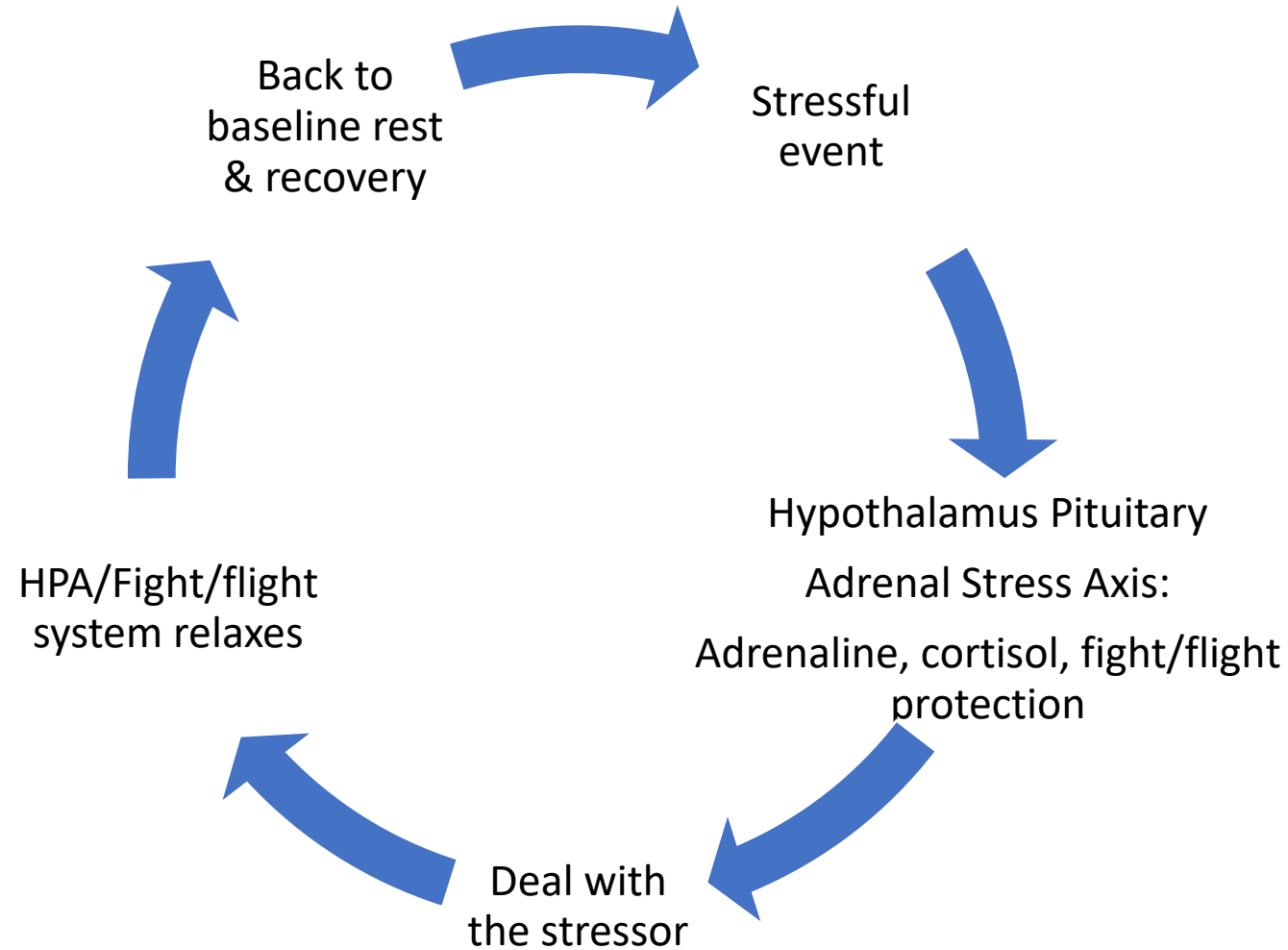
Post Traumatic Stress Disorder: Long term responses to trauma including distressing memories/thoughts; avoiding places or people that trigger symptoms/memories; feeling guilty or worried; and symptoms such as angry outbursts or trouble sleeping.

Learning to handle life: The Roots of Connection & Resilience

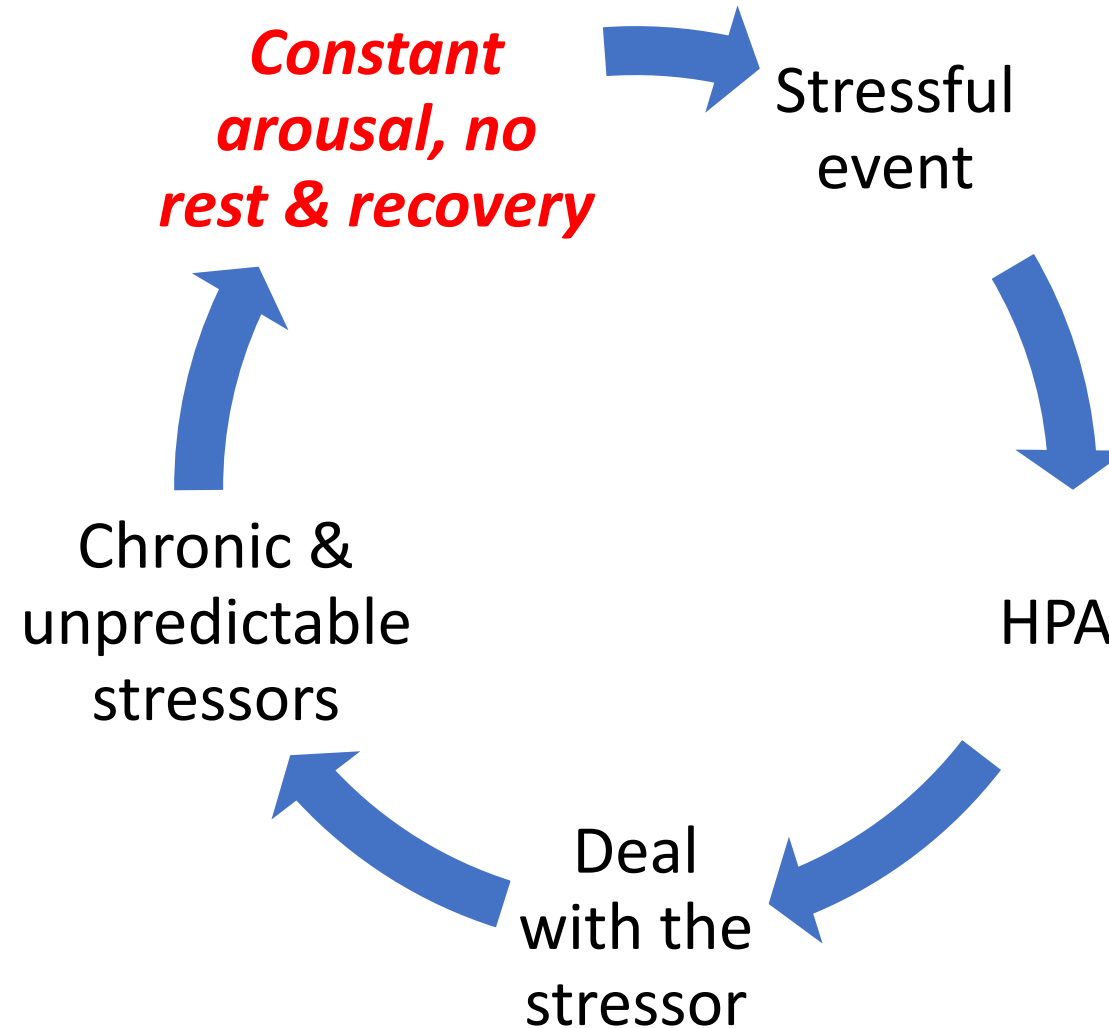


- As the newborn's basic needs are met by caregivers, the brain grows and develops emotional connection capacity.
- Infants learn to depend on caregivers for safety and comfort.
- Having basic needs met allows the infant to feel safe and confident that things will be OK.
- **The infant “absorbs” problem solving skills, laying the foundation for resilience.**
- ***If basic needs are not met and trauma happens, the brain strengthens its survival “wiring”: fight/flight instincts increase.***

Physical/neurological responses to stress



Beyond stress:
Complex Trauma: *Chronic & Unpredictable*



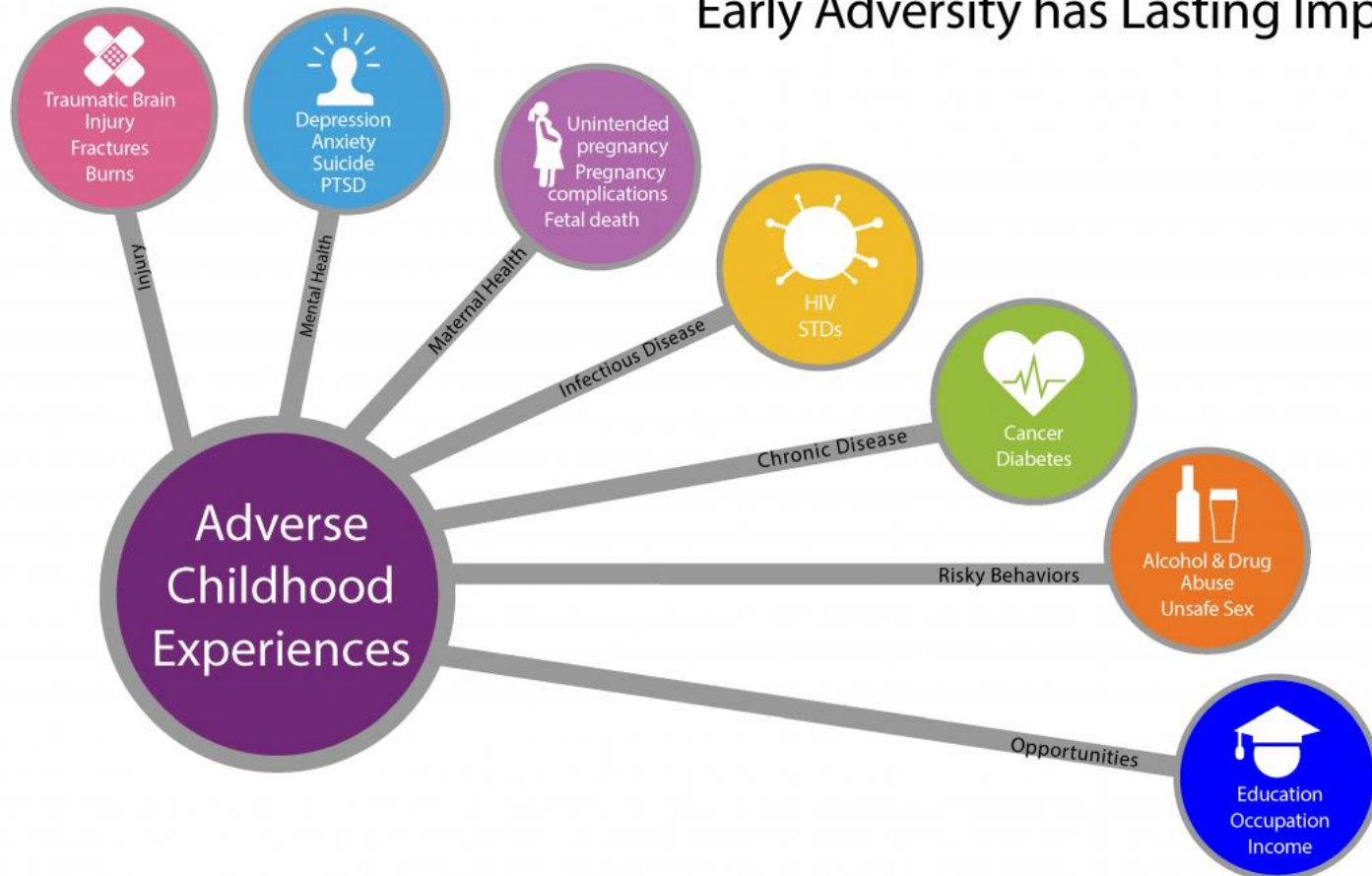
Being in a Constant State of Arousal with No Rest & Recovery

- Cortisol and Adrenaline are flowing, even with no current threat
- The protection systems of the brain are turned up
- The learning and memory centers of the brain are turned down
- Small things trigger intense responses, e.g., not understanding an assignment, or a classmate laughing.
- Paying attention is limited when you're full of worried thoughts
- **You don't feel safe & don't know who to trust, you are "wired" to protect yourself, & are quick to "fight/flight"**

The Adverse Childhood Experiences studies

A longitudinal look at the effects of trauma

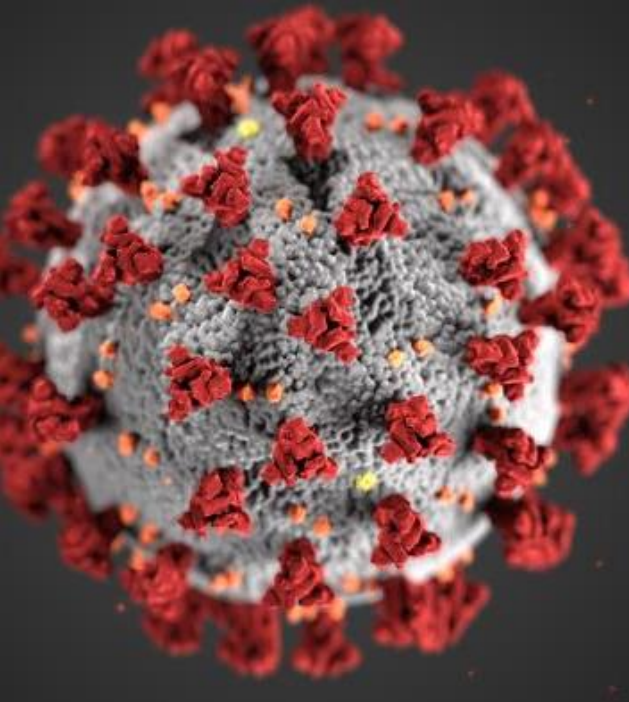
Early Adversity has Lasting Impacts



THE “BIG 10”

Before age 18, have you experienced

1. emotional abuse
2. physical abuse
3. sexual abuse
4. emotional neglect
5. physical neglect
6. divorce
7. domestic violence
8. Substance abuse of a parent
9. Parent with mental illness
10. Incarcerated parent



Beyond the ACEs BIG 10

- **Racism is trauma**
 - Being devalued
 - Feeling at risk
 - Reduced opportunities
- **COVID 19 created trauma**
 - Delayed academic growth
 - Delayed executive functioning skills
 - On average a 2-year delay in social emotional development
- **Societal violence, including school shootings, is trauma**
- **What other examples of trauma come to mind?**



In a typical classroom 22% of the students have enough ACEs to impact their behavior!

How many ACEs?

- 36% have 0 ACEs
- 26% have 1 ACE
- 16% have 2 ACEs
- **3 OR MORE ACEs impacts behavior:**
- 9.5% have 3 ACEs
- 12.5% have 4 or more ACEs

Impact in the classroom

- Organizing materials
- Understanding cause & effect
- Paying attention
- Taking another's perspective
- Attachments: relationships, empathy, friendships
- Regulating emotions
- Executive functioning
- Managing self: *reactive, impulsive, aggressive, defiant, withdrawn, perfectionistic*

Supports & interventions for students who experience trauma, PTSD, & chronic unpredictable trauma

- **You will not be aware of the traumas most have experienced; make the classroom inherently trauma informed.**
- **64% of students will experience at least one trauma**
- **22% will experience enough trauma to impact school & relationships**
- **Most will benefit by trauma sensitive practices.**
- **A few may need individual and small group supports**

Recognizing & Normalizing

responding to someone who has experienced trauma

Show caring by noticing changes in behavior

- “You don’t seem like yourself lately. Is there something going on?”
- Invite students to connect via text/email, by calling their parents, or by mailing a note to their homes with a self-addressed stamped envelope for them to write you back.
- Possible school changes in behavior: new fears, separation anxiety (particularly in young children), sadness, loss of interest, reduced concentration, decline in schoolwork, anger or irritability, somatic complaints

Validate & normalize

- CAUTION: DO NOT MINIMIZE
- More listening/less talking
- What happened?
- Were you scared/freaked out/upset?
- What did you see?
- Do you keep thinking about it during the day?
- Has it gotten in the way of your sleep?
- Do you have dreams about it at night?
- ***“Normalizing conversation” tends to heal***

Counseling & Collaboration

- Team with counselors. **Daily routines/coaching need to support counseling.** A sad day in class can wipe away the benefits of counseling.
- **Cognitive Behavioral Intervention for Trauma in Schools**
 - School-based, group and individual intervention
 - 5th grade through 12th grade
 - <https://traumaawareschools.org/index.php/learn-more-cbits/>
- Work on strengthening your connection to families; know resources to share with them.

Social Skills for Students who have Experienced Trauma

- Talking with others
- Accepting apologies
- Making positive self-statements
- Accepting help
- Advocating for oneself
- Dealing with fear
- Using relaxation strategies
- Being assertive



The Growing Conditions for Resilience

***Positive
trusting
relationships***

***Practicing
new coping
skills***



***Calm,
predictable &
positive
routines***

***Being positively
connected & useful
to your friends,
class, & family***



Why are positive trusting relationships important?

Share a couple of ideas on how you've done this, especially with a challenging student.



Why is a calm,
predictable routine
important for a student
who has experienced
trauma?



Share examples of things you
do to ensure a calm,
predictable routine.



What are some examples of useful stress/trauma coping skills?





What are some ways you can strengthen student connections?

How can you help students be useful to others?



A Behavior/Discipline Reflection

Are we dealing with a ***Problem Student*** or ***Is Something Going On Here?***

- Stress, trauma, & anxiety may look like:
 - Anger
 - Depression
 - Being defiant, uncooperative, or “checked out”
- Change your lens from ***PROBLEM STUDENT to SOMETHING IS GOING ON HERE***
- *“Though all the other students responded as requested, Robert refused to go to the board in the front of the classroom. I didn’t confront the issue, but calmly talked to him later. “Some bad things are happening at home; I don’t feel safe when my back is to everyone.”*



A room centered on a trauma-informed alternative to discipline

The room includes elements that can assist students in deescalating, relieving stress and relaxing. Some of these may include, but are not limited to :

- Soft lights**
- Stationery bike**
- Swing**
- Mini trampoline**
- Rocking chairs**
- Fidgets--various textures**
- Straws**
- Weighted blankets or stuffed animals**
- Soft material**
- "Theraputty"**
- Shawls**
- Coloring books and crayons**

