

# Help, Hope, Healing After Trauma

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The National Child  
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*we are all survivors courage strength faith hope justice growth*

## *Dr. Maya Angelou*

*History, despite its wrenching pain  
Cannot be unlived, but if faced with  
Courage, need not be lived again.*

*“On the Pulse of Morning”*

# Adverse Childhood Experiences Study (ACES)\*

Physical abuse by a parent

Emotional abuse by a parent

Sexual abuse by anyone

An alcohol and/or drug abuser in the household

An incarcerated household member

Someone who is chronically depressed, mentally ill, institutionalized, or suicidal

Domestic violence

Loss of a parent

Emotional neglect

Physical neglect

Felitti et al. 1998

# Adverse Childhood Experiences Study (ACES)\*



Felitti et al. 1998

There is no such thing as  
an event, especially  
when trauma is involved.

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# The Co-Occurring Nature of Trauma

“Individuals with a trauma history rarely experience only a single traumatic event, but rather are likely to have experienced several episodes of traumatic exposure.”

Cloitre et al., 2009

(Retrospective studies, e.g., Kessler, 2000; Stewart et al., 2008; Coid et al., 2001; Dong et al., 2004 )

Finkelhor et al. (2009)

Nationally Representative Sample (n=4549)

Nearly 40% had experienced two or more types of direct victimization in the past year.

NCTSN Core Data Set (2012)

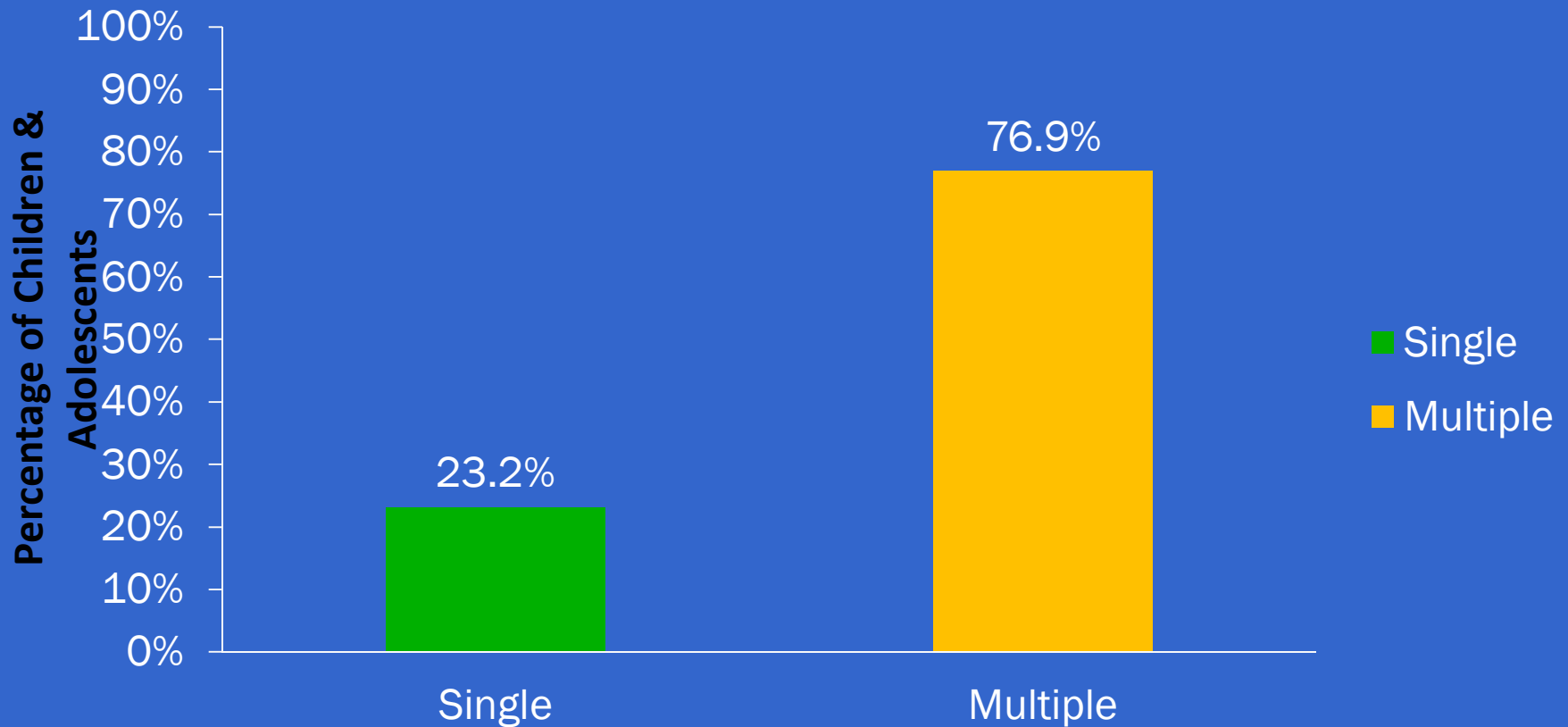
Children Served in the National Child Traumatic Stress Network (n=11,138)

Fewer than 24% had experienced only one type of trauma or ACE.

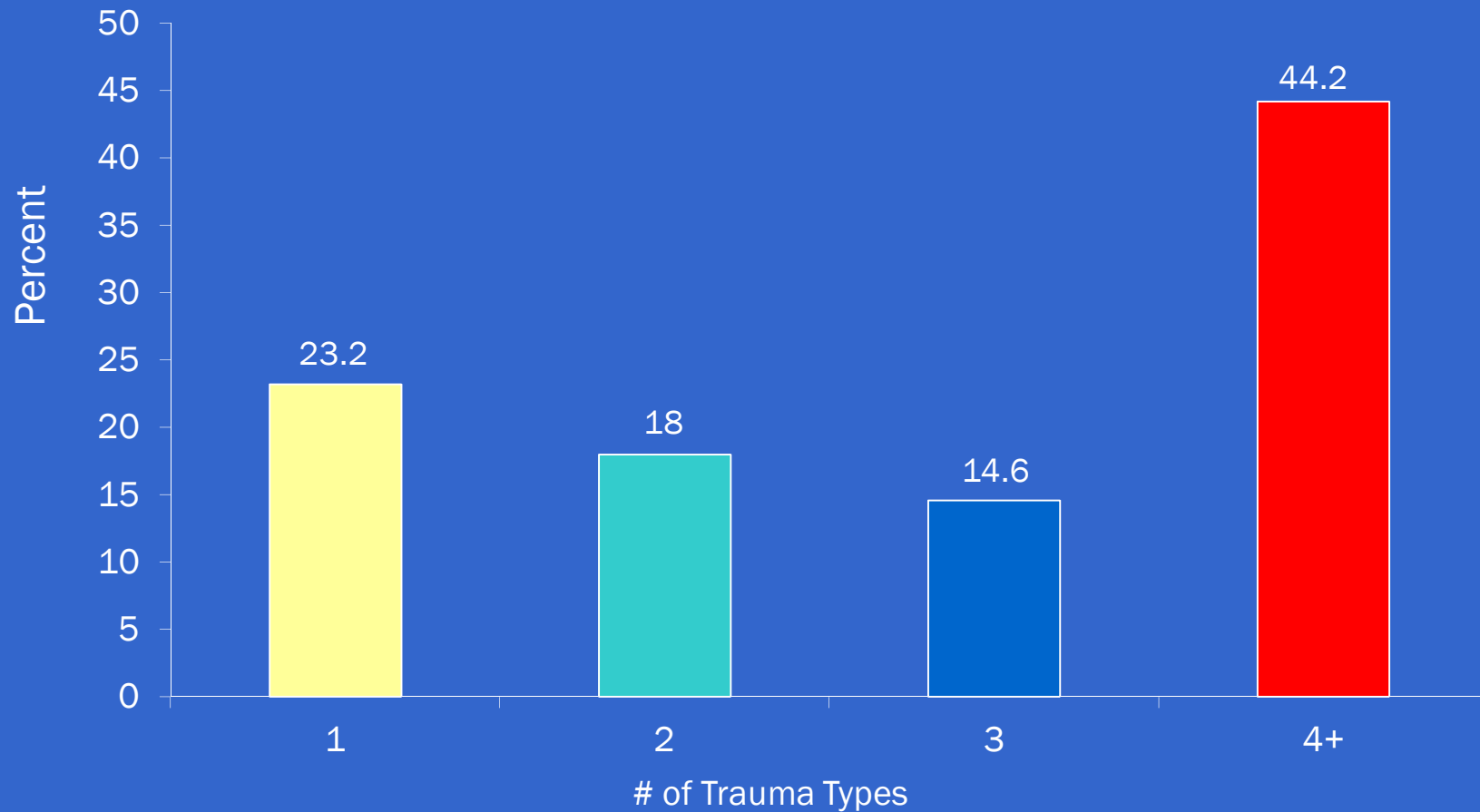
Over 40% had experienced 4 or more.

# Trauma Exposure in Children Served in the National Child Traumatic Stress Network

## Single vs. Multiple Trauma Types



# Percentage of Children in the NCTSN Core Data Set Experiencing Cumulative Traumas





## Traumatic Stressors Experienced by Children Served in FY12

Sexual Abuse	55%
Witnessed Domestic Violence	48%
Physical Abuse	44%
Witnessed Physical or Sexual Abuse	36%
Traumatic Loss (e.g., by homicide or suicide)	26%
Witnessed Community Violence	21%
Medical Trauma (e.g., Burns, MVA, Dog Attack)	15%
Victim of Extrafamilial Violent Crime	8%
Witnessed Homicide	6%
Fire	5%

Other trauma types include school violence, abduction, torture, witnessing serious injury, trafficking

Mean # of Types of Traumatic Stress = 2.88    73% Exposed to 2 or More

# Trauma Exposure

91% experienced at least one form of interpersonal trauma.

74% experienced at least one form of family violence.

69% experienced at least one form of ongoing traumatic stress.

86% of children exposed to DV were also exposed to Physical and/or Sexual Abuse.

## Other Adverse Experiences (Children Served in FY12)

Impaired Caregiver (e.g., mentally ill, substance abusing)	63%
Placement in Foster Care	55%
Neglect	41%
Unresolved Trauma History in Caregiver	41%
Emotional Abuse	30%
Death of Significant Other (not TL)	26%
Incarcerated Family Member	26%
Exposure to Prostitution or other Developmentally Inappropriate Sexual Behavior in Home	24%
Exposure to Drug Use or Criminal Activity in Home	21%
Substitute Care (not foster care)	18%
Homelessness	12%

Mean # of Types of Other ACES = 3.6

74% Experienced 2 or More

Mean Combined Total Types of  
Traumatic Stressors +  
Other Adverse Childhood Experiences =

6.51

74% Experienced 4 or More

Range = 1 - 16

Fewer than 10% experienced only 1 type.

There is no such thing as  
an individual, especially  
when children are  
involved.

# The Attachment Behavioral System

- ❖ Attachment: an evolved behavioral system that functions to promote the protection and safety of the attached person
- ❖ Attachment system is activated strongly by internal and external stressors or threats.
- ❖ It is through healthy attachment (i.e., a behavioral system that effectively protects and comforts the infant or child) that a child develops the capacity for emotional and behavioral self-regulation, as well as a coherent self.

# Attachment

- ❖ Internal Working Models: complementary representations of the self and the attachment figure
- ❖ These models reflect the child's appraisal of, and confidence in, the self as acceptable and worthy of care and protection, and the attachment figure's desire, ability, and availability to provide protection and care. – Solomon & George, 1999

# What is Complex Trauma?

Exposure to multiple forms of violence and other potentially traumatic stressors in the context of attachment behavioral systems that are unable to provide protection, care, and comfort

Focus on cumulative trauma and the developmental context in which exposure occurs rather than on discrete episodes

Proposed Developmental Trauma Disorder Criterion A:

- A. Exposure. The child or adolescent has experienced or witnessed multiple or prolonged adverse events over a period of at least one year beginning in childhood or early adolescence, including:
  - A. 1. Direct experience or witnessing of repeated and severe episodes of interpersonal violence; and
  - A. 2. Significant disruptions of protective caregiving as the result of repeated changes in primary caregiver; repeated separation from the primary caregiver; or exposure to severe and persistent emotional abuse



# Some Basic Assumptions About Psychological Traumatization

Traumatic experiences are those which overwhelm an individual's capacity to integrate experience in the normal way. (e.g., Putnam, 1985)

Following exposure to trauma, if integration does not occur, traumatic experience(s) are split off and an individual alternates between functioning as if the trauma is still occurring and functioning as if the trauma never occurred. (e.g., Nijenhuis et al., 2004)

Although traumatic memories and associations remain inaccessible to consciousness much of the time, they have the power to shape an individual's daily functioning and behavior. (e.g., Allen, 1993)

# Key Developmental Capacities Affected by Complex Trauma

Ability to modulate, tolerate, or recover from extreme affect states

Regulation of bodily functions

Capacity to know emotions or bodily states

Capacity to describe emotions or bodily states

Capacity to perceive threat, including reading of safety and danger cues

Capacity for self-protection

Capacity for self-soothing

Ability to initiate or sustain goal-directed behavior

Coherent self, Identity

Capacity to regulate empathic arousal

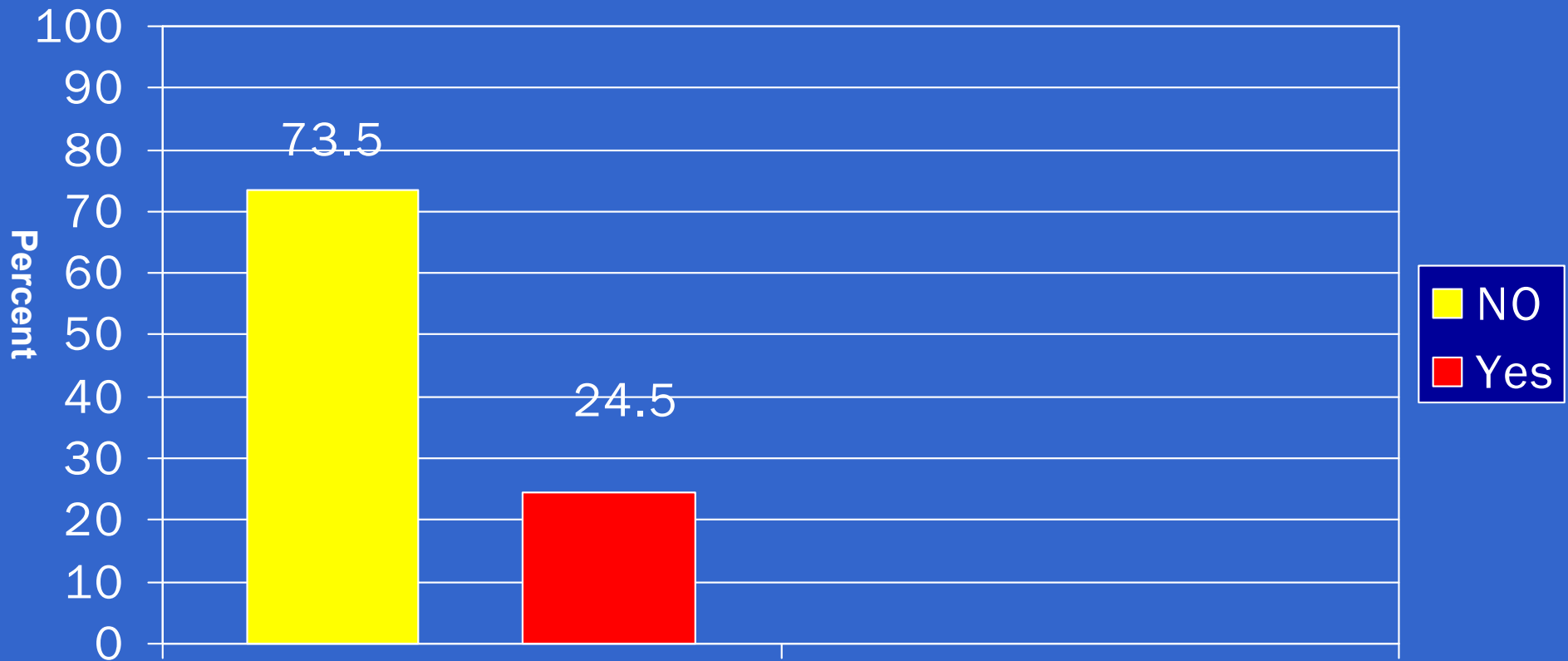
# Beyond Posttraumatic Stress Disorder

Complex Trauma, Type II Trauma, Betrayal Trauma, Developmentally Adverse Interpersonal Trauma and Maltreatment, ACEs, Extreme Stress Not Otherwise Specified, Developmental Trauma....

has profound effects on development, functioning, personality, and the capacity to live, love, and be loved.

These effects are not accounted for in our current diagnostic classification system, nor are they addressed in standard simple PTSD treatment approaches.

## Met Full Criteria for PTSD



Pynoos et al., 2008

# “Gang-Involved” Youth (Child Soldiers)

## Self-Reported Trauma Exposure

n = 8

Physical Abuse	100%
Witnessed Physical Abuse	100%
Witnessed Domestic Violence	100%
Witnessed Community Violence	100%
Witnessed School Violence	100%
Witnessed Homicide(s)	75%
Loss Through Violent Death	75%
Witnessed Sexual Victimization	62.5%
Motor Vehicle Accident	50%
Victim of Extrafamilial Violent Crime	50%
Dog Attack	37.5%
Burns	37.5%

Other trauma types include fire, natural disaster, torture

Bocanegra & Stolbach, 2012

# Youth Self-Reported Trauma Exposure

100% experienced both family violence and community violence.

100% experienced at least one form of ongoing traumatic stress.

Average age of first trauma exposure = 6 years, 1 month

Mean # Types of Trauma Experienced = 10

Range = 7 - 13

Bocanegra & Stolbach, 2012

## Youth Other Adverse Experiences

Impaired Caregiver	75%
Exposure to Drug Use or Criminal Activity in Home	75%
Exposure to Prostitution or other Developmentally Inappropriate Sexual Behavior in Home	37.5%
Substitute Care	25%

Other ACEs include incarcerated significant other, homelessness, neglect

Mean # Types of Adverse Experiences = 2.75

Range # Types of Adverse Experiences = 0 – 5

Bocanegra & Stolbach, 2012

“Gang-Involved” Youth (Child Soldiers)  
Mean Combined Total Types  
of Traumatic Stressors +  
Other Adverse Childhood Experiences =

12.75

Range = 7 - 18

Bocanegra & Stolbach, 2012



## Who is a Child Soldier?

A child soldier is any person under 18 years of age who is part of any kind of regular or irregular armed force or armed group in any capacity, including but not limited to cooks, porters, messengers and anyone accompanying such groups, other than family members. The definition includes girls recruited for sexual purposes and for forced marriage. It does not, therefore, only refer to a child who is carrying or has carried arms.

*Cape Town Principles and Best Practices on the Recruitment of Children into the Armed Forces and on Demobilization and Social Reintegration of Child Soldiers in Africa (Cape Town, 27-30 April 1997).*

# The Power of a Lens

## Criminal or Maltreated Child or Child Soldier

U.S. incarcerates more than twice as many youth per 100,000 than next highest youth incarcerator.

Many of these youth are classified by statute as adults.

Youth of color are much more likely than others to be incarcerated. In Cook County, Illinois, African American youth are 46 times more likely than White youth to be incarcerated.

# “Alfonso”

Torture	5
Physical Abuse	5 - 13
Substitute Care	7
Witnessed Community Violence	8 - 13
Witnessed Physical Abuse	9 - 13
Impaired Caregiver	9 - 13
Extrafamilial Violent Crime Victim	9 - 13
Witnessed Domestic Violence	10 - 13
Witnessed Sexual Assault	10
Motor Vehicle Accident	12
Traumatic Loss	12
Witnessing Homicide (3)	12, 13
School Violence	12 - 13
Dog Attack	12
Burn	12
Total Types of Traumatic Stress	13
Total Types of Adverse Other Experiences	2

## Trauma History Timeline: "Alfonso"

Age at which Trauma/ACE Occurred In Years

Trauma/Adverse Experiences	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13		
Torture																
Physical Abuse																
Substitute Care																
Witnessed Community Violence																
Witnessed Physical Abuse																
Impaired Caregiver																
Extrafamilial Violent Crime Victim																
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Witnessed School Violence																
Witnessed Homicides (3)																
Motor Vehicle Accident																
Traumatic Loss																
Burn																
Dog Attack																

BLACK LINE = AGE WHEN FIRST PERFORMED ACTIONS  
ON BEHALF OF STREET ORGANIZATION

*we are all survivors courage strength faith hope justice growth*

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*History, despite its wrenching pain  
Cannot be unlived, but if faced with  
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# Evidence-Based/Evidence-Informed Trauma-Focused Intervention

Attachment, Self-Regulation and Competency  
Child and Family Traumatic Stress Intervention  
Child-Parent Psychotherapy  
Phase-Oriented Trauma-Focused Psychotherapy  
Strengthening Family Coping Resources  
Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy

# Core Components of Complex Trauma Treatment in Children and Adolescents

Safety

Self-Regulation

Self-Reflective Information Processing

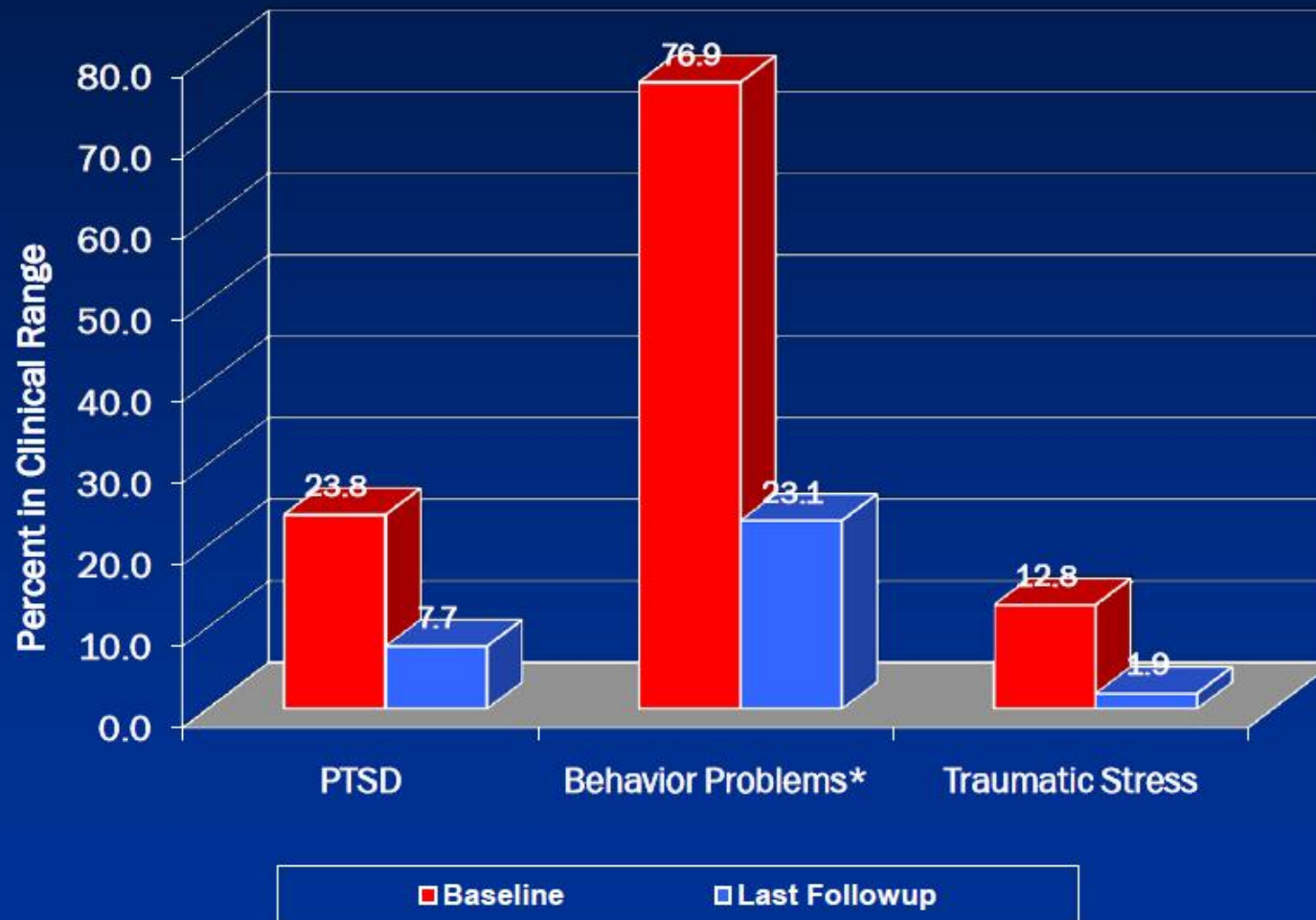
Trauma Experience Integration

Relational Engagement

Positive Affect Enhancement

(National Child Traumatic Stress Network Complex Trauma Workgroup; Cook et al, 2005)

# Illinois Children in the Clinical Range: Baseline and Last Follow up





# “Malcolm”

Father Incarcerated	3 mos - 21
Death of Grandmother(s)	5, 17
School Violence	5 - 18
In and Out of Psychiatric Hospital/Residential Treatment	6 - 12
Exposure to Criminal Behavior in Home	7 - 13
Domestic Violence	7 - 17
Physical Abuse	7 - 17
Witnessing Physical Abuse	7 - 17
Unresolved Trauma in Caregiver	7 - 21
Community Violence	8 - 21
Loss Through Violent Death (Many)	8 - 21
Medical Trauma	8
Shooting Victim	9
Motor Vehicle Accident	12
Extrafamilial Violent Crime Victim	17
Total Types of Traumatic Stress	10
Total Types of Adverse Other Experiences	5



Some people was trying to help me, but they was trying to cure me. There's like no cure, but there's ways to deal with this.

If you think about the things that happened to you, and you stay there thinking about that and not moving, you'll drown. I feel like in life we all are in the water, and we're all trying to swim and make it. Sometimes it do take a light. Maybe you don't see which way to go, maybe you think underneath is somewhere different, but for me, when peoples helped me out, that was that light above that had me keep swimming.”



# Key Messages for Trauma Recovery

1. It is not happening now.

The trauma is over. It is in the past. You are here in the present.

2. You are safe.

The adults here are responsible for your safety and you are worthy of care and protection.

3. You are not inherently dangerous/toxic.

What is inside you (thoughts, feelings, dreams, impulses, etc.) cannot hurt you or others.

4. You are good.

Whatever you have experienced and whatever you have had to do to survive, you are a good, strong person who can contribute to your community.

5. You have a future.

we are all survivors courage strength faith hope justice growth



## Walter Howard Smith, Jr.

Dr. Walter Smith is a psychologist in Pittsburgh dedicating his life work to preventing child abuse by strengthening families and communities. As a child he experienced sexual and physical abuse perpetrated by a family member. The isolation of his nuclear family of origin and the silence of those who could have risen to protect, drives his passion to change our social permission and tolerance for one in five children sexually abused in the United States before age eighteen. He believes the rights of children to have safety, voice, and choice is the last great civil rights battle to wage in America. As an African American man, he uses Civil Rights as a metaphor because it speaks to the need for freedom, and the silent tolerance of oppression. To even dare speak of children as having power, voice, and rights challenges custom, culture and law.

Yet, his will to defy is balanced with the Irony of Healing from great pain. Like so many, it is through suffering that peace is discovered and understood. Exploring pain finds courage. Defying fear uncovers hope. Facing shame reveals empathy. The journey of healing has given more than the pain stole; an important message to those who do not speak their darkness. By all means: Speak! By voice, pen, and action: Speak! To self, family, and unknown others: Speak! Speak softly and loud, angrily and welcoming. Learn the many voices it takes to be heard and join the effort to quiet the silence.

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