

TRAUMA INFORMED NUTRITION

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What is Trauma?

Trauma is an emotional and/or physical response to a terrible and/or life-threatening event.

(CDPH, 2020)

Experiencing trauma is
common

(Chefalo, 2023a)

Trauma can change your
views about yourself, the
world, and the future

(Galindo et al., n.d.)

Types of Trauma

INDIVIDUAL

One event that happens to one person.

Example: Experiencing a car accident.

COMMUNITY

Traumatic experience shared by a specific group.

Example: Military service members experiencing war.

(Galindo et al., n.d.)

GROUP

Trauma that affects a community or culture.

Example: Surviving a school shooting.

MASS

Traumas/disasters that affect a large amount of people.

Example: Terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001

Other Types of Trauma

HISTORICAL

Harmful experiences that impact multiple generations and specific groups of people.

Example: The Holocaust

SYSTEMIC

Environment and institutions that contribute to trauma.

Example: Unsafe neighborhood, food desert

(CDPH, 2020)

ADVERSE CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES (ACEs)

Traumatic childhood events that can result in toxic stress.

Examples:

- Abuse
- Neglect
- Divorce
- Poverty
- Natural disasters

3 Realms of ACEs



Image source: Paces Connection

Food Scarcity

Food insecure families are at greater risk of experiencing multiple ACEs or other forms of trauma



(Hecht et al., 2018)

Toxic stress

Tradeoffs between food and other necessary expenses

Someone in the household going hungry

Feelings of hunger, pain, tiredness, weakness

Feelings of worry, sadness, anger

Knowing that food is poor quality

Increased rates of mental health issues

Developmental delays among children

How ACEs Influence Health Throughout the Lifespan

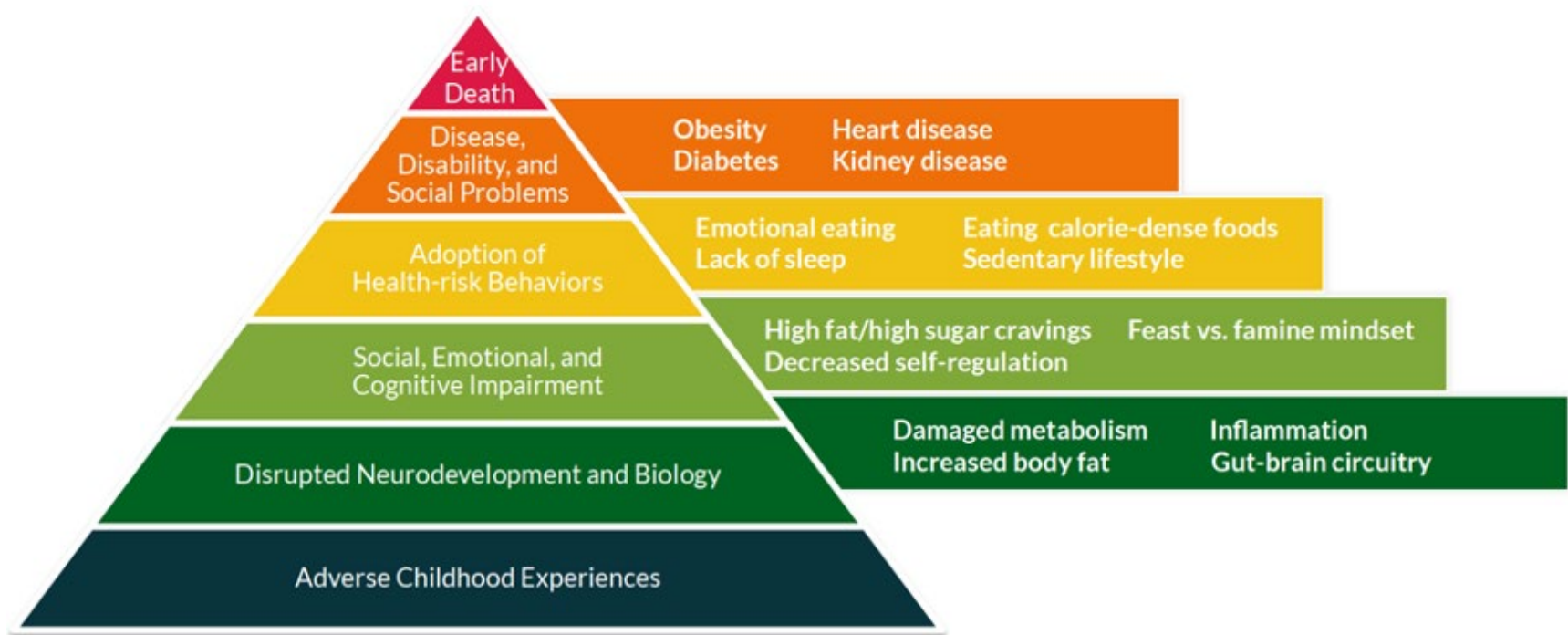


Image source: Leah's Pantry

Food Experiences & Behavior

Adverse Food-Related Experiences

- Unreliable, unpredictable meals
- Restriction and control over food
- Body shaming
- Loss of food traditions
- Shame, bias, and/or stigma when using food assistance
- Untrustworthy/inadequate nutritional supports
- Punish/reward with food

Potential Dietary Behaviors

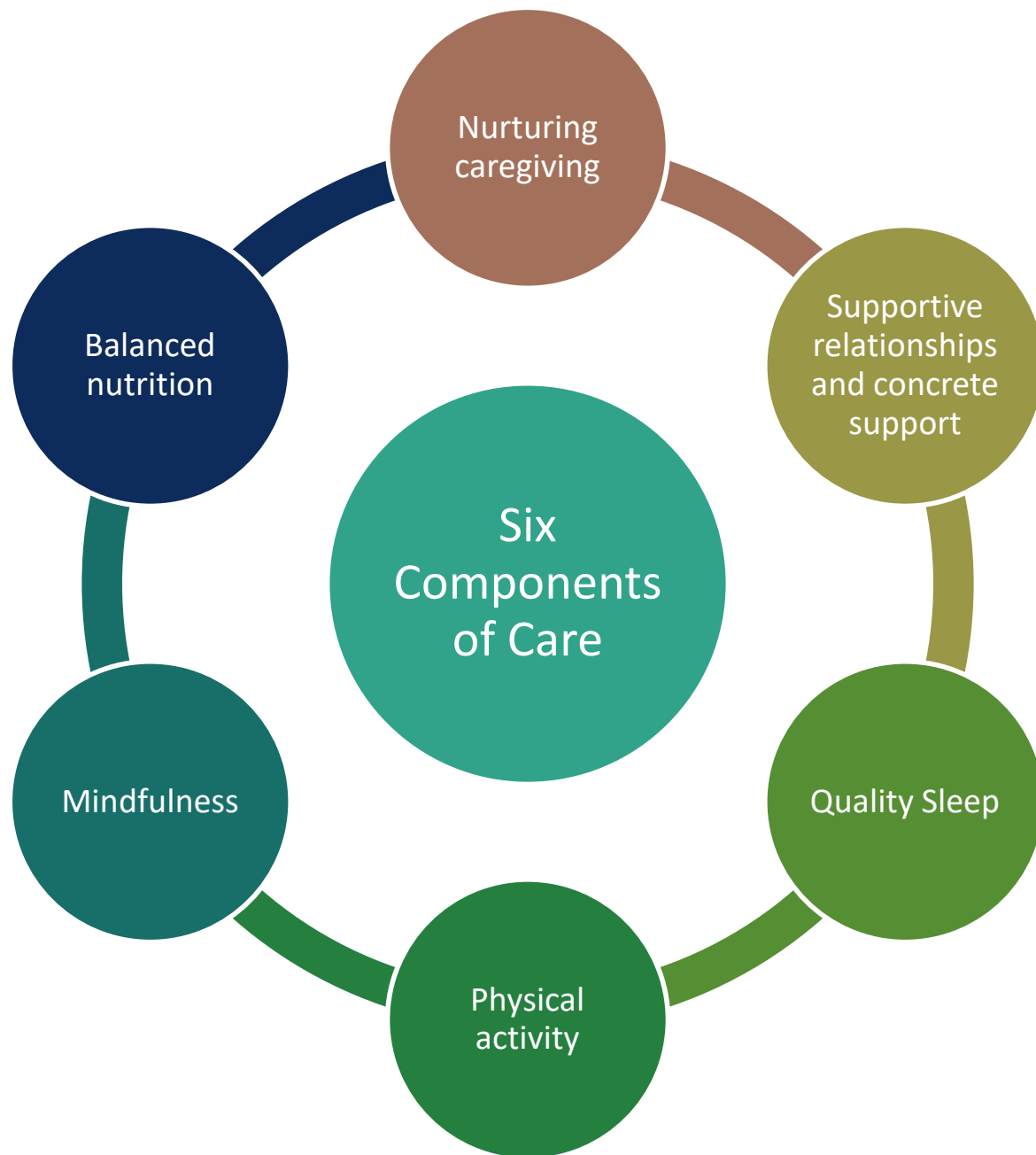
- Hoarding food, binge eating
- High fat, sugar, and/or salt diets
- Eating disorders or food addiction
- Reliance on convenience foods
- Decision making to meet short-term, rather than long-term needs
- Lack of planning/budgeting

Trauma Informed Nutrition



- Recognizes the impact of trauma on mind and body reactions to food
- Understands that unhealthy dietary habits, chronic disease, and poor health outcomes could be a result of ACEs/trauma
- Avoids shaming, stigma and blame

(CDPH, 2020)



Registered Dietitians Can...

- Acknowledge strengths and skills of clients
- Focus on holistic well-being, not obesity or BMI
- Not overemphasize personal behavior change
- Consider the ability of clients to adopt new behaviors
- Acknowledge trauma histories and their impact
- Consider your conscious and/or unconscious bias
- Recognize some nutrition interventions may be triggering
- Practice cultural humility

Trauma & Resiliency Informed

Personal Bias	Trauma Informed	Resiliency Informed
People are bad	People are suffering	People are resilient
People need punishment	People need intervention	People need compassion
People don't care	People don't understand	People can learn new skills
Stop making excuses	Trauma impacts development	Well-being skills can help
What is wrong with you?	What happened to you?	What are your strengths?

6 Principles of a Trauma Informed Approach

Safety & Security

Physical and psychological safety, ideally defined by those served.

Trustworthiness & Transparency

Transparent operations, goal of building and maintaining trust.

Peer Support

Peers refers to individuals with lived experience of trauma.

Collaboration & Mutuality

Partnering and leveling the power between staff and clients.

Empowerment, Voice, & Choice

Individuals' strengths and experiences are recognized and built upon.

Cultural, Historical, & Gender Issues

Move past cultural stereotypes, responsive to needs of those served.

(SAMSHA, 2014)

Your role...

Consider space setup, communications, logistics, and timing.

Prioritize professional development. Develop systems to deliver trauma informed services.

Support clients to help and teach each other. And share relevant skills and resources.

Clients choose to opt in or out. Support them in expressing their wants, needs, or preferences.

Encourage the client to make decisions, teach shopping, planning, and cooking.

Be aware of biases. Recognizes the multiple dimensions of well-being.

(CDPH, 2020)



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