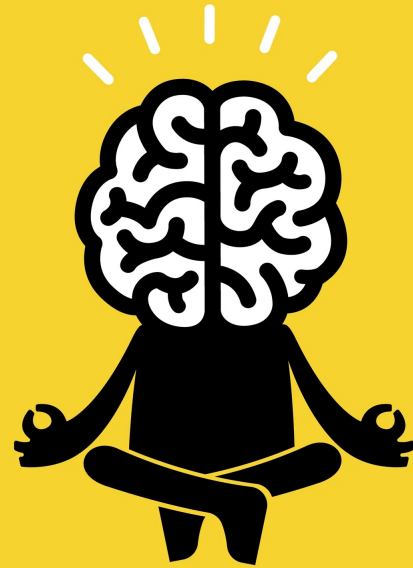


Building Resiliency Among Hispanic Youth Living in Poverty: An Assessment of Mind Matters Curriculum Pre- an Post COVID-19

Dr. Heidi Rueda, MSW, PhD
Co-Presenters: Abigail Vera, LMSW, Arminda
Marcaill, MSW & Catherine Perri, BA, LCDC

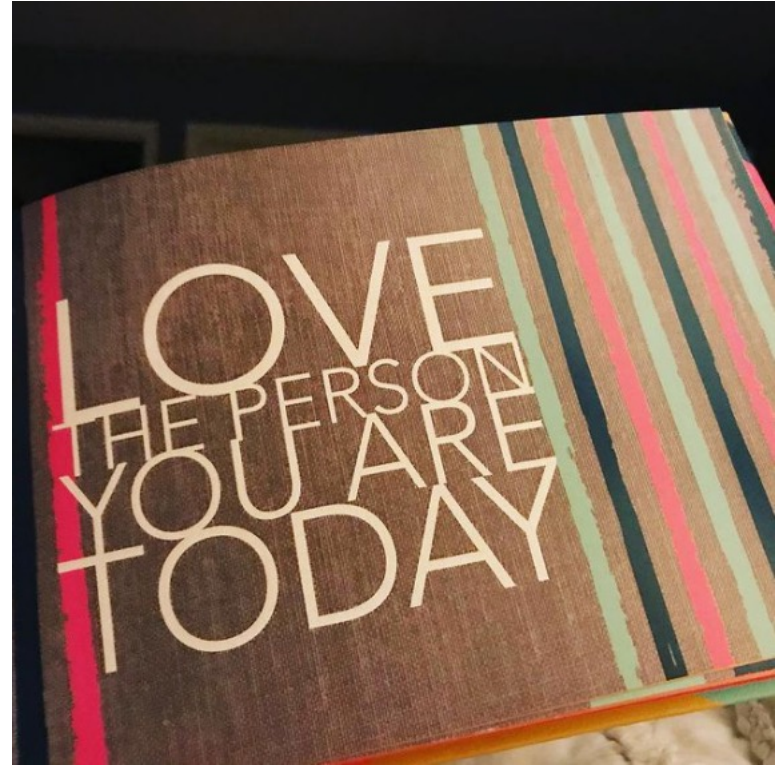


Setting the Intention: 5-4-3-2-1 Exercise



Today's Webinar

- My personal and research interest in wellness, trauma recovery, and post-traumatic growth
- Collaboration with a community-based organization in the heart of a large urban city in the South
- A pilot evaluation of *Mind Matters: Overcoming Adversity and Building Resilience* within an after-school setting serving majority Hispanic youth
 - Youth perceptions of the program
 - Staff perceptions of the program



Trauma

- What is trauma?
- Trauma can prime the brain for 'fight, flight, freeze', negatively impacting cognition, behavior, and brain development
- Being raised in unpredictable or threatening environments has been associated with psychological and biological disruptions to development
- Early trauma and prolonged stress often continues into later childhood, adolescence, and adulthood



Sources of Cumulative Stress and Trauma

- Youth in communities marked by poverty are exposed to complex and cumulative stressors across multiple ecological contexts
 - Zip code ranks within the poorest in the state
 - High Hispanic population
 - Linguistic isolation
 - Low educational attainment
 - High crime
 - Negative health
 - Adverse family trends – child abuse & neglect rates are high
 - One of the highest rates of Covid-19 deaths in the U.S.
- Youth and families of color also face increased societal stress including historic discrimination, and for Hispanic youth, acculturative stress

Resiliency = Ability to Bounce Back from Adversity

- Resilience includes cognitive, biological, and social/interpersonal assets, which act in tandem to support one's ability to successfully adapt
- Having close relationships with caring adults and access to supportive relationships are social protective factors that contribute to youth's development of resiliency
- Children and youth can benefit tremendously from building resiliency, which helps to mitigate stress and contributes to overall well-being

“Passing mental states become lasting neural traits”

– Dr. Rick Hanson



Adolescence

- Ideal time to reach youth with programs to build resilience
- Youth's brains are in a period of rapid development that contributes to abstract thought and heightened emotionality
- Identity is developing, and forms in relationship to others
 - For Hispanic youth, ethnic identity is also forming
 - Cultural norms are negotiated:
 - Protective assets: Familism, Religiosity
 - Potential stressors: Help-seeking norms, Rigid gender roles expectations
 - Acculturative stress
 - Importance of mentoring, after-school support programs
- Physical bodies are changing rapidly
 - Critical time to negotiate ACEs as youth transition to adult life

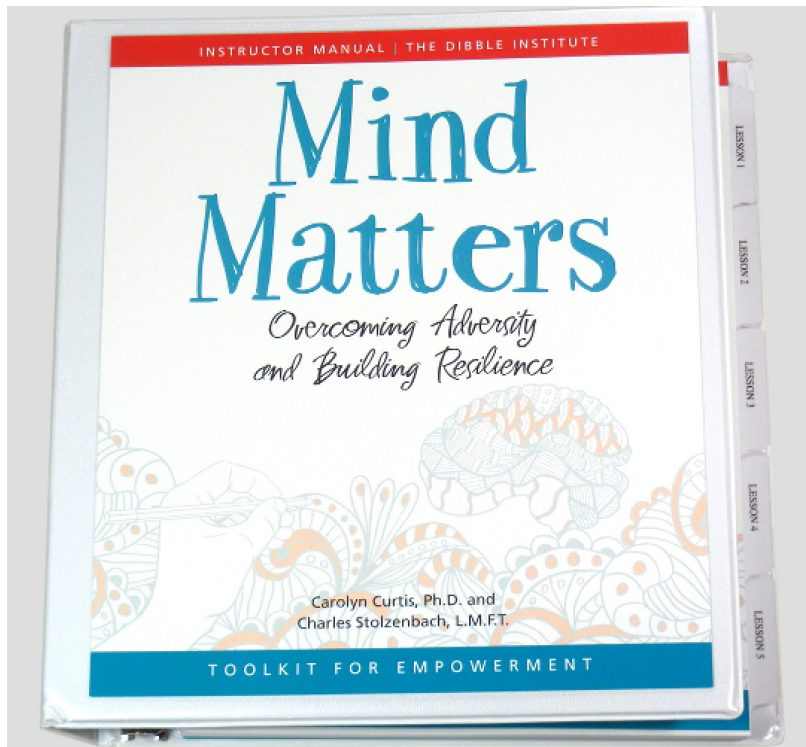


Mind Matters: Overcoming Adversity and Building Resilience: A Research-Based Approach

- Mind Matters was chosen for its integration of the latest research from neuroscience and trauma recovery
- Each of the following core components of the program has been scientifically shown to improve youth resilience and to help youth recover from trauma
 - Mindfulness/Self-Observing
 - Self-soothing
 - Building Relationships & Relationship Skills
 - Compassion for the Hijacked Brain
 - Self-Care
 - Goal Setting & Purpose



Mind Matters



- 12 one-hour lessons
 - Also available as 21 shorter lessons and as a virtual curriculum
 - Digital version available
 - Ages 12+
 - Adopted by 36 states and internationally
 - Aligns with Tier 1 and 2 SEL support (Dibble Institute, 2021)
 - Can be used for general education and in small groups
 - **Authors:** Carolyn Curtis, Ph.D. & Charles Stolzenbach, L.M.F.T.
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12 Lessons in Mind Matters

1. Self-soothing
2. Discovery of emotions
3. Understanding the difference between thoughts and emotions
4. Building empathy
5. Building a support system
6. Having compassion for a traumatized brain
7. Trauma containment and rhythm
8. Tapping and sleep
9. Exercise
10. Goal setting
11. Asking for help
12. Designing a personal contract

A Moment of Pause...Loving Kindness Exercise



The Present Study

- Assessment of middle school and high school youth's perceptions of the program
- Their experience using the resiliency skills taught
- The extent to which they remembered and utilized skills post program
- Assessment immediately after program and again 3 months later




Sample

FALL 2019

- 12 in-person lessons after-school
- $N=14$ youth participants
- Two groups were formed based on age
 - 6th and 7th graders ($n=5$ participants; 2 boys)
 - 8th through 12th graders ($n=9$ participants; 5 boys)
- 11 self-identified as Hispanic, 2 as mixed race, and 1 as white

SPRING 2020

- Covid-19: Kids went home after spring break (March)
 - Follow-up with 5 Hispanic youth ($n=3$ high school females; $n=2$ middle schoolers; 1 male/1 female) via phone interviews
- 

Results

Themes pertained to:

- 1.) Program Acceptability
- 2.) What youth had learned from the program
- 3.) Content areas they liked best
- 4.) Content areas they liked least/areas for improvement



Results

Program acceptability	<p><i>"It was weird but fun." (Male, 10th grade)</i></p> <p><i>"I don't want it to be over... it's really fun." (Male, 6th grade)</i></p> <p><i>"...I didn't know that all this had something to do with me, but then I'm like oh my god. I always feel this. I always do that. Like this is describing me. I'm so glad I've done this program." (Female, 6th grade)</i></p>
What youth had learned from the program	<p><i>"The focused breathing to like calm down, umm, and to like just have a little moment to yourself when like you can't really understand the [school] work and you're getting really frustrated about it." (Female, 10th grade)</i></p> <p><i>There's this one thing where like if you're abused as a child, you're like at a higher risk for heart disease..." (Male, 10th grade)</i></p>

Results

Content areas they liked best	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Body scan in which youth were guided through awareness of body sensations and breathing while sitting or lying down• The marshmallow challenge• Focused breathing and counting
Content areas they liked least/areas for improvement	<p><i>“I didn’t like sitting down cuz I have too much energy.” (Male, 6th grade)</i></p> <p><i>“I liked it. It’s just kind of confusing... Just like the book how it’s made. Should be like a little simpler cuz I’m simple.” (Male, 10th grade)</i></p> <p><i>“[The instructor] said something, I felt uncomfortable, and I went under the table... like [were talking about] abuse...” (Female, 6th grade)</i></p>

Follow-up during COVID-19 Pandemic Overview

- Youth felt they had benefited from the program
- They were able to remember many self-soothing skills
- Many had been utilizing them to cope with the pandemic
- Nearly all the youth interviewed said they would do the program again



Discussion

- Cultural competency – the program was received well by Hispanic youth
 - Potential cultural barriers with this population include home receptivity; involvement of parents in future adaptations
 - Kids may have taught family members
- Youth felt the program was applicable to their daily lives and across multiple settings
 - Impact of trauma, self-soothing skills, and emotional regulation were most salient
- Benefits of administering in an after- school program:
 - Case Management availability
 - Wrap-around services
 - Help-offering services to families who may not have otherwise received them
 - Trauma-informed approach at the agency including training for staff/interns

Practitioners' Perspective

Arminda Marceal, MSW- Middle School Group

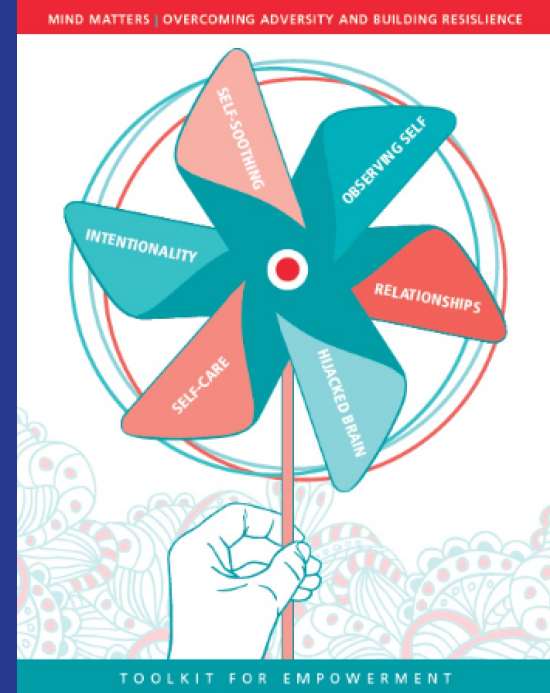
Catherine Perri, BA LCDC- High School Group

Abigail Vera, LMSW- Group Observer



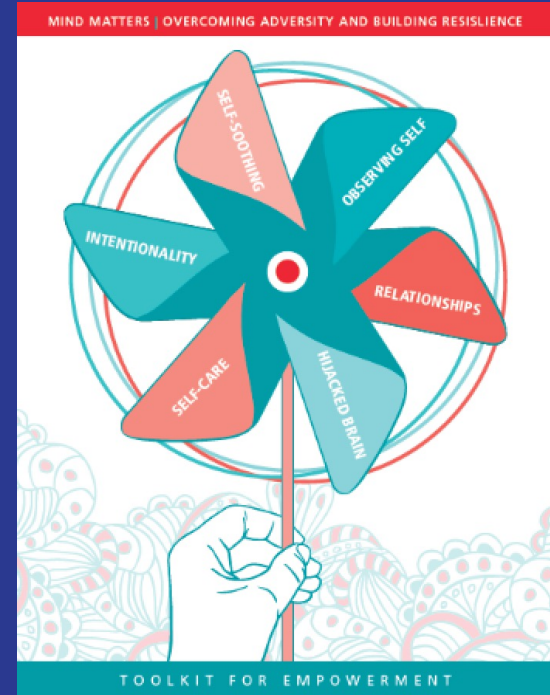
Arminda's Experience

Middle School Group



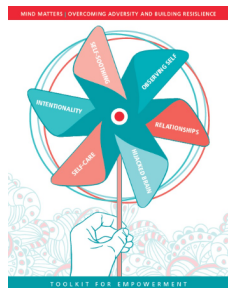
Catherine's Experience

High School Group



Abigail's Experience

Group Observer



12. To what extent did the participants appear to understand the material?

- ☐ All of the time
- ☐ Most of the time
- ☐ Some of the time
- ☐ Rarely
- ☐ Never

13. For each of the four categories below, rate how faithfully the teachers followed the curriculum's lesson plan.

	Completely	Mostly	Somewhat	Not at all	Not Applicable
Instruction	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Videos	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Practice	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Homework	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

14. In the space below, please list/describe anything that was left out or changed (with respect to the lesson curriculum) and the reason behind the change.

15. In the space below, describe any instances in which students appeared not to understand the lesson.

16. In the space below, describe any instances in which students appeared to be uncomfortable with the lesson.

17. In the space below, describe any instances in which students appeared to react negatively to or resist participating in the lesson.

18. In the space below, describe any environmental or contextual factors that may have impacted on the implementation of the lesson.

19. Please write any additional observations below.

Focused Breathing “Belly Breathing” Exercise





Thank you!

Q&A