



# Toxic Stress

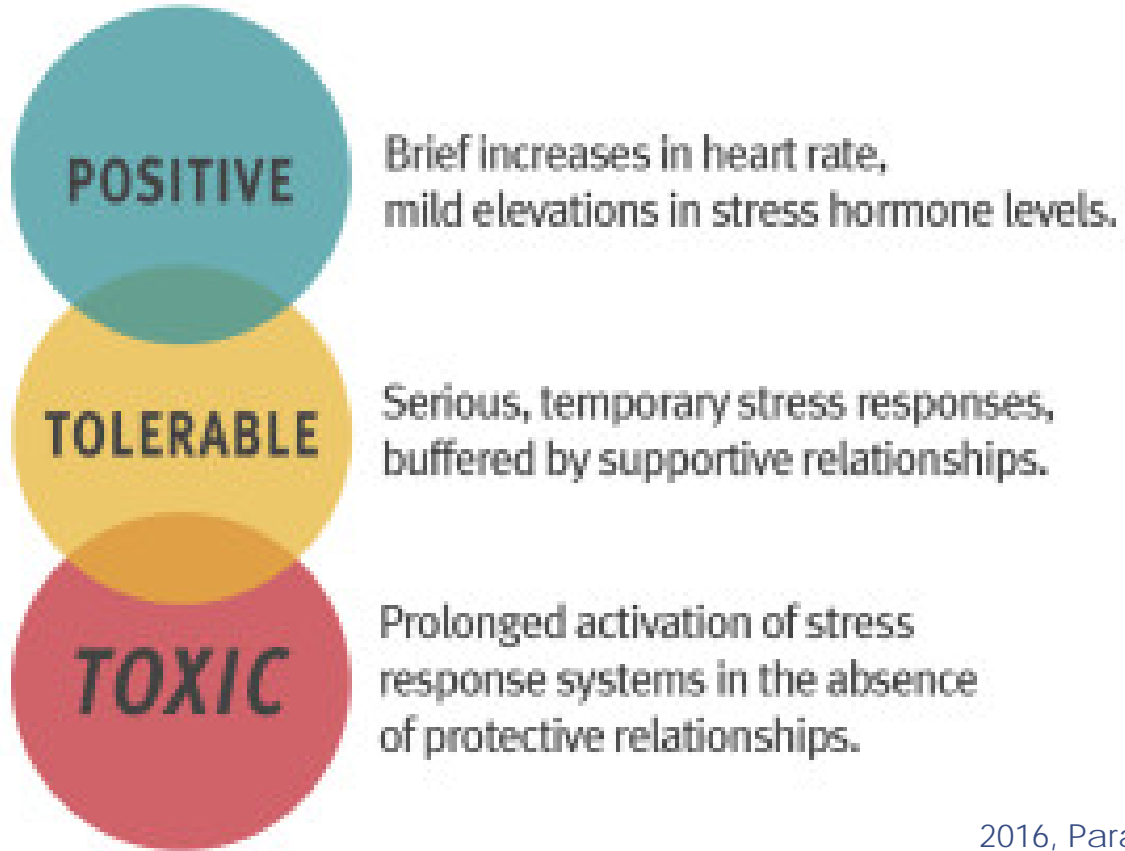
## HPOG Meeting 2016

Margaret P. Moss, PhD, JD, RN, FAAN  
Hidatsa/Lakota  
Asst. Dean of Diversity & Inclusion  
Assoc. Professor- UB School of Nursing

# Overview

- Definitions: Toxic Stress, Historical Trauma, Cultural Competence, Trauma Informed Care, Resilience
- Concepts:
  - Toxic Stress and Historical Trauma impact student success
  - Pipeline
- Strategies:
  - Implement tenets of cultural competence and trauma-informed care to strengthen resilience and create a learning environment conducive to success
  - Implement supportive services to low-income/vulnerable students who may suffer from Toxic-Stress.

# Definitions- Toxic Stress



2016, Para 3

Measured response to stress as experienced firsthand by an individual using vital signs, and cortisol levels the 'stress hormone'

# Definitions: Historical Trauma

- Sustained, targeted, trauma to one's Ancestors with effects on today's individual-Unresolved Grief

Maria Braveheart (1992)

- Government
- Epigenetics
- Royal Winnipeg Ballet-  
*Going Home Star: Truth and Reconciliation*



# What Happens When...

## Historical Trauma

- Crushing from above (previous generations)

## + Contemporaneous Trauma

- Crushing head on (today)

## =Education/Health

- Poor outcomes

- Unseen

- Ignored

- Educators/Programs Cannot understand why?

# Examples on How Toxic Stress and Historical Trauma impact student success

## American Indian

- “When I get raped...” - Overheard at Chiefs’ meeting in the Plains by young teens.



Photo from: <https://www.gofundme.com/rs5hdncw>

## African American

- African American teenaged male practices ‘getting shot’ and does not sleep at night- hypervigilant. (from presentation at IOM on violence- 2013)



# Definition of Cultural Competence

“Cultural competence is the ability of an individual to understand and respect values, attitudes, beliefs, and mores that differ across cultures, and to consider and respond appropriately to these differences in planning, implementing, and evaluating [health] education and promotion programs and interventions..”

*American Association for Health Education*



# Why is Cultural Competence Needed?

## American Indian Students:

- See that indigenous knowledge not honored or valuable
- Oral tradition doesn't 'fit' with educational modalities
- They have to fit not vice versa (ex from nursing-Moss)
- Takes energy (that is already depleted) to live/study in two worlds

## Immigrant/Int'l Students:

- Cultural cannot ask for help
- Often left behind off program cycle
- Now need more money to maintain
- See others from their 'legal class' in the same boat
- Loss of hope



# Trauma Informed Care/Approach

## SAMHSA's Six Key Principles of a Trauma-Informed Approach

"...generalizable across multiple types of settings, although terminology and application may be setting- or sector-specific:

- Safety
- Trustworthiness and Transparency
- Peer support
- Collaboration and mutuality
- Empowerment, voice and choice
- Cultural, Historical, and Gender Issues" (SAMHSA, 2016, para 3).

# What you Need to Know about Trauma

- Specific Type of Trauma
- Severity, Duration, and Frequency of Trauma
- Age, Gender, of the Child &
- Relationship to any Perpetrator(s)
- Remember- can be in the Community- Red Lake Reservation, or Detroit for ex.
- Any PTSD factors
- Response to any Treatment/Intervention

# Concept: The Educational Pipeline

The idea is to help lift the student to be able to matriculate into a program/degree and be successful!



Then the student successfully emerges at the other end!



# What Really Happens!



# What Causes the Holes?

- Family/community disturbances (often 'back home') ex UMN
- Pressures from 'back home' to quit
- Religious doings
- Childbearing
- Lack of money, jobs, role models
- Depression, anxiety, substance issues, guilt, PTSD

# Strategies

“The more adverse experiences in childhood, the greater the likelihood of developmental delays and later health problems, including heart disease, diabetes, substance abuse, and depression.” para 3

The more positive adult relationships a student has can help mitigate and even reverse effects of childhood toxic stress.

Source: <http://developingchild.harvard.edu/science/key-concepts/toxic-stress/>

# So What to Do with the Leaky Pipeline?

- Support and Relationships must be maintained throughout education-
- Make no assumptions-ask
- Don't try to 'plug' *all* the holes
- Instead anticipate and support as they may be cultural in nature (i.e. not just a matter of money, housing, bias etc.)



# Definition: Resilience

“The ability to overcome adverse conditions and to function normatively in the face of risk” (Jenson & Fraser, 2015, p.8).



Photo: Spirit Bowl- Moss 2000



# Actions

Implement tenets of cultural competence and trauma-informed care to strengthen resilience and create a learning environment conducive to success

## Cultural Competence

- Crushing from above  
(previous generations)

## Trauma-Informed Care

- Crushing head on (today)

## =Education/Health

- Optimum outcomes

- See and understand the issues

- Do not ignore what is happening now

- Strengthen resiliency

# A Program that is Culturally Competent Has:

- Program Staff with knowledge of or sensitivity to the first language of clients
- Program Staff understanding of the cultural nuances of the client population-including understanding importance of spirituality
- Program Staff backgrounds similar to those of the client population
- Methods that reflect the culture-specific values and education needs of clients
- Inclusion of the client population in program policy-making and decision-making action methods that reflect the culture-specific values and needs of clients
- Ongoing Staff/Faculty development

# A Program that Understands T-I Care

- Realizes the widespread impact of trauma and understands potential paths for recovery;
- Recognizes the signs and symptoms of trauma in clients, families, staff, and others involved with the system;
- Responds by fully integrating knowledge about trauma into policies, procedures, and practices; and
- Seeks to actively resist re-traumatization.”

(SAMHSA, 2016, para 2)

# Questions?



Photo: Moss 2012- Fort Berthold Reservation, ND