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Embracing Identity: Fostering Positive Adolescent Emotional Growth

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Event Materials

Visit the **event page** to download a copy of the presentation slides and any additional resources.



Continuing Education

This webinar has been approved to offer continuing education credit. Please stay tuned for more information!

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This material is based upon work supported by the National Institute of Food and Agriculture, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the Office of Military Family Readiness Policy, U.S. Department of Defense under Award Number 2019-48770-30366 and 2023-48770-41333.

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Today's Presenter



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Objectives

1. Define adolescent mental health and its intersection with education
2. Identify strategies to support positive emotional growth and identity exploration
3. Develop ideas for supporting adolescents and their parents/caregivers

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Parent/Adolescent Relationship Dance



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Chat



What role do you currently have with adolescents?

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Childhood Experiences with Trauma and Adversity



25%

25% of American children experience a traumatic event before 16 years of age



50%

Nearly 50% of American children experience an adverse childhood experience before 18 years of age

National Child Traumatic Stress Network, 2024; National Institute for Children's Health Quality, 2024

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Military and Mental Health Considerations

During today's conversation being a part of a military family and adolescent mental health will be briefly discussed. This overview will include:

- Anxiety
- Trauma Informed Care
- Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) Brief
- Trauma and its Impact on Children in Military Families

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Forms of Extreme Stress: Trauma, Adversity, and Anxiety

- These often precipitate mental health symptoms
- Can increase the risk of chronic mental health symptoms
- Specific impacts depend on factors such as:
 - Individual traits
 - The specific features of the extreme stress
 - How the adults in the adolescent's life respond

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ACEs Overview

- Traumatic events that occur during childhood (0-17)
- Initial CDC/Kaiser study: 10 ACEs
- Focus: Adversities in the home
- 3 Categories: Abuse, Neglect, Household Dysfunction
- Higher ACE Scores = Worse Health Outcomes
- Lasting negative effects on health, well-being and opportunity

(Felitti et al., 1998)

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Becoming Trauma-Informed

Application of trauma-informed strategies and techniques includes:

- An awareness of trauma and adversity as common, often invisible and critical factors that can influence health, mental health and education
- An appreciation that children who have experienced trauma can have short-term, medium-term and long-term consequences



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Trauma-Informed for School and Community

Organizational level

- Training for Staff
- Policies



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Anxiety During Adolescence

Normative

- Peer Relationships (e.g., friendships, dating)
- Academic Success
- Appearance

Chronic/Unhealthy

- Continual nervousness or restlessness
- Extreme stress
- Inability to attend school
- Unable to perform up to their academic potential

American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry, 2024

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Adolescent Identity Exploration and Formation

Components of Exploration and Formation Process

- What is Identity?
- Identity Development
- Identity Commitment



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Engaging in Identity Exploration: The Third Rail

Challenges to Supporting

- Examining various possibilities for one's identity is associated with experiencing identity confusion or uncertainty about one's sense of self.
- Individuals presently involved in identity exploration and grappling with identity confusion may encounter heightened symptoms of depression or anxiety.

Benefits to Supporting

- Best outcomes are often seen with high levels of exploration and commitment
- Research indicates that previous engagement in identity exploration is associated with aspects of adaptive psychological functioning, (e.g., self-esteem and sense of purpose)

(Sumner, n.d.)

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Chat



Please share how adolescent identity exploration presents itself where you work.

What are some of the challenges and successes where you work?

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How Can I Create Space for Relational Safety?

- Support Self-Validity
- Support Self Actualization Versus Social Devaluation



Image from Storyblocks.com, CCO

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Support Self-Validity



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Support Self-Actualization vs. Social Devaluation



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Tips for Supporting Identity Formation

- Seek out role models, as they can assist teenagers in envisioning diverse paths or possibilities for their future selves. These role models may be found within your family, educational institutions, or local community..
- Engage in discussions about values, aspirations, and identities. They may be intrigued to learn how you made your choices regarding the type of individual you aspire to be.
- Try to support the commitments that have been established. Embracing identity commitments can provide a sense of grounding and reduce confusion as individuals engage in exploration of their identity.

(Sumner, n.d.)

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Stacking the Deck for Our Adolescents

Our relationships with the youth in our care are built over time through our actions and words:

- "You are accepted"
- "You are safe"
- "You can trust me-and others-to be there for you."



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Framework of Stressor for Military Youth

Normative Family Stressor

- Common stressor that can occur in many families, regardless of military association

Normative Military Stressor

- Normative stressor for military families (e.g., move, deployment)

Non-normative Stressor

- Not expected or anticipated, and can rise to the level of catastrophic

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Toxic Resiliency

- Long term endurance of stress without asking for help
- Feeling like you'll be letting others down if you raise the fact that you're not coping
- Poor health as a result of the above



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Chat



In your role have you seen resiliency at toxic levels?

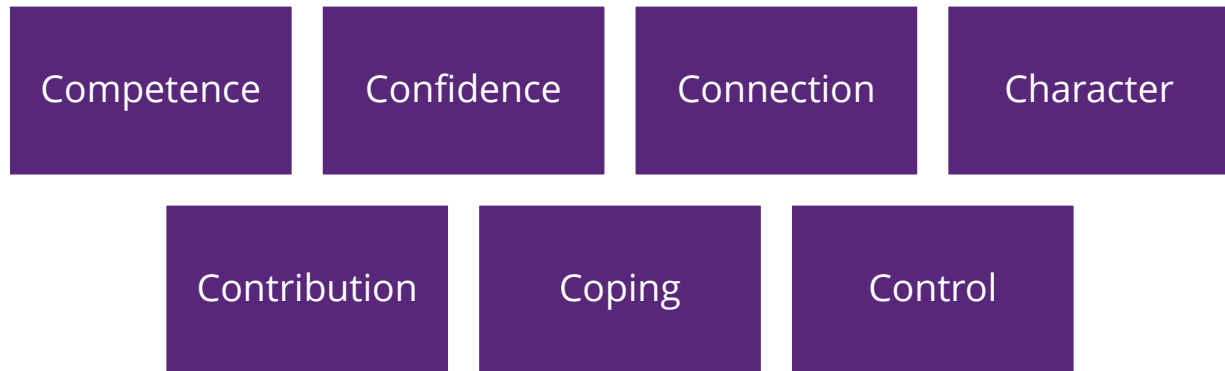
If you are able, please share examples of resiliency at or approaching toxic levels in the chat. How can we change this?

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Resilience: 7 C's Framework



(Ginsburg, 2018)

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Other Potential Challenges

- Child with Disability
- Financial Challenges
- Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion Issues
 - Race, Religion, Ethnicity
 - Sexual Identity
- Single Parent
- Digital Natives

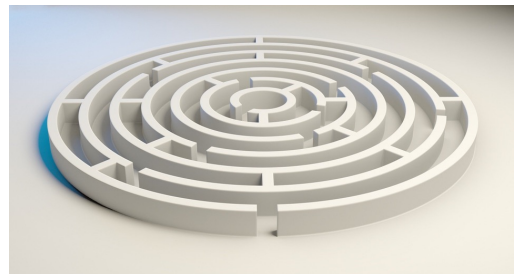


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Stacking the Deck for Our Parents

Relationships with the youth in our care are built over time through our actions and words and the same is true for the parents.

Building block words and actions include:

How can I/we help you?

I see you.

You can trust me, and other,
to be there for you.

I/We see the good that
you are doing.

I/We haven't always
gotten parenting right.

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Misattunement Happens!

As parents and caregivers we need to give ourselves grace. Without our missteps and challenges there would be no opportunities to learn and develop adaptation skills.



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Strategies for Supporting Youth and Their Parents

Listening with
a quiet ear

Embracing a
stance of
humility

Providing
grace

Seeking help

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When Additional Support is Needed

- Help parents identify signs that they require extra assistance.
- Share and utilize resources in a way that doesn't overload families or yourself.
- Direct families to seek higher levels of care when it becomes necessary.



(Zero to Three, 2009)

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Framing: What Families Universally Need

- Friends/social support
- Reliable information on development and discipline
- Parenting skills
 - Listening
 - Effective communication
 - Emotional-regulation skills
- Concrete help
 - Where to go and how to ask for help when they have questions

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Framing to Destigmatize

- Prevention
- Universal
- Meet them where they are (online, as time allows)
- Varied resources
 - Podcast
 - Articles
 - In person
 - Telehealth

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Supporting Caregivers = Supporting Teens

- Listen
- Express understanding and empathy
- Ask questions
 - *What's their take on their situation?*
 - *What's everyday life for each family member?*
 - *What kind of support system is in place for the family?*
- Create a strong, trusting relationship (think parallel process).
- Support in creating family traditions and routines.
 - Creates a sense of security for the teen.
- Refer to resources (in a way that won't overwhelm the family further).

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Any Questions?

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Contact Info

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Upcoming Event



The Art of Connection: Empowering Professionals to Respond Positively to Challenging Behaviors – Part 1

Tuesday, May 21, 2024, 11:00 AM - 12:30 PM EDT

This webinar will discuss the factors that impact children's behavior and how professionals respond to the different behaviors children present.

OneOp.org/learn/160041

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Continuing Education



This webinar has been approved for 1.5 continuing education (CE) credits from:

- National Council on Family Relations
- University of Texas at Austin, Steve Hicks School of Social Work
- American Association of Family & Consumer Sciences (CFCS)
- Certificate of attendance available

Evaluation Link

Go to the event page for the evaluation and post-test link.

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