



UNIVERSITY *of* MARYLAND
SCHOOL OF MEDICINE

Growing Up In Fear: The Impact of Community Violence and Police Interactions

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Objectives

- Prevalence and Impact of Community Violence
- Police Interactions with Youth in Urban Environments
- Impact of Aversive Experiences on Development
- Promising Interventions

Prevalence of Community Violence

- Between 50-96% of youth in urban areas have witnessed or experienced violence in their communities (Zimmerman & Messner, 2013)
- Recent survey of adolescent youth in Baltimore: (McDaniels, 2016)
 - 43% witnessed physical violence at least once a week
 - 39% said they knew someone who was killed before their 20th birthday

Impact of Exposure to Violence

- Higher rates of:
 - Depression
 - Anxiety
 - PTSD
 - School problems (academic and behavioral)
 - Aggression
 - Delinquency

(Jones Thomas et al., 2012)

Baltimore City teens (YRBS 2015)

	Total	Females	Males
Carried a weapon	21.9	14.9	28.1
Were threatened or injured with a weapon at school	10.0	6.9	11.9
Did not go to school because they felt unsafe at school or on their way to/from school	11.5	8.6	12.4

Incarceration

- Baltimore City represents 10% of the State's population but 35% of the State prison population
- 71% of inmates in the State of Maryland are Black
- Approximately 20,000 or 15% of the children in Baltimore have a parent who is incarcerated or under criminal supervision

(Baltimore City Health Department, 2017)

Distrust and Fear

- Almost 40% of African-American men reported being treated unfairly by law enforcement (APA, 2016)
- People of color are more likely to be stopped by police, arrested, and victims of non-lethal force by police (Fryer, 2018; Miller et al., 2016)
- Aggressive policing associated with increased levels of trauma, anxiety, and feelings of worthlessness (Geller et al., 2014; Sewell et al., 2016)

Definition of Trauma

- Trauma involves an emotional response to:
 - Exposure to an experience involving horror, terror or fear
 - Threat to your safety or the safety of those around you
 - A change in the way you view yourself or others

Examples of Traumatic Experiences

- Community Violence
- Complex Trauma
- Domestic Violence
- Early Childhood Trauma
- Medical Trauma
- Natural Disasters
- Physical Abuse
- Refugee Trauma
- School Violence
- Sexual Abuse
- Terrorism
- Traumatic Grief
- Racism



Categories of Trauma

- Acute Trauma: Event that occurs at a particular time and place and is usually short lived
- Chronic Trauma: Experiences that occur repeatedly over long periods of time
- Historical Trauma: The collective and cumulative trauma experienced by a particular group across generations still suffering the effects

The Impact of Trauma: ACEs

- The risk of the following health problems increases as the number of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) increase:

- Risk for Intimate partner violence
- Multiple sexual partners
- Sexually transmitted diseases
- Smoking
- Suicide attempts
- Unintended pregnancies
- Early initiation of smoking
- Early initiation of sexual activity
- Adolescent pregnancy
- Alcoholism and alcohol abuse
- Chronic Obstructive pulmonary disease
- Depression
- Fetal death
- Health-related quality of life
- Illicit drug use
- Ischemic heart disease
- Liver disease

The Impact of Trauma on Students

Video

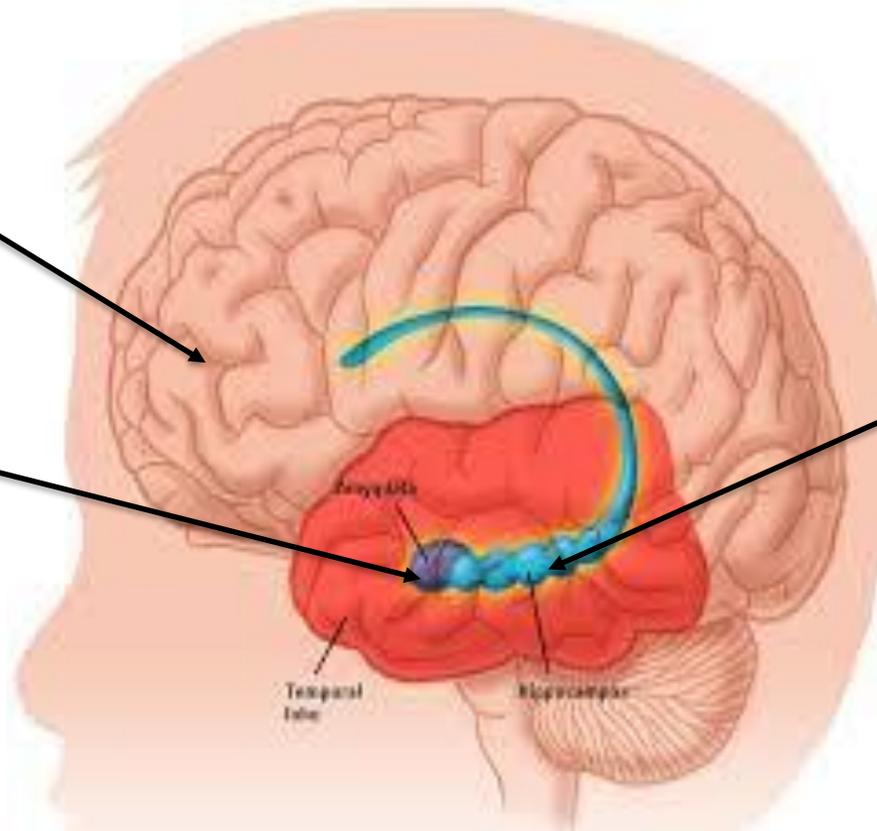


Impact of Trauma on the Brain

Prefrontal
Cortex
(Planning,
organization)

Amygdala
(Regulates
chemical
reactions to
fear)

Hippocampus
(memory)



Typically Functioning Brain



Scary Event
Occurs



Amygdala
produces
“alarm” signals
and overrides
frontal lobe



Response to
Crisis: Fight-
Flight-Freeze



Hippocampus:
Creates Potent
Memory of
Event

The changes brought about in the brain as a stress reaction are helpful in the immediate face of danger.

Brain Impacted by Complex Trauma



Trauma
Reminder



Amygdala
produces
“alarm” signals
and overrides
frontal lobe:
False Alarm



Response to
Crisis: Fight-
Flight-Freeze



Hippocampus:
Reduction in
size and
decreased
ability to
inhibit
reactions to
stimuli

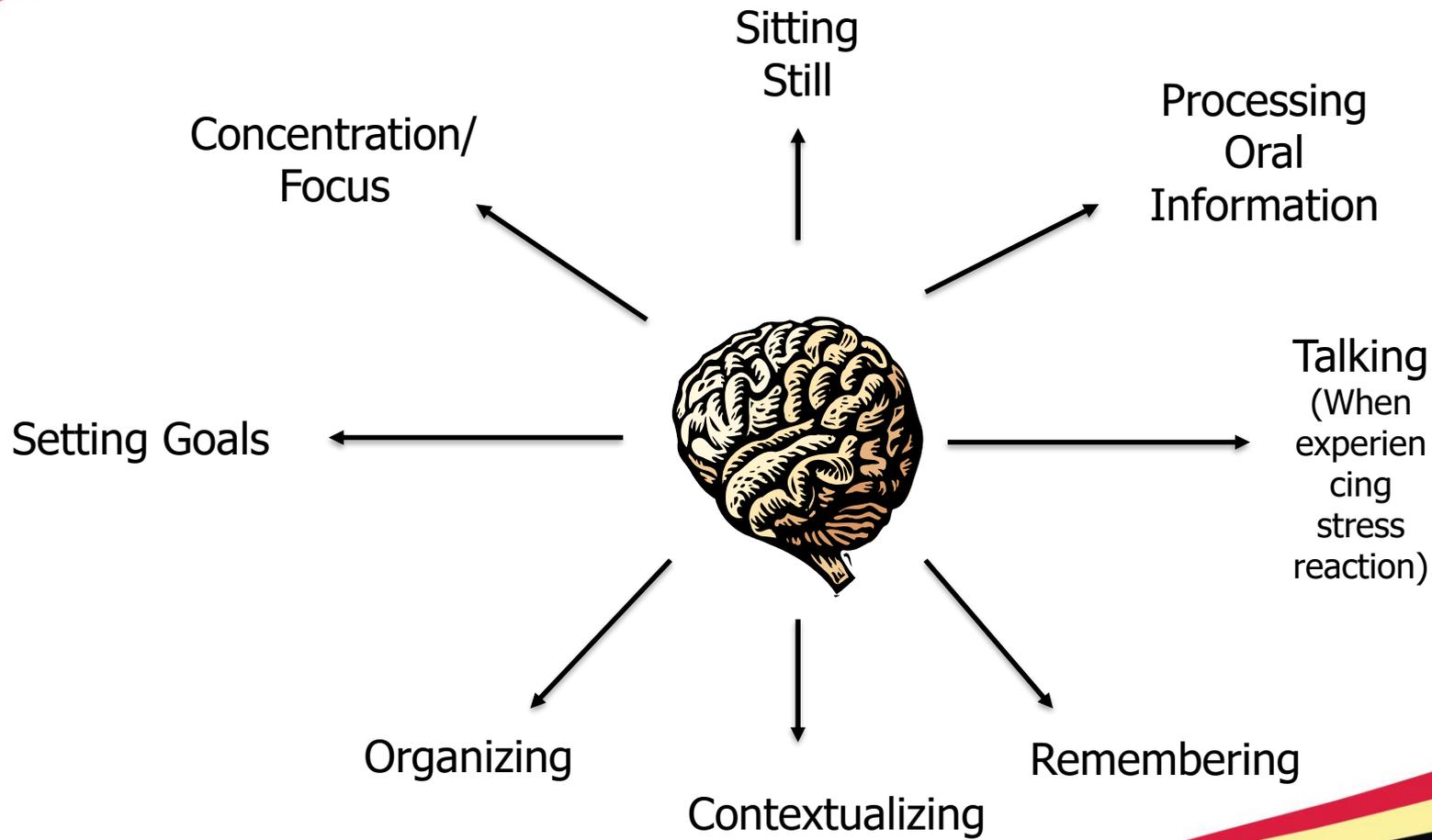
Same reactions on prolonged basis cause brain damage including impaired use of the prefrontal cortex and indiscriminate fear.

In General..

- Smaller brain size and structures
- Fewer neural connections
- Heightened baseline level of arousal
- Difficulties with learning, memory, and emotional regulation



Impact on Student Functioning



Impact on Mental Health

- Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)
 - Arousal and reactivity alterations
 - Intrusive thoughts
 - Avoidance
 - Alterations in cognitions and mood
- Anxiety
 - Excessive worry/doubt
- Depression
 - Feelings of hopelessness/helplessness
 - Decreased enjoyment

Baltimore City teens (YRBS 2015)

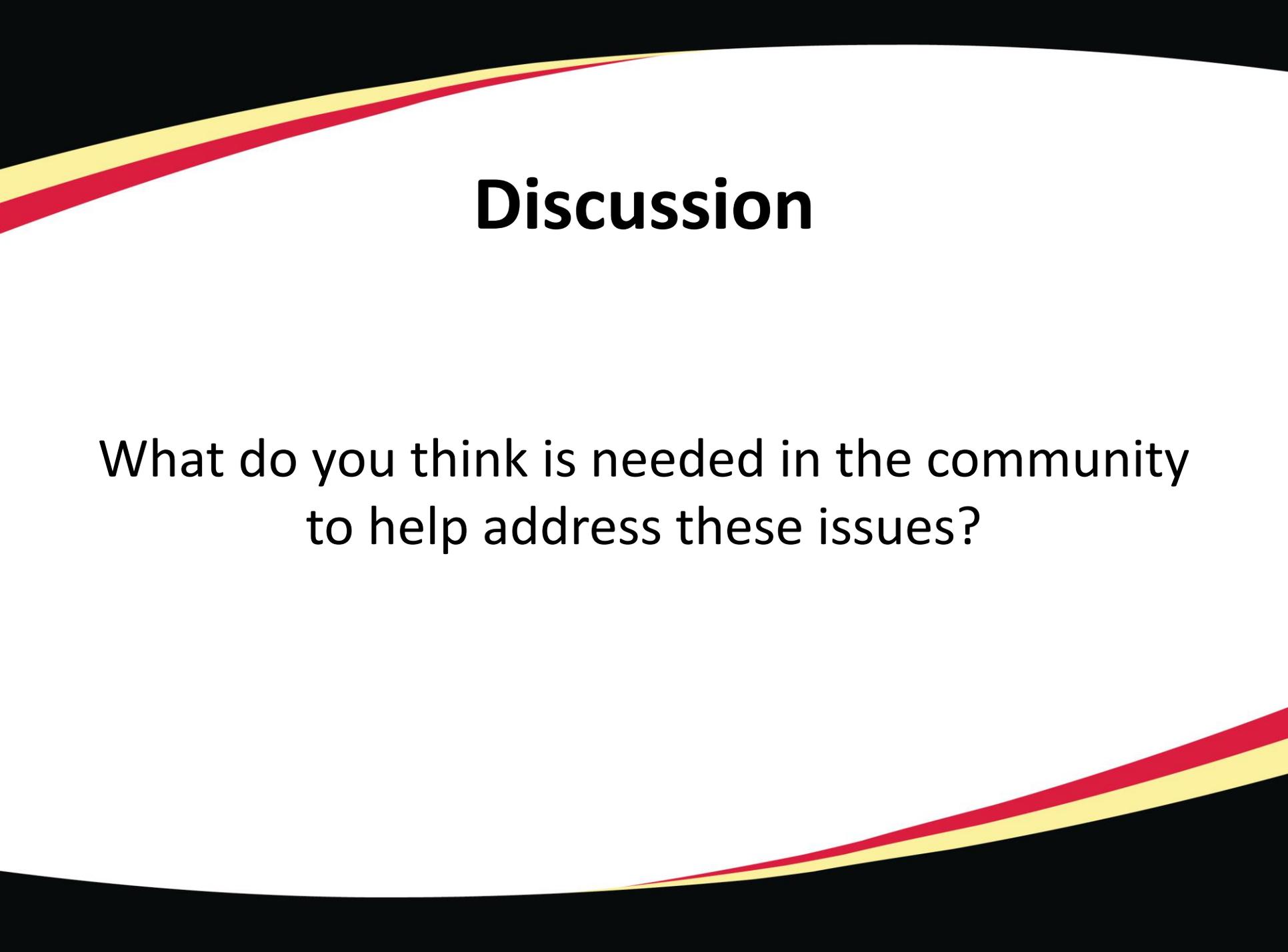
	Total	Females	Males
Felt sad or hopeless	29.8	26.5	23.0
Seriously considered suicide	17.8	20.3	14.8

Academic Consequences

- Experience more tardy and absent days
- Increased risk of failing, poor test scores
 - Tend to score significantly lower on tests of reading and math
- More likely to be suspended or expelled
- Higher rates of referral to special education
- 2.5 times more likely to repeat a grade

Promising Interventions

- Police training
- Improving relationships between law enforcement and youth
- Anti-bias trainings
- Violence prevention and intervention programs



Discussion

What do you think is needed in the community to help address these issues?

References and Additional Resources

References

- Carter, R. (2014). *The human brain book*. Penguin.
- Guarino, K. (2015). Integrating Trauma Sensitive Practices in Schools [PowerPoint slides]. Retrieved from https://safesupportivelearning.ed.gov/sites/default/files/03%20P2_Integrating%20TraumaSensitive%20Practices%20in%20Schools_10.15.15_to%20ED.pdf.

Additional Resources:

- www.nctsn.org
- www.schoolmentalhealth.org
- www.mdbehavioralhealth.org

Thank You

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