

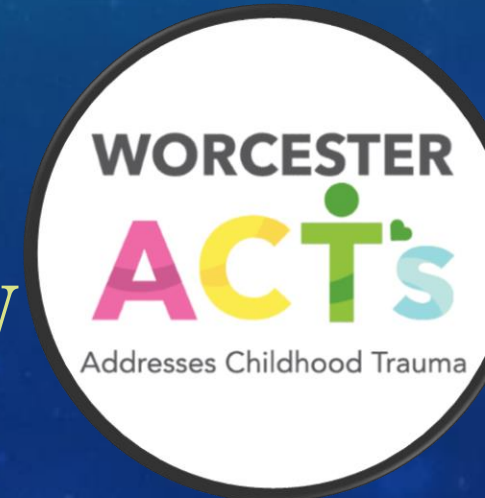
# INTERGENERATIONAL TRAUMA



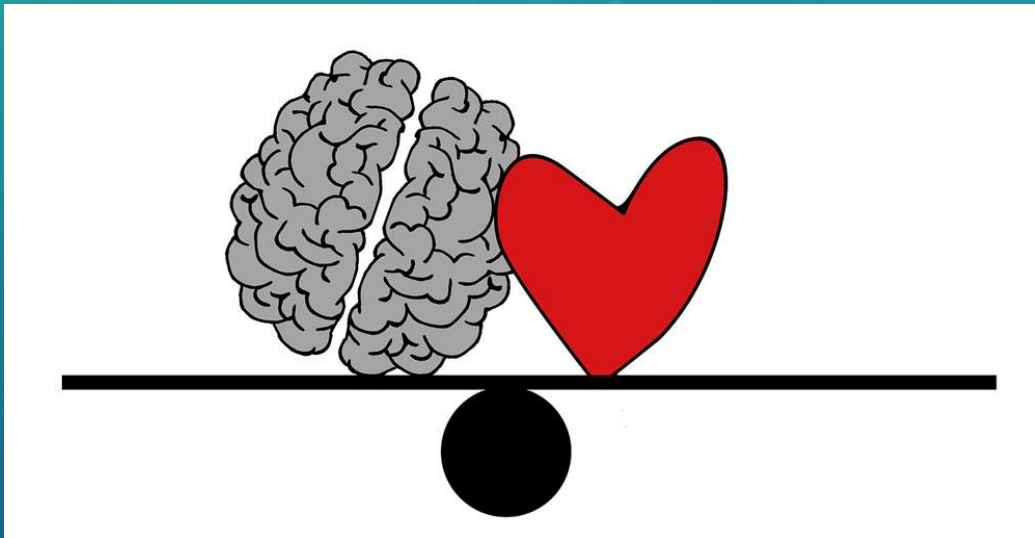
<https://healingfoundation.org.au/intergenerational-trauma/>

Generational trauma—known as intergenerational or transgenerational trauma—is a cycle of trauma that passes through families.

Amy Ebbeson, LCSW  
[worcesteracts.org](http://worcesteracts.org)



# GOAL FOR THE SESSION-



To connect our personal experiences to a much larger picture in service of a better understanding of what you inherited  
Self knowledge leads to personal growth  
Insight is the best indicator of mental health



# SELF CARE

Please practice self-care & compassion

If you feel the need to step away due to triggering content, please do and return when you can.

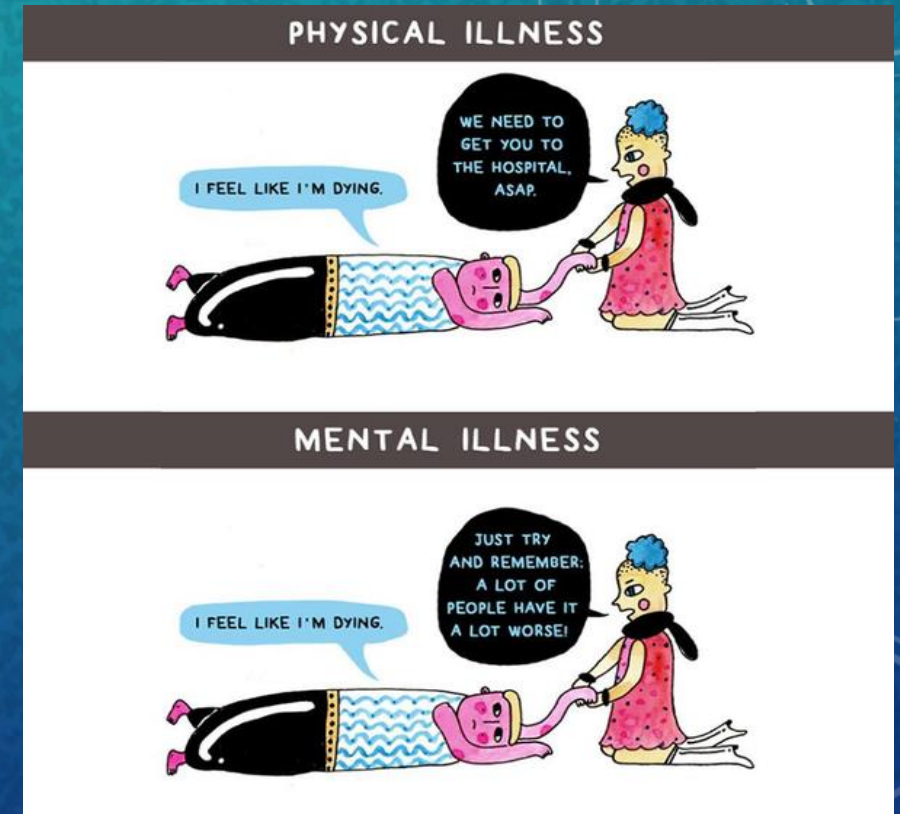
This is painful content

Muting, turning off the camera, getting a drink- it's all good.

# STIGMA

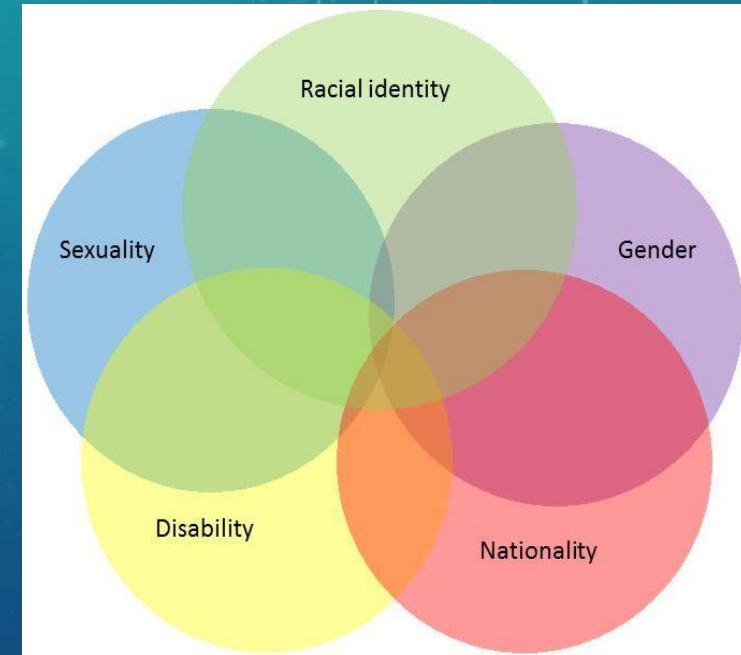
*mark of disgrace or infamy; a stain or reproach, as on one's reputation*

- Stigma is a barrier that discourages people from talking about this and from seeking help
- Stigma happens at all levels- individual, families, groups, systems, cultures
- Amount of stigma depends on positionality
- Men experience more stigma
- A major contributor to generational trauma



# INTERSECTIONALITY

- We hold multiple identities
- Racism/ Sexism/ Heterosexism impact stress
- Groups are not afforded the same access
- Different cultures have historically viewed mental illness as weakness, a character flaw or even demonic possession
- Men experience more stigma than women because of sexism

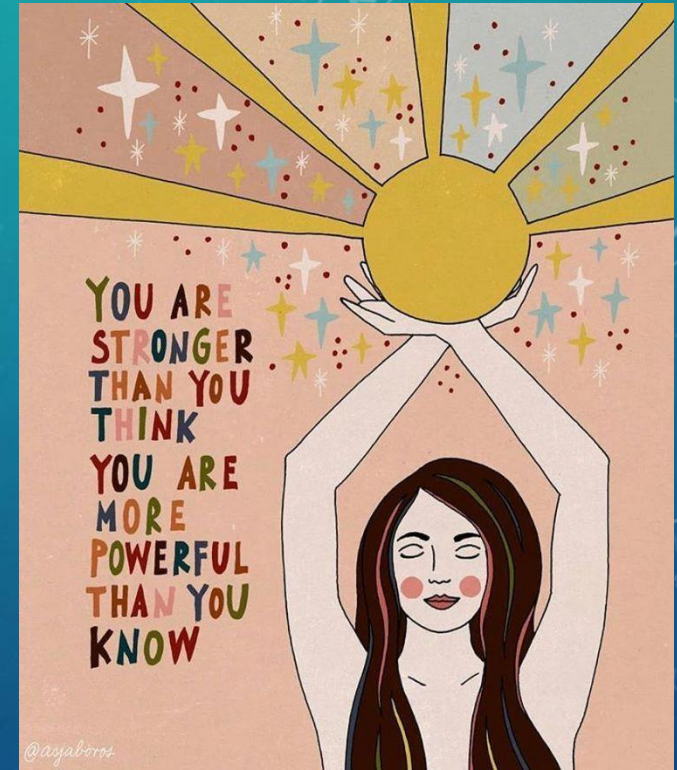


# TRAUMA

DSM-an occurrence which would be notably distressing to almost anyone

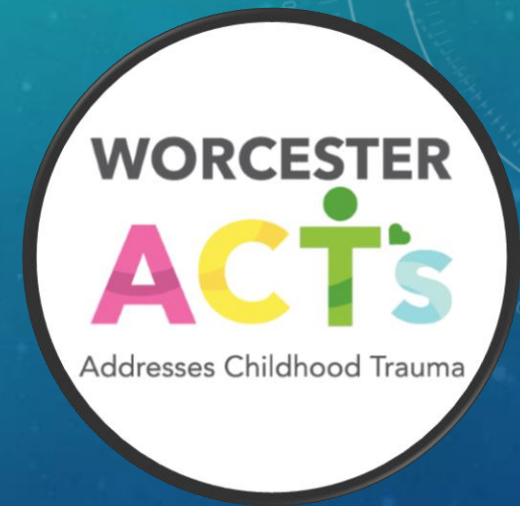
Exposure- directly experiencing;  
witnessing it occurring to others;  
learning of a trauma that occurred to a loved one in the past

(American Psychiatric Association, 1987).



# ORIGIN OF WORCESTER ACTs

- A needs assessment/community-wide strategic planning process (2013-2015) informed the creation of the WYVPI
- The assessment identified the following drivers of youth violence: Family stress; Unemployment; Early childhood trauma; Generational cycles of gang involvement; Limited neighborhood recreation; and Punitive school discipline.
- Generational Trauma



# TRAUMA IN WORCESTER

## Profile of Proven Risk SSYI Participants

- 95% of the participants are Black, Latino, or Multiracial.  
(racial trauma)
  - 30% had early police contact (before age of 12), as victim or witness
  - Substantial police contact that becomes increasingly violent as they get older.
- 
- ▶ Struggled with school due learning and/or behavior challenges
  - ▶ Many men on the list have mental health issues and substance abuse issues
  - ▶ At least 30% (30) have one or more children
  - ▶ Need help, have gotten punishment





# IS THIS NORMAL?

DSM uses- “Within Normal Range”

Norms are Personal, social, cultural

Invisible, indisputable

Norms impacts our thoughts, feelings and behaviors

What happened in your family is YOUR normal

We learn by Experience/ Comparison/ media

## Children Learn What They Live

by Dorothy Law Nolte

If a child lives with criticism,  
He learns to condemn.

If a child lives with hostility,  
He learns to fight.

If a child lives with ridicule,  
He learns to be shy.

If a child lives with shame,  
He learns to feel guilty.

If a child lives with tolerance,  
He learns to be patient.

If a child lives with encouragement,  
He learns confidence.

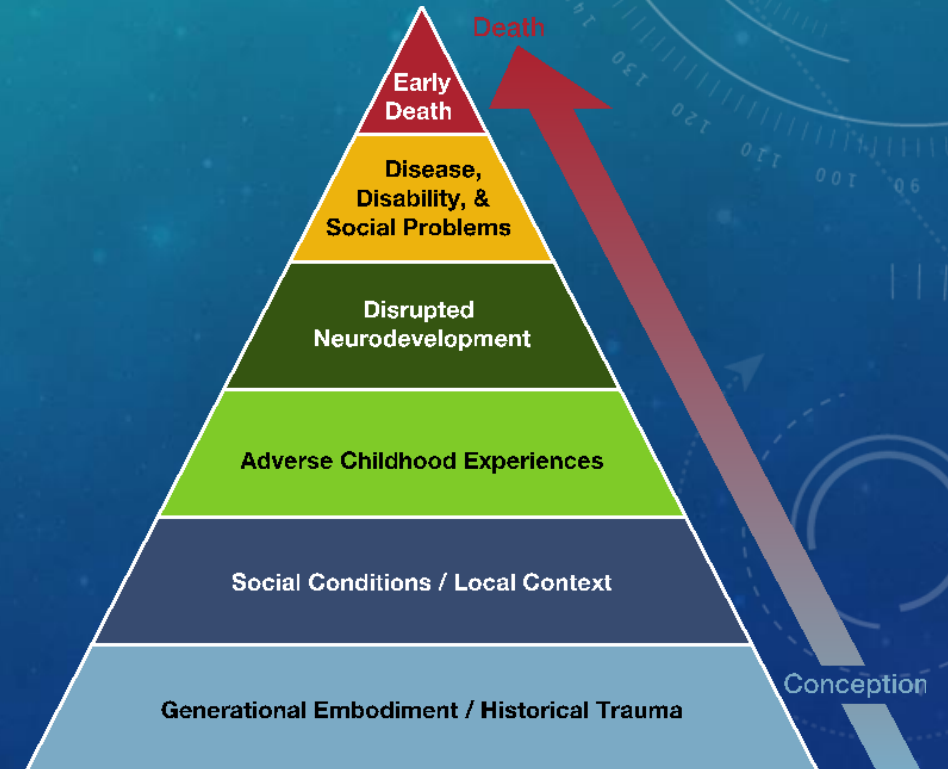
If a child lives with praise,  
He learns to appreciate.

If a child lives with fairness,  
He learns justice.

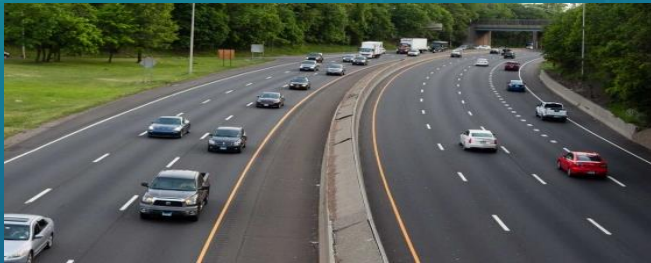
If a child lives with security,  
He learns to have faith.

# TRAUMA IMPACTS EVERYTHING

## ACE study



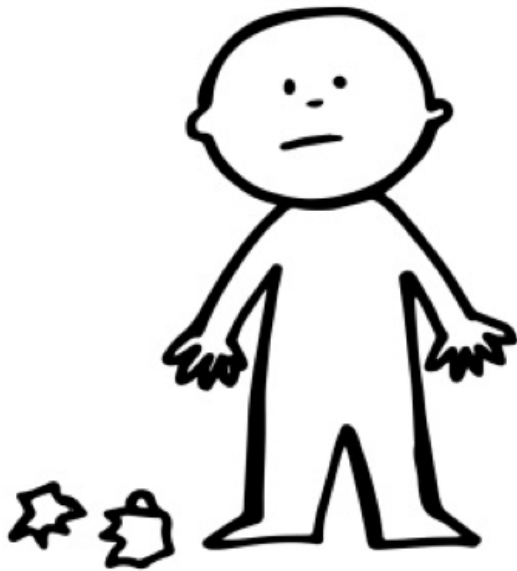
# TRAUMA'S IMPACT ON THE BRAIN



- The brain is a use dependent organ
- Each experience shapes the architecture of the brain
- Emotion super charges it
- The more an experience happens, the better traveled the path is
- The coping mechanisms we learn in childhood become our default
- Abuse can feel normal and expected- Very mad and sad kids become mad and sad adults-

# TRAUMA RESULTS IN SHAME

## Guilt vs Shame



I did something bad



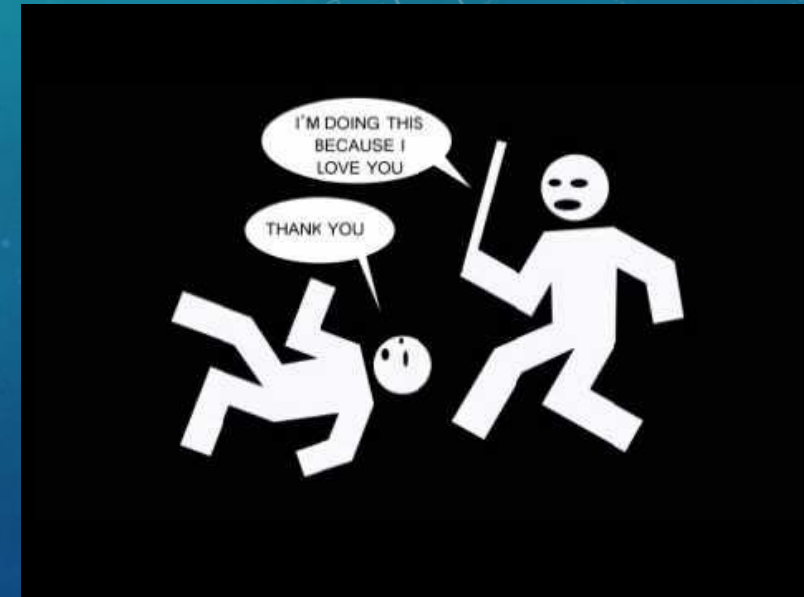
I am bad

## What is shame?

- A private, self-conscious experience where individuals feel weakness or vulnerability
- Causes feelings of being deficient or humiliated.
- One's sense of self-worth and dignity are diminished
- Shame is a painful feeling about oneself *as a person*

# TRAUMA IMPACTS RELATIONSHIPS

- Creates/ Affirms negative beliefs about self
- In childhood, Power difference is huge
- Parent/ child
- A person with PTSD who becomes a parent may recover traumatic memories as their children age, can have a big impact on kids.
- Transfer of negative feelings to child
- Over/ under identification
- Projection/ blaming
- Internalized Oppression
- Define ourselves as victims or perpetrators



# TRAUMA AFFECTS LIFE CHOICES

- No ability to distinguish between safe and unsafe
- Repetition Compulsion
- Falling in the same trap again and again
- “This time it will be different”
- Judgment is impaired
- Confusing safe and familiar
- All you know



# Self Medication



Give me 2 or 3 months in therapy and you'll begin to feel better



Give me 2-3 weeks on these meds and you'll begin to feel better



Give this shot 2-3 minutes and you will be feeling better!

TRAUMA IS A PREDICTABLE RESPONSE TO SOMETHING EXTRAORDINARILY STRESSFUL. IT IMPACTS ALL AREAS OF A PERSON'S LIFE AND CAN SIGNIFICANTLY AFFECT FUNCTIONING AND QUALITY OF RELATIONSHIPS.

## Trauma Symptoms

- Avoidance (too little)
- Arousal (too much)
- All symptoms relate to the trauma





# NATURE AND NURTURE

Trauma Passed in utero (Dutch Hunger Winter)

Historical Trauma

Post Traumatic Slavery Syndrome

Hearing horror stories from the holocaust/ genocide

Secondary Trauma, vicarious trauma

Interferes with Primary Attachment

Genetics- mouse smell study

Neuroscientists at Emory University found that genetic markers, thought to be wiped clean before birth, were used to transmit a single traumatic experience across generations, leaving behind traces in the behavior and anatomy of future pups.



# AMERICAN CULTURE

Built on Colonialism  
Manifest Destiny  
Might is Right

Tabula Rosa  
Myth of the meritocracy  
Fierce Individualism

Invisibility of privilege  
Accumulated advantage  
Behind from the start



No one—not rock stars,  
not professional  
athletes, not software  
billionaires, and not  
even geniuses—ever makes  
it alone.

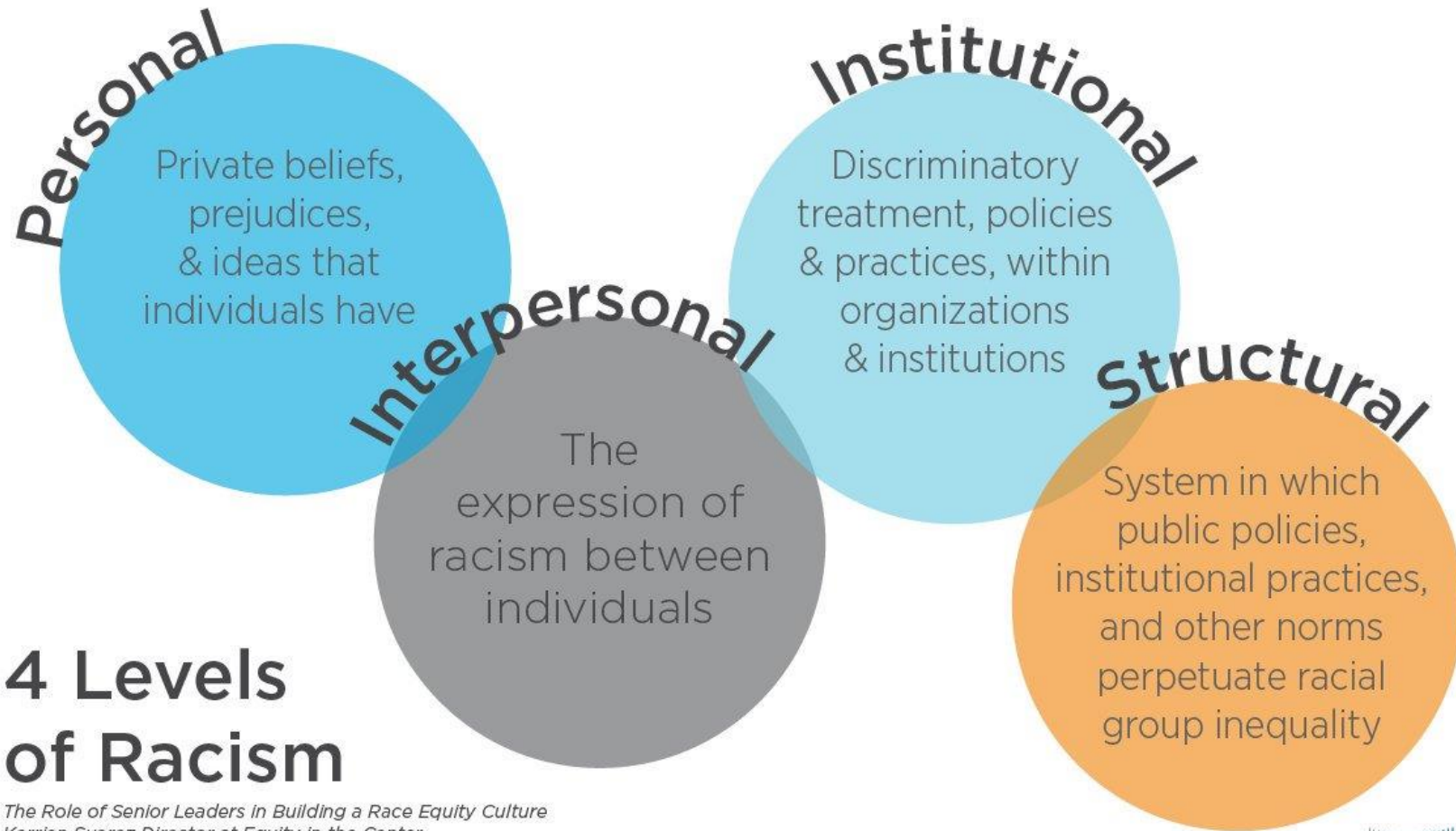
*Malcolm Gladwell*



# Racism

- Racism is a social determinant of health, mental health, and well being that has a profound impact on children, adolescents, emerging adults and their families
- Exposure to racism as a target, a witness, or an unwilling participant is trauma
- The response is the same as the trauma response—fight, flight, or freeze; release of stress hormones leading to inflammatory reactions
- Racism creates moral injury
- Racism is a trauma, like other traumas there is a dose response

# How is racism expressed?

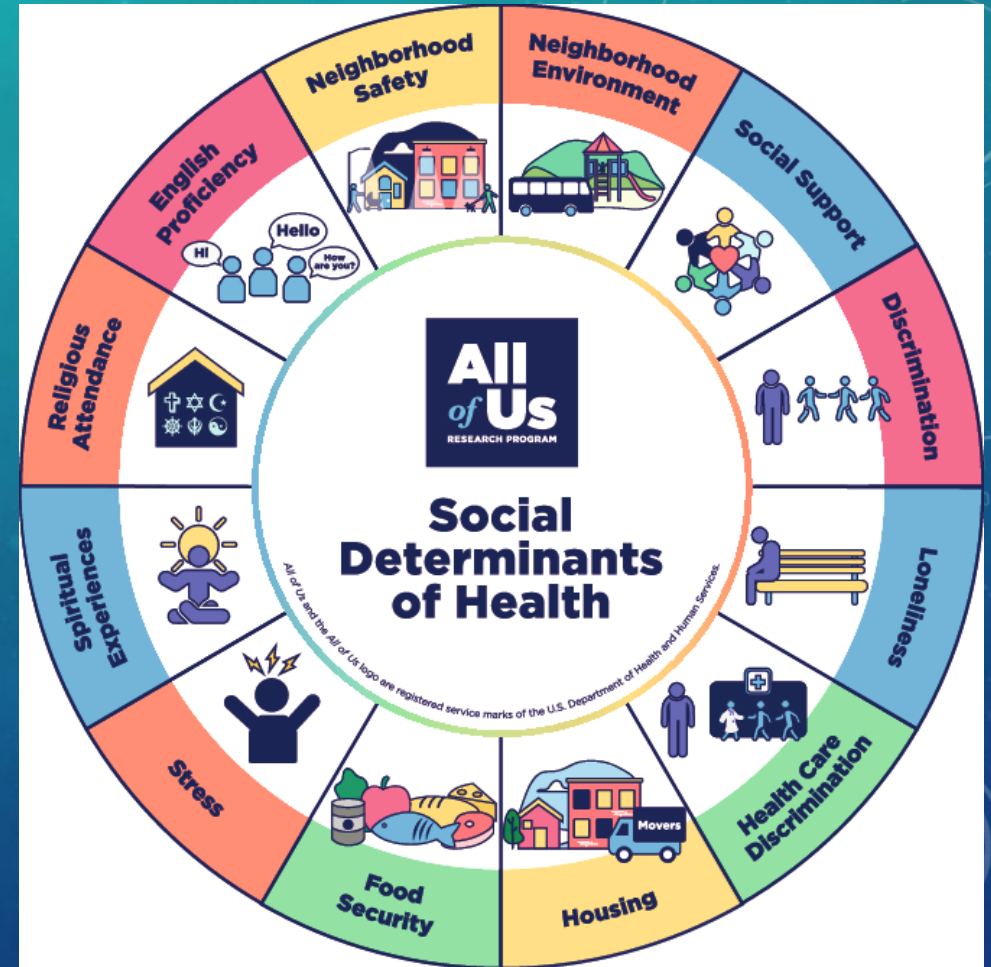


## 4 Levels of Racism

*The Role of Senior Leaders in Building a Race Equity Culture*  
Kerrien Suarez Director at Equity in the Center

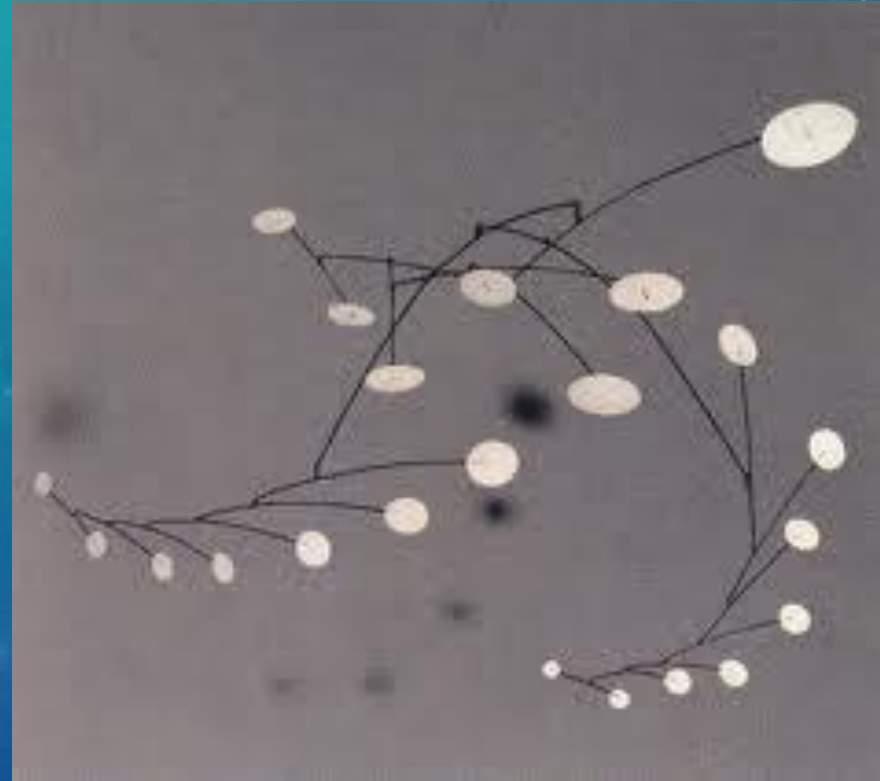
# Family Systems

- Families are the primary influence in our lives.
- History tends to repeat itself.
- Families move through time on a horizontal as well as a vertical continuum.
- Each individual member must maintain both separateness from and connectedness to the family.
- Systems develop typical ways of being which are reliable and predictable.
- Each part of the system affects each others.



# HOMEOSTASIS--EQUILIBRIUM

- There is a pull from the system NOT to CHANGE—but to continue functioning as things have always been.
- This tendency to keep doing things as they've always been done is known as homeostasis or the system's equilibrium.



# Issues of Parent get passed on to the child

- ▶ Patterns develop from purpose
- ▶ Unexamined patterns remain even when they no longer work



# Patterns in Addiction



Lack of safety/ predictability



Basic needs unmet



Excessive worry



Issues with authority



People pleasing as survival



Neglect



Hyper vigilance



Parentified child –

Common for Girls  
Oldest child



# Patterns in Physical Abuse



Preoccupation with power and control



Fear and mistrust



On edge/ exaggerated startle response



Issues with authority



May bully younger/ smaller kids



May have been taught to lie about injuries



Need to be good/ right/ perfect



Insecure attachment

# Patterns in Sexual Abuse



Lack of boundaries



Hygiene needs unmet



Inability to trust/ feel safe



Sexualized Relationships



Victim/ Perpetrator lens



Uneven attention- all or nothing



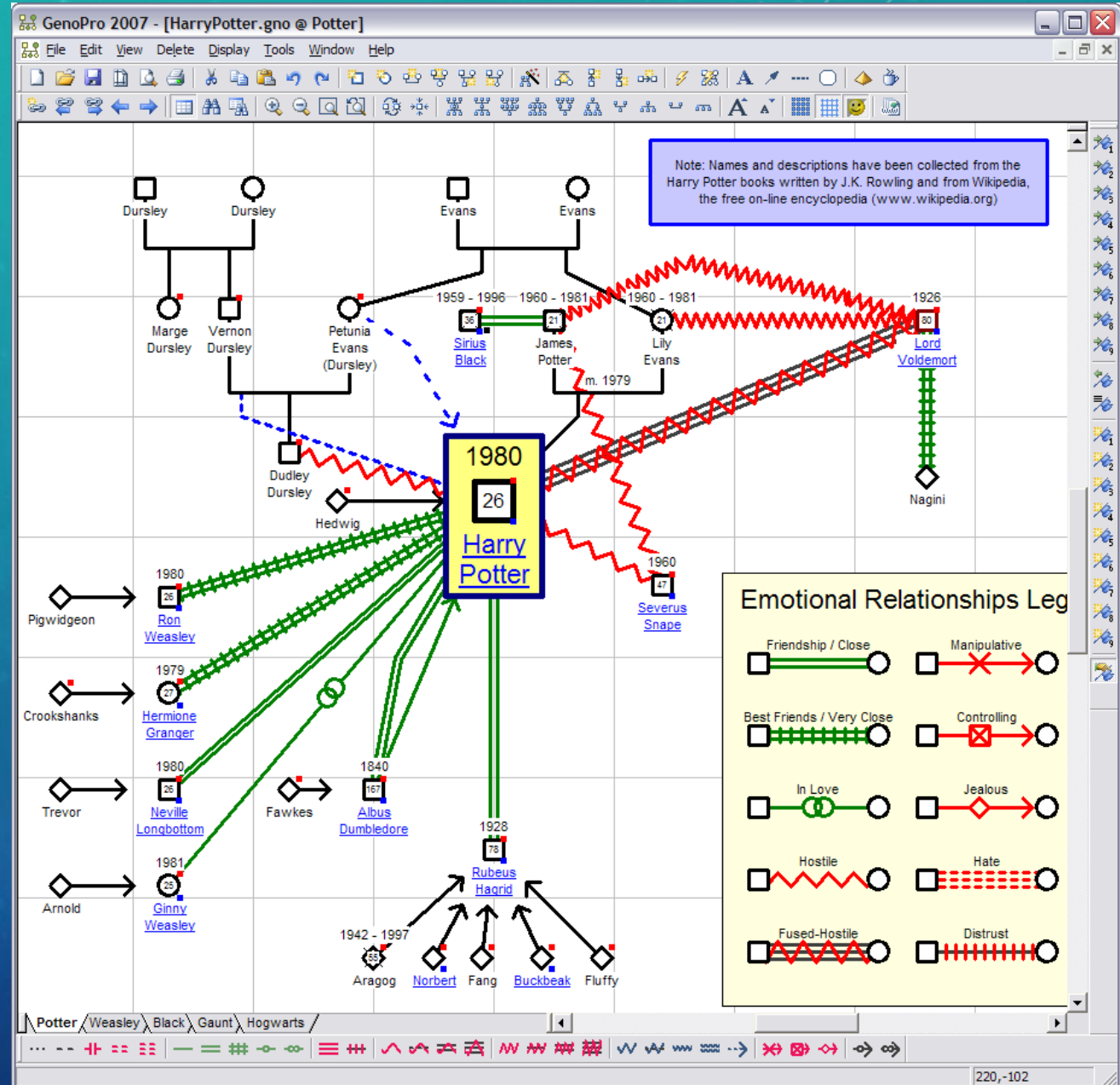
Confusion about sex, love and identity



Trauma bonds

# Your Family Tree

- Create your own family- many templates, guidelines available for free
- Go back to at least your grandparents
- Ask family members for help if needed
- Look for patterns, striking events
- Relationships
- Illnesses, addictions, alternative lifestyles



## What Helps?

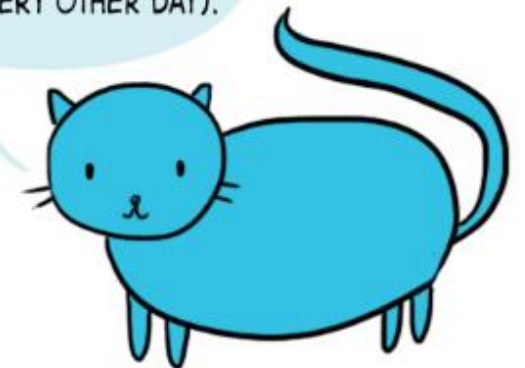
- Collective Healing
- Reduce Stress
- Mindfulness
- Increases Restful Sleep
- EMDR
- Psychedelic Medicine
- Processing- Feel it to heal it
- Timing and Dosage

**Self-Care is a  
priority and necessity  
- not a luxury -  
in the work that we do.**

When another person makes you suffer, it is because he suffers deeply within himself, and his suffering is spilling over. He does not need punishment; he needs help.

- Thich Naht Hanh

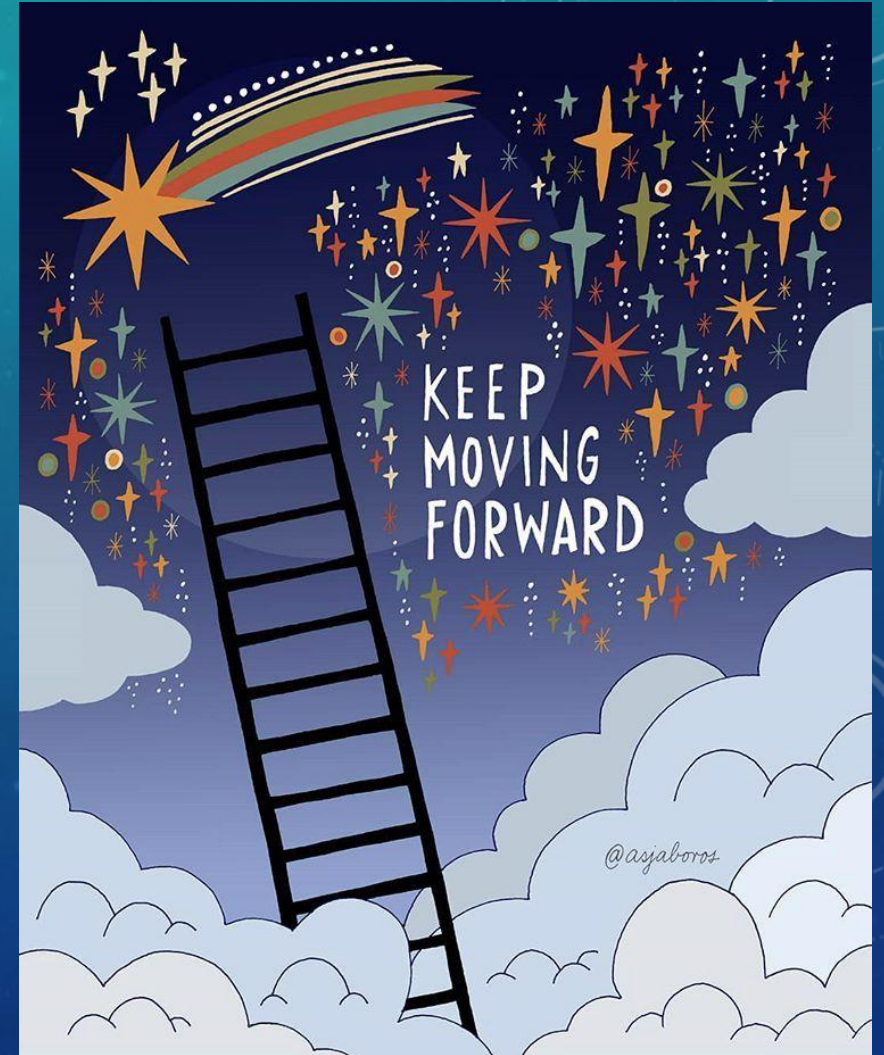
IT'S A GOOD DAY TO  
TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF  
(SO IS EVERY OTHER DAY).



# Awareness, Education and Insight

- Whatever you put your attention on, you give power
- Paying attention is one of the best things you can do (and free)
- Learn from good sources
- the most effective tools in your toolbox!
- Insight into illness is the best predictor of

**SUCCESS**



# SELF CARE/ SELF COMPASSION

- Doing our healing work is stopping the cycle
- Generational Impact/ Ripples

Make generous assumptions

give yourself the love you deserve!

[https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLy\\_xtLu0yoI\\_Gh98qCMlt27gOO1xfyVkp&si=g\\_WiyMvoeZ3Rx97u](https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLy_xtLu0yoI_Gh98qCMlt27gOO1xfyVkp&si=g_WiyMvoeZ3Rx97u)

## A little guide to glimmers:

- glimmers are the opposite of triggers.
- they are tiny moments of awe.
- they spark joy & evoke inner calm.
- they have a positive effect on our mental health.
- they are micro-moments causing tiny mood shifts.
- they send cues of safety to our nervous system.
- they bring feelings of ease & contentment.
- our body responds with positive energy.
- they allow us to feel hope when lost.
- our nervous system is strengthened by them.
- they can help increase our well-being.
- once we start embracing them it can become a beautiful way to see the world around you.

@h.e.l.e.n.m.a.r.i.e



**When we deny our stories, They  
define us. When we own our  
stories, we get to write the ending.**

Brené Brown

quote fancy

# REFERENCES/ RESOURCES

Brene Brown's work

National Center for Child Traumatic Stress

American Society for the Prevention of  
Suicide

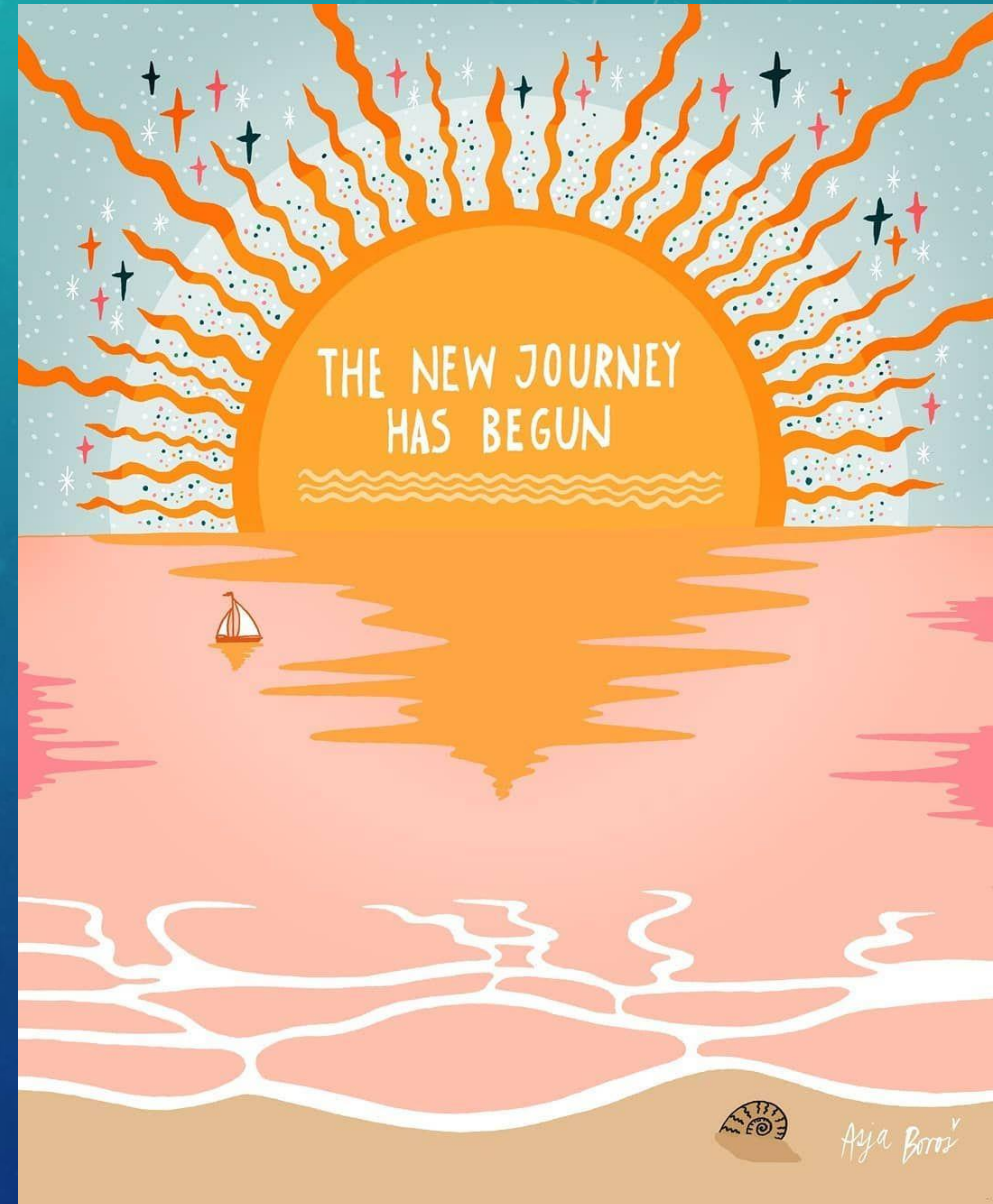
National Alliance for Mental Illness

Trauma and Recovery- Judith Herman

Bessel van de Kolk

Gabor Mate's work

<http://www.new-synapse.com/aps/wordpress>





## Feedback Request



<https://forms.gle/nt4QKk7mdFidoExb9>