Children's Mental Health during the COVID-19 Pandemic

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Historically our global society has viewed human matters through eyes of adults, and have used adult themes and issues to chart and measure development. Up the late 19th century children were seen as insignificant blank slates whose lives only attained meaning when they were old enough to contribute to society's development via the labour force. This ideology is responsible for the causal outlook of children's lives. In the local context we often hear "**children will thrive**", and the word **'thrive'** is often misused when speaking about child development.

We marvel when adults give accounts of their harrowing childhoods, recounting years of unimaginable horror and have lived to retell their experiences. This however is certainly not an indication of thriving, because in the absence of illness, suicide, murder or accidental death; becoming an adult is inevitable. It is a default setting in human design. If adulthood was a indicator of a thriving existence, adults who were abused as children, would not have enacted that same abuse on their offspring. There would have been no perpetuation of horror cycles

THRIVE
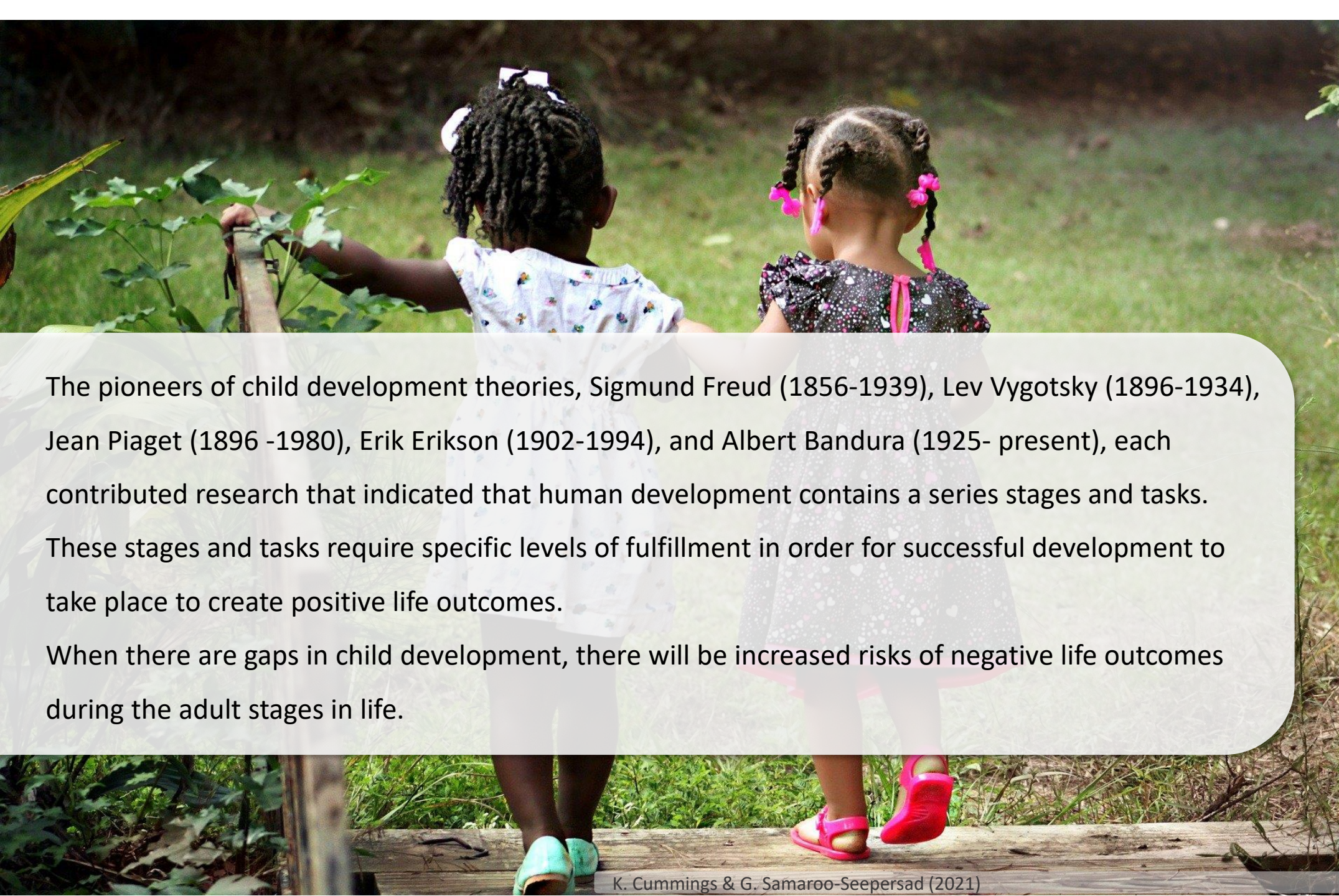
The pioneers of child development theories, Sigmund Freud (1856-1939), Lev Vygotsky (1896-1934), Jean Piaget (1896 -1980), Erik Erikson (1902-1994), and Albert Bandura (1925- present), each contributed research that indicated that human development contains a series stages and tasks. These stages and tasks require specific levels of fulfillment in order for successful development to take place to create positive life outcomes.

When there are gaps in child development, there will be increased risks of negative life outcomes during the adult stages in life.

THRIVE

Using agriculture to illustrate the concept of child development, we can note that the seed is planted in the soil and requires several types of deliberate care-oriented activities by the farmer for it to grow and thrive.

Apart from water and sunlight, the farmer adds nutrients to the soil to stimulate growth, establishes a set routine for watering, removes weeds and carries out pest control along with other necessary precautions, to create a safe environment that promotes positive development.
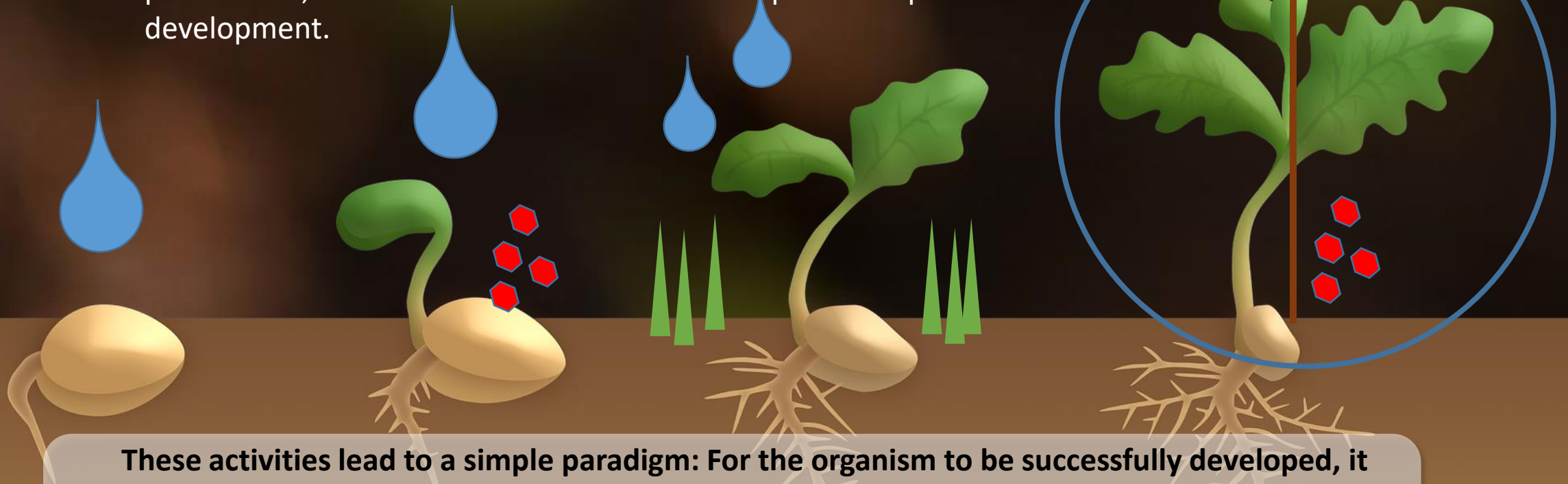
These activities lead to a simple paradigm: For the organism to be successfully developed, it has to be adequately NURTURED. The soil can be seen as life within the home and wider community, and the farmer represents the parent or caregiver. Children require deliberate positive actions, consistent routines, and protection for optimum growth.
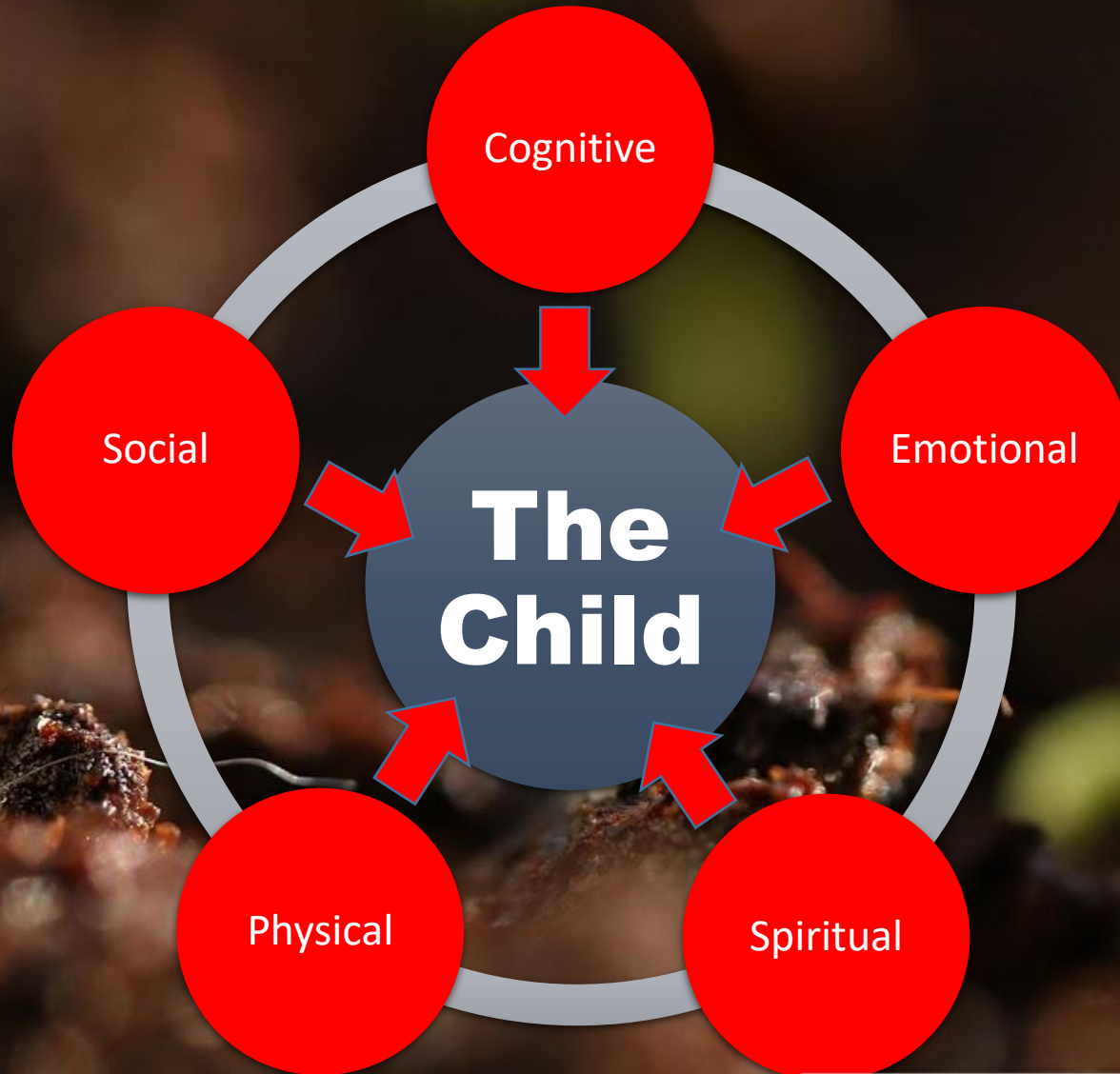
CHILD DEVELOPMENT
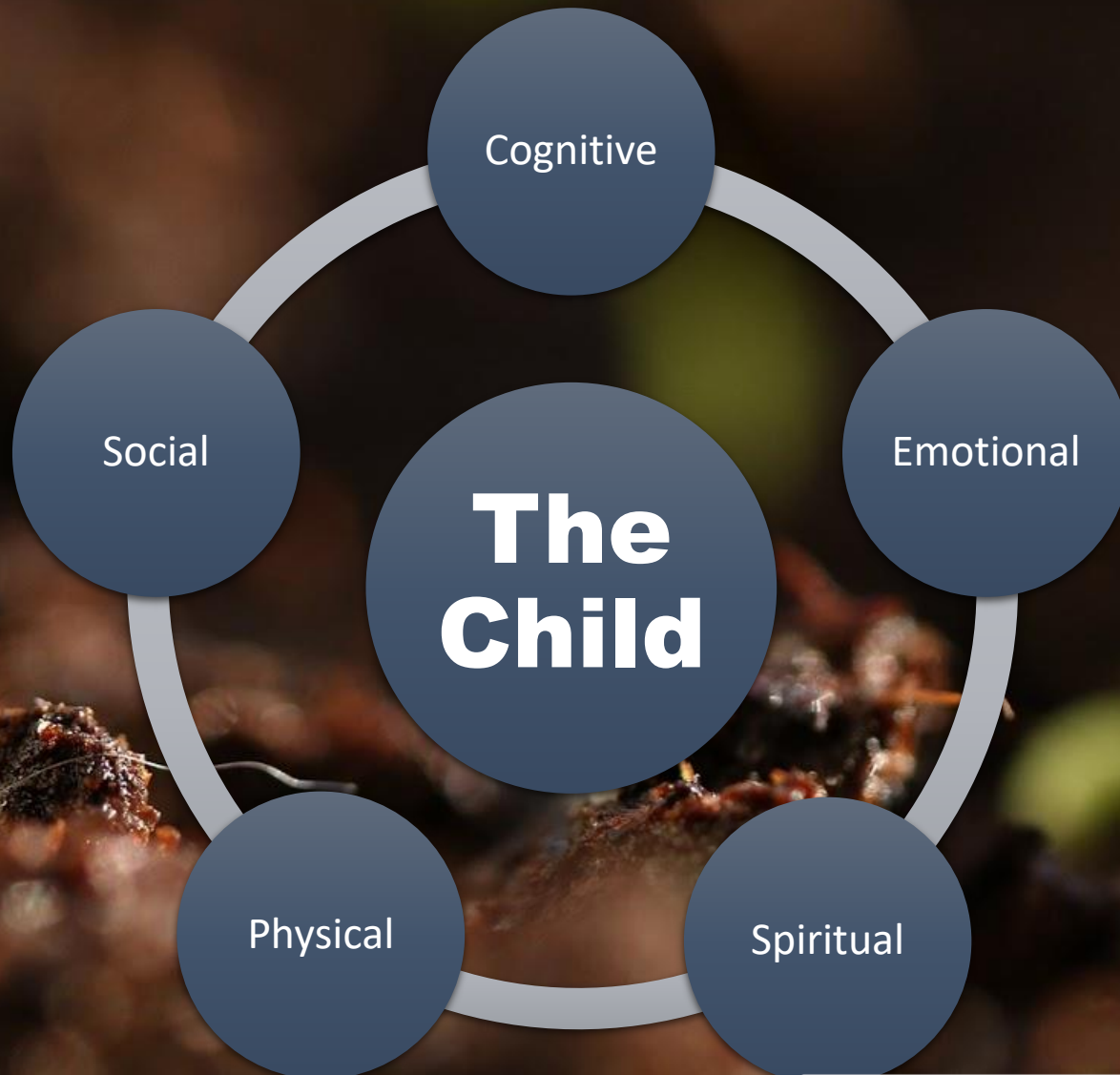
Normative child development enhances the child's competence, and reliance on self-direction and self-investment (e.g., motivation to learn, master, achieve, affiliate and attach) (Romer, Duckworth, Sznitman, & Park, 2010).

Cognitive

Emotional

Social

The Child

Physical

Spiritual

In normative development, individuals learn from the **consistently responsive**, **sensitive, predictable**, and **soothing** behaviours of caretakers, allowing for the development of effective self-soothing (Schore, 2003).

CHILD DEVELOPMENT

Cognitive

Emotional

Social

The Child

Physical

Spiritual

Life processes can be negatively impacted by external and biological factors. If one or more of these domains are not properly addressed, there will be gaps in development that can lead to potential negative life outcomes.

The optimum time to address developmental issues is during the childhood or early adolescent stages. As **Frederick Douglass,** American social reformer, abolitionist, orator, writer, and statesman indicated:
"It is easier to build strong children than to repair broken men".

CHANGE THE NARRATIVE

POSITIVELY THRIVE
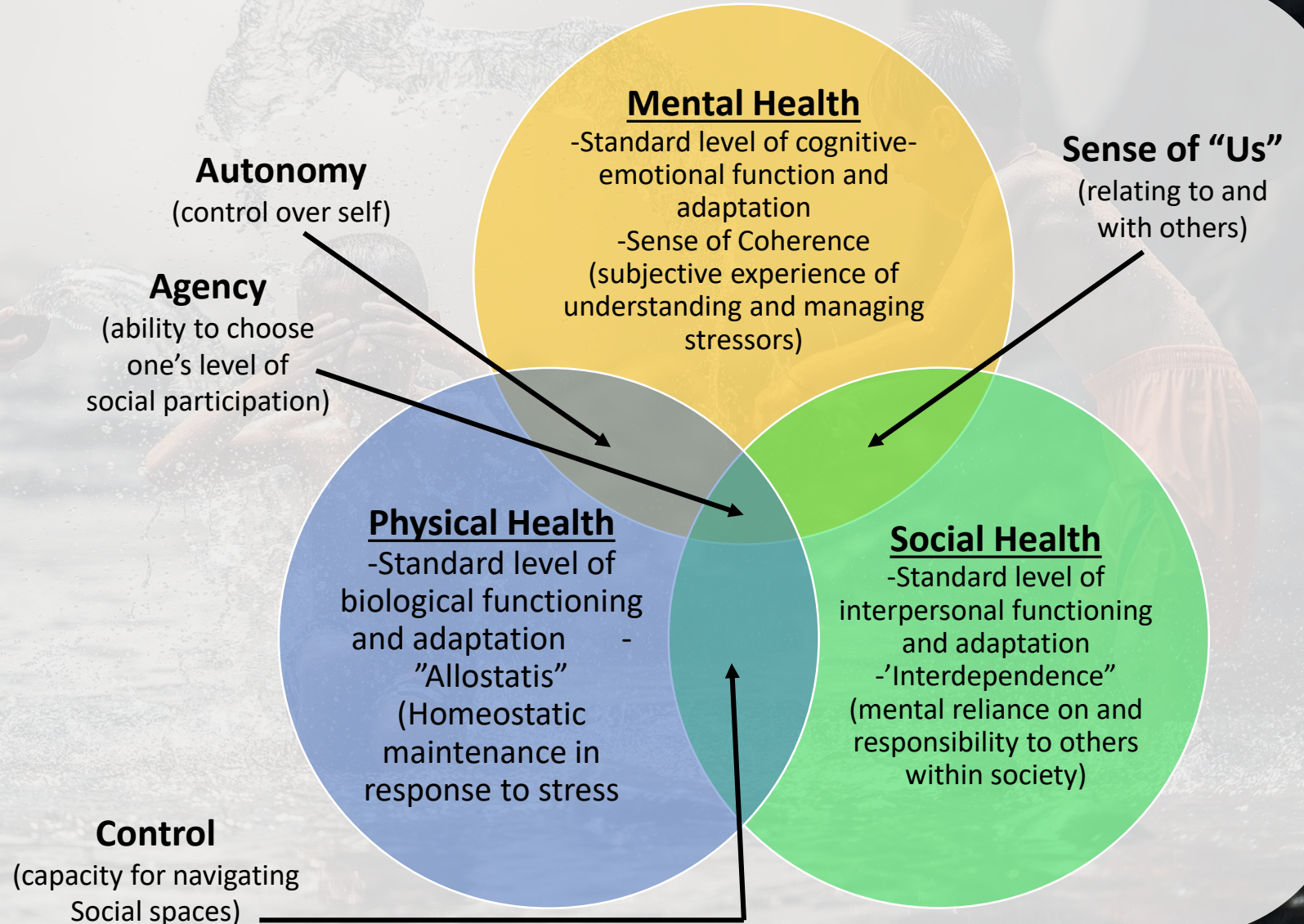
WHEN THERE ARE PROPER CONDITIONS

The World Health Organization defines health as the state of having "complete physical, mental, and social wellbeing".

HEALTH

The WHO along with Huber et al (2011) identifies three domains of health which is illustrated in a Trans-domain model:
physical, mental, and social, each of which would be defined in terms of a basic (human rights) standard of functioning and adaptation.

There are four dynamic areas of integration or synergy between domains and examples of how the core concepts of mental health could be used to define them.

Autonomy
(control over self)

Agency
(ability to choose one's level of social participation)

Mental Health
-Standard level of cognitive-emotional function and adaptation
-Sense of Coherence (subjective experience of understanding and managing stressors)

Sense of "Us"
(relating to and with others)

Physical Health
-Standard level of biological functioning and adaptation   -"Allostatis" (Homeostatic maintenance in response to stress

Social Health
-Standard level of interpersonal functioning and adaptation
-'Interdependence" (mental reliance on and responsibility to others within society)

Control
(capacity for navigating Social spaces)

K. Cummings & G. Samaroo-Seepersad (2021)

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What is mental health

According to the W.H.O.,

"Mental health is defined as a state of well-being in which every individual realizes his or her own potential, can **cope** with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community"

What is mental health

"A mentally healthy community offers people the ability to thrive. It is one in which people feel a sense of connectedness and there are also networks which link people from all walks of life to each other. There is a strong community identity but despite this, the community is welcoming of diversity. People participate in their community, organize to combat common threats and offer support and aid for those in need".

McKenzie K. - Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, (2014)

What is mental health

From perspectives of the discipline of psychology or holism, mental health may include an individual's ability to enjoy life and procure a balance between life activities and efforts to achieve psychological resilience (WHO,2009; UNICEF, 2010; Hodgins, 1992; Torrey, 2011; and Mullen, 2010).

Mental health is an expression of emotions and signifies a successful adaptation to a range of demands (WHO,2009; UNICEF, 2010).

According to Nala and Ishaya (2013), maintaining good mental health is crucial to living a long and healthy life in the society.

What is mental health

According to Manwell, Barbic , Roberts, et al.(2015), the complexity of mental health points to the fact that:

- MH does not exist in the physical components (brain, neurons, genes) within the individual.

- That relation extends also to everything outside the individual: eg, relations with self, other individuals, the human world, the immediate environment, as well as the neighbourhood, culture, society, socio-political-economic systems

(MH – Mental Health)

What is mental health

Basic necessities for optimum mental health in children include:

- safe and comfortable home environment

- food security

- access to health services

- equitable access to public resources, childcare, education, transportation, and support systems

- respect for diversity

- positive opportunities for building resilience, self esteem, personal and social efficacy, growth, meaning and purpose, and sense of safety and belonging

PANDEMIC

The COVID-19 epidemic has caused a parallel epidemic of fear, anxiety, and depression. People with mental health conditions could be more substantially influenced by the emotional responses brought on by the COVID-19 epidemic.

Global attention has largely been focused on the infected patients and the frontline responders, with some marginalized populations in society having been overlooked (Yao, Chen & Xu, 2020). Children and adolescents make up the majority of world's marginalized and vulnerable populations, and during this pandemic, face a variety of challenges with regard to mental health.

Family/Home Challenges

Community-related risks

Child maltreatment

Psychological risks

Educational challenges

Family/Home Challenges

According to Ferget et al.(2020), at the family level, the pandemic has led to a re-organization of everyday life. Household members are impacted by the stress of quarantine, social distancing, school shutdowns, work from home schedules, and loss of incomes.

Increased pressure to work from home, maintain employment and professional quotas.

Strained caregiver resources and disrupted family support systems.

Strained spousal relations and increased levels of conflict within the home.

Increased stress levels as a result of reduced or loss of income.

Increased levels of anxiety due to fear of economic instability, spread of virus, and loss of life.

Family/Home Challenges - Impact on Mental Health

According to Behere et al. (2017), factors which increase the likelihood that children will show disturbance over time include **marital conflict**, being raised in **poverty**, teen and **single parenthood**, **parental depression**, and **hostile/angry parenting**.

Dysfunctional family backgrounds and socioeconomic adversity have also been attributed to suicide in young people. Childhood adversity including divorce and impaired parenting seems to cause both short- and long-term problems, various childhood disorders, and subsequently depression in adulthood.

The stresses associated with the pandemic can lead to substance abuse by parents which can significantly impact on parent– child relations (Riley et al, 2008) and increase the risk for mental health problems in children (Rasic, 2014).

Grief and mourning of lost family members, especially in cases where contact with the infected member is restricted or refused, could lead to adjustment problems, post-traumatic stress disorder, depression and even suicide of both, adults and young people (Stikkelbroek et al 2015)

Income loss and economic hardship can lead to feelings of economic stress and consequent marital conflict (Elder & Conger, 2000). Exposure to domestic violence again significantly affects mental health of children (Holt et al, 2008; MacMillan et al, 2013), and has the potential to create long-term consequences (Hill et al, 2017).

Child Maltreatment

Child maltreatment can be described as behaviours outside normal conduct that cause physical or emotional harm to children. Maltreatment is usually generalized as physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, and neglect.

The current overall reduced parental and community supervision as a result of the extended closure of education facilities and daycare centres has led to increased instances of maltreatment.

The closure of schools have confined children to their homes and communities where Sexual Abuse, Physical Abuse, and Emotional Abuse are prevalent.

According to Schneider et al. (2017), there have been documented increases in all forms of child maltreatment during recessions in both developing and developed nations. Based on this and other data, a significant increase in maltreatment risks for children and adolescents during the current COVID-19 pandemic, is a realistic expectation.

Reduced household incomes have led to increased child labour and exploitation.

Increased instances of children and adolescent being mandated to performing of adult duties in the home (cook, clean and look after younger siblings).

Child Maltreatment - Impact on Mental Health

Maltreatment, which tends to cluster with other adverse events (e.g., parental dysfunction, intimate partner violence, loss), is a robust risk factor for victim mental health and substance abuse problems across the lifespan (Gilbert et al., 2009; McLaughlin et al., 2010).

Maltreated adolescents may engage in self-harming (Jacobson & Gould, 2007; Laye-Gindhu & Schonert-Reichl, 2005) or aggressive behaviours (Gordis, Feres, Olezeski, Rabkin, & Trickett, 2009) in an attempt to regulate (i.e., decrease or distract from) the experience of negative emotions, which may arise from maltreatment memories or environmental cues.

Child maltreatment skews social learning and attachment relationships towards survival, which may manifest as vigilance, avoidance, and clinging behaviours (Reyome, 2010; Reyome, Ward, & Witkiewitz, 2010; Wall & McKee, 2002).

Individuals may develop a negative schema, template, or self-concept that confers cognitive vulnerability to developing negative affective states (Calvete, Villardóna, & Estéveza, 2008; Haeffel et al., 2008).

The maltreating environment involves not only the greater application of harmful behaviours, but also the lack of development of calming behaviours and feeling safe (McCoy, Cummings, & Davies, 2009). Additionally it contributes to the hampering of proper applications of the 'self' and relationships, tolerance and self-management, and skews the perceptions of risk-taking in relation to the environment.

Child Maltreatment – Actual current cases in the Judiciary of Trinidad and Tobago

Trinidad and Tobago Police Service
Apr 21 · 🌐

April 21st, 2021
MEDIA RELEASE

Tobago man told to stay away from 14-year-old girl

A 19-year-old grocery packer was ordered to stay away from a
14-year-old girl having been charged with one count of sexual penetration of a child.

▮▮▮▮▮, of ▮▮▮▮▮, ▮▮▮▮, appeared before Magistrate ▮▮▮▮▮ at the ▮▮▮▮ Magistrates' Court yesterday where he was granted $45,000 bail with a surety and ordered to have no contact with the girl. He also has to report to the ▮▮▮▮ Police Station twice weekly.

The charge stemmed from an alleged incident which occurred in January of this year. The girl told police that she was at home when she was visited by the accused.

A ▮▮▮▮ man, 55 was denied bail yesterday when he appeared in court charged with sexually assaulting a five–year–old boy.

Police said that on April 5 the suspect was arrested and charged by PC ▮▮▮▮ of the Eastern Division Child Protection Unit after a woman reported to him that her son was assaulted by a man she knows on April 3.

The incident was investigated and following the man's arrest he was charged.

Article 1 (trinidadexpress.com)

Four men have been charged with offences relating to trafficking children.

The accused—██████████, ████████ ████, ██████████, and ██████████—are all charged with various offences under the Trafficking in Persons Act and the Children's Act, as follows:

1. ██████, aka "██████████████", of ██████████████, ██████████ ██████████████, is charged with receiving and transporting a child for the purpose of child trafficking; harbouring a child for the purpose of child trafficking; knowingly receiving a financial benefit from the offence of trafficking in persons; causing a child to prostitute; controlling a child prostitute and facilitating child prostitution.

Article 2 (https://trinidadexpress.com/newsextra...)

A 35–year–old ████████████████ man was granted $10,000 bail after appearing before a ████████████ magistrate on Monday charged with two counts of cruelty to his daughters.

The accused was also ordered by Magistrate ████████████ to report daily to the Police Service Child Protection Unit (CPU). He will reappear before the court on May 17.

The man was arrested and charged on Saturday by W/Cpl ██████████ of the Port of Spain CPU following a report made to police by a woman that her two daughters were physically assaulted by their father.

Trinidad and Tobago Police Service

★ Favorites · 6h · 🌐

May 7th, 2021
MEDIA RELEASE

SRP Granted $150,000 Bail - Ordered to Stay Away from Boy, 15

SRP ████████████████ appeared before the ████████████ Magistrates' Court on May 4th, to answer to the charges of one count of sexual penetration, two counts of sexual touching, and three counts of perverting the course of justice

The boy, also recounted that sometime in April, 2020, while at his home the woman took his right hand and placed it inside her private parts.

The matter has been adjourned to June 1st, 2021.

Child Maltreatment – Trinidad and Tobago Police Service Awareness campaigns

Trinidad and Tobago Police Service
Apr 27

Be the hand that helps.

If you suspect a child is being abused, make a report to the nearest police station, via the TTPS App or call 999 or the Children's Authority at 996.

#childabuse #ReportCrimeOnline #TTPS #TTPSApp

SOME PEOPLE STAY AT HOME WITH
MONSTERS

HELP US CAPTURE THESE MONSTERS

Trinidad and Tobago Police Service
Apr 22

Be the hand that helps!

If you suspect a child is being abused or neglected, make a report to the nearest police station, via the TTPS App or call 999 or the Children's Authority at 996.

#childabuse #ReportCrimeOnline #TTPS #TTPSApp

Long term effects of abuse and neglect include:

▸ Emotional difficulties such as anger, anxiety, sadness or low self-esteem
▸ Mental health problems such as depression, eating disorders, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), self-harm, suicidal thoughts
▸ Problems with drugs or alcohol
▸ Disturbing thoughts, emotions and memories that cause distress or confusion
▸ Poor physical health such as obesity, aches and pains
▸ Struggling with parenting or relationships
▸ Worrying that their abuser is still a threat to themselves or others
▸ Learning difficulties, lower educational attainment, difficulties in communicating
▸ Behavioural problems including anti-social behaviour, criminal behaviour.

CITIZENS WORKING WITH POLICE

K. Cummings & G. Samaroo-Seepersad (2021)

Psychological Risks

The COVID-19 pandemic-related quarantine has significantly impacted on the mental health of children and adolescents. Findings from a recent review on the psychological impact of quarantine, found that post-traumatic stress symptoms (PTSS) occur in 28 to 34% and fear in 20% of subjects in quarantine (Brooks et al, 2020).

Lack of positive socializing opportunities with peer groups in school can negatively affect development in children and self-concepts in adolescents.

Lack of play and physical activity can negatively impact on health and physical development

Delay in developmental milestones that can impact on the Cognitive and Affective domains

Depression, low mood, irritability, insomnia, anger, emotional exhaustion, self-harm, and suicidal thoughts

Psychological Risks - Impact on Mental Health

The movement restrictions that have arisen as a result of the pandemic-associated lockdowns have negatively impacted physical as well as mental health. Especially vulnerable to this are children (Kumar,Thakur & Sharma, 2020).

It has been found that children staying at home due to lockdown, spend more time in front of TV and internet which can lead to psycho-social problems, like lower self-esteem (Grechyna,2020)

Excess use of internet can lead to internet addiction disorder and expose children and adolescents to cyberbullying which can negatively impact on mental health.

Being confined inside the house makes children vulnerable to effects of indoor pollutants (such as lead, carbon monoxide, mold and secondhand cigarette smoke) which can affect their brain development leading to limited development of cognitive abilities (Franklin, 2007).

Children who are separated from their parents/caregivers due to their infections or their parents being affected or their parents serving in hospitals are more susceptible to psychological problems. Their vulnerability to depression, stress, anxiety, avoidance behaviour, and post-traumatic stress disorder have been reported (Liu, 2020).

Educational Challenges

As per the data available from the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) as on 29th April, 2020, school functions have been affected globally with 186 countries having nationwide school closures. This has led to around 74% of registered learners being affected which is about 1.3 billion young people (UNESCO, 2020).

Interruption of the learning process and cognitive development.

Lack of devices and connectivity creating an atmosphere of inequity in accessing online learning.

The altering of the teacher-learner paradigm has created severe gaps in the learning process.

Increased stress levels as a result of loss of contact time with physical learning environments and parental/caregiver roles in the learning process

Educational Challenges - Impact on Mental Health

School routines are important coping mechanisms for young people, particularly those with mental health issues or those who are likely to develop mental health issues due to external factors. When schools are closed, they lose an anchor in life and their symptoms could relapse.

One of the chief concerns is the experience of disruption from their daily routine and social scaffold as a result of school closures (Lee 2020, Viner 2020).

Schools are places for growth for children and adolescents which provide them with a social structure and offer efficient coping mechanisms to those with or vulnerable to mental health issues (Lee 2020). Closure has meant increased risks for negative impacts on mental health.

Education reduces the risk of poor mental health. The impact is observed for all ages and at all points of the distribution. Education also reduces the risk of becoming depressed (Chevalier & Feinstein, 2006)

Schooling provides essential learning and when schools close, children and youth are deprived opportunities for growth and development. The disadvantages are disproportionate for under-privileged learners who tend to have fewer educational opportunities beyond school (UNESCO, 2020). This can lead to gaps in Cognitive and Affective development which can create decrease social competence and impact on mental health.

Increased stress levels as a result of loss of contact time with physical learning environments and conflicts with parental/caregiver figures while navigating the learning process.

Community related risks

Since the pandemic was announced, at the community level, there has been disruption of, or more limited access to basic services, such as kindergarten, schools, and routine medical care (Fegert et al, 2020)

Lack of adequate supervision can lead to possible exposure to potential deviant behaviours found in the community.

Increased likelihood of developing Drug & Substance Abuse habits.

Exposure to and participation in Sexual activity

Exposure to maltreatment

Exposure to and participation in Criminal activity

Increased risk of incarceration and death.

Community related risks - Impact on Mental Health

Social factors correlated to wider community context , particularly those associated with deviance, can have negative impacts upon mental health. Deviance and mental illness often go hand-in-hand (Balah and Ishaya, 2013).

According to Balah and Ishaya (2013), the social learning variables are moderate predictors of aggressive and depressive behaviours, which lead to deviance. The aggression and depression drives the brain further into struggling with dysregulation and cognitive impairments, which is synonymous to mental disorder as related to illness and deviance; being an activity that lacks the consciousness of proper mental thoughts and processes.

Deviance, particularly the combination of childhood and adolescent aggression, substance abuse, violent and non-violent criminal activities, and improper supervision, are implications of PTSD.

Community discord, strife and violence are directly connected to increased levels of anxiety, stress, depression, and even conditions like PTSD.

Toxic associations with persons such as gang members and drug dealers can lower self-esteem, increase irritability, cause anxiety, contribute to depression, induce conduct disorder, antisocial personality disorder, psychosis, drug and alcohol dependence (Public Health England, 2015).

Community related risks : Adolescent Deviance

– Actual current case in the Judiciary of Trinidad and Tobago

Trinidad and Tobago Police Service

· 3h · 🌐

May 11th, 2021
MEDIA RELEASE

Two Juveniles among four arrested for larceny

Two juveniles were among four persons arrested for larceny by officers of the Tableland Police station and the Emergency Response Patrol (ERP) over the weekend.

The victim reported that approximately 11.50 pm on Saturday 8th May, 2021, he secured his business and went away. Around 2.30am he was awoken by a noise. Upon checking his CCTV footage, he saw three persons jumping over the wall of his business and entering a silver grey Nissan Cube. The man then made checks to his business and discovered six exhaust catalysts valued at $60,000 missing.

The man contacted the Police and PC ▬▬▬▬ from the ▬▬▬▬▬ Police Station, along with officers of the South ERP, intercepted a Nissan Cube. The vehicle had four occupants, the driver who is a 40-year-old man of ▬▬▬▬▬ ▬▬▬▬▬, a 28-year-old man, a 16-year-old boy and a 15-year-old boy, all of ▬▬▬▬▬ ▬▬▬▬▬▬▬▬▬▬

Why Does Stability Matter?

According to Sandstrom & Huerta (2013),children **thrive** in stable and nurturing environments where they have a routine and generally know what to expect from their daily lives.

Although some change in children's lives is normal and anticipated, sudden and dramatic disruptions can be extremely stressful and affect children's feeling of security.

Within the context of supportive relationships with adults who act as a buffer against any negative effects of instability, children learn how to cope with adversity, adapt to their surroundings, and regulate their emotions (National Scientific Council on the Developing Child 2007).

Un-buffered stress, however, that escalates to extreme levels can be detrimental to children's mental health and cognitive functioning (Evans, Brooks-Gunn, and Klebanov 2011; Shonkoff and Garner 2011).

Love

Moral Grounding

Protection

Support

Positive Affirmations

Spiritual Foundation

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AS WE MOVE FORWARD

Let us keep in mind that:

"**Human values are innate qualities**" – Sri Sathya Sai Baba

These values are key to developing and maintaining optimum human character and interaction within the societal context. They are:

- Truth
- Right Conduct
- Peace
- Love
- Nonviolence

What can be done?

Parent, teacher, care - givers etc. are all leaders - one of the most important role as leaders is being responsible for those in our charge.

From the Educators' Perspective

The School

STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES

- Guidance Counsellor creates avenues for regular online sessions on personal, social & career development.

- Social Worker do follow-ups with student & families who may have financial other challenges

- Make referrals to other Support Services or Child Protection Agencies if necessary.

STAFF

- TEACHERS interact with their students through daily checks and deliver daily affirmation. Discussions can be formal and informal in contexts.
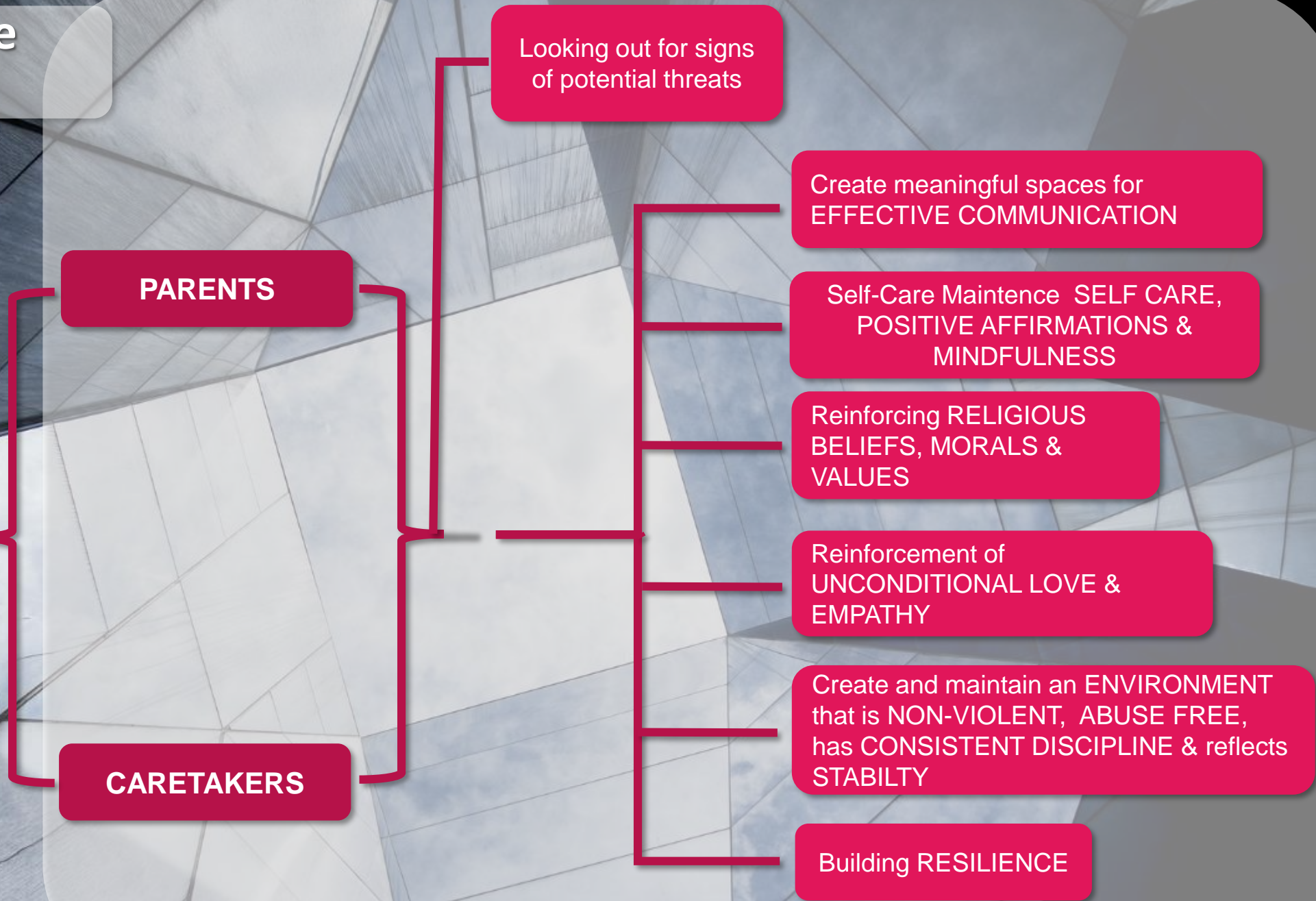
- DEANS/ SENIOR TEACHERS - will continue to laze with their colleagues to gain information in all areas.

- Provide facilities for students messaging via online and other platforms to cater for emergency needs.

- Make referrals to school's Guidance Unit or Child Protection Agecies if necessary.

The Home

PARENTS

CARETAKERS

Looking out for signs of potential threats

Create meaningful spaces for EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

Self-Care Maintence SELF CARE, POSITIVE AFFIRMATIONS & MINDFULNESS

Reinforcing RELIGIOUS BELIEFS, MORALS & VALUES

Reinforcement of UNCONDITIONAL LOVE & EMPATHY

Create and maintain an ENVIRONMENT that is NON-VIOLENT, ABUSE FREE, has CONSISTENT DISCIPLINE & reflects STABILTY

Building RESILIENCE

PARENTS /CAREGIVERS

COMPASSIONATE PARENT

We need to be sensitive to, understanding of, and knowledgeable about the effective ways to meet all the needs of our child/children.
As cited by Dunham et.al. (2011) (Glasser, 1998; Minuchin, 1974) suggested a compassionate approach to parenting is based on an understanding that children need parents/ caretakers who will provide a balance between allowing children to have fun, be creative, and experience freedom while maintaining parental control by setting limits through appropriate structure and discipline.

Create and maintain an environment that consist of love, safety, that allows children to explore, learn, and grow.

Boost your child's Self-Esteem - Use daily affirmations and compliments.

Recognize when they are good – Give acknowledgements and encouragement.

Make communication a priority.

Set limits and be consistent with discipline.

Know your strengths and weakness as a parent.

Grow with your child.

Show unconditional love.

The ultimate parenting goal is to enable children to become independent, competent, and loving citizens of the world and compassionate parents to their own children (Buck, 2000; Stosny, 1998) as cited by (Dunham et al., 2011).

SELF-CARE

Some self-care activities

Self-Care is an effective way to reduce health care cost and can significantly reduce the disastrous effects on health.

WHO (2013) has defined "self-care" "as the ability of individuals, families, and communities to promote and maintain health, prevent disease, and to cope with or without the support of a health care provider." The three most important factors according to (WHO, 2013) that contribute to self-care and healthy life are diet, exercise, and healthy state of mind.

Exercise – whatever suits you best.

Healthy nutrition plan.

Strengthen you spiritual beliefs.

Virtual Socialization via the available media.

Hobby – Gardening (kitchen garden, flowering or non-flower plants).

Daily – meditation, yoga, deep breathing, and mindfulness exercises.

POSITIVE AFFIRMATIONS

According to Anderson (2018) affirmations are positive statements that are made out loud every day. They help to shift one's mindset in a positive and productive ways and can be about anything in a positive light.

The main benefit of using affirmations is a progressive long-term change in the individual's outlook and ideology. Affirmations can be used for emotional support and encouragement in any area of an individual life. Additionally, appropriate actions must be made together for change to take place.

Some Positive Affirmations for Parents and Children

Today is going to be a great day.

All of my problems have solutions.

I can get through anything.

I can do anything I put my mind to.

I can do better next time

Everything will be okay.

I believe in myself.

MINDFULNESS

Mindfulness is a simple way of relating to all experience that can reduce suffering and set the stage for positive personal transformation. It is a core psychological process that can alter how we respond to the unavoidable difficulties in life, which includes everyday challenges and even severe psychological problems such as suicidal ideation (Linehan, 1993), chronic depression (Segal, Williams, & Teasdale 2002), and psychotic delusions (Bach & Hayes, 2002).

With committed practice, a person can gradually figure out how to become more and more mindful in life. Cultivating mindfulness is and has always been, a deep personal journey of discovery.

Signs of Potential Threats to the Child's Well Being

How do children deal with stress?

Depending on their ages and temperaments, some kids choose healthy, positive strategies like play, exercise, or talking, while others withdraw, sulk, zone out, act aggressively, talk back, and toss tantrums.
Older children may turn to the coping mechanisms that they see peers using such as smoking, drugs, fighting, sexual activity, eating disorders, self-mutilation, and delinquency. At any point without further signs thoughts of suicide can infiltrate mind. Studies have shown that rates of suicide for both adolescents and adults increase during times of high stress.

Many young people simply do not know more healthy and effective alternatives. Unless we guide them toward positive ways to relieve and reduce stress, they choose the negative behaviours of peers or the culture they absorb from the media. They become caught up in a cycle of negative coping methods and risky behaviours. We need to help them avoid that cycle. (Ginsburg & Jablow, 2020).

According to Ginsburg and Jablow (2020) adults usually see these choices as "behaviour problems" when in actuality, these negative behaviours are often attempts to counter stress, push it under, chill out, and make it all go away. When kids are stressed, their first impulse is to relieve the discomfort. They do not rationally think about the best way to do it. They find relief by acting impulsively or by following the paths most readily available to them or the ones they see other kids using.

PARENTING - Inclusive of Parents, Guardians & Care Takers

How successfully parents undertake their parenting responsibilities impacts on their children's adjustment, mental health and well-being into adulthood. Over the years parenting styles has changed and to date continue to change. Family structure changes and societal changes are two main factors for this change. More than ever the combination of different skills, strategies, thoughts, and behaviours are needed for effective parenting.

The parenting role involves purposeful activities that will ensure the survival, care, development, & well-being of children. Parents engage in multiple caring activities, in varying contexts throughout a child's life to promote the well-being of their children. (Sanders & Morawska, 2018).

The cultural context in which families live can greatly influence parenting values and practices. Different cultures and religious belief systems are associated with different parenting values and practices, as well as family routines and rituals.

However, culturally based parenting values and practices are not static. They may differ between parents in the same family, and between generations (Sanders & Marawska, 2018).

Parenting takes place in many diverse family contexts such as nuclear family, single parent, adoptive, blended or stepfamily, foster or kinship care, multigenerational or multiple family households. Although there is no single family configuration that is essential to produce healthy, well-adjusted children (Sanders & Morawska, 2018).
Children can thrive in any environment that is base on love, stability, and security that cater for social, emotional, and physical development.

COMMUNICATION - Through Emotional Care, Guidance, & Boundaries & Limits

Emotional Care - involves creating a warm, caring, nurturing environment that ensures children feel loved and accepted and that helps children learn to self-regulate their behaviour and emotions.

Emotional care includes the development of a secure parent–child attachment. Secure attachment, when combined with positive parenting practices, helps children become emotionally self-regulated and more resilient in the face of adversity (Waters et al., 2010).

Providing Guidance – involves modelling, providing advice, verbal and physical guidance, and necessary instruction to children about specific skills children can use to handle particular situations they encounter in their everyday social world.

Providing Boundaries & Limits - setting limits and boundaries in a developmentally and culturally appropriate manner. It involves helping children learn to self-manage their emotions and behaviour, control impulsive behaviour, refrain from unacceptable behaviour (e.g., hitting, bullying, temper tantrums, and disobedience), and how to behave appropriately in varied social situations (e.g., visiting relatives, going shopping, attending ceremonies). It also involves providing consequences when children behave inappropriately.

HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT

Children need to know that they are loved and wanted. They need to feel accepted and to know that you think their abilities, looks, and feelings are positive and important. They need to be respected. That's how they learn to respect others, including their parents.

You, the parent, need to express feelings of respect, appreciation, warmth, joy, and love on a regular basis every day (Alyy, 2021).

Non- Violent Environment - Alyy (2021) stated research has shown that parents who spank and use other forms of corporal punishment, and who are verbally aggressive and insulting to their children, are likely to be contributing to very different outcomes (as opposed to parents who use nonviolent methods) and are likely to be doing a good deal of harm that is not immediately apparent.

Spanking and hitting children sets a bad example and can lead to future problems, it is also unfair.

Stable Environment - A stable environment provides a sense of constancy, predictability, routine, and continuity, essential to child well-being.

STRATEGIES

Take time out when things are heated and you are about to lose control.

Stick firmly to the rules and insist that your children follow them.

Discussing the problem and emphasizing family rules will help make things clear.

Before you yell, close your eyes and imagine you are hearing what your child is about to hear.

MORALS, VALUES & RELIGIOUS BELIEFS

Religious and moral beliefs and affiliation with religious groups, influences how parents raise their children (Brody, Stoneman, & Flor, 1996; Fung, Wong, & Park, 2018). In turn, parents influence children's religious beliefs, attitudes, and behaviour in relation to social and moral issues.

The family is where children are first exposed to spirituality, religious practices, cultural traditions and rituals, and role models for moral and ethical behaviour (e.g., honesty, kindness).

The attitudes expressed by adults in 'adult-oriented' conversations with children or those that are overheard by children, can influence their attitudes towards others, work ethics, sexuality, intimate relationships, and social issues.

Parents have an important role in encouraging tolerance, compassion, and acceptance of others (e.g., racial, cultural, and religious differences), and the avoidance of inadvertently teaching children to be prejudiced (Kirby, 2016).

UNCONDITIONAL LOVE

Children need love if they are to realize their potential for flourishing, and many adults fully flourish only if they experience, and act on, parental love for a child.

When parents accept, love, and show affection to their children, even when they make mistakes or fall short of expectations, this is unconditional love. In other words, it is a form of love with no strings attached. Therefore, parents love their children for who they are, no matter what.

Unconditional love is one of the most important gifts we can receive as children. Moreover, it's the very best gift we can offer our own children as parents.

Unconditional love affects so many aspects of mental and physical health, multiple studies have revealed the positive effects of unconditional love, which include:

Healthier brain development in childhood

Enhanced ability to forge positive relationships

Greater stress resilience

Stronger immune system

EMPATHY

Empathy is a social and emotional skill that helps us feel and understand the emotions, circumstances, intentions, thoughts, and needs of others, such that we can offer sensitive, perceptive, and appropriate communication and support (McLaren, 2013).

Listen - listen compassionately, without interruption, let the child talk his or her way through the issue without turning it into a conversation about what you would do or have done or have thought of doing. It is important that you make supportive sounds like, yeah, or mm-hmm, throughout the conversation, this shows that you are paying attention to what is being said.

Reflect - reflect on what you heard, paraphrase what you heard them say, always checking in with them to see if you heard them correctly. If you can correctly reflect another person's words, they may be able to hear what they meant to say, and they may be able to hear their own solution in the words that got away from them.

Share - share your impressions and perceptions of what was said, but at the same time maintaining respect, love, and understanding for the child.

RESILIENCE

Resilience is often defined as an ability to recover from setbacks. Resilience may be the core factor in determining not only who adapt but more importantly who will strive (Ginsburg & Jablow, 2020).

Attention Management - the ability to stay focused when faced with challenges.

Action Management - the ability to control behaviour, self-monitor, and learn from mistakes.

Task Management the ability to organize, plan, prioritize, and manage time.

Information Management - the ability to remember, organize, and retrieve information

Emotion Management - the ability to experience emotions without impulsively acting on them

The bedrock of raising happy and resilient children rests on the developmental path of executive function. Executive Function refers to our mental capacity to manage life. Executive Function involves skills like decision-making, self-monitoring, and planning. These skills begins to develop in childhood and continues throughout adulthood (Bertin,2018).

Effort Management - the ability to persevere when activities are challenging, sustain focus, and work efficiently.

Taking time to support a child's emerging Executive Function skills allows not only them but also entire families to thrive.

RESILIENCE

The Seven C's in building Resilience

1- COMPETENCE - the ability to handle situations effectively and is acquired through actual experience. Children cannot become competent without first developing a set of skills that allows them to trust their judgments, make responsible choices, and face difficult situations. Effective ways to help in building competence :

Ginsburg and Joblow (2020) suggested the Seven C's in building Resilience — Competence, Confidence, Connection, Character, Contribution, Coping, and Control.

Do's

Don'ts

Focus and build on their strengths

Reinforce the positives

Give positive criticism

Communicate in ways that empower

Support in all areas of involvement

Guide their decisions

Comfort disappointments

Interfere   **Compare**   **Undermine**

RESILIENCE

The Seven C's in building Resilience

2 - CONFIDENCE – the belief in one's own abilities. Children gain confidence by demonstrating their competence in real situations. Children who experience their own competence and know they are safe and protected develop a deep-seated security that promotes the confidence to cope with challenges. When parents support children in finding their own islands of competence and building on them, they prepare kids to gain enough confidence to try new ventures and trust their abilities to make sound choices.

Do's

- See the best in your children
- Encourage them to go further
- Believe in them
- Complement them on the morals & values they display
- Have reasonable expect
- Praise them for their effort & accomplishment
- Remind them about their abilities & capabilities

Don'ts

- Do not Embarrass them or criticize them

RESILIENCE

The Seven C's in building Resilience

3 - CHARACTER – the mental and moral quality distinctive to an individual. A fundamental sense of right and wrong is needed to ensure they are prepared to make wise choices, to contribute to society, and become stable and functioning individuals. Children with character enjoy a strong sense of self-worth and confidence and are comfortable with their values, as they demonstrate a caring attitude towards others

Do's

Model & encourage positive, empathic, caring behaviours.

Allow their views and opinions of right and wrong.

Understand their morals and values.

Encourage spiritual growth.

Show & encourage respect for all cultures, ethnicities etc.

Encourage effort and persistence.

Protect them from hate crimes and hateful statements as much possible.

Practice patience in everything.

RESILIENCE

The Seven C's in building Resilience

4 - CONNECTION – ties to family, friends, school, and community. Family is the central force in any child's life, but connections to educational, religious, social, and sports groups can also increase a young person's sense of belonging.

Do's

Provide a safe physical and emotional environment.

ALWAYS SHOW AND EMPHASIZE UNCONDITIONAL LOVE.

Understand and support THEIR JOURNEY .

Introduce other capable form of support personnel.

Be open with communication.

Create family time.

Address and resolve problems, conflicts, concerns, issues through respectful and non- abusive ways.

Encourage participation in various ethnic, religious, or cultural groups.

Foster healthy relationships with others who will reinforce positive messages.

RESILIENCE

The Seven C's in building Resilience

5 - CONTRIBUTION - Children who understand the importance of personal contribution gain a sense of purpose that can motivate them. It is a powerful lesson when children realize that the world is a better place because they are in it. A sense of personal contribution does not only foster action & choices that improves their world it also enhance their own competence, character, and sense of connection. Children who contribute to their communities become surrounded with reinforcement "Thank Yous" then condemnations & low expectations. They also pave & inspire others like themselves to contribute.

Do's

Encourage the expression of gratitude for accomplishments.

Encourage the value of service to others.

Model generosity with time and possessions.

Use role models as guides to encourage your children to be the best they can.

Equally distribute your time, resources, and attention when and where it is needed.

RESILIENCE

The Seven C's in building Resilience

6 - COPING – applying skills to minimize the effects of any negative situation, thought or feeling. Children who learn to cope effectively with stress are better prepared to overcome life's challenges.

Do's

Be clear and specific using defining terms.

Be as consistent with coping strategies.

Introduce effective coping skills to your children.

Approach problem solving using a step by step process.

Introduce and encourage self-care strategies to your children.

Create a family environment in which talking, listening, and sharing are safe, comfortable, and productive.

RESILIENCE

The Seven C's in building Resilience

7 - CONTROL – the ability to influence or direct the outcome of situations, thoughts, behaviours and feelings. When children realize that they can control the outcomes of their decisions and actions, they are more likely to know that they have the ability to do what it takes to bounce back, which increases their competence and confidence.

Do's

Emphasize that most things happen as a result of someone's choices and actions.

Stay focus and calm in negative situations.

Reinforce positive thoughts.

PARENTAL RESOURCES

A parent's personal resources include their knowledge, education, and experience with children, attitudes towards child-rearing, and history of relationships including how they were parented themselves as children.
The African proverb "It takes a village to raise a child" speaks to the importance of parents having access to strong community support in parenting

Resources include:

Peer or friendship network

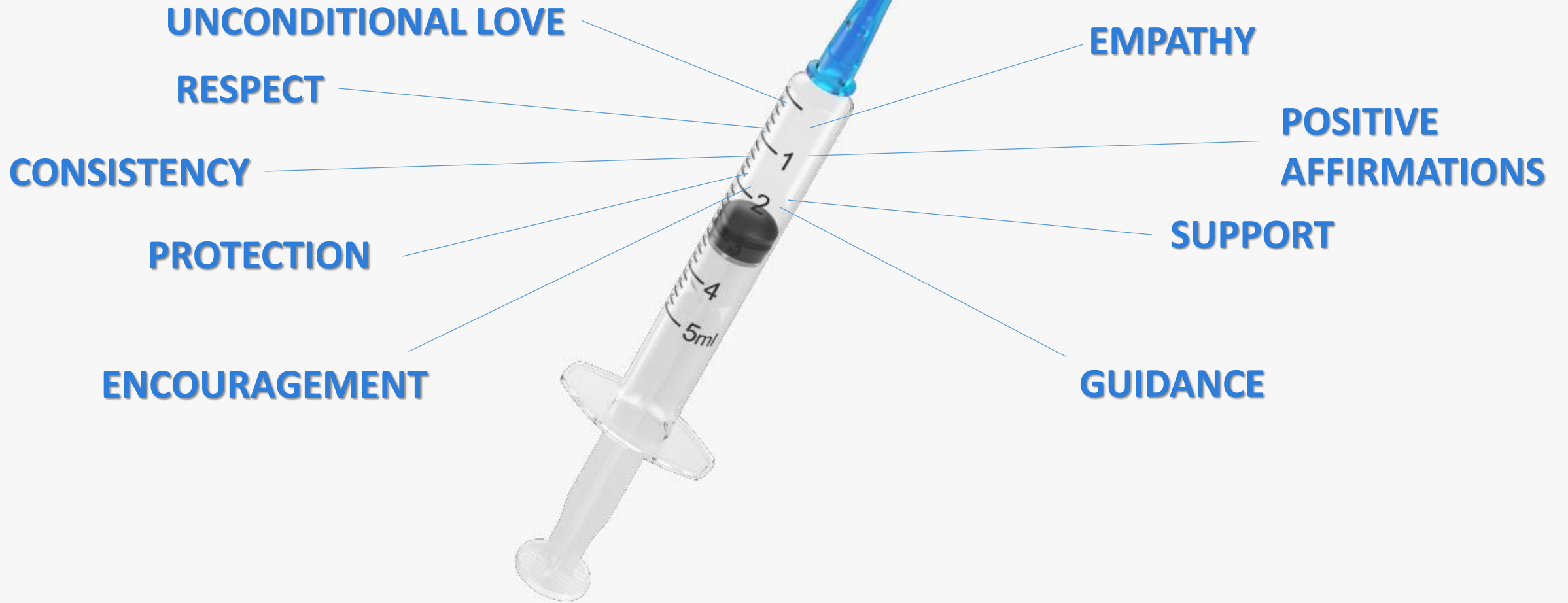Extended Family

Professionals Support Groups

Religious Institutions

Having access to the experience and wisdom of other parents, or people interested in the welfare of children, provides a valuable source of information and emotional support that can promote a parent's ability to deal with unfamiliar or difficult parenting situations particularly for parents of children with special needs (Wang, Huang, & Kong, 2017).

AS WE MOVE FORWARD

Let us remember that we can psychologically vaccinate our children and charges with:

UNCONDITIONAL LOVE

RESPECT

CONSISTENCY

PROTECTION

ENCOURAGEMENT

EMPATHY

POSITIVE AFFIRMATIONS

SUPPORT

GUIDANCE

Thank You

Please remember that in a society such as ours with our 1.4 million citizens (as of January 2021) , and the orientation of our population density; none of us can be truly isolated and insulated from societal problems. Children need love, support, connection, and community.

"The child who is not embraced by the village will burn it down to feel its warmth."

African Proverb

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