



# Addiction: Trauma Roots & Hope for Resilience

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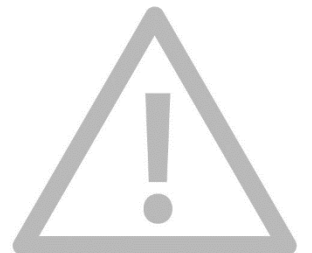


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# Good Morning!

Thank you for joining me today.

Some of the material I will cover today may be difficult to hear. **Please feel free to take care of yourself, step away from the presentation, and rejoin later if needed.**



# Background

- 20+ years working in non-profit and social determinants of health
- Ph.D. in 2018 focused on the resilience of women who had suffered trauma
- Interviewing and studying the resilient for the last 15 years
  - Over 100 resilient people interviewed to date

# Background (cont.)

- My journey
- Abuse
- Addiction
- Turning points
- Trauma survival is a journey, not a destination.



# What is Trauma?



# What is Trauma? (cont.)



# Who Experiences Trauma?

- 21 Million Americans have at least 1 addiction
- 1 in 7 children experience abuse or neglect
- 1 in 6 women experience rape or attempted rape in their lifetime
- There have been 314 mass shootings this year
- To date, over One Million U.S. deaths from COVID-19
- Every day, 40 people complete a suicide
- In short, **almost everyone experiences trauma.**

# Trauma Today (cont.)



# Trauma Today: Alcohol Effects

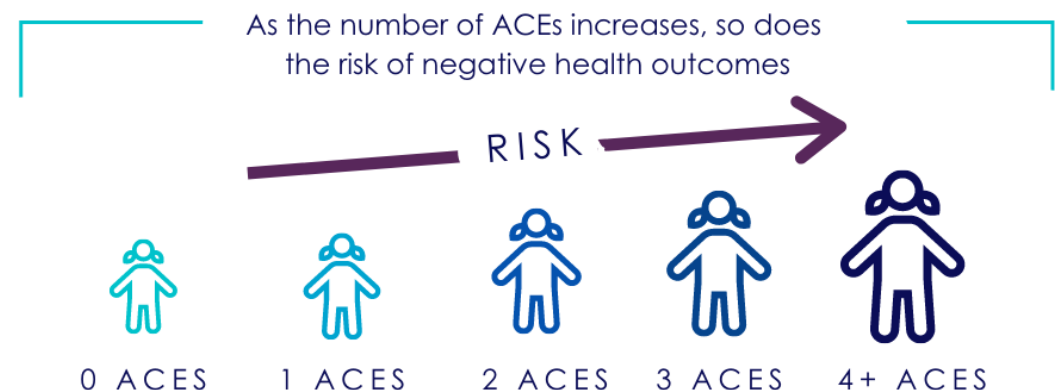
- Alcohol use disorder linked to 232 million missed workdays annually.
- Long term chronic illnesses such as diabetes, high blood pressure, liver disease, and cancer
- Up to 140,000 Americans die each year from alcohol-related issues.

There are  
more than **380**  
**deaths each day**  
in the US due  
to excessive  
alcohol use.



# ACEs

- Nearly half of all children have experienced one Adverse Childhood Experience (ACE)
- ACEs – Adverse Childhood Experiences are potentially traumatic events that occur in childhood
- 65%-85% of attacks on adolescents go unreported
- 20 million children suffer from PTSD



# ACEs

- Violence, abuse, and growing up in a family with mental health or substance use problems
- Events that can change brain development and affect how the body responds to stress
- Linked to chronic health problems, mental illness, and substance misuse in adulthood



Physical



Mental Illness



Incarcerated Relative



Emotional



Mother treated violently



Substance Abuse

# ACEs (cont.)

- Adults who have suffered ACEs as children can often go on to experience trauma in adulthood
- Complex compound trauma and PTSD can result



Severe obesity



Diabetes



Depression



Suicide attempts



Lack of physical activity



Smoking



Alcoholism



Drug use



Missed work

# Common Responses to Trauma

- **Strong emotions:** anger, anxiety and guilt
- **Withdrawing:** friends, family, previously enjoyed activities
- **Sleep disruption:** too much or not enough sleep, nightmares about events
- **Pessimism:** outlook on life, cynical, distrust of others, hopelessness
- **Performance issues:** concentration, short-term memory, problem solving
- **Acting out:** externally and internally



# Trauma and Substance Use Disorder

- The transition from trauma victim to substance abuser is an easy one
- Trauma permanently changes the brain
- Alcohol and drugs (sex or food) give the trauma victim temporary relief and an escape
- Alcohol and drugs lower inhibitions and allow trauma survivor to feel “free”



- [illegible]

**Start by Believing**

# What Can be Done at Work?

- Maintain usual routines
- Refer to help: SUD treatment, therapy, counseling
- Give time off to attend counseling or groups
- Give coworkers choices and latitude
- Increase the level of support and encouragement
- Set clear, firm limits for inappropriate behavior



# What Can be Done at Work? (cont.)

- Recognize that behavioral problems may be transient
- Provide a safe place for the employee
- Give simple and realistic answers
- Be sensitive to the cues
- If the trauma is yours, ask for what you need



# What Can be Done at Home?

- Anticipate difficult times and seek additional support
- Ask family and friends for advance warning if they will be doing something out of the ordinary
- Be aware of family and friends' reactions
- Understand that trauma is a healing process
  - Be patient



# What Can be Done at Home? (cont.)

- Be aware of positive and negative responses:
  - “What is wrong with you?” vs. “What happened to you?”
- Consider your medications
  - Are they appropriate? What support do they need?
- Reach out to those who understand
  - Find the right support group for you/loved one



**“Forgiveness comes in layers.”**

**— Susan, a 47 year old two time cancer and child sexual abuse survivor**

# Resilience/Posttraumatic Growth Strategies

- Creating connectedness (Mentors)
- Family support
- Therapy and group work
- Connecting values and goals
- Mindfulness/meditation/spirituality
- Artistic expression/creation
- Exercise and sport
- Giving back/"paying it forward"



**“Being able to feel safe with other people is probably the single most important aspect of mental health: safe connections are fundamental to meaningful and satisfying lives.”**

— Bessel Van Der Kolk



# Creating Connectedness: Mentors

- Creating connectedness through:
  - Mentoring
  - Teaching unconditional acceptance
  - Families of birth and families of choice
  - Meeting basic needs: stability



# Mentorship

Offer support through listening or giving an encouraging word.

***“If you cannot ask for help without self-judgement, you can not offer help without judging others.”***

— Brene Brown, Ph.D.



# Fostering Resilience

- Hold space for yourself as you do for others
- Meet others where they are
- Remember that the smallest act you or a loved one can muster is an act of goodness and virtue.



# Families of Origin & Families of Choice

- Connect with family/others
- Ensuring basic needs are met
- Creating families of choice
- For LGBTQIA, and other marginalized groups: be the connector
- Offer a place (soft place to land)



# Therapy and Group Work

- Offer support groups for staff
- Connect with a counselor
- Connect to psychiatrist if needed
- Normalize behavioral health care for self and staff
  - Care for the caregivers (secondary trauma)



# Meditation Benefits

Reduced depression and anxiety (including social anxiety)

Significantly reduced stress

Increased concentration

Improved mood

Reduced PTSD and ADHD symptoms

Increased creativity

Improved attention



# Meditation Benefits

Emotional stability  
 Increased focus  
 Increased work/academic performance  
 Decreased insomnia  
 Reduced Post Acute Withdrawal Symptoms (PAWS)  
 Increased strength  
 Increased flexibility  
 Reduced risk of relapse



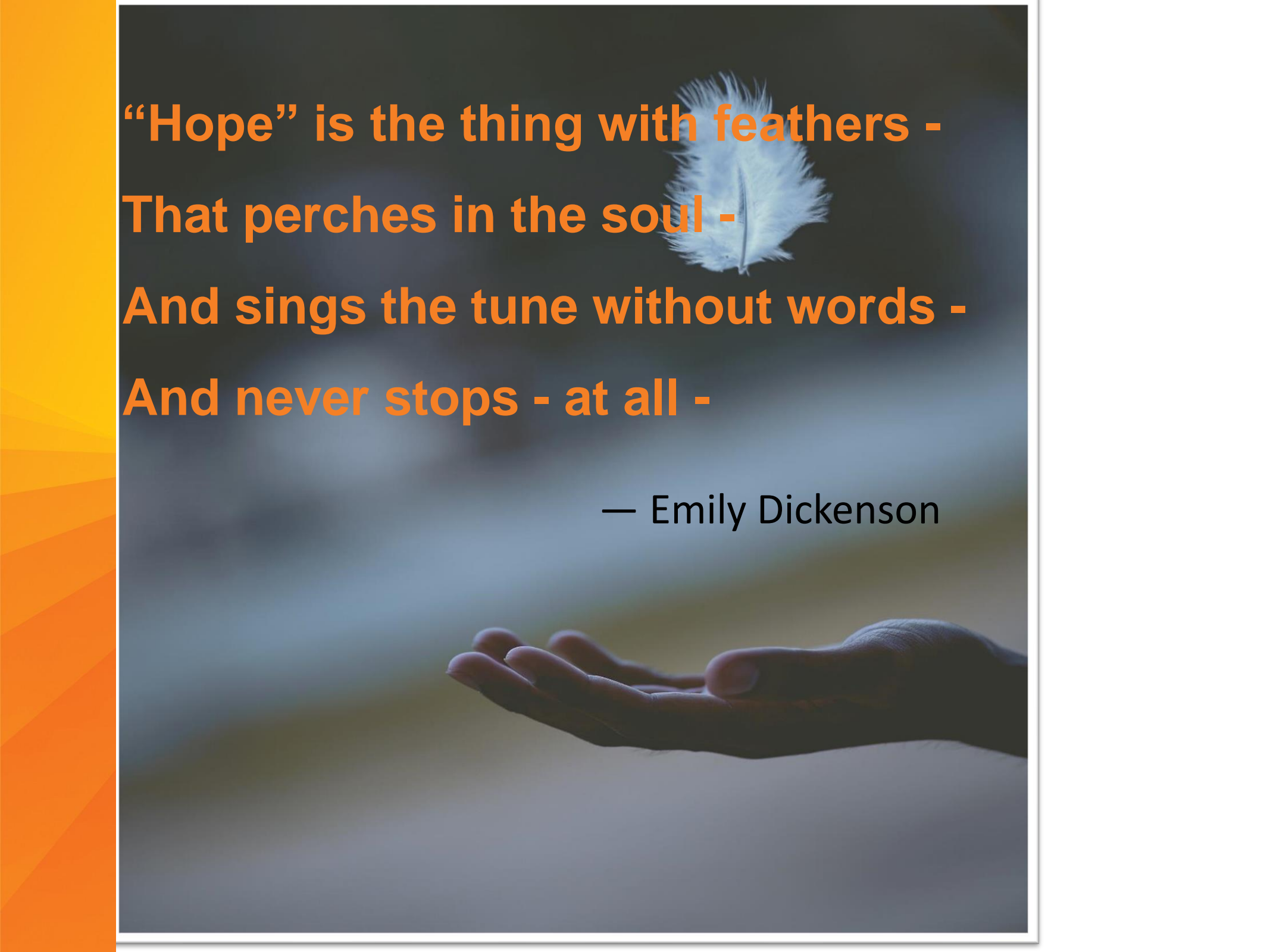
# Meditation Benefits

Opens up possibilities

Can build the “Hope Muscle”

Helps unite goals and values



A white feather is shown floating in the air, positioned above an open, cupped hand. The background is a soft, out-of-focus landscape with warm, golden light, suggesting a sunset or sunrise. The overall mood is peaceful and contemplative.

**“Hope” is the thing with feathers -  
That perches in the soul -  
And sings the tune without words -  
And never stops - at all -**

— Emily Dickinson

# Hope is a Muscle

- Built it by:
  - Write out a roadmap
  - Meditating
  - Journaling
  - Vision Board
  - Seeking out elements of dream
  - Taking concrete steps – even baby steps
  - Create a “container” for your hope



# Artistic Expression

- Seek out art therapy programs and local painting, acting, and/or music classes
- Evidence shows that expression in the form of music, dance, painting, etc. is healing to trauma survivors and protective against addiction cravings and relapse.



# Exercise/Sport

- Yoga
- Tai Chi
- Cardiovascular exercise
- Weightlifting
- Walking



# Values and Goals (Purpose) Connection

- Examine your **values** (old and new)
- Discuss long/short-term goals
- Values + Goals = Stickiness





## *List of* **VALUES**

Accountability	Ethics	Kindness	Self-respect
Achievement	Excellence	Knowledge	Serenity
Adaptability	Fairness	Leadership	Service
Adventure	Faith	Learning	Simplicity
Altruism	Family	Legacy	Spirituality
Ambition	Financial stability	Leisure	Sportsmanship
Authenticity	Forgiveness	Love	Stewardship
Balance	Freedom	Loyalty	Success
Beauty	Friendship	Making a difference	Teamwork
Being the best	Fun	Nature	Thrift
Belonging	Future generations	Openness	Time
Career	Generosity	Optimism	Tradition
Caring	Giving back	Order	Travel
Collaboration	Grace	Parenting	Trust



Commitment  
Community  
Compassion  
Competence  
Confidence  
Connection  
Contentment  
Contribution  
Cooperation  
Courage  
Creativity  
Curiosity  
Dignity  
Diversity  
Environment  
Efficiency  
Equality

Gratitude  
Growth  
Harmony  
Health  
Home  
Honesty  
Hope  
Humility  
Humor  
Inclusion  
Independence  
Initiative  
Integrity  
Intuition  
Job security  
Joy  
Justice

Patience  
Patriotism  
Peace  
Perseverance  
Personal fulfillment  
Power  
Pride  
Recognition  
Reliability  
Resourcefulness  
Respect  
Responsibility  
Risk-taking  
Safety  
Security  
Self-discipline  
Self-expression

Truth  
Understanding  
Uniqueness  
Usefulness  
Vision  
Vulnerability  
Wealth  
Well-being  
Wholeheartedness  
Wisdom

***Write your own:***

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# Goal Examples

- Live a healthier lifestyle
- Spend more time with family
- Live a more ethical life
- Engage in more mental health practices
- Be a more present friend/spouse/parent
- Give back to my community
- Increase my spiritual life
- Discover my life's purpose

# Values + Goals (Purpose) = Stickiness

- When values and goals are united, stickiness occurs
- Visualize trauma healing journey
- Keep purpose in mind
- Create a map of your path to your goal, keeping your values in mind (journaling, art)
- Get help and input from trusted allies/professionals
- Take small steps and reward progress
- Use physical reminders

# Stickiness Leads to Resilience



# Strength of stickiness plus hope alignment brings Resilience

- Stickiness
- Plus hope alignment
- Leads to long lasting change.
- Continued strengthening of the Hope Muscle
- Alignment
- Brings lasting resilience

# Paying it Forward / Giving Back

- Capstone Course in resilience and post-traumatic growth
- Unique to each person/situation

## **Benefits:**

- Helps manage anxiety and depression
- Builds social safety net
- Relieves anger and stress
- Promotes happiness
- Gives purpose
- Strengthens connections



# Conclusion

Although we cannot be all things to all people,  
we can, through small acts,  
connect one other  
to post-traumatic growth  
and resilience.





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## life's waiting

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