

# Trauma: The Gateway Drug

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# Objectives- Today we will:

- ▶ Learn about trauma and the types of trauma and diagnosis
- ▶ Learn about Adverse Childhood Experiences and the study behind it.
- ▶ Learn about Addiction Vulnerability
- ▶ Learn How To Work Through Trauma and Resources for those struggling.

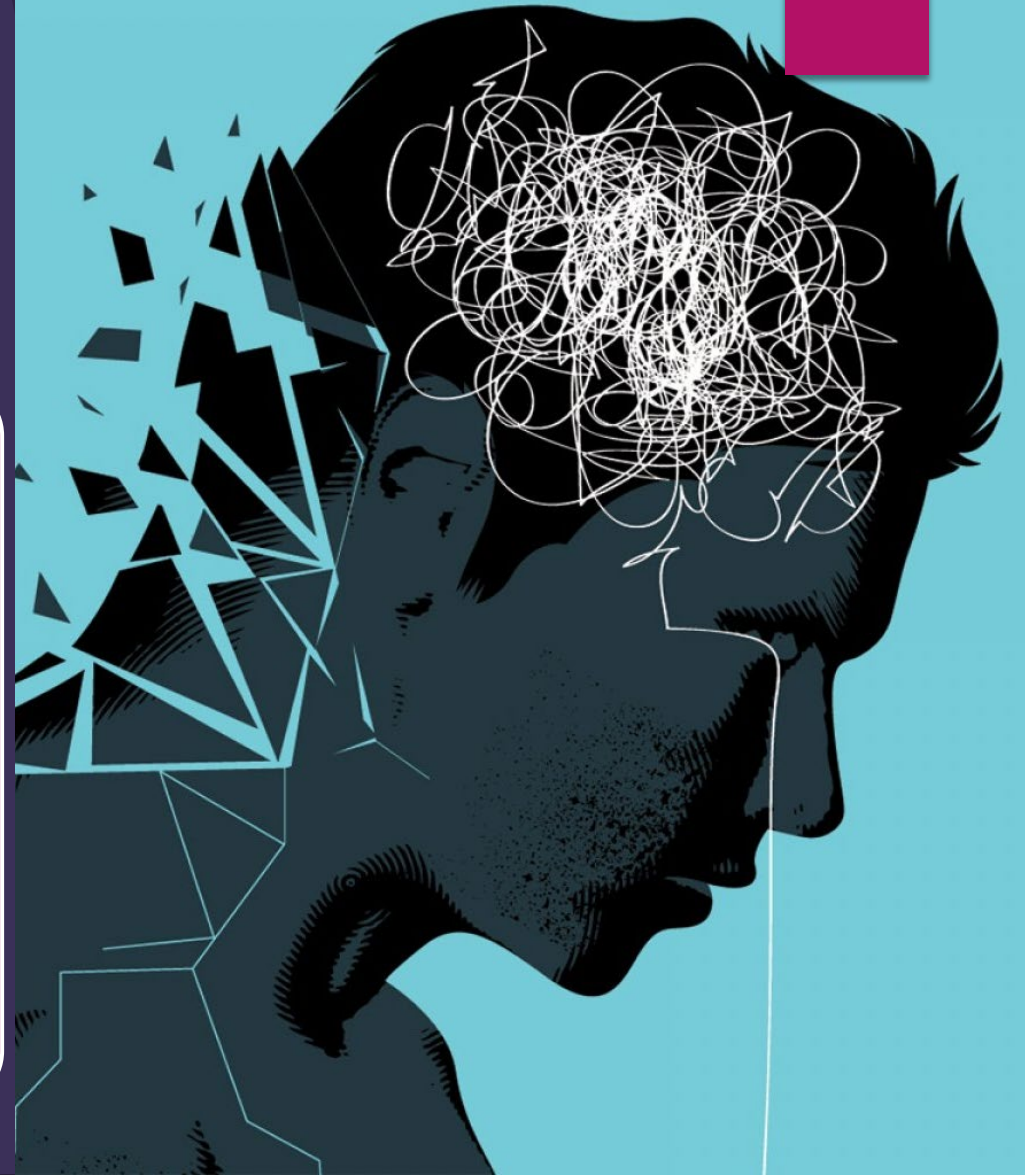


# WHAT IS TRAUMA?

Trauma occurs when a person perceives an event or set of circumstances as extremely frightening, harmful, or threatening—either emotionally, physically, or both. Not just about the memory, but how you process the information.



" See the world and react to the world in a different way. Present reality has changed. See people differently. Hard to love people and hard to engage in life and hard to have pleasure, and body plays tricks with you." Dr. Bessel van der Kolk



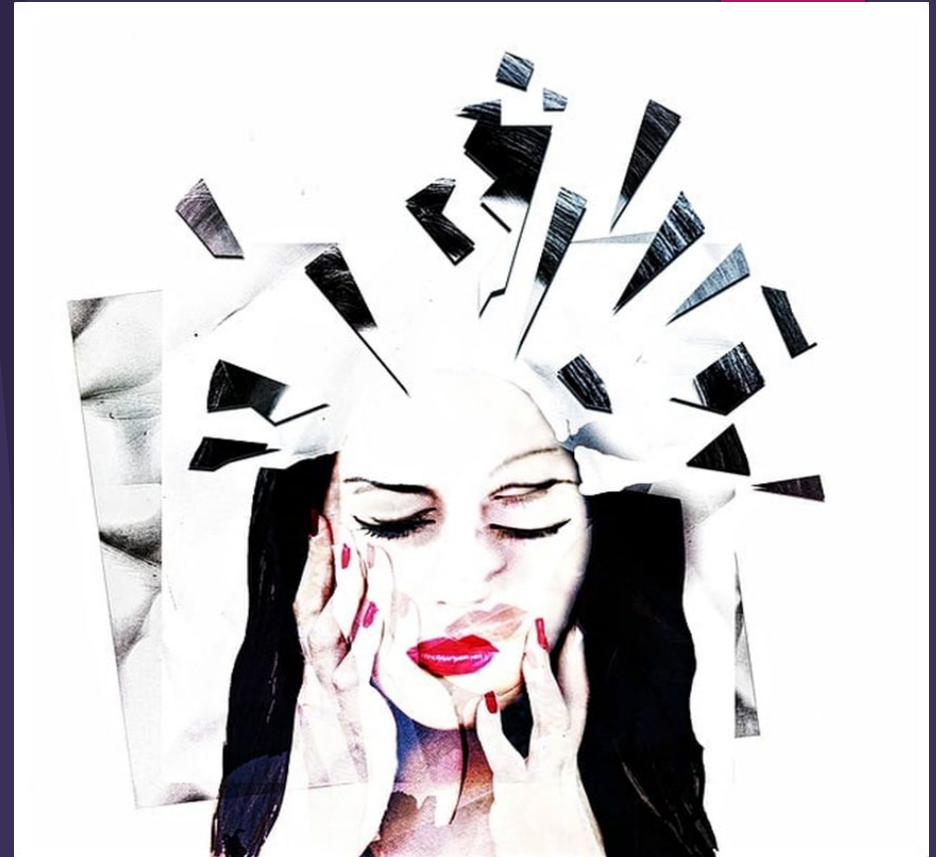
# WHAT ARE TRAUMATIC EXPERIENCES

There are 2 types of Traumatic Experiences:

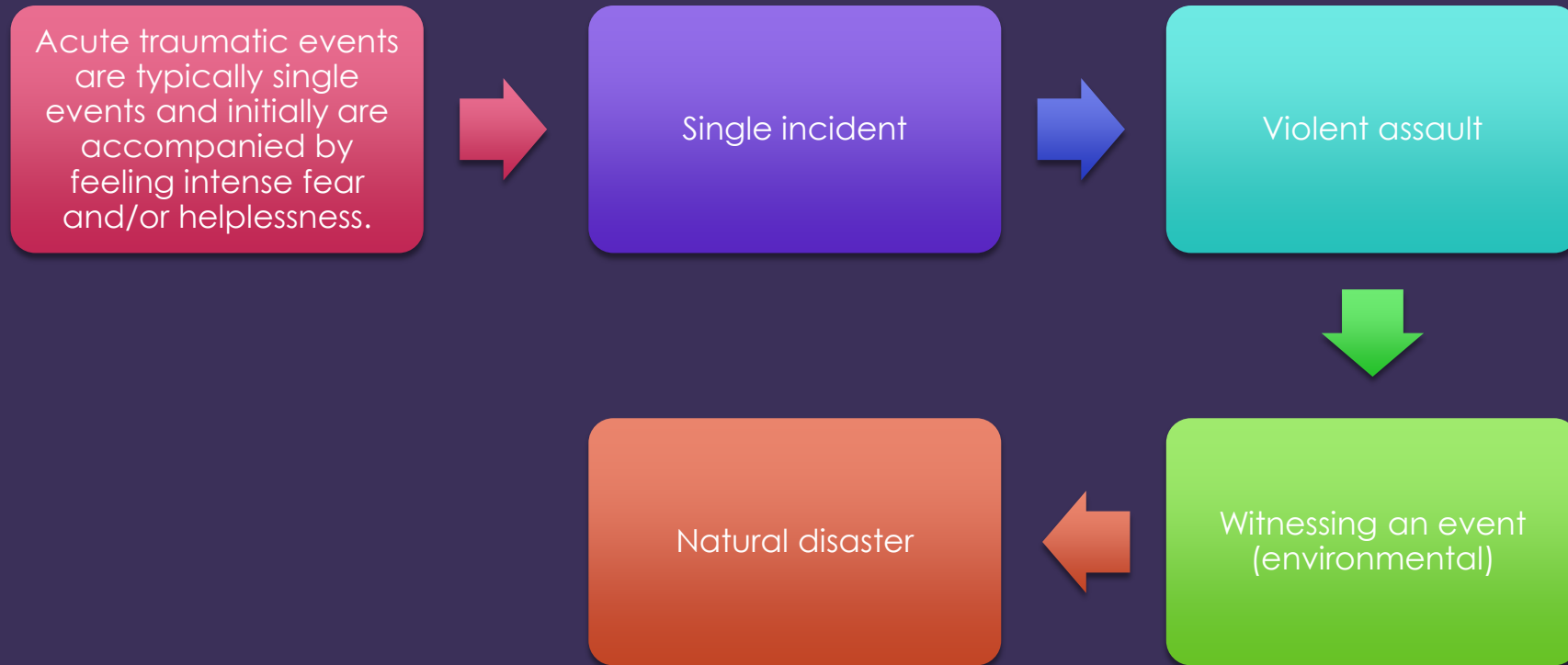
Acute

Chronic

These events can be both personal and public.



# An Acute Traumatic Experience





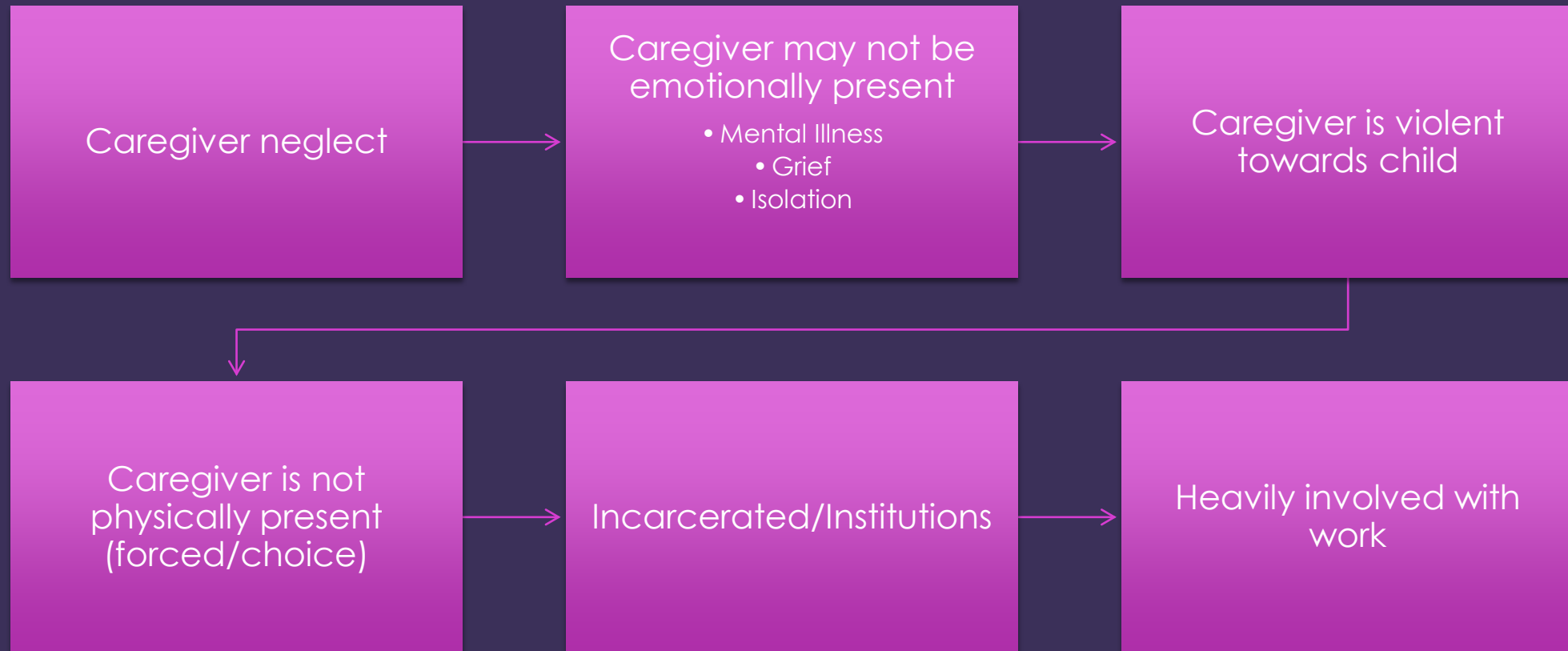
# Chronic Traumatic Experiences

Chronic traumatic situations are persistently repeated threats or violations of safety and integrity and are associated with a complex range of emotions potentially including fear, shame, distrust, hopelessness, and numbness.

Community violence

Racial marginalizing

# Developmental Trauma



# Development of Trauma Disorder

- ▶ Developmental Trauma Disorder or DTD emerges from prolonged and cumulative interpersonal trauma that disrupts the development of secure attachments to caregivers and dramatically alters core assumptions and beliefs about one's vulnerability to danger in the world. DTD is theorized to develop from early interpersonal trauma. However, DTD may also result from the lack of a secure attachment relationship, which would have protected the developing individual during early trauma events.



# Post Traumatic Stress Disorder

- ▶ PTSD is a psychiatric disorder brought on by exposure to a highly stressful and potentially life-threatening event such as a natural disaster, motor vehicle accident, witnessing family or community violence, experiencing abuse and neglect, or losing a loved one.



# Symptoms of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder

- ▶ Symptoms can vary but can include:
  - ▶ Intrusive thoughts
  - ▶ Avoidance
  - ▶ Hyperarousal
  - ▶ Alterations to conscious awareness
    - ▶ Disassociation
    - ▶ Derealization
    - ▶ Depersonalization



# Complex PTSD

Many traumatic events (e.g., car accidents, natural disasters, etc.) are of time-limited duration. However, in some cases people experience chronic trauma that continues or repeats for months or years at a time. Some have suggested that the current PTSD diagnosis does not fully capture the severe psychological harm that occurs with prolonged, repeated trauma.



# Symptoms of Complex Post Traumatic Stress Disorder

- Symptoms can include those associated with PTSD but also:
- Emotional regulation.
- Consciousness
- Self-perception
- Distorted perceptions of the perpetrator.
- Relations with others.
- One's system of meanings

# What are ACEs?

## Adverse Childhood Experiences

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) are stressful or traumatic events, including abuse and neglect. They may also include household dysfunction, such as witnessing domestic violence or growing up with family members who have substance use disorders.

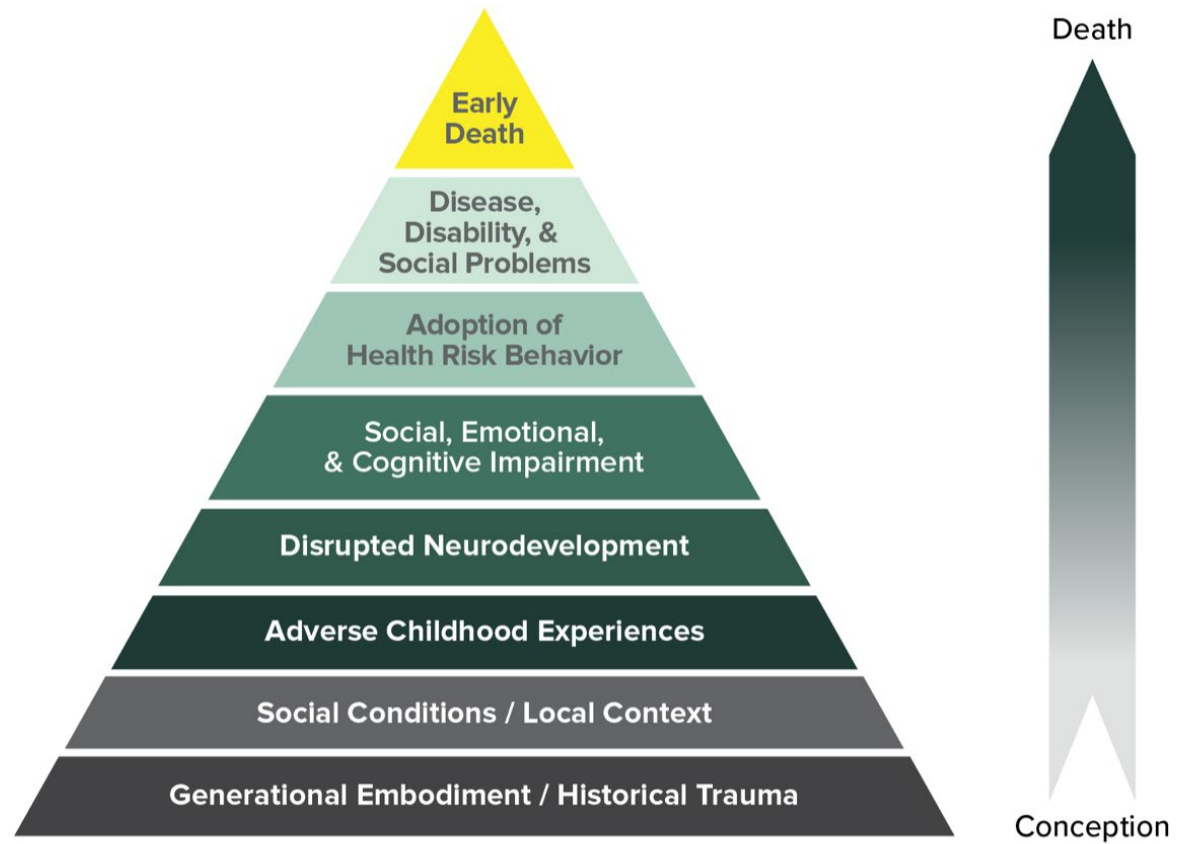
ACEs are strongly related to the development and prevalence of a wide range of health problems throughout a person's lifespan, including those associated with substance misuse.



# Overview of the ACE Study

The CDC-Kaiser Permanente adverse childhood experiences (ACE) study is one of the largest investigations of childhood abuse and neglect and household challenges and later-life health and well-being.

The original ACE study was conducted at Kaiser Permanente from 1995 to 1997 with two waves of data collection. Over 13494 Health Maintenance Organization members from Southern California receiving physical exams completed confidential surveys regarding their childhood experiences and current health status and behaviors.



Mechanism by which Adverse Childhood Experiences Influence Health and Well-being Throughout the Lifespan

# STUDY FINDINGS

WHAT DID WE LEARN FROM THIS?

## Trauma and the Brain

Amygdala

Prefrontal Cortex



Hippocampus

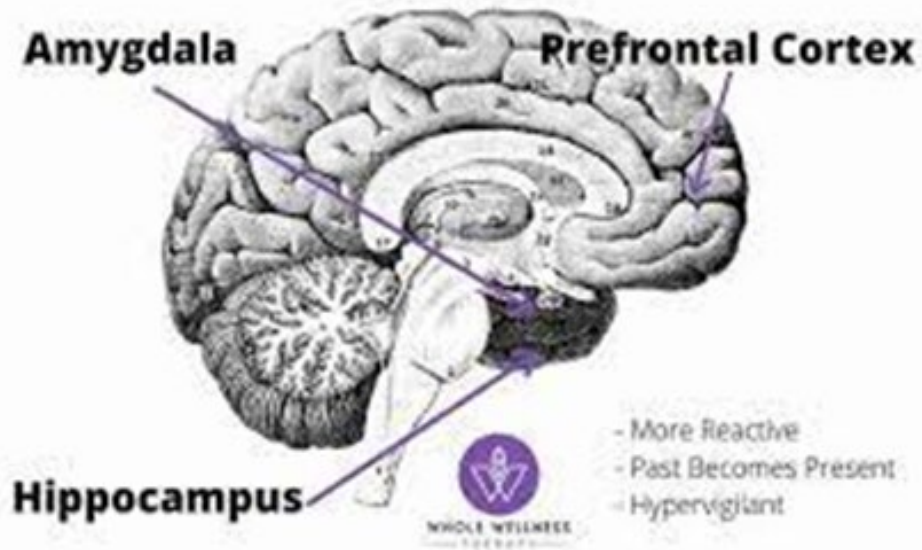


- More Reactive
- Past Becomes Present
- Hypervigilant

# Trauma and The Brain



## Trauma and the Brain



- Amygdala
- Prefrontal Cortex
- Hippocampus



## How Does Trauma Affect the Brain

# Addiction Vulnerability

- ▶ Accepted research now shows that some people have vulnerabilities to addiction and has established a three-factor standard for vulnerability to drug addiction: genetic factors, environmental factors, and repeated exposure to drugs of use.
- ▶ This research is known as the 3-factor model encompassing both physiological and biological components.
- ▶ **Genetic factors**
  - ▶ Contemporary research in neurobiology (a branch of science that deals with the anatomy, physiology, and pathology of nervous system) of addiction points to genetics as a major contributing factor to addiction vulnerability.
  - ▶ 40 to 60 percent of all those addicted have some genetic factors that place them at greater risk.
  - ▶ Genetics also play a role in our personality, meaning the potential for reward seeking and response to stress may also lead to increased vulnerability.





# Addiction Vulnerability

## Environmental factors

- Socioeconomic status
- Access to resources
- Familial relationships
- Access to substances
- Chronic stress-\*Major contributor to vulnerability\*

## Repeated Exposure

- Different between recreational and chronic use.
- Deliberate use of the drug plays a role in the eventual compulsory drug-taking.
- Changes in brain's reward system increasing the need for substances.

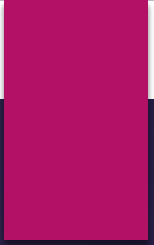
What Does Healing  
Look Like?



# Working Through Trauma

- TRAUMA SPECIFIC SERVICES
- TRAUMA INFORMED CARE





Questions?