

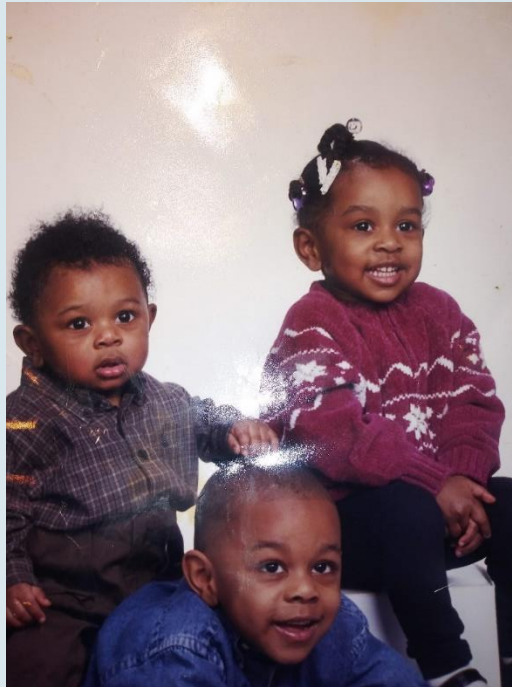
Strategies for Building Resilience with Social Emotional Learning

Will Weeks, BA, CTRC
Resilience Coach and Trainer

weeksw@starr.org



Introductions



Today's Agenda



Focus on Resilience



Understand Trauma as an Experience



Foster Emotional Regulation and Connections



Prioritize Social-Emotional Skill Development



Establish Safety with SEL

Remember...
Stressed Brains
Can't Learn!

Starr Commonwealth

- Starr provides a wide array of services for children, families, communities, and professionals. From prevention and intervention, to enrichment and residential treatment, all of our trauma-informed, resilience-based programs are rooted on creating powerful and positive experiences for all to heal, and for all to thrive.



Driven to Heal

- Since 1913, Starr Commonwealth has led with courage to create positive experiences so that all children, families, and communities can flourish.
- We identify and assess the impacts of toxic stress and trauma on children and design and implement interventions that build resilience, heal pain, and create new pathways to success and opportunity. Then we teach others what we know and what works.
- We've had over 100 years of working with youth and 30 years of sharing our expertise with social workers, counselors, teachers, schools, and organizations.
- With direct services across Michigan and professional training and coaching in all 50 states, over 60 countries, and 6 continents, we are

Driven to Heal.





Pursuing Partnerships

We are driving to influence professionals around the world, from teachers, social workers, educators, nurses, doctors, and beyond, with the latest evidence based practices that will help children achieve whole health and success in life.

Partnering with healthcare systems, hospitals, schools, and institutions of higher education are critical to changing practice for better outcomes. We are excited about the many opportunities we all have to help to create a world full of *Universal Hope, Boundless Love, and Limitless Success for all Children.*

If you see a potential alignment with Starr Commonwealth, we want to talk with you. It is through partnerships that all children will experience universal hope, boundless love, and limitless success.



About Self-care.....



Starr Commonwealth is Committed

Committed Then



Committed Now



What is the best place to positively impact children outside of the home?



Call to Action

The *National Center for Traumatic Stress Network* is now asking schools to play a key role in addressing the needs of traumatized children.





STARR
COMMONWEALTH

Children of Trauma

- **Over 50% of the nation's children** have experienced at least one or more types of serious childhood trauma (34,835,978 children nationwide)
- **33% of children** have experienced two or more types of childhood adversity
- **15% of all girls ages 14-17** have experienced sexual assault
- **33% of students** have been bullied
- **60% of students 17 years or younger** have been exposed to crime, violence, and abuse
- **30% of students in inner-city schools** have witnessed a stabbing or shooting
- **16 million children in the United States** live at or below the poverty level (6 million are under the age of 6)

(National Survey of Children's Health – CDC, 2017)

Trauma

Any experience that leaves a person feeling hopeless, helpless, fearing for their life/survival, or their safety.

This experience can be **REAL** or **PERCEIVED**.





STARR
COMMONWEALTH

We Begin Here: **RESILIENCE**

We can't talk about making a school trauma-informed without talking about how to make a school resilience-focused.

We may not be able to take away toxic stress and trauma a child has experienced or will continue to experience in their homes and communities, but we can create new experiences of resilience in our schools.

Resilience = Hope



Step 1

Focus on Resilience

What is Resilience?

- *...the ability to achieve positive outcomes – mentally, emotionally, socially, and spiritually –*
- *despite adversity.*



4 Main Protective Factors for Resilient Children



Supportive adult-child relationships



A sense of self-efficacy and perceived control



Adaptive skills and self-regulatory capacities



Sources of faith, hope and cultural traditions

Circle of Courage



VIDEO



Who Remembers...



- What are the 4 **Protective Factors** resilience research today indicates as most important?

This is Practice Based Evidence -1913 to Present



Supportive adult-child relationships

Belonging



A sense of self-efficacy and perceived control

Mastery



Adaptive skills and self-regulatory capacities

Independence



Sources of faith, hope and cultural traditions

Generosity



STARR
COMMONWEALTH

Belonging

The presence of a strong sense of belonging makes young people more receptive to guidance from other community members. And, even if parents/caregivers are struggling – there are others there to help children.



Mastery

- The goal for mastery should be to achieve one's potential and then contribute to and provide for the greater community.



Independence

- **In contrast to obedience models of discipline, teaching should be designed to build respect and teach inner discipline.**
- **Children should be encouraged to make decisions, solve problems, and show personal responsibility.**
- **To learn and practice emotional awareness and regulation.**



Generosity



- In helping others, we create our own proof of worthiness, for we have the power to make positive contributions to the world.



Step 2

Understanding Trauma as an Experience

Broken Circles



Generosity

Independence



Belonging

Mastery

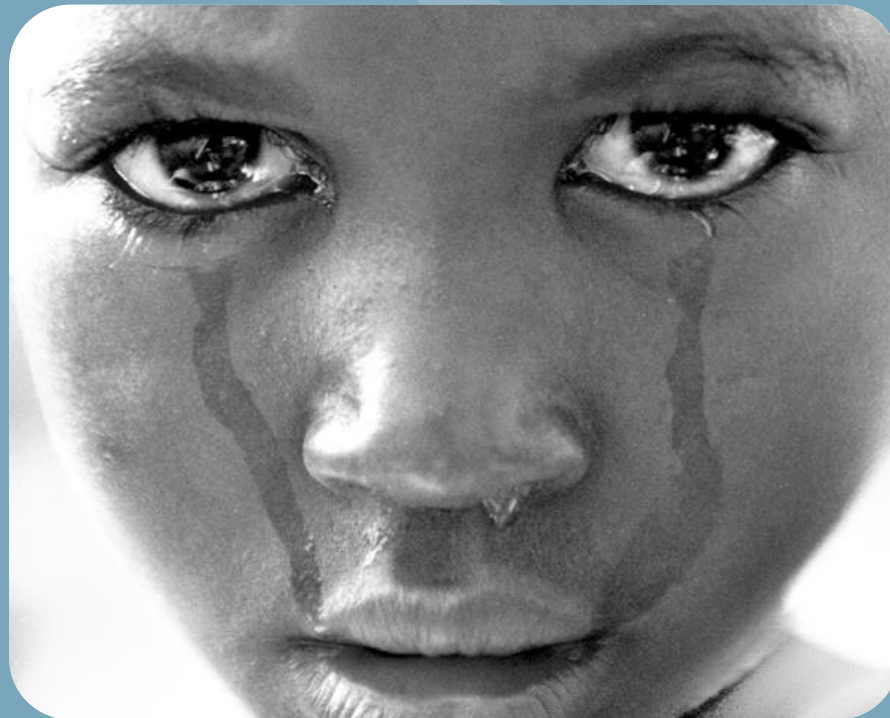


STARR
COMMONWEALTH

How do circles become broken?



TRAUMA



We can Experience Trauma in Many Ways

The causes of trauma are less important than **how trauma manifests** in a client's life...

It is important to understand we can **experience trauma** in many ways.



Trauma Exposure

Victim

(e.g., abuse, neglect, car accident)

Witness

(e.g., personal witness – domestic violence, police, fire)

Related to

(e.g., peer, siblings – of chronically ill siblings, sibling that completed suicide)

Listening to details of trauma

(e.g., therapists, media exposure, video games, etc.)



Types of Trauma

Type 1 – Single exposure

Type 2 – One type of exposure that is repeated OR exposure to one or two different events

Type 3 – **Toxic Stress** and Developmental Trauma Disorder





STARR
COMMONWEALTH

Developmental Trauma Disorder

A proposed diagnosis to help us understand the symptoms and reactions children experience when they have grown and developed in a constant state of stress and trauma.

- Robert Pynoos and Bessel van der Kolk in 2005, 2009, 2013 –
 - with no success for approval by the APA

Trauma-Informed Resilient Schools

Understand the impact stress and trauma have on children's bodies and their ability to regulate emotions, behavior, and ultimately learn



Trauma-Informed Resilient Schools

Recognize the strong and significant correlation between **trauma** and **low academic achievement**.

The causes of trauma are less important than **how trauma manifests in** a client's life...

It is important to understand we can **experience trauma** in many ways.



Trauma's Impact on the Brain

OUTER BRAIN

(THINKING)

- Language
- Reasoning
- Understanding
- Processing

DEEP BRAIN

(SENSORY)

- Senses
- Affect
- Emotional Regulation
- Memory

Trauma-Informed Resilient Schools

Why should you be convinced that you and your school becoming trauma-informed and resilience-focused will help?



Why should you be convinced that becoming trauma informed and resilience focused will help?



Improved Academic Achievement and Test Scores



Improved School Climate



Improved Teacher Sense of Satisfaction and Retention



Reduced Frequency of Behavioral Outbursts and Referrals



Reduced Stress Experienced by Staff and Students



Reduced Absences, Use of Detention, and Suspensions



Reduced Bullying, Harassment, and Fights



Reduced Burden on Special Education Services

Overlapping Symptoms

Symptomology	ADHD	PTSD
Hypervigilance	X	X
Inattention	X	X
Detachment	X	X
Irritability	X	X
Anger Outbursts	X	X
Distracted	X	X
Restless	X	X
Impatient	X	X
Impulsive	X	X
Limited sense of future	X	X
Difficulty Concentrating	X	X

(Weinstein et al., 2000)

What do trauma- informed resilient schools have in common?

10 Steps to Creating a Trauma-Informed Resilient School



1. Focus on Resilience



2. Understand Trauma as an Experience



3. Foster Connections



4. Prioritize Social-Emotional Skill Development



5. Establish Safety



6. Promote Play



7. Believe the Link Between Private Logic and Behavior



8. Collaborate with Families & Communities



9. Support and Invest in Staff



10. Collect and Utilize Outcome Data

...Where
ALL Children
Thrive



About the Ten Steps

It is **hard to identify** the most important step.

The steps **overlap...**

The steps are **not linear...**

With each small implementation,
the **benefits are significant...**



Be patient with the process.

What does being trauma-informed and resilience-focused really mean?

What is Trauma-Informed and Resilience-Focused Education?

- It is a **MINDSET**



What is Trauma-Informed and Resilience-Focused Education?

- It is being curious rather than “all knowing”
- It is asking or wondering:
 - *What happened or what is happening in this student’s life?*
 - *What is already right for this student?*
 - *What are the strengths of this student?*



Trauma-Informed and Resilience- Focused

Trauma-informed and
resilience-focused
schools foster the
possibility of well-being
by restoring and
nurturing resilience –
**despite other life
adversity.**



What is Trauma-Informed and Resilience-Focused Education?

It is asking, "What experiences are driving the way this child thinks about themselves and others?"

And, "How does that impact the way they behave?"



What is Trauma-Informed and Resilience Focused Education?

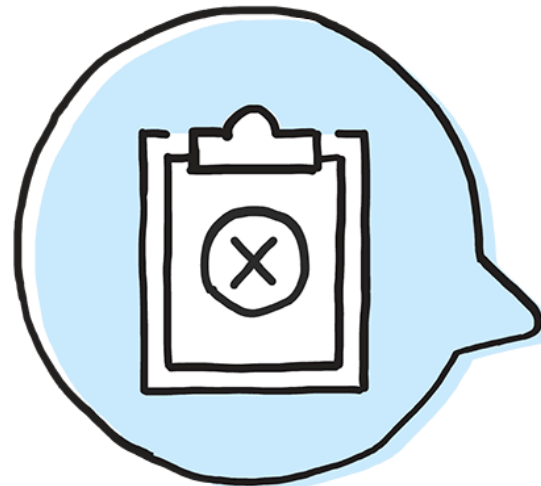
It is wondering, "*What can I do to support this student most?*"

And, "*What are the new opportunities and experiences I can provide this child to restore and nurture resilience, despite all they have experienced?*"



What is Trauma-Informed and Resilience-Focused Education?

- It is **NOT** asking, “What is wrong with this child?”
- It is **NOT** labeling
- It is **NOT** diagnosing without first REALLY assessing



The Most Important Thing You Will Hear Today...

Trauma-Informed and Resilience-Focused Education is a [MINDSET](#)





STARR
COMMONWEALTH

The bad news is,
TRAUMA is a fact...

The good news is,
so is **RESILIENCE!**



Step 3

Foster Emotional Regulation and Connections



STARR
COMMONWEALTH

School Connectedness

School connectedness is the strongest factor in reducing incidence of:

- Anxiety
- Depression
- Suicide
- Substance abuse
- Violence

A protective factor for all students, regardless of race, ethnicity, and level of family income.



Connections

The single most common factor for children who develop resilience is at least **one stable and committed relationship with a supportive parent, caregiver, or other adult.**



Bids for Connection

Acts of caring, teaching, learning, and love!

Kids learn and grow when meaningful connections are made with adults they can trust.

Like a tennis match... Serve and return... Accept and make bids to connect. Repeatedly!

We know how much stress changes the brain...





STARR
COMMONWEALTH

Connections Assessment



5:1 Interactions Ratio

Increase the number of **positive interactions** with students instead of negative interactions.

(e.g., friendly conversation, nonverbal acknowledgement, praise vs. criticism, punishment, negative or non-existent nonverbal towards student)

The critical ratio is 5:1

Increase connectedness → student feels engaged → motivation increases → academic achievement and regulated behavior



Relationship Skills

- **Clear communication**
- **Active listening**
- **Cooperation**
- **Resisting inappropriate social pressure**
- **Conflict negotiation**
- **Seeking and offering help when needed**





STARR
COMMONWEALTH

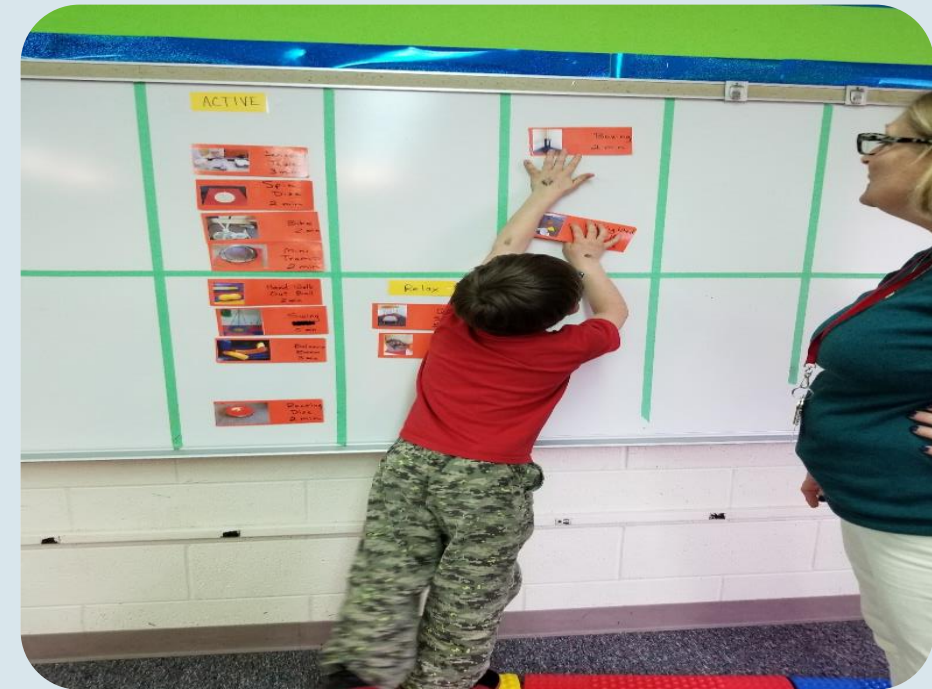
Classroom Meetings



Sensory Diets & Sensory Rooms

- “It is not a punishment room; it is not a time-out room—it is a room where you feel better going out than when you went in.”

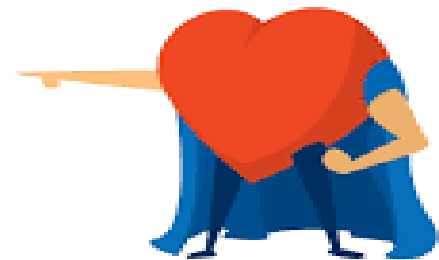
- –Principal, El Dorado Elementary School, San Francisco, CA



Emotional Awareness

- **What messages is my body sending me?**
- **What is my experience in the here and now?**

MUST PRACTICE!



Emotional Regulation & Trauma

Trauma survivors often have somatic or body experiences that are linked to overwhelming body sensations, negative emotion, and maladaptive thoughts that are all easily activated by triggers (internal or external).

- The triggers often **NEGATIVELY** impact a traumatized youth's ability to regulate emotions and control behavior.



STARR
COMMONWEALTH

What is Emotional Regulation?

EMOTIONAL REGULATION is:

- The development of the ability to ***maintain*** a well-regulated emotional state to cope with everyday stress.
- The ability to ***differentiate*** between emotions and body sensations.
- The ability to ***notice*** the sensation even if you don't know WHY these sensations are coming up AND to be able to ***manage*** them.

It doesn't just happen!

It must be experienced (co-regulated), and practiced.



STARR
COMMONWEALTH



Relationship Skills

Emotional Awareness

Emotional Regulation

Self Regulation & Universal Needs: Circle of Courage



Source: Brendtro, L.K., Brokenleg, M. & Von Bockern, S., 2002, *Reclaiming youth at risk. Our hope for the future*, Rev. edn., Jossey-Bass, San Francisco, CA

FIGURE 2: Universal growth needs according to the Circle of Courage.





STARR
COMMONWEALTH

Belonging

Attachment and Significance

"I am important to someone and they want to know what my life is like, not only what is wrong with me but what is good about me to."

How can educators connect with students?

- Be continuously curious about how the child is experiencing their world.
- Get to know them!
- Find out their likes, dislikes.
- Explore what they need most to feel supported.



STARR
COMMONWEALTH

Mastery

Achievement and Competence

"For once I feel like I am good at something."

"I am in control of my behavior and reactions."

"There is more to me than just my stress and trauma..."

How can educators promote mastery?

- Identify each student's potential.
- Teach emotional awareness and regulation and then practice with them.
- Provide opportunities for students to experience their strengths.



STARR
COMMONWEALTH

Independence

Autonomy and Power

"I have a choice."

How can educators promote a sense of independence?

- Provide choices.
- Provide options for the best ways they can be ready to learn.



STARR
COMMONWEALTH

Generosity

Altruism/Virtue

"I have value and I can help others."

How can educators help students feel valuable?

- Help students feel that they are not alone – this helps them to develop empathy for others.
- Point out student's self worth.
- Provide opportunities for them to experience their value when they help others!

**Awareness +
Practice =
Self-
Regulation**



Step 4

Prioritize Social and Emotional Skill Development

Social and Emotional Skills

School **MUST** be more than standardized tests, they must **enhance social and emotional learning**.

School is often the **ONLY** true socialization environment for children (especially those living in poverty)



Social & Emotional Skills

- Improves attitude towards self, school, and others
- Enhances positive pro-social behavior
- Reduces conduct problems (e.g., misbehavior & aggression)
- Reduces emotional distress (e.g., stress & depression)
- Improves academic performance (e.g., test scores & school grades)



Social & Emotional Skills



Difficulty regulating emotions can lead to a host of problems in the school setting:

- Poor impulse control
- Aggression
- Trouble interpreting the emotional signals of others
- Chronic uncertainty about the reliability of others
- Lack of a predictable sense of self
- Difficulties with concentration and learning



STARR
COMMONWEALTH

Feelings & Sensations



Sensation Words

Dense	Breathless	Thick
Flowing	Fluttery	Nervous
Queasy	Heavy	Electric
Numb	Full	Spacey
Tight	Hot	Icy
Light	Cold	Hollow
Wooden	Sweaty	Tingly
Suffocating	Knotted	Energized
Blocked	Fast	Calm



Trauma-Informed Resilient Schools

- AVOID consequences such as **time-outs and suspensions**.
- USE interactions and opportunities like **co-regulation, comfort corners, and time-ins**.
- UNDERSTAND that exclusionary practices encourage the child to withdraw and reinforce the message that they are "bad."





Step 5

Establish Safety with Social Emotional Learning

How Can **We** Help?



Process Trauma



Restore Resilience



Foster Connections

Proactive Strategies to Healing Trauma and Promoting Resilience with Tier One Supports

• ...



Connections



Social & Emotional Skills



Safety



Play



Limit Opportunities for Students to Feel Anxious and/or Threatened

SAFETY

- ...SECURITY
- ...STRUCTURE
- ...CONSISTENCY



Every child knows what to expect all of the time!



STARR
COMMONWEALTH

Safety

It is not what you think children “know” about feeling safe. It is what *they experience as safe*.

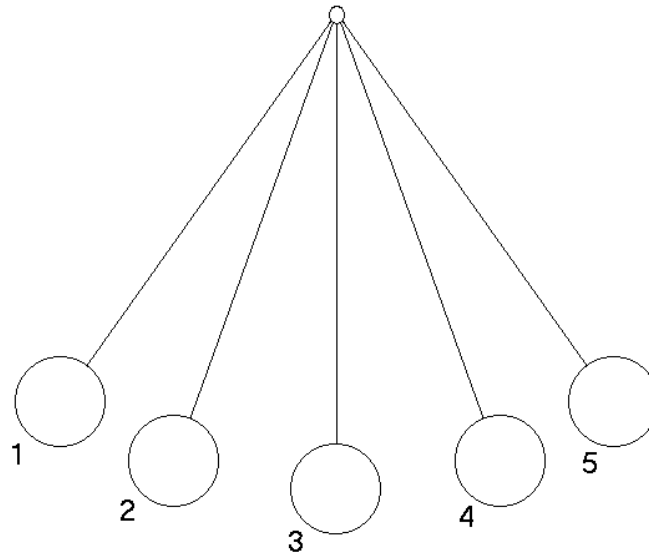
- My teacher will be **even-tempered**
- My **schedule** is pretty much the same everyday (if it changes though, someone will let me know as soon as they know!)
- When I make a mistake, **someone will help**, not call me stupid
- **Nobody will tease me**
- I **have someone** to walk to class with, sit with at lunch, go to the game with...



STARR
COMMONWEALTH

Titration and Pendulation

Exposure to trauma themes and then to resilience-building themes



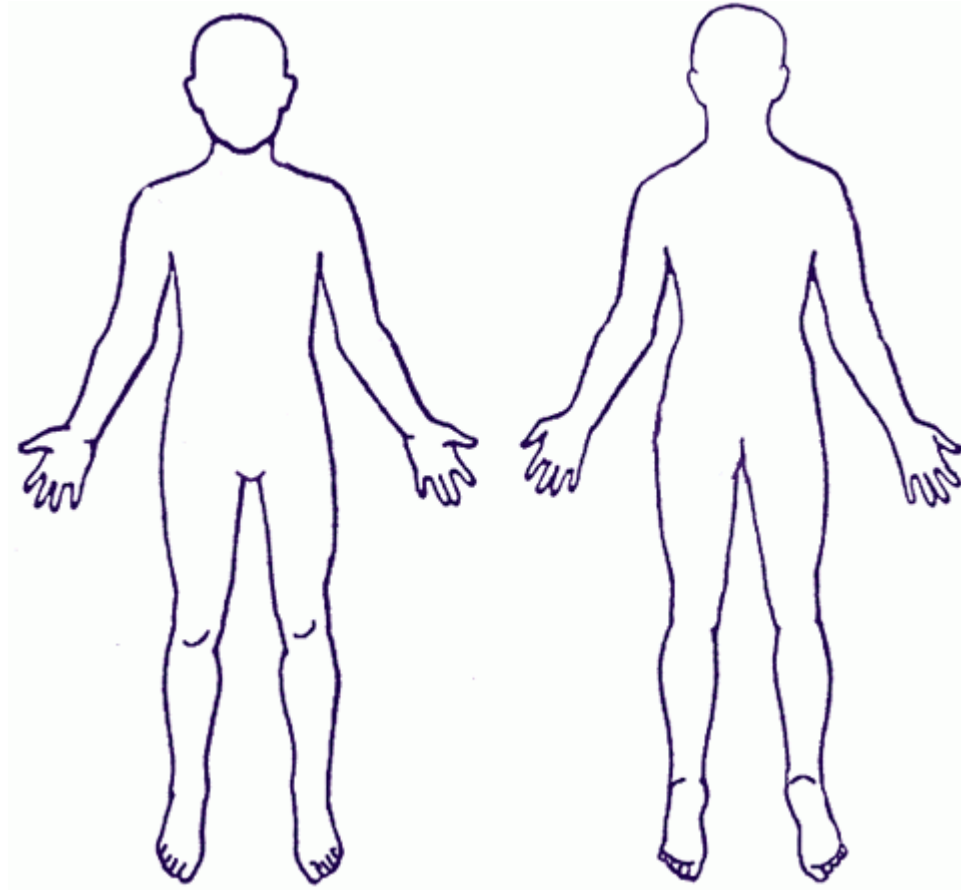
Theme Based Activities

Trauma	Resilience
Tension/stress	Calm
Worry	Hope
Fear	Safety
Loneliness	Connection
Hurt	Joy
Anger	Generosity
Guilt/Shame	Gratitude
Perfection	Pride (Healthy Striving)



STARR
COMMONWEALTH

Body Maps



New Dance = New Experience = New Pathways



These three functions must "dance" together.

These three functions must "dance" together.



STARR
COMMONWEALTH

Benefits of Curiosity

- We learn **what matters most** to the child.
- Establishes an empathetic relationship (not all knowing).
- Keeps us in synch with child.
- **Gives child the lead, control, power.**
- Helps us to know their subjective experiences like they “know” them (e.g., house fire).

About Self-care.....



Stay In Touch

And let us know how we can help!

<https://starr.org/ncsbe-and-starr-commonwealth/>