

Addressing the Mental Health Impact of COVID-19 on Children and Families

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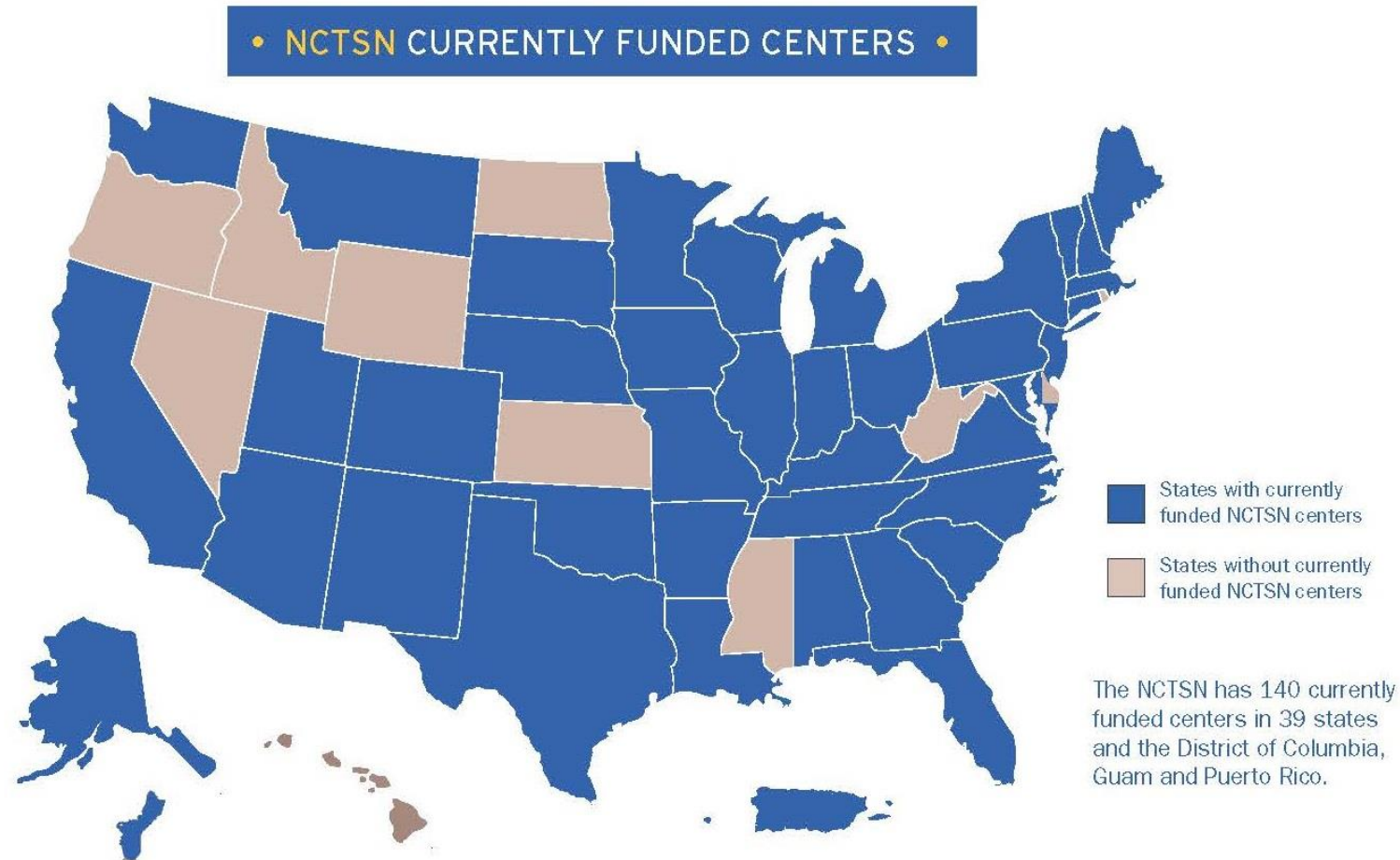


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NCTSN Mission



SAMHSA's NCTSN Funded Centers



Assessing the Traumatic Impact of COVID-19 in the NCTSN

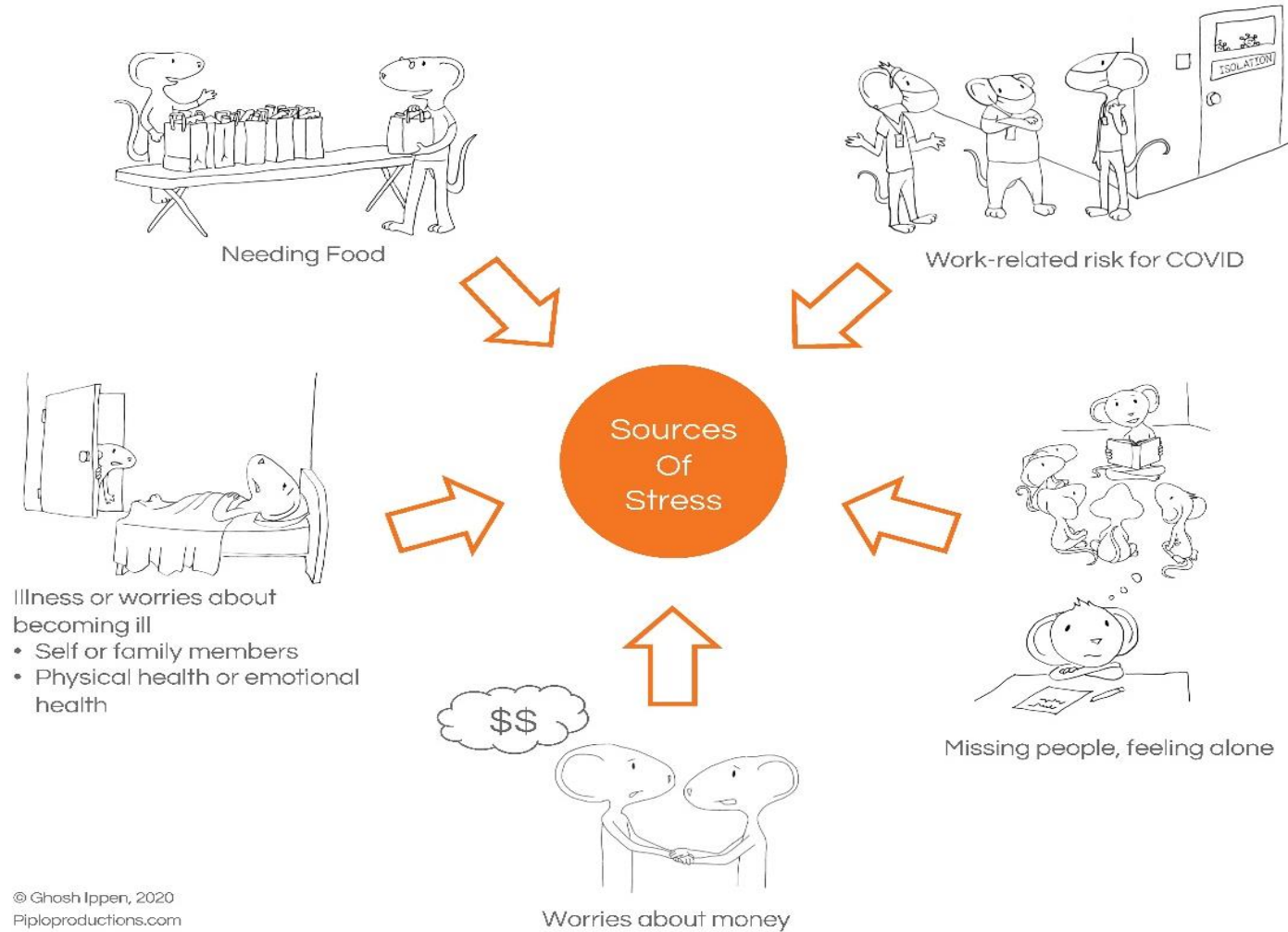
- COVID-19 Impact Survey
- 5 Think Tanks
 - *Grief & Loss*
 - *Disparities*
 - *Suicide & Substance Use*
 - *Schools*
 - *Maltreatment & Interpersonal Violence*
- 28 Network Conversations
- The Traumatic Impact of COVID-19 on Children and Families: Current Perspectives from the NCTSN



Absher, Maze, & Brymer, 2021

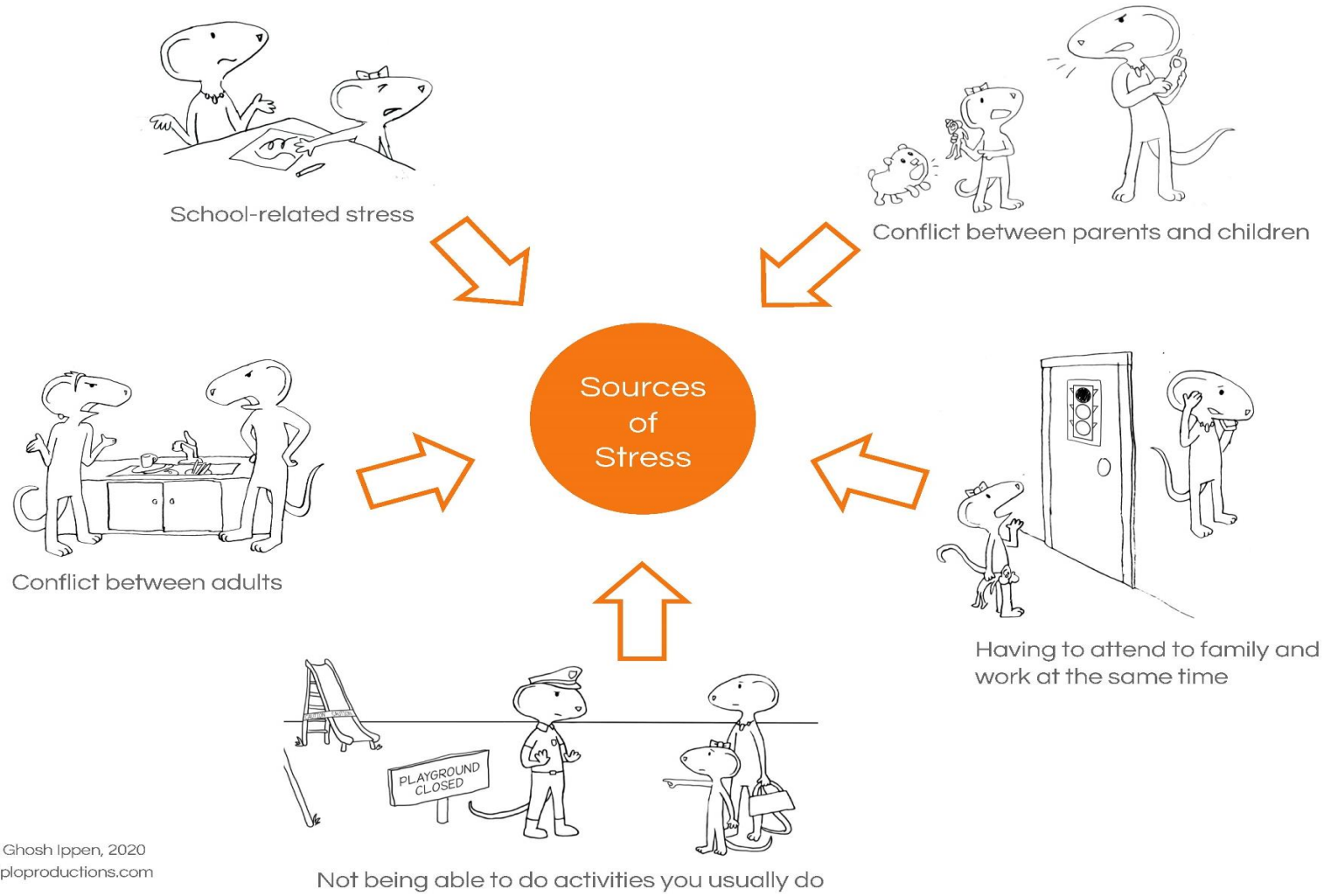
Children and Family Stresses

Trinka and Sam Fighting the Big Virus: Trinka, Sam, and Littletown Work Together



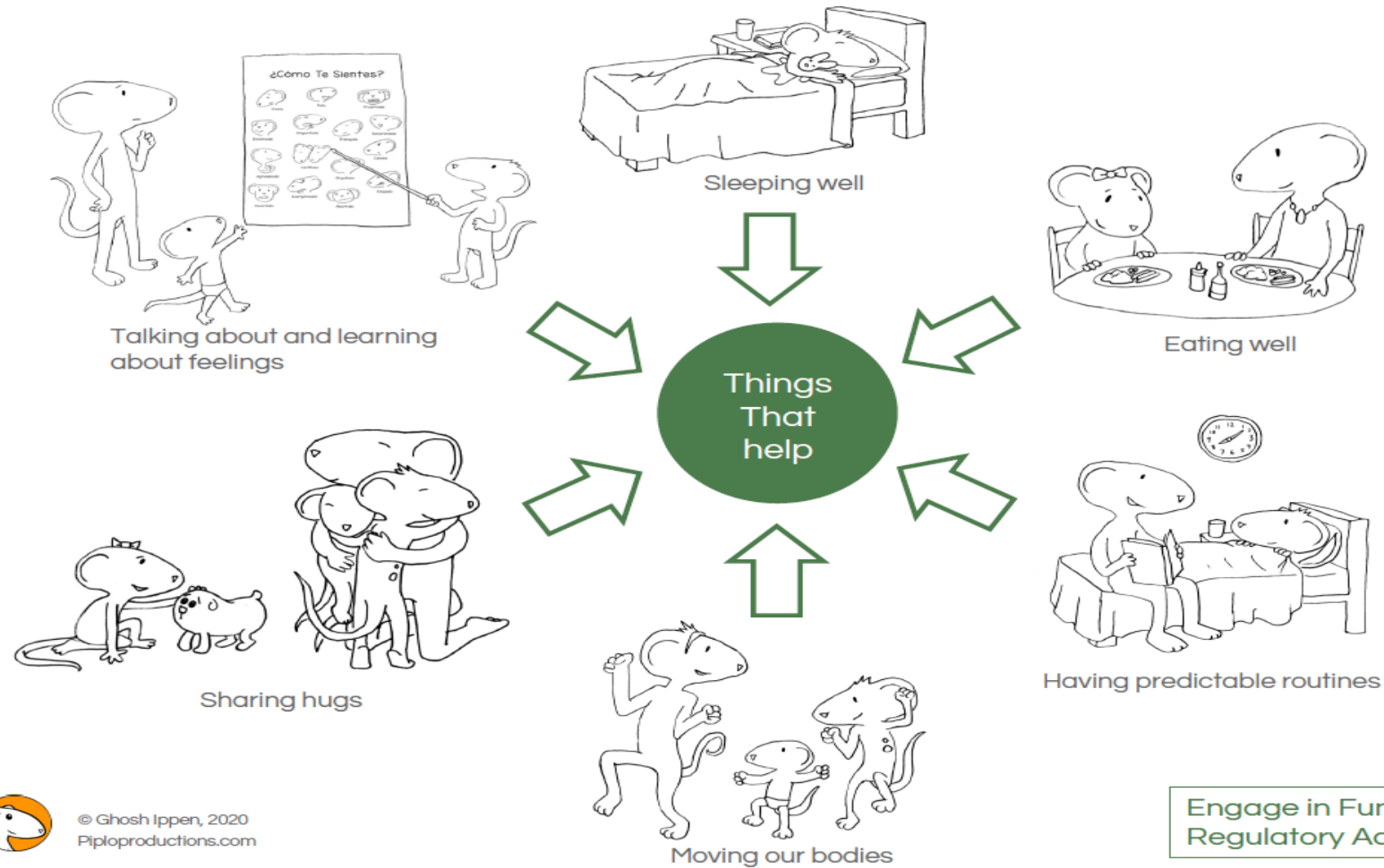
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Children and Family Stresses



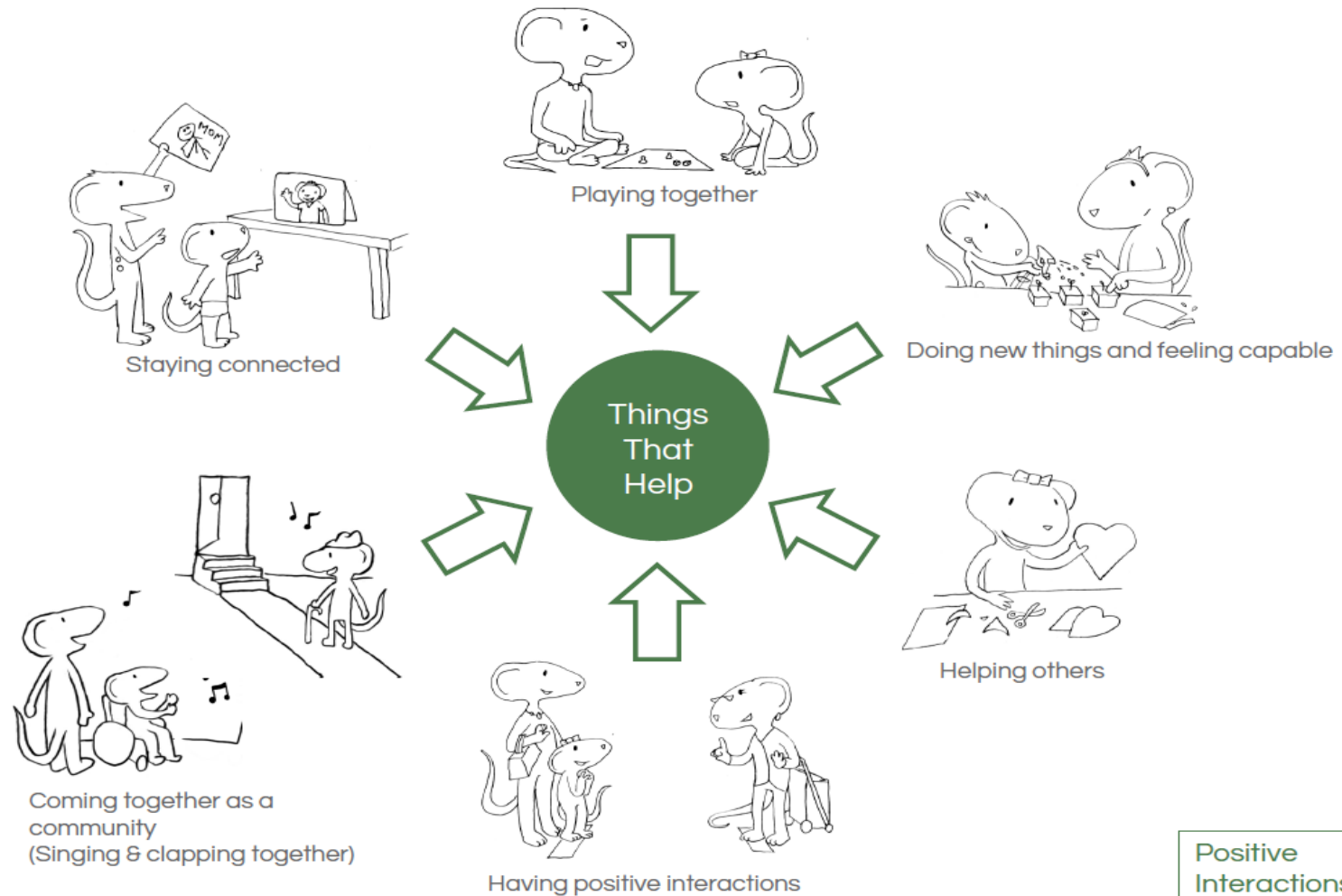
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Promoting Family Supports



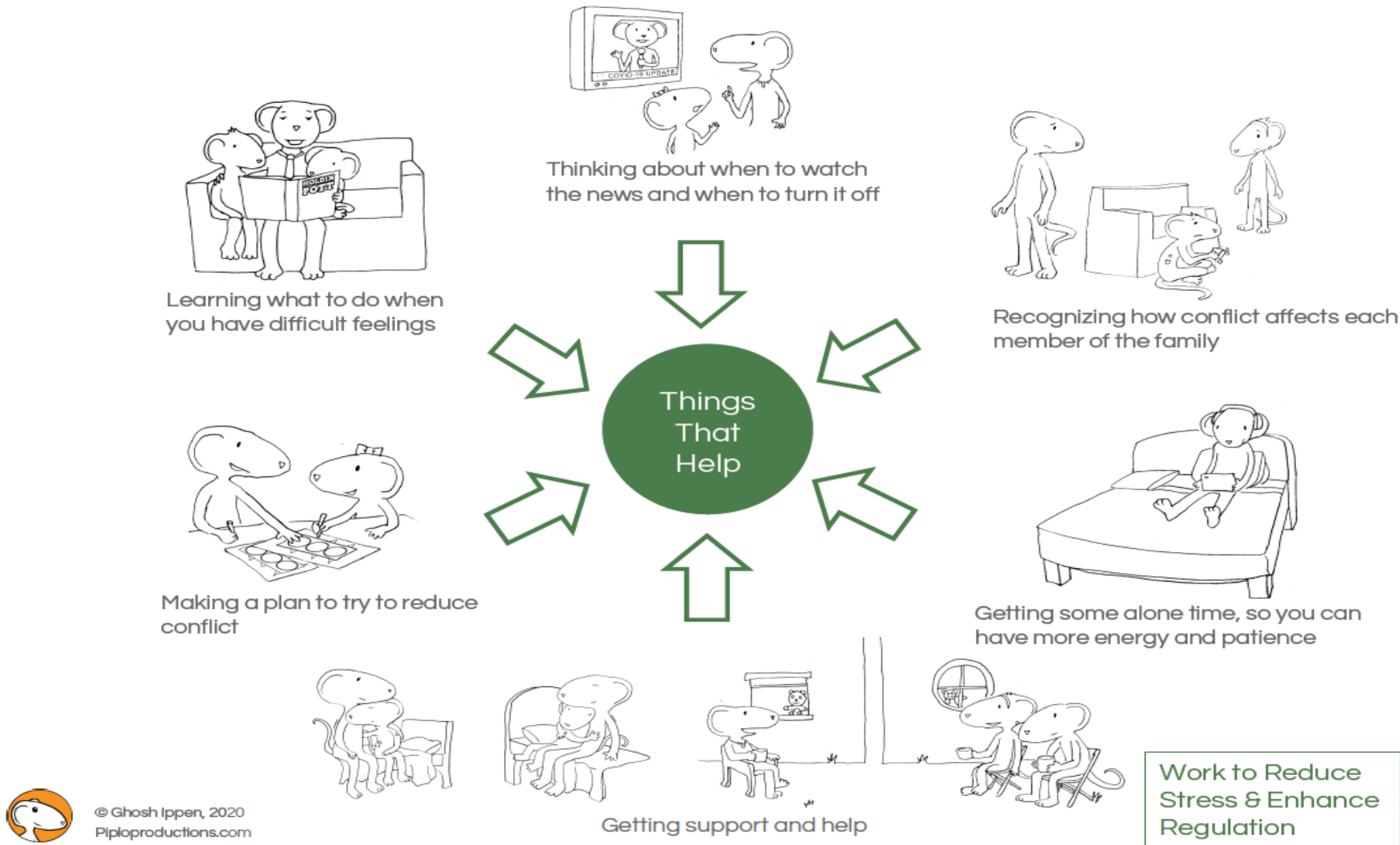
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Promoting Family Supports



Grief and Loss: Impact

- Over 1,000,000 deaths nationwide; 140,000 children have lost a primary or secondary caregiver (*Hills et. al., 2021*)
- Additional losses due to reduced access to medical care, opioid crisis
- Disproportionate impacts on Black, Latino/a, and American Indian and Alaska Native populations
- While much has been lost, the permanence of death is different from other losses



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Grief and Loss: Complications in Grieving



Photo by [Tim Mossholder](#) on [Unsplash](#)

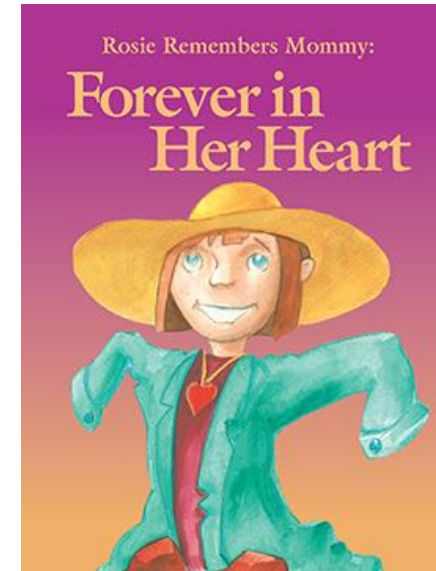
- Features of the COVID-19 pandemic increase the risk for complications in grieving for many
 - May not have been able to be in-person with a loved one who was ill or dying or not able to say goodbye
 - Many deaths sudden and unexpected
 - May experience shame/guilt they caused a loved one to get sick
 - Confusion that their loved one died while others only had mild symptoms
 - Stigma and inequities in access and care

Grief and Loss: Impact to Supports

- End-of-life rituals have also been disrupted, changed, or absent
 - Can create a sense of unfinished business or ambiguous loss
- Caregivers who would normally provide support to a grieving child may be less available or less present because of COVID
- May have a huge cohort of children who are struggling with bereavement, even if the death occurred early in the pandemic
 - Prolonged Grief Disorder
- Providers experiencing vicarious trauma AND vicarious loss and bereavement

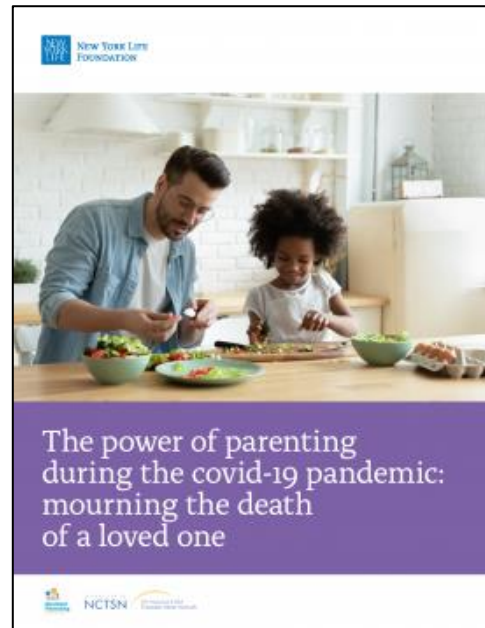
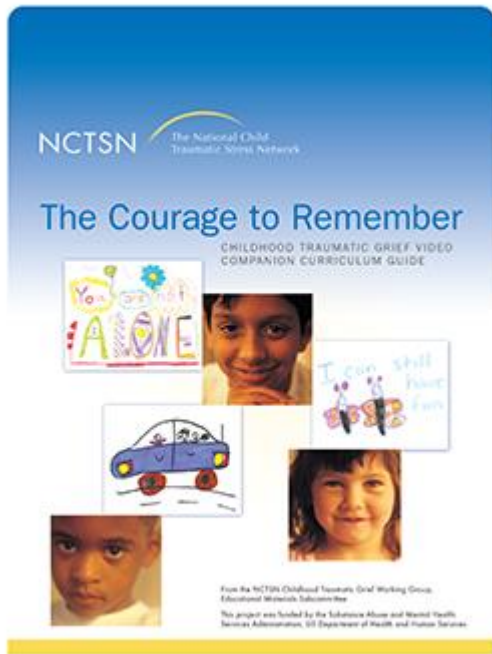
Grief and Loss: Strategies for Families

- Adapt rituals or ceremonies
- Validate feelings
- Use children's books
- Provide routine and structure
- Identify additional supports
- Provide extra time, attention, patience, love, and reassurance
- Get extra help when needed

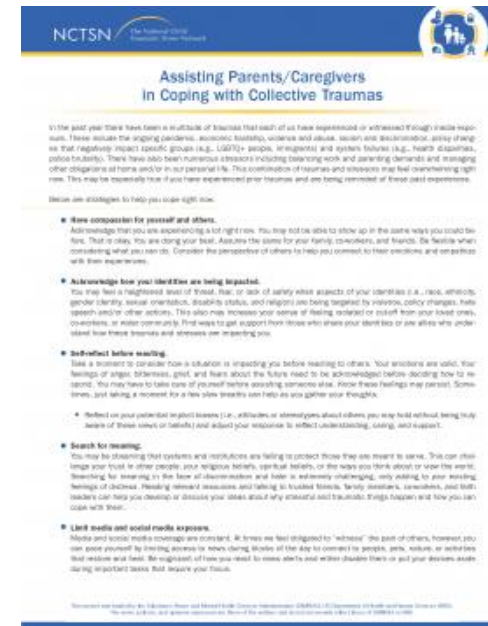


Addressing Grief

- Ensure providers are trained in grief and prolonged grief resources



- Give caregivers strategies for supporting bereaved children



- Help families cope with other collective traumas

Suicide and Substance Use: Impact

- Increase in risk factors during the pandemic
 - Social isolation and reduced social connection
 - Anxiety and other mental health difficulties
 - Experience of trauma
 - Experience of grief and loss
 - Economic hardships
 - Family discord or family mental health difficulties
 - Limits on coping skills
 - Limited access to care
 - Experiencing disparities, racism, and political and civil unrest



Photo by [Tim Mossholder](#) from [Pexels](#)

Suicide and Substance Use: Impact

- Emergency department visits for suspected suicide attempts have increased substantially, especially for adolescent girls (Yard et al., 2021)
- LGBTQ+, Black, Asian, Native Americans, and Transitional-age youth are more at-risk (Czeisler et al. 2020; Sheftall, et al., 2022)
- Overall rise in substance use and overdoses during the pandemic
 - Drug availability has changed (e.g., using fentanyl if heroin isn't available)
 - Isolation (e.g., no one is available to call 911 or administer naloxone)
- Impact of the pandemic was not universal (e.g., some students had decreased suicidal ideation when not in school)
- Drastic disruption in service delivery

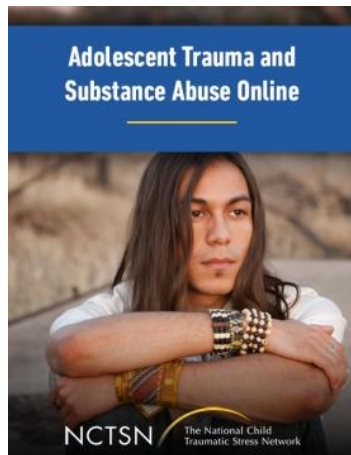
Enhancing Peer Support



- Helps peers to listen without judgment
- Know the signs & the words to use
- Offer supports & help peers connect to these supports
- Circle back & check in after supporting a peer
- Taking care of self while supporting others!

Additional Strategies for Addressing Substance Use and Suicide

- Shift from risk assessment to therapeutic assessment
 - **A**ssess
 - **B**uild hope and reasons for living
 - **C**onnections
 - **D**evelop safety plan, including reducing access to lethal means



- Learn about the intersectionality between substance use and trauma



- Assess and support at-risk groups

Maltreatment and Interpersonal Violence (IPV): Impact

- Estimates of IPV increased during COVID (Piquero et al., 2021)
- Youth are reporting more abuse (Krause et al., 2022)
 - Over half of youth reported experiencing emotional abuse by a parent/caregiver
 - Over 10% reported experiencing physical abuse by a parent/caregiver
 - LGBTQ+ youth reported increases of abuse
- Disruptions in mandated reporting
 - Fear that abuse may be happening undetected
 - Increased severity in reports from emergency rooms



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Maltreatment and IPV: Impact on Systems

- Increased financial instability also meant more survivors of violence were unable to relocate to safe and stable housing
- COVID related protocols became a trauma reminder for some who experienced previous maltreatment and/or abuse
- Significant disruption to child welfare and juvenile justice systems
 - Decrease in staffing due to COVID safety concerns
 - Family reunification were delayed
 - Contact between children in placements and families was reduced or suspended
 - Disproportionate impact: families of color are over-represented in these systems

Addressing Child Maltreatment and IPV



A Toolkit for Child Welfare Agencies to Help Young People Heal and Thrive During and After Natural Disasters

Jessica Dym Bartlett, Allison Hebert, and Margaret Haas



A Toolkit for Juvenile Justice Agencies to Help Young People Heal and Thrive During and After Natural Disasters

Jessica Dym Bartlett, Rebecca L. Vioratto, Akiva Liberman, Allison Hebert, and Margaret Haas

- Promote preparedness of JJ and CW systems



- Address the workforce needs, including training in evidence-based practices for all developmental levels



- Enhance knowledge of early childhood and early childhood mental health services

Schools: Impact



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- Numerous shifts to school schedule (remote, hybrid)
 - Many students unable to learn as well
 - Setback for students who were already struggling
- Services for disabled students less readily adaptable to virtual provision
- Reduced school-based services

Schools: Impact

- Lost milestones, social connection, sense of belonging and community
- Educators/schools faced anger and blame from the public about decisions about public health directives
- Emotional safety and mental well-being are needed for academic achievement
- Under-resourced schools had worse COVID safety safeguards
- Trust, relationships, and connection are key elements of an effective learning environment



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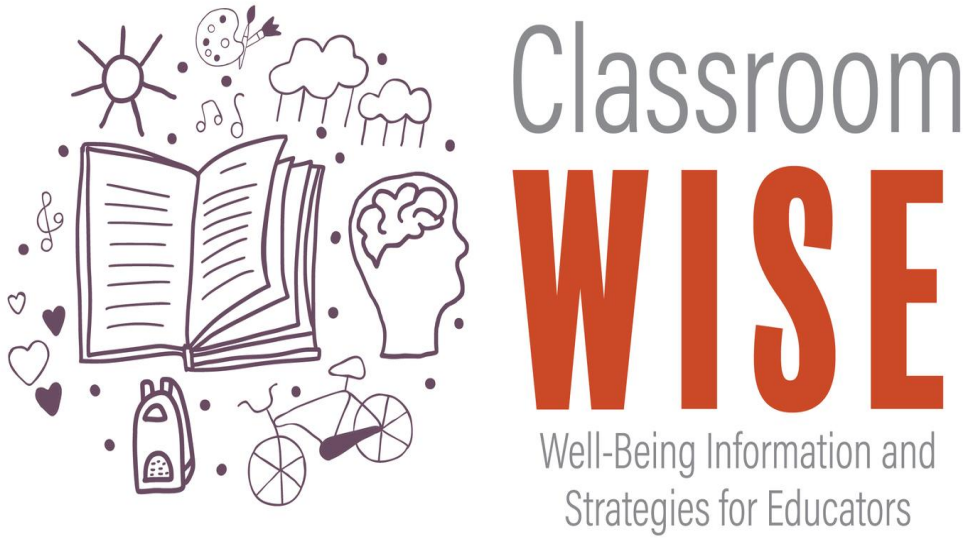
Support for Teachers Affected by Trauma



- Online course addressing educator secondary stress
- Self-assessment helps to monitor stress over the school year
- Offers strategies for increasing well-being

<https://statprogram.org/>

Well-Being Information and Strategies for Educators



- a FREE 3-part training package that assists K-12 educators in supporting the mental health of students in the classroom.
- Offers evidence-based strategies and skills to engage and support students with mental health concerns in the classroom.

<https://www.classroomwise.org/>

Additional Strategies to Support Schools



Creating, Supporting, and Sustaining Trauma-Informed Schools: A System Framework

BACKGROUND AND OVERVIEW

The primary mission for schools is to support students in educational achievement. To reach this goal, we know that children must feel safe, supported, and ready to learn. As schools strive to accomplish this for all students regardless of strengths, needs, and backgrounds, they must recognize the influence of the students' personal experiences on their learning and achievement. Children are exposed to violence and trauma at an alarming rate in the United States. By age seven, two-thirds of children in the United States have experienced a potentially traumatic event such as physical or sexual abuse, natural disaster or terrorism, sudden or violent loss of a loved one, refugee and war experiences, serious accident or life-threatening illness, or military family-related stress. Many children, with support, are able to heal and overcome such traumatic experiences. However, a recent report examining the impact of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) on academic outcomes found that communities with higher ACE scores had higher rates of suspension and unexcused absences and lower rates of graduation from high school and progression to postsecondary school than communities with relatively low prevalence of ACEs. Not only are individual children affected by traumatic experiences, but their attitudes, the adults in their lives, and their communities can be impacted by interacting or working with a child who has experienced trauma. Thus, as schools maintain their critical focus on education and achievement, they must also acknowledge that mental health and wellness are inextricably connected to students' success in the classroom and to a thriving school environment. The framework illustrates why becoming "trauma-informed" should be an essential component of the overall mission of our education system.

This framework will help schools and other who partner with schools have a better sense of the areas to address when working towards a more trauma-informed school.



A Trauma-Informed Resource for Strengthening Family-School Partnerships

WHY AN ENTIRE RESOURCE FOCUSED ON THE IMPORTANCE OF STRENGTHENING FAMILY-SCHOOL PARTNERSHIPS?

It is well established that parents and caregivers have tremendous influence on their children's success in school. When parent and educator partnerships extend beyond individual students, it can have tremendous influence on the success of the entire school community. However, a comprehensive collaboration might be new to your school and its families, and it often takes when people from the school community have experienced trauma themselves, lived with the legacy of trauma, or are impacted by social disparities or community adversity. Due to the factors just mentioned, partnering, much like cultural humility efforts, takes intentionality, effort, strategies, and resources – and is entirely worth it.

In order to support schools working toward such meaningful goals, the NCTSN's Creating, Supporting, and Sustaining Trauma-Informed Schools: A System Framework calls to be, The NCTSN Trauma-Informed Schools Framework presents a varied approach to creating a trauma-informed school environment that addresses the needs of all students, staff, administrators, and families who might be at risk for experiencing the symptoms of traumatic stress. It includes the following domains: identifying and assessing traumatic stress, addressing and treating traumatic stress, trauma education and awareness, partnerships with students and families, creating a trauma-informed learning environment, cultural responsiveness, leadership management, and crisis response. Staff will have and secondary traumatic stress, school discipline policies and practices, and crisis system collaboration and community partnerships. This tool is focused on the partnership domain of that framework.

This tool is for administrators and staff to drive further conversation about family-school partnerships. This resource will help you to assess what level of partnering currently exists within your school community, areas that require endorsement, and strategies for implementing these and practices.

What is the purpose of this tool?

- Provide a rubric to help administrators and staff recognize areas of strength, areas deserving more effort, and opportunities to acknowledge and celebrate growth along the way.
- Help you to differentiate beginning, intermediate, and advanced partnering activities to support a growth mindset.
- Offer examples of how families and schools can partner to build a trauma-informed school community.
- Allow for customization! Partnering typically looks different in every school so use this tool as a guide, not a mandate.

Create trauma-informed schools



Addressing Race and Trauma in the Classroom: A Resource for Educators

PURPOSE OF THE GUIDE

This resource is intended to help educators understand how they might address the impact of race and trauma and its effects on students in the classroom, after defining key terms, the guide outlines recommendations for educators and offers a list of supplemental resources. This guide is intended as a complement to two existing NCTSN resources: *Statement on Racial Trauma and Trauma and Grief Trauma Toolkit for Educators* and it should be implemented in accordance with individual school policies and procedures.

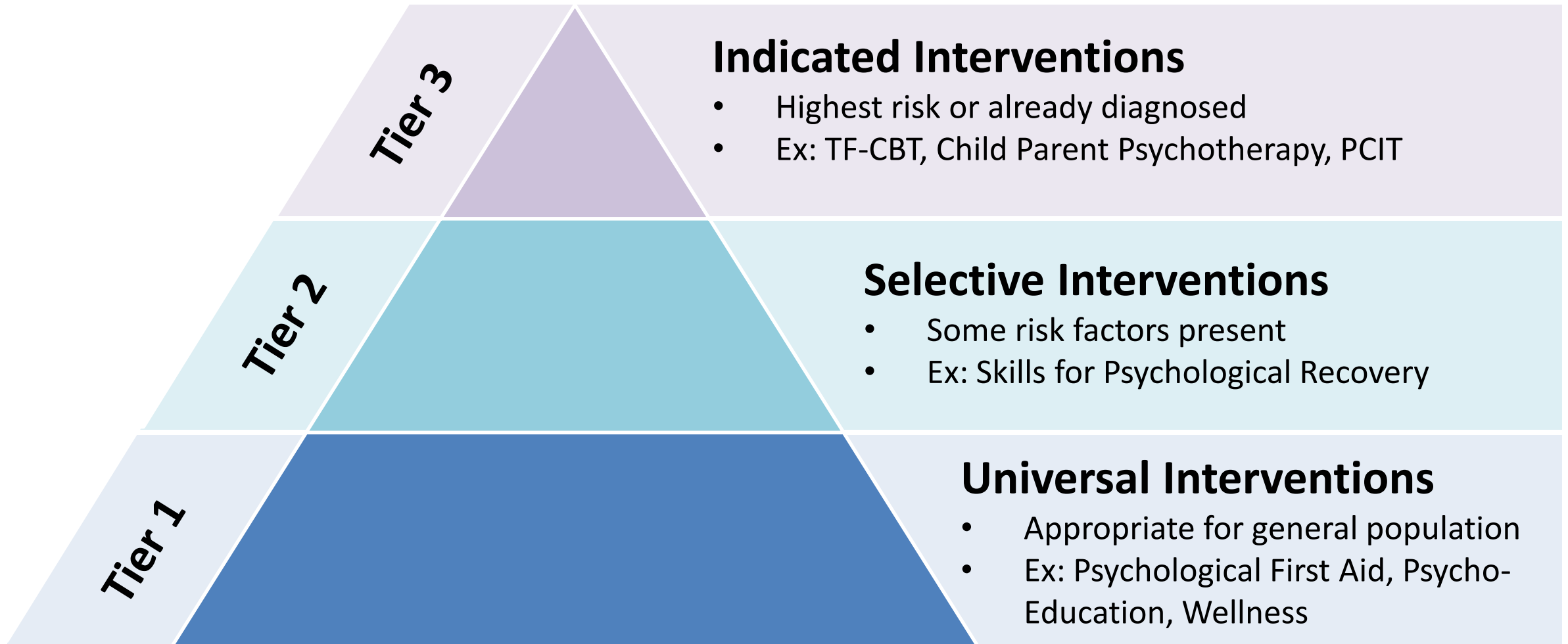
TABLE OF CONTENTS

Purpose of the Guide	1
SECTION ONE: What Are Trauma and Grief Trauma? Steps 1	2
SECTION TWO: What Is Racial Trauma?	2
SECTION THREE: What Is Racial Trauma?	3
SECTION FOUR: Why Is This Important to Educators?	3
SECTION FIVE: What Are the Effects of Racial Trauma on Alignment?	4
SECTION SIX: What Can Educators Do?	5

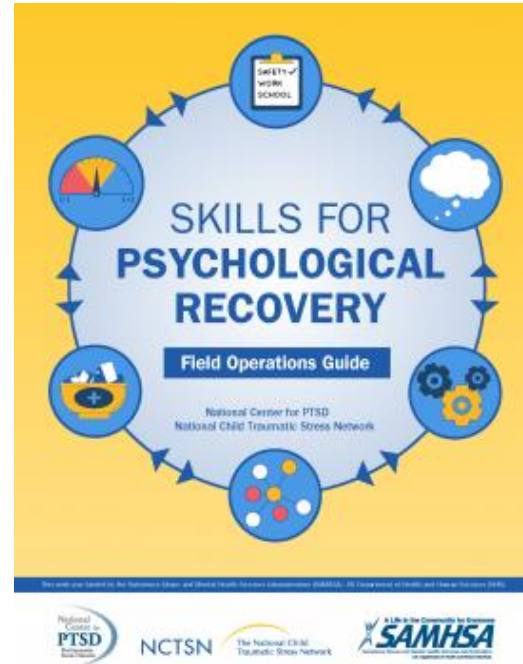
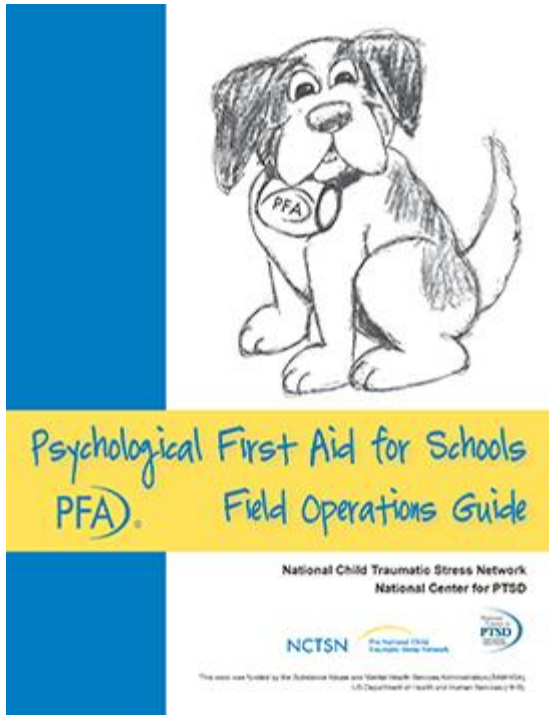
Address Racism & Hate

Strengthen Family-School Partnerships

Tiered Approach to Intervention



School-Based Interventions



iCARE Collaborative
Anyone, Anywhere. CARE.



Traumatic Impact of COVID-19 on Providers:

The moral injury of advocating for children and not being heard by larger systems.

Working in an environment where basic human needs were not being met.

Continued inequities and the emotional toll of ongoing racism, which impacts the families we serve.

Dealing with a sense of a loss of control; no concrete end date for pandemic.

Responding to the co-occurring pandemic and hurricane and the inability to provide face to face crisis counseling.

Having to reduce our services while knowing that there are child abuse victims not being identified due to social distancing.

A New Framework for Self-Care: PRN



NCTSN The National Child Traumatic Stress Network

Pause – Reset – Nourish (PRN)* to Promote Wellbeing
Use as Needed to Care for Your Wellness!

All of us have a variety of stresses daily. Currently, you may be dealing with additional responsibilities at work and new challenges with parenting. Consider your level of distress before deciding what approach you'd like to take to address it. Gauging your level of distress is an important step in practicing self-care strategies. The PRN framework is one such strategy and consists of the types of practices that help promote wellbeing and enhance resilience. Just like you would take a medication PRN, or as needed, to address unwanted symptoms, you can Pause/Reset/Nourish to help replenish yourself when needed. These practices can help to reset and recharge your nervous system, and can be done frequently throughout each day in just a few minutes. Consider these simple steps:

Pause:	Reset:	Nourish:
<p>Check in with your internal experiences or how your body is feeling at the present moment.</p> <p>By taking a slow conscious (diaphragmatic) breath you can pause to check on how you are feeling inside. Repeat this at least 3 times. As you become more aware of what is happening inside your body, you might realize that you are anxiously ruminating about something, holding stress or tension in different parts of the body, feeling that your mind is cluttered, having intrusive thoughts (e.g., frustration, anger, anxiety) or grieving the loss of a loved one, partner, or the loss of resources due to COVID-19. It may be more than one thing, making the need to pause all the more urgent.</p> <p>There are many ways to do slow conscious breathing, click to watch a demonstration of the 3-3-3 technique of the equine breathing technique.</p>	<p>Actively do something to help you feel calmer, more calm, grounded or focused on your next task. Be kind to yourself and remember that there are difficult times.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">When you sense you are rushing or your mind is full, try to reset by taking a quiet moment. Consider conscious slow breathing (e.g., 3 minutes breathing space), meditation, practicing mindfulness, petting an animal, taking a brief walk outside, or looking at a photo that puts a smile on your face.When negative experiences are overwhelming you, try to reset by focusing on a positive thing that happened or an affirmation, sharing gratitude, watching a short funny video or meme, talking with a colleague or seeking grounding.When unsure of how you are feeling but realize you are uncentered, try to reset by observing the feeling, acknowledging it, and letting it pass through your hand like it is on a conveyor belt. Accepting the current situation allows us to acknowledge our desire for things to be different than they are.When you become critical of yourself, try to reset by interrupting those thoughts with self-compassion or talking to yourself as if you were a caring supportive friend.	<p>Take a something positive that replenishes your mind/body/emotional spirit. Turn your focus towards something that helps you remember your own strength and resilience, or reminds you to take time to tend to yourself. You may ask yourself, "What do I need to nourish myself right now?"</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Think about something that has been rewarding or meaningful at work or at home. You might remind yourself of why you got into this profession, how you helped someone, or a meaningful moment with your family or loved ones.If a loved one has died, consider ways to have time by reconnecting with others who were there, reflecting on a positive memory you have of them, contributing to a cause they found important, or doing a kind act in their name.Consider affirmations or mantras that help you feel empowered to deal with the stress or challenges you are facing; this may help you harness your own strength and resilience.Consider engaging in moments of cheerfulness, light-heartedness, and creating meaningful social connection with others. This might include enjoying a family activity, laughing, singing or dancing, cooking, or other ways that bring you joy, engaging in meaningful cultural practices or rituals, connecting with a supportive other or a beloved pet, experiencing a success at work or with loved ones, or doing something for others in need (donating, time for charity, baking for a neighbor).

*The PRN framework was created by Diane Thomas, Hamilton Health Sciences, 2020.

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Pause

- “Pausing” just means taking 3 slow breaths to check how you are feeling
- Check in
 - Body – where do you hold your stress
 - Mind – is your mind cluttered or full of worries
 - Feeling – notice and name any intense feelings
 - Frustration
 - Anxiety
 - Anger
 - Grief
 - Sadness



Reset

Actively do something to help you feel steadier, more calm, confident, or focused on your next task

- Take a quiet moment
 - Meditation
 - Petting an animal
 - Going outside for a minute
 - Looking at a favorite photo
- Acknowledge the feeling of being “uncentered”
 - Imagine letting this feeling go (leaf in a river)
- Focus on something positive
 - Affirmation
 - Sharing gratitude
 - Watching something funny
 - Talking with a colleague
- Practice self-compassion—what would you say to a friend or colleague to provide caring and support?

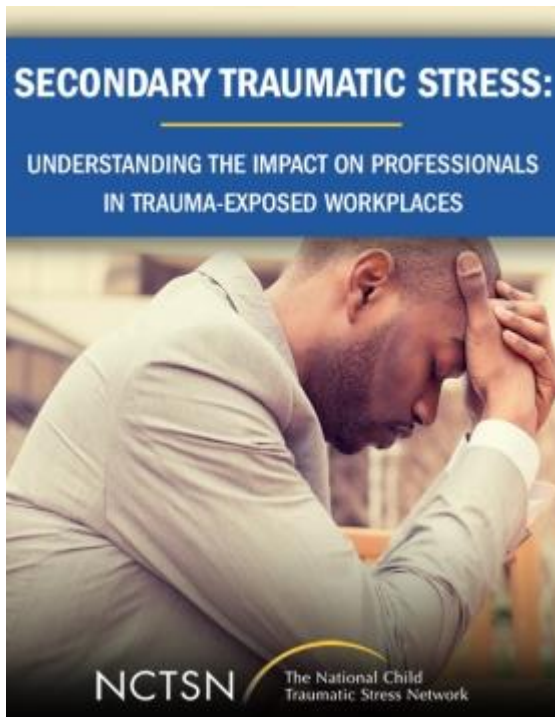


Nourish

- Ask yourself, *“What do I need to nourish myself right now?”*
- Consider ways to replenish your mind-body-heart-soul-spirit
 - Name one rewarding or meaningful moment at home and at work.
 - Find a moment (or more) to be playful, lighthearted, joyful
 - Create your own affirmation or mantra you can repeat to yourself in times of stress
- Find ways to honor/commemorate someone who has died
- Remind yourself of WHY you went into this work in the first place and think of one way you are making a difference
- Celebrate the small victories



Addressing Provider Distress and Organizational Wellness



- Learn how to address Secondary Traumatic Stress

Secondary Traumatic Stress Core Competencies in Trauma-Informed Supervision
Self-Rating Tool

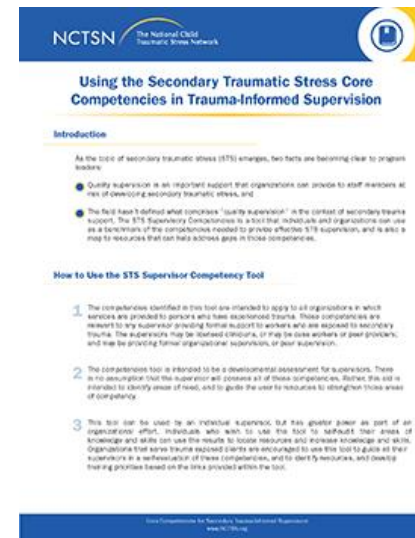
Competency #1: Knowledge of the signs, behaviors, and risk factors of STS and its impact on employees. Knowledge of agency support options, referral process for employee assistance, or external support resources for supervisors who are experiencing symptoms of STS.

The Supervisor is able to do the following:

Competency	Not at all not at all not at all	Doing OK but need more training	I have confidence in my skills in this area
Recognize the signs of STS in their supervisees	Not at all not at all not at all	Doing OK but need more training	I have confidence in my skills in this area
Address observed STS with symptomatic employees in a supportive manner that normalizes their responses, promotes resiliency, and is responsive to the supervisor and their and participants' demands, as directed by the supervisor	Not at all not at all not at all	Doing OK but need more training	I have confidence in my skills in this area
Communicate what the STS informed services and support options are available from the organization	Not at all not at all not at all	Doing OK but need more training	I have confidence in my skills in this area
Facilitate the referral process for accessing available, quality services for symptomatic employees	Not at all not at all not at all	Doing OK but need more training	I have confidence in my skills in this area
Identify other resources that provide STS prevention or intervention services and in which to refer the employee who is experiencing these concerns	Not at all not at all not at all	Doing OK but need more training	I have confidence in my skills in this area
Recognize the potential use of organizational supports for the regulatory provision of STS symptoms as a required part of doing the work	Not at all not at all not at all	Doing OK but need more training	I have confidence in my skills in this area
Act as an advocate within the organization for STS supports, training, or other needed requirements needed by supervisors, indicated by supervisors' experience of STS symptoms in supervision	Not at all not at all not at all	Doing OK but need more training	I have confidence in my skills in this area
Differentiate STS, PTSD, and burnout symptoms, and describe the differential coping responses to each condition	Not at all not at all not at all	Doing OK but need more training	I have confidence in my skills in this area
Identify how own, personal trauma, implicit bias, and/or culture impacts the way STS manifests in the individual and organizational context	Not at all not at all not at all	Doing OK but need more training	I have confidence in my skills in this area

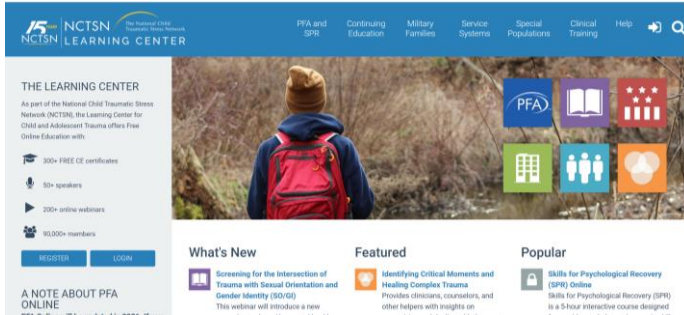
Spring 2019

- Conduct organizational assessments



- Ensure supervision is trauma-informed

Additional Information



- NCTSN Learning Center
learn.nctsn.org

- To stay up-to-date about new and updated resources, sign up at info@nctsn.org

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SAMHSA's mission is to reduce the impact of substance abuse and mental illness on America's communities.

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Thank you to my collaborators: Robin Gurwitch, Kristine Louie and Ernestine Briggs-King

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