



Building Strong Brains

Six-Hour Professional Development Session for Elementary Schools

Why?

- Tennessee Department of Education 2015-16 Educator Survey
 - 73 percent of teachers reported a need for further support in meeting the non-academic needs of students
- Strategic plan *All Means All* priority areas:
 - Chronically out of school
 - Discipline
- Tennessee ACEs Initiative: <https://www.tn.gov/dcs/program-areas/child-health/aces.html>

Equality vs. Equity



EQUALITY

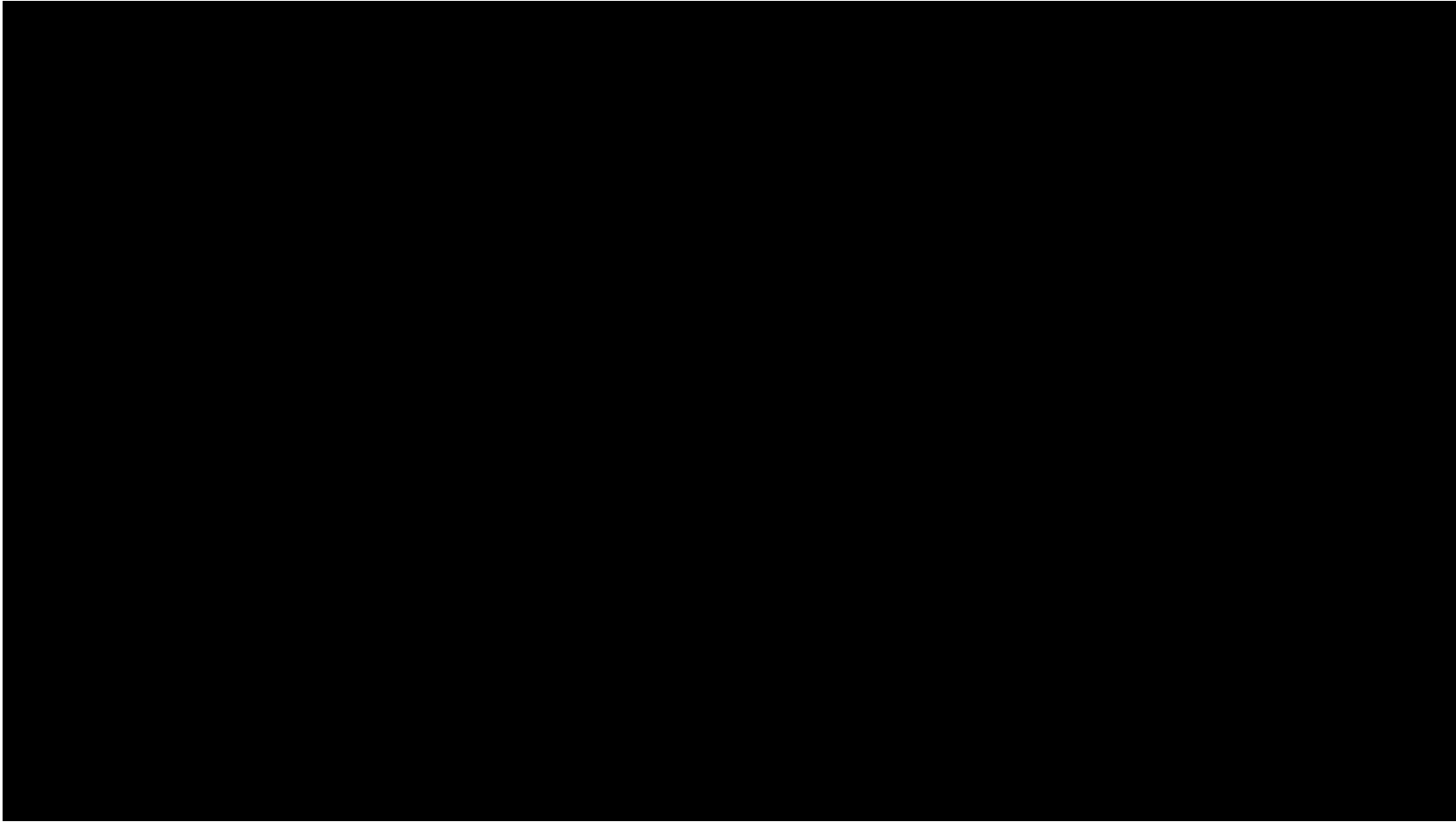


EQUITY

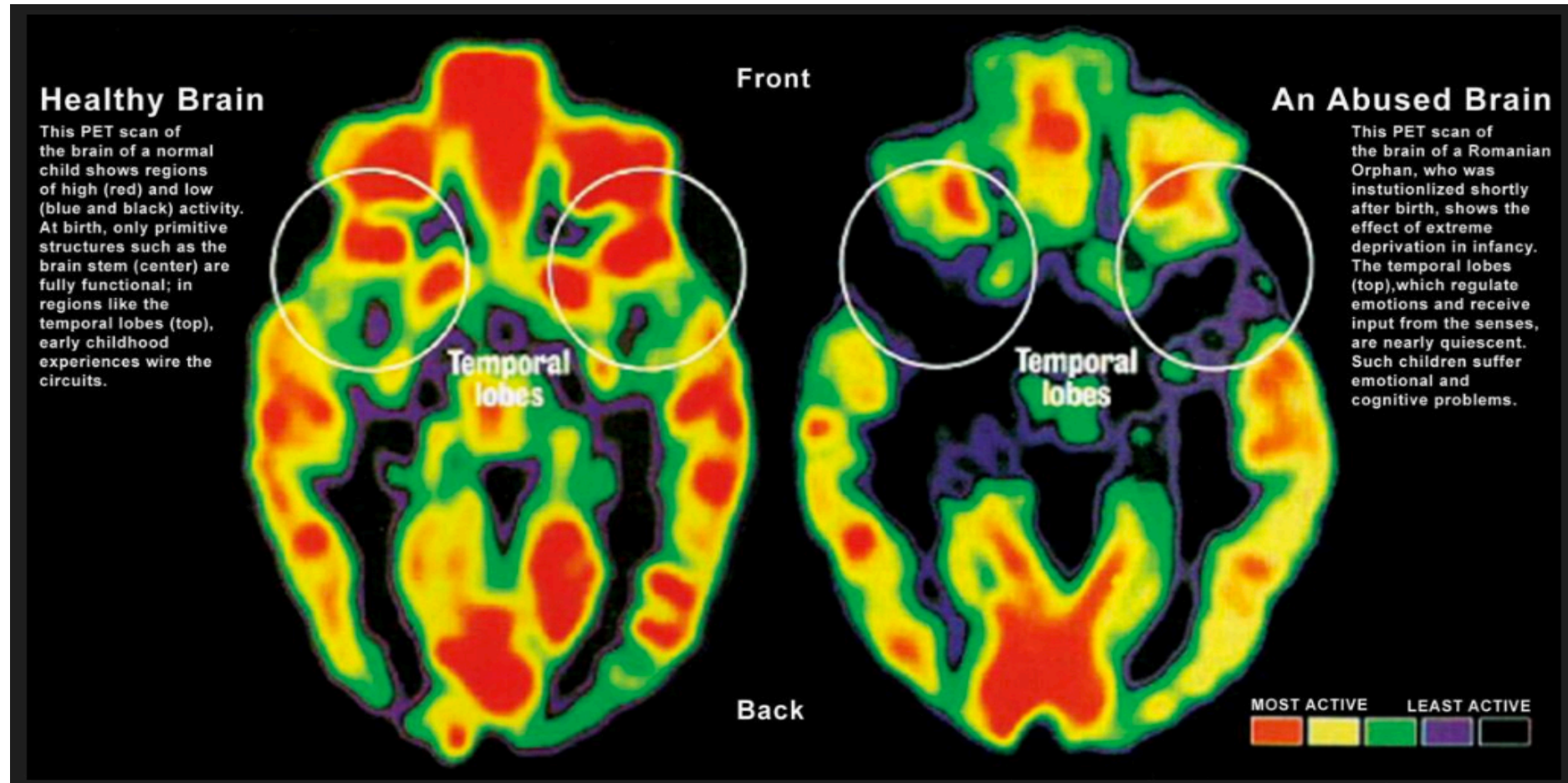
Four Core Concepts of Development

1. **Brain architecture** is established early in life and supports lifelong learning, behavior, and health.
2. **Toxic stress** in the early years of life can derail healthy development.
3. Stable, caring relationships and “**serve and return**” interaction shape brain architecture.
4. **Resilience** can be built through “serve and return” relationships, improving self-regulation and executive.

How are Brains Built?



What Childhood Neglect Tells Us About Nature vs. Nurture



Bottom Up Processing

Neocortex (planning, judgement,...):

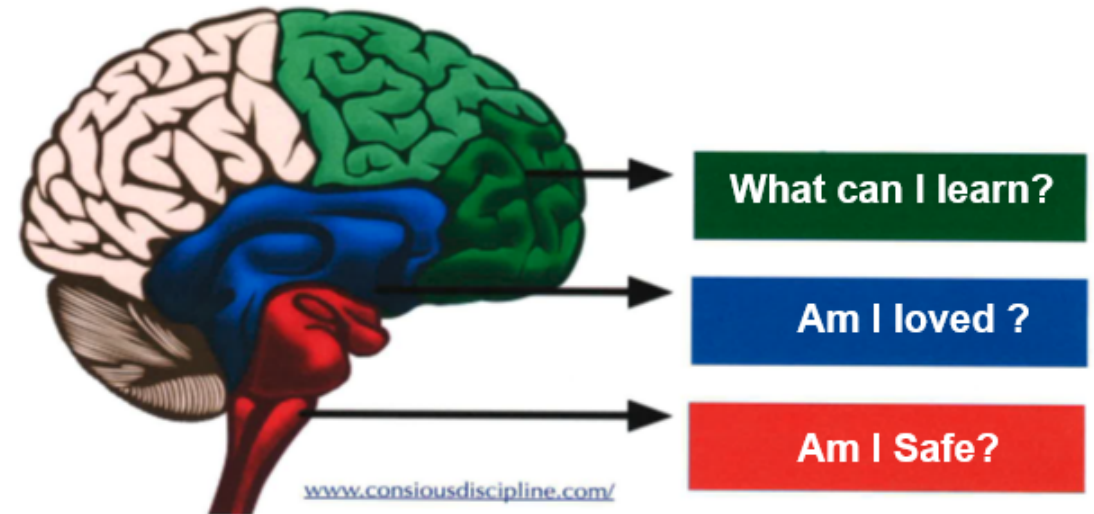
What can I learn from this?

Limbic System (emotions):

Am I loved?

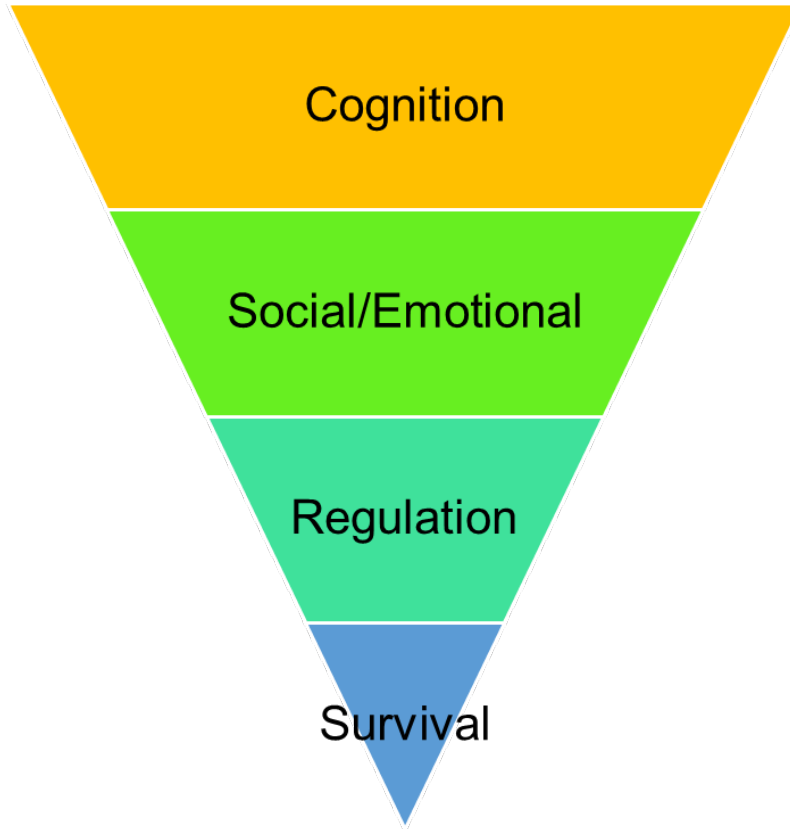
Brain Stem:

Am I safe?

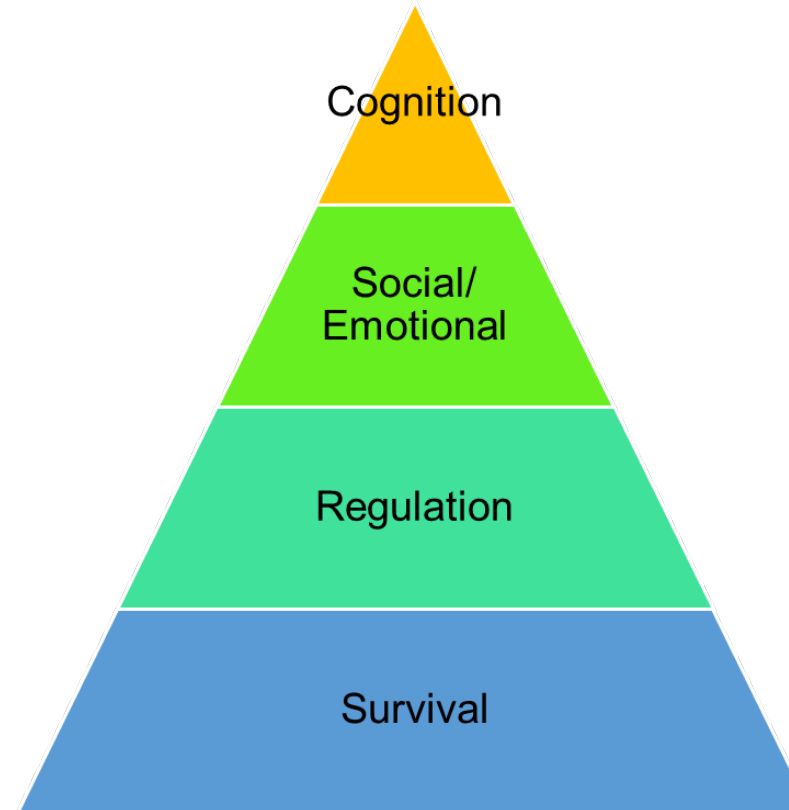


Top Down vs. Bottom Up

Typical Development



Developmental Trauma



Three Types of Stress

Positive Stress



Short, stressful events like meeting new people or starting the first day of school are healthy for brain development. They prepare the brain and body for stressful situations later in life.

Tolerable Stress



Tragic, unavoidable events like a natural disaster or losing a loved one aren't good for us. But if supportive caregivers are around to buffer the stress response, these events won't do lasting damage to the brain and body.

Toxic Stress



Ongoing, repeated exposure to abuse or neglect is bad for brain development. If no supportive adults are present to help buffer the stress response, stress hormones will damage developing structures in the child's brain. The result is an increased vulnerability to lifelong physical and mental health problems, including addiction.

3 R's for Fostering Resilience

Compassion is a prerequisite for fostering resilience.

- **Relationship**

- Connection that conveys caring, cooperation and hope.

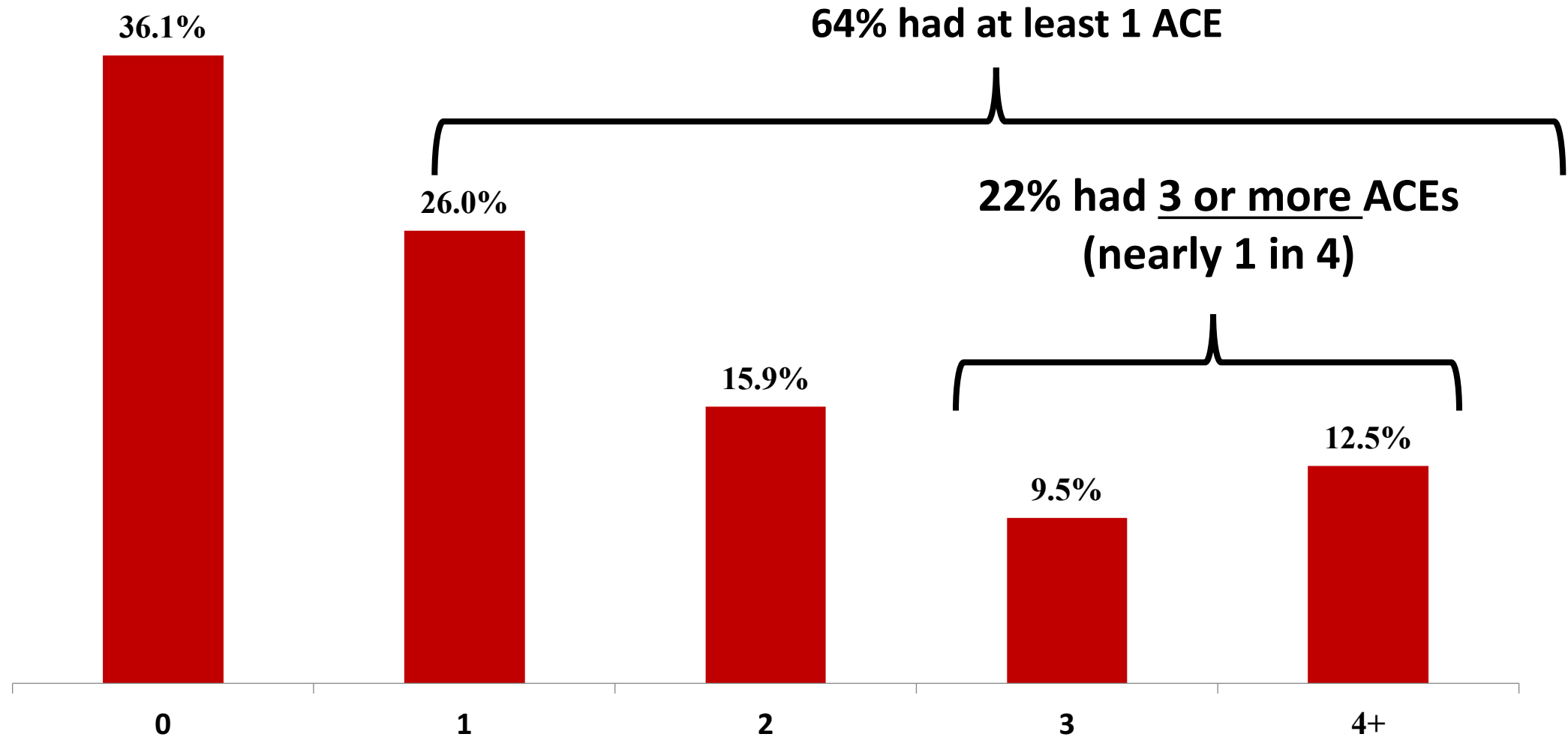
- **Respect**

- Mutual, unconditional respect for each individual and their boundaries and challenges, through appropriate expectations, consequences, activities and materials.

- **Reasonable**

- Teacher accommodations for student needs that are reasonable given the challenges of most school environments and the realities of ACEs of many students.

Number of ACEs Experienced Before Age 18 by Adults in CDC-Kaiser ACE Study



ACEs include:

Abuse and Neglect

- Child physical abuse
- Child sexual abuse
- Child emotional abuse
- Emotional neglect
- Physical neglect

Indicators of Family Dysfunction

- Mentally ill, depressed, or suicidal person in the home
- Drug addicted or alcoholic family member
- Witnessing domestic violence against the mother
- Parental discord – indicated by divorce, separation, abandonment
- Incarceration of any family member

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5 Critical Steps to Implementing A Trauma-Informed School

Concept	Mantra	Strategy
1. The stress is coming from outside.	It's not about me.	Drop your personal mirror.
2. Allow the student to de-escalate and regulate before solving the issue.	Problem solving and solutions can't be worked through while "in the moment."	Designate a quiet place(s) where students can feel safe to de-escalate.
3. It's never about the issue at hand. It goes much deeper.	What's really driving this child's behavior?	Be the one who listens and values the student's voice...ask how you can help. Explore the underlying issue behind the behavior.
4. It's a brain issue, not a behavior issue.	My job is to help this school regulate, not simply behave.	Incorporate regulatory activities into the culture of the classroom and support students in their ability to learn how to self-regulate.
5. Discipline is to teach, not to punish.	Discipline should happen through the context of relationships.	Use consequences that keep students in school and foster the building of trust and safety with caring adults.

How is school employee wellness like airplane safety?

“...Place the oxygen mask on yourself first before helping small children or others who may need your assistance.”



See it in Action: Fall-Hamilton Elementary - Transitioning to Trauma-Informed Practices to Support Learning

