

# **Our Kids are NOT Broken: The Importance of Resilience in Both Recovery and THRIVING**

Indian Health Service National Behavioral Health Conference

Ken Ginsburg, MD, MS Ed

The Children's Hospital of Philadelphia

Boys and Girls Clubs of Indian Country

National Congress of American Indians



# Objectives

1. Applied resilience, using a strengths-based approach (Resilience 101)

2. Trauma Informed Care 101

3. Recognizing Indigenous Cultures Have More to Teach Than Learn

4. Eliminating shame, building confidence

5. Not undermining confidence; Learning not to lecture

6. Giving control back to people who have lost control over their lives

7. Managing stress

**How do we define success for  
ALL Kids?**

**Problem Free . . .**

**. . . is NOT Fully  
Prepared!**

**Karen Pittman**

# Resilience

- **The Ability To Overcome Adversity**
- **The Capacity to Bounce Back**

**Resilience is a Mindset**

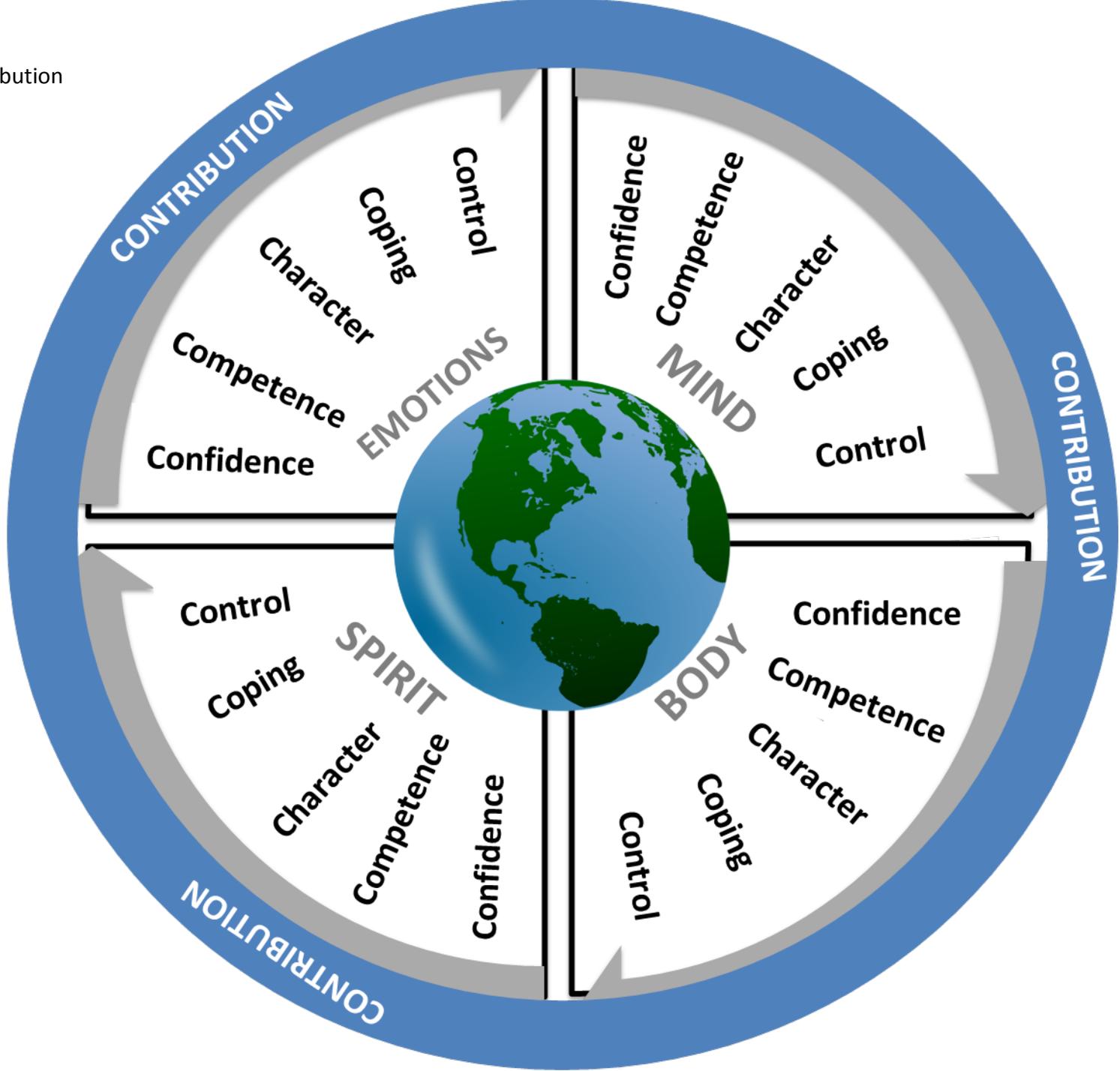
# Resilience

- is
- NOT
- Invulnerability

# The Bottom Line

- **Young People will be more resilient if the important adults in their lives believe in them unconditionally and hold them to high expectations**
- **Young People live up or down to the expectations we set for them**

Contribution



# When Resilience Reaches Its Limits



Children are Sacred Beings

**Breathe**

# The Parable of the River

Once upon a time there was a town built just beyond the bend of a beautiful river. One day, children were playing beside the river when they noticed three bodies in the water. They ran for help and the townsfolk quickly pulled the bodies out of the river.

One body was dead, so they buried her. One was ill, so they took him to the hospital and nursed him back to health. The third was healthy, so they placed her with a family who cared for her and took her to school.

From that day on, every day bodies came floating down the river, and every day, the people tended to them – taking the sick to the hospitals, placing the healthy with families, and burying the dead.

This went on for years. The townsfolk came to expect the bodies and developed elaborate systems for recovering and attending to them. Some were generous and a few gave up their jobs to do this full time. The town developed pride in its generosity and efficiency in body tending.

However, during all these years and despite the effort, nobody thought to go up river, beyond the bend that hid what was above them, and find out why those bodies came floating down the river.

**(Adapted from Rolbeiser, R. (1999). The holy longing. New York: Doubleday)**

# Trauma Informed Care



**The model is borrowed from  
Camara Phyllis Jones, M.D., M.P.H., Ph.D.**

Felitti VJ, Anda RF, Nordenberg DF, Williamson DF, Spitz AM, Edwards VJ, Marks JS.  
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 Preventive Medicine* 1998;14(4):245-258.

# The Adverse Childhood Experiences

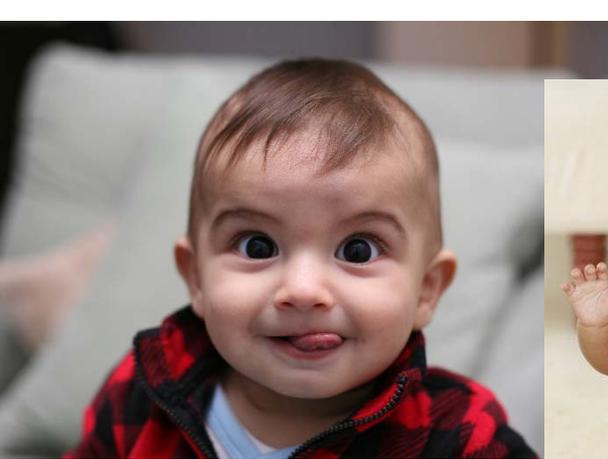
- Emotional Abuse
- Physical Abuse
- Sexual Abuse
- Neglected
- Exposure to Substance Abuse in Household
- Exposure to Mental Illness in Household
- Exposure to Domestic Violence in Household
- Parent(s) Sent to Prison
- Were Parents Divorced or Did You Experience Parental Abandonment?

**UNLESS**



**UNLESS until when???**





“The proper time to influence the character of a child is 100 years before he is born. In each of us lives our childhood and the values of past generations.”

-Robert ten Benschel, pediatric psychiatrist, Mayo Clinic



# The Effect of ACEs on the Brain



# The Effect of ACEs on Behavior



# How Do We React to Behavior



# Trauma Does Not Break Kids . . . . . . Nor Does it Cause Brain Damage

- Predictive is Not an Absolute Determinant
- A Different Kind of Credential
- Having a “Protector’s Brain”

# NOT Triggering Traumatic-based Behaviors

- Earning Trust
- Radical Calmness
- Listening
- Construct Rather than Destruct
- Body Language
- Understanding People Regulate Themselves Differently
- Knowing Your Own Buttons
- Physical Space and Touching
- Boundaries, Boundaries, Boundaries

# Giving Kids Control Over Their Decisions

# Offer Radical Calmness Amidst a Chaotic Reality

- Key to de-escalation
- Critical to anticipation

# Being Trauma Informed is Healing (for Us and Youth)

But focusing on **trauma** or risk holds the potential to re-traumatize

*To enable all young people, especially those who need us most, to reach their full potential as productive, caring, responsible citizens.*

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- Youth who need us the most are often those who push us away
- Youth who need us the most are often those who push our buttons
- Youth who need us the most may raise uncomfortable feelings in us
- Youth who need us the most often don't give us the feedback we crave

**Children are Sacred Beings**

# **Behavioral Change 101**

(What they're missing)

# **The Five Steps of Behavioral Change**

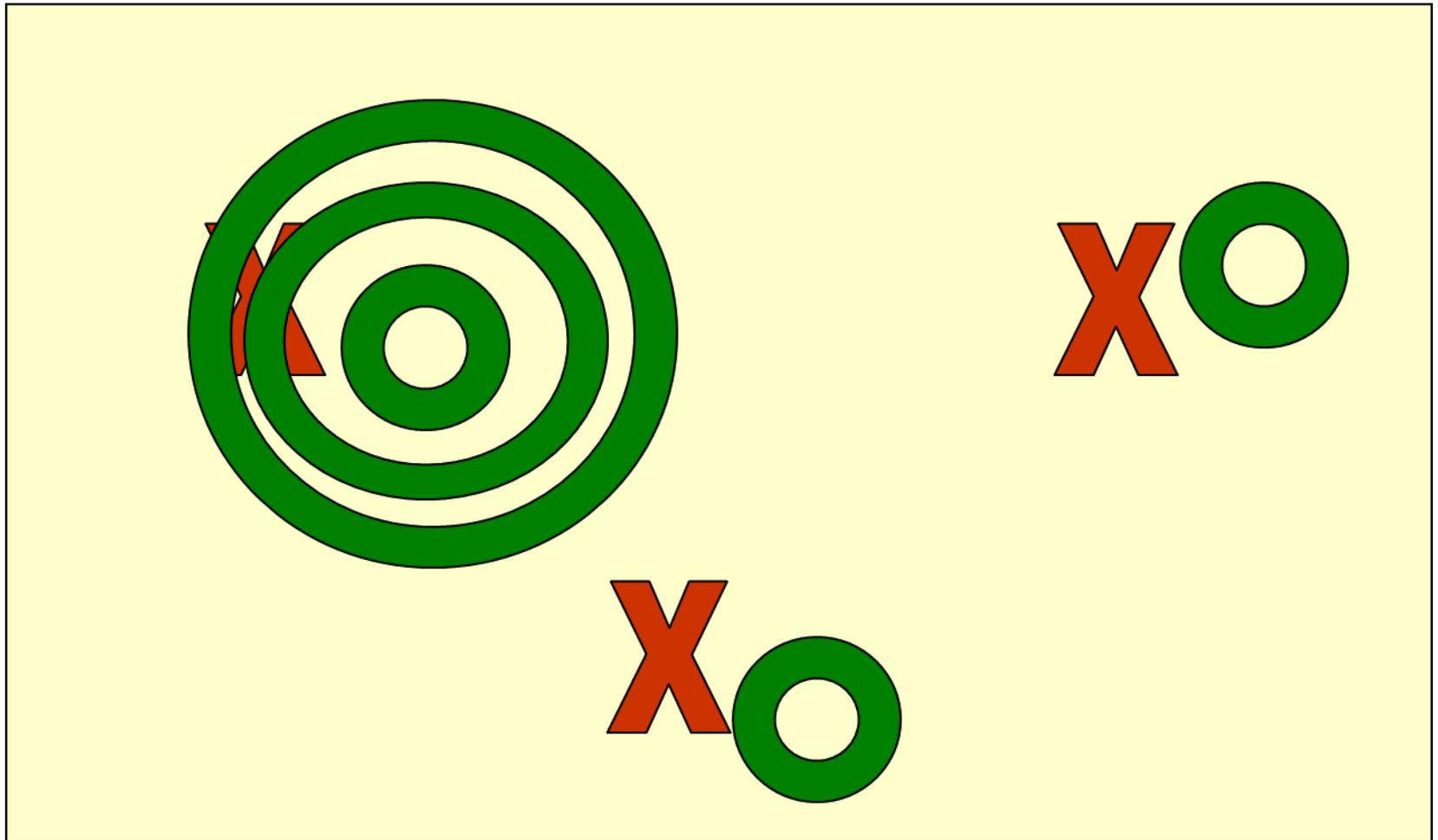
- 1. Awareness**
- 2. Motivation**
- 3. Skills**
- 4. Trial and error**
- 5. Maintenance**

**? Pre-contemplation ?**

**Confidence gets it started . . .**

**. . . and shame paralyzes all  
efforts**

# Finding Competence . . . . . . Building Confidence



- “Love is seeing someone as they deserve to be seen, *as they really are* , not through the lens of the behaviors they have sometimes needed to display.”

We are loving for reasons beyond  
spirituality; we are loving to initiate  
positive change

**CONTROL:**

**The C most affected by trauma**

# Giving Kids Control Over Their Decisions

# Learning Not to Undermine Competence

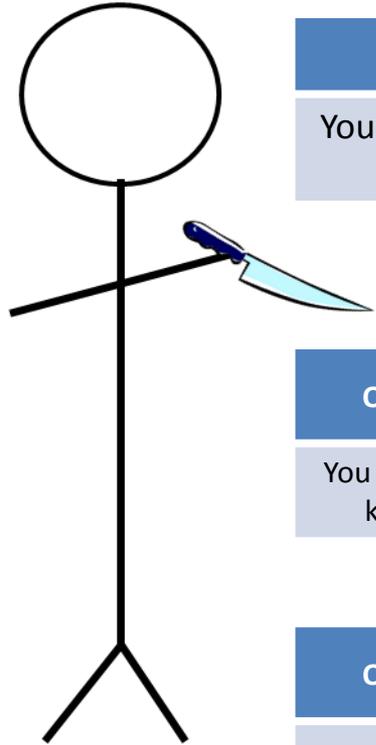
- Talking in a way young people understand
- Recognizing the cognitive development of adolescence
- No more lectures!!!!!!

Option	Physical Consequence	Outcome
You fight, but she uses her knife first	Stabbed in back	Maimed and left in a wheelchair

Option	Physical Consequence	Outcome
You fight, but she uses her knife first	Stabbed in heart	You are killed

Option	Emotional Consequence	Judicial Consequence	Family Consequence	Educational Consequence	Career Consequence	Outcome
You fight and kill her	How long are you happy?	20 years in Prison	Your Mom is Ashamed	No Education	No Job	You die alone with no family

Option	Emotional Consequence	Judicial Consequence	Family Consequence	Educational Consequence	Career Consequence	Outcome
You don't fight	How long are you Angry?	None	You can have children	You can finish school	You can have a career	Your mom is proud



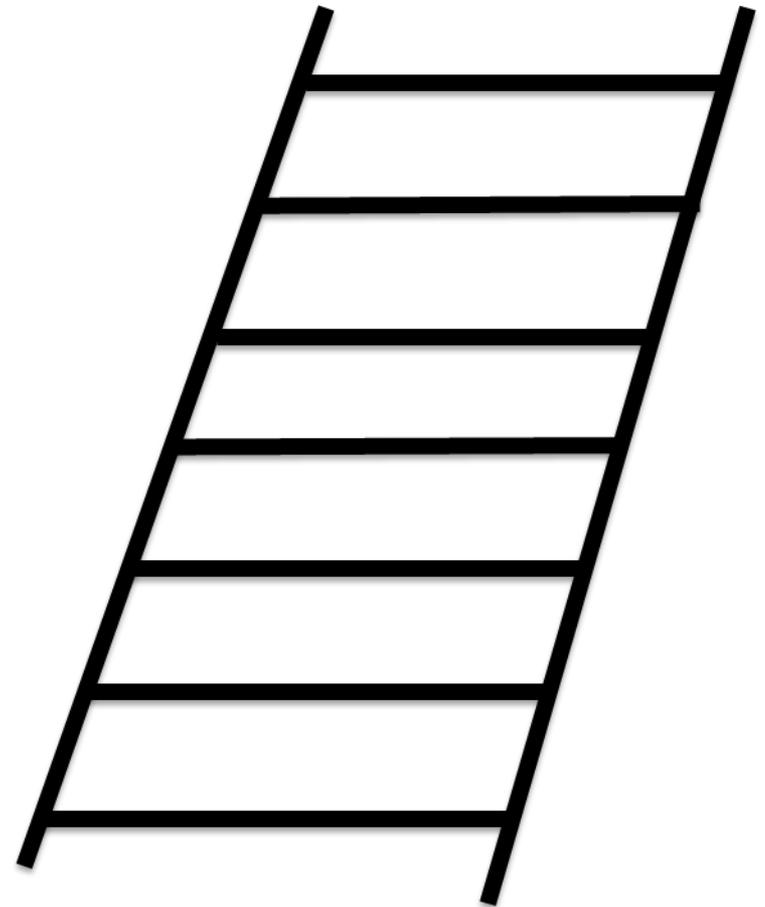
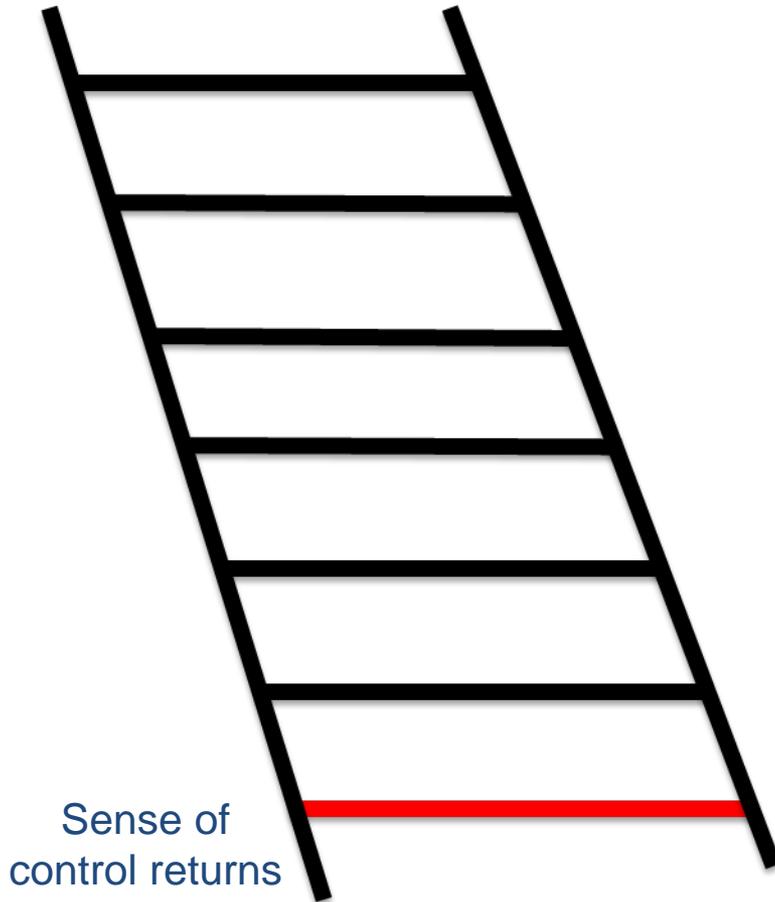
**The World Happens to Me**

**or**

**I control my Destiny**

A Future as an  
Architect, Building  
Your Community

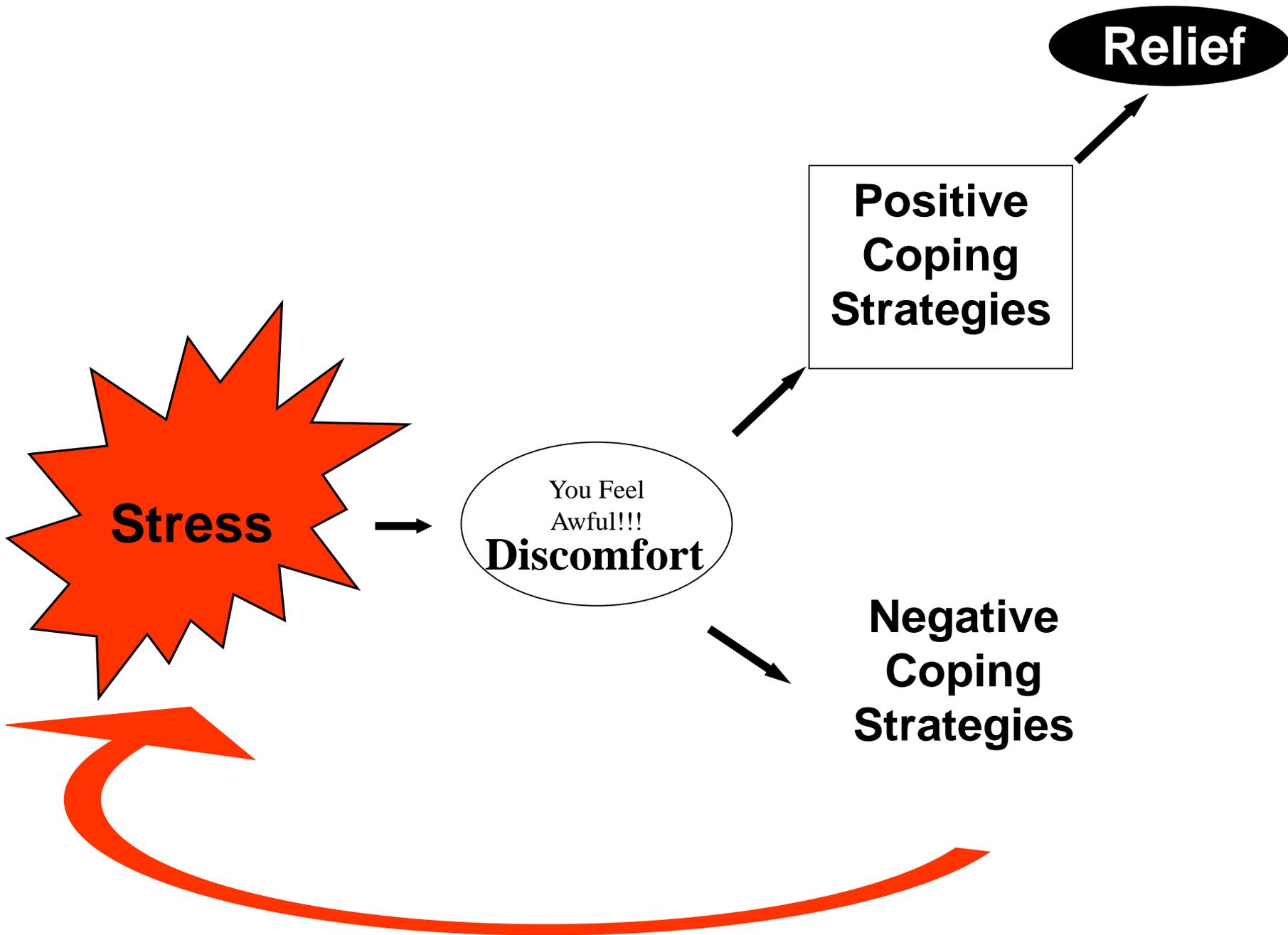
Death and  
Destruction



Life Running with Gangs

# Resilience

- Is about learning to cope, in a positive way with life's inevitable stressors
- We might do our greatest good by raising youth with a wide repertoire of positive coping strategies



Connection is the most important  
coping strategy

- **Distinguishing Paper Tigers from Real tigers**
- **Knowing When Bad Things are Temporary**
- **Knowing When Good Things are Permanent**

# Coping

- Engagement vs. Disengagement
- Emotion Focused vs. Problem Focused

# A Stress Management Plan for Teens

- **(It Might Just Work for grownups)**

# Stress Management : Tackling The Problem

- 1) Making the problem manageable
- 2) Active Avoidance
- 3) Let Some things go

# Serenity Prayer

- **Grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change; courage to change the things I can; and wisdom to know the difference**

# Stress Management : Taking Care of My Body

## **4) Exercise**

- o Fear**

- o Anger**

# Stress Management : Taking Care of My Body

**5) Relaxation**

**6) Nutrition**

# Stress Management :

## Taking Care of My Body

- **7) Sleep**
  - o **Stimulation**
  - o **Cool Down**
    - Exercise**
    - Shower**
  - o **Release emotion**

# Stress Management : Managing Emotions

**8) Instant Vacations**

**9) Releasing Emotions**

The Worst thing is not to be  
**stressed** . . . it is to be **NUMB**

# Stress Management Plan : Making the World Better

## **10) Contributing to the world**

**Do The Work It Takes To Love**

**The Second Sentence**

# How will we judge our success?

(not in ways that are easy to measure!!!)

- Through easy measurements: education, markers of health, jobs, graduations.
- By proving that adolescents are capable of healing from trauma
- By helping our young people know that they are worthy of being loved
- By making it more likely that our youth will be able to “pass along” our love to their children, and then break the cycle of trauma and oppression.
- By helping our young people experience that people are worthy of trust . . .

# How will we judge our success?

(not in ways that are easy to measure!!!)

- By having youth learn how to feel.
- By having staff and the families who care for our kids never stop learning how to feel

Plate of food



Empty Plate



Hands Holding Seeds



**There is no “other”**

- **There is only US**

# Fosteringresilience.com

