

# Young Adults:

## Convergence of Trauma and Substance Use Disorders

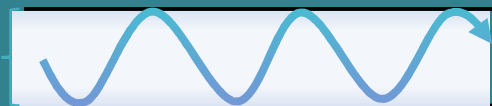


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### Autonomic Nervous System

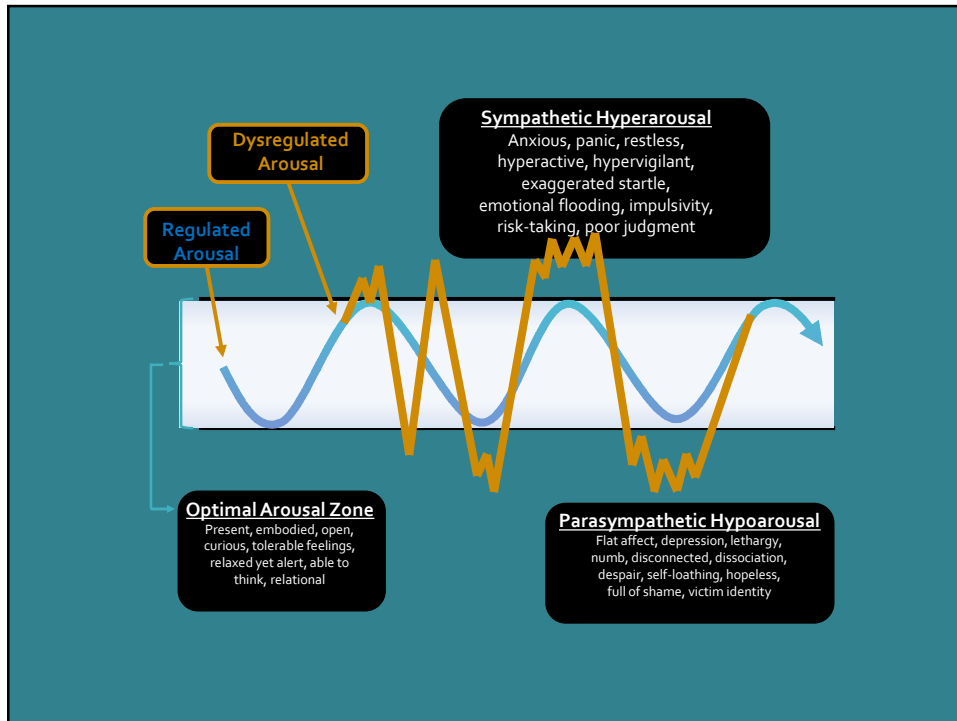
On a daily basis, our nervous systems experience periods of increasing arousal and periods of decreasing arousal. Each one of us has a "Window of Tolerance" or an "Optimal Arousal Zone" where we can experience nervous system fluctuations while still having the capacity to regulate ourselves.



### Optimal Arousal Zone

Present, embodied, open, curious, tolerable feelings, relaxed yet alert, able to think, relational

Adapted from the works of P. Levine, Porges, & P. Ogden



The more severely dysregulated, and/or the longer the dysregulation lasts, the greater the chance to subjectively experience unbearable discomfort, or difficulty staying “within your own skin”.

Many begin self-medicating in order to move away from the pain, and move towards pleasure.



When overwhelmed by a threat and not able to successfully defend self, one becomes stuck in a survival mode.

This continual state of arousal, hypo or hyper, over time can begin to form the symptoms of trauma.

Trauma is what happens inside of you...



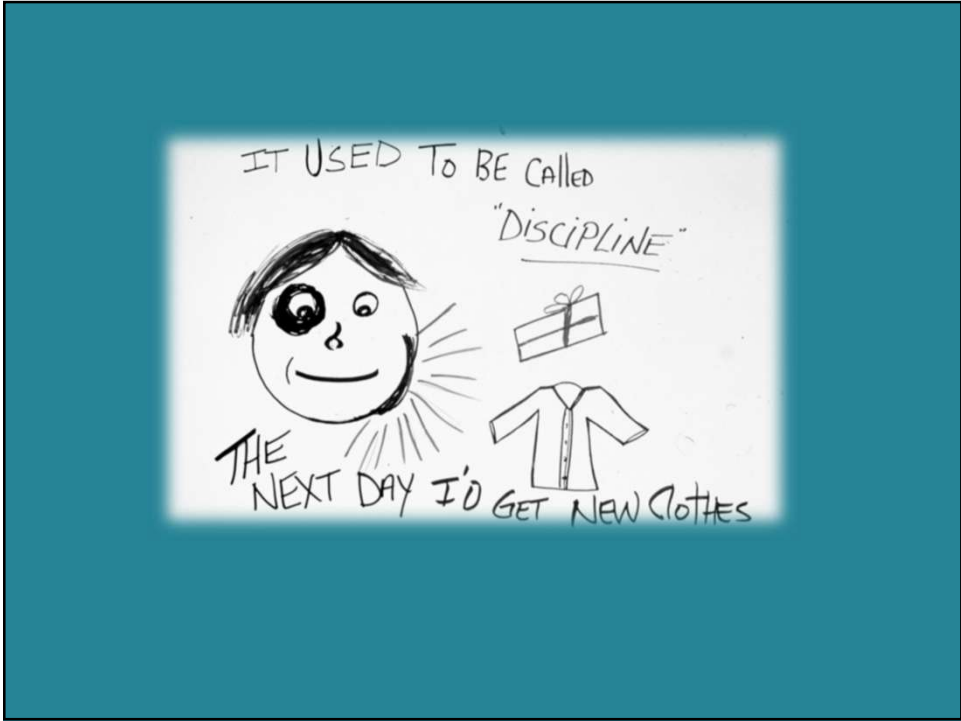
...as a result of what happens to you

## Resiliency vs Vulnerability to Trauma

- Support at time of stressors
- Few previous stressors
- Older at time of stressors

Trauma negatively impacted when:

- Repeated
- Unpredictable
- Undergone in childhood
- Perpetrated by a caregiver, someone supposed to be loving towards you





## Prevalent Traumas

- Physical Abuse
- Witness Factor
- Sexual Abuse
- Bullying
- Grief & Loss
- Emotional Abandonment

## Emotional Abandonment

### Abandonment

When you have to hide a part of who you are in order to be acceptable/ to protect self.

### **When you have to hide:**

- Your mistakes/ vulnerabilities
- Your feelings
- Your needs
- Your accomplishments/ success

- Unrealistic expectations
- When someone is disappointed with you they attack your whole being, worth, and value versus what you did or did not do
- When another expects you to be an extension of themselves, fulfilling their dreams
- When another is not willing to take responsibility for their feelings, thoughts, and behaviors but expects you to take responsibility for them
- When parents' esteem is predominantly derived through child's behavior
- When children are treated as peers with no parent child distinction
- Perfectionistic and controlling parents
- Being rejected for who you are in your sexual orientation

## Core Adoption Issues

### Loss

Without loss there would be no adoption  
 No space for grief  
 Triggered with following losses  
 Birthdays

### Rejection

Personalizing the loss: I wasn't good enough No one truly loves me  
 Sensitive to perceived rejections or provoke rejection to validate feared beliefs  
 Perceiving rejections/slights inaccurately  
 Fear both adopted and birth parents will reject

### Shame and Guilt

Belief the rejection was deserved  
 There is something wrong with me  
 I wasn't cute enough  
 Guilt if adopted into means leaving behind sibs

## Core Adoption Issues

Identity defined by who one is and is not

Medical, genetic, religious, historical information lost

Feelings of incomplete, unfinished, or something missing

Who am I? Where do I belong?

Seeking acceptance – at risk for unhealthy relationships, adolescent pregnancies, bullying, substance abuse

## Core Adoption Issues

Intimacy

Avoid all core issues by avoiding closeness and contentment

“If you really knew me you would leave me too”

Control

Major life decisions made without permission or consent

No control over loss of birth family or choice of adoptive family

Attempts to control- power struggles, oppositional defiance disorder





# Emerging Adulthood

Prevalent Issues

- Abuse
- Bullying
- Grief & Loss
- Emotional Abandonment

The immersive world of the screen is the antithesis of developmentally essential experiences.

## Dynamics of Emotional Abandonment

coinciding with acceptance and likes via social media and gaming

*"I have to hide a part of who I am in order to be acceptable or to protect myself – my fears, my inadequacies, my vulnerability."*

This is what's happening to these kids with technology.

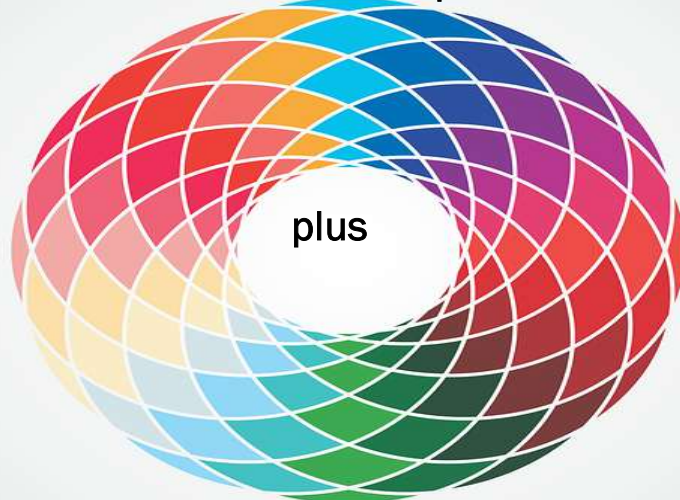
In social media and gaming they are hiding their authenticity, engaging in image management, and often projecting a fantasy image.

Are these young adults coming into social media and technology from a place of trauma?

and/or

Is social media and technology creating the original trauma?

## Adverse Childhood Experiences



excessive screen use leads to synergistic impact

## Foundational Goals

- Lessen emotional reactivity, calm part of brain that keeps person in fight, flight or freeze state
- Tolerate uncomfortable feelings without engaging in self defeating behavior
- Recognize and disrupt shame-based thinking and behavior
- Define boundaries that offer safety



## Core Elements to Treatment

- Grounding/emotional regulation
- Assessments
  - bullying
  - online activities
  - gaming
  - multiple addictions - process and substance
  - adoption narrative
  - relationship conflict

## Core Elements to Treatment

- Grounding/emotional regulation
- Assessments
- Trauma therapies
- Experiential
- Community
- Self help groups
- Gender responsive programming
- Life skills
- Validate strengths
- Fun in recovery

## Fun in Recovery

Circle or highlight those you have an interest in, and list additional ideas you have.

- Rock climbing, mountain climbing, hiking
- Painting, drawing, writing, learning another language
- Snowboarding, skateboarding, waterskiing, snow skiing
- Going to the gym, taking dance classes, taking acting classes
- Playing pickleball, volleyball, tennis, soccer
- Horseback riding, motorcycle riding, bicycle riding
- Sewing, knitting, craft making, woodworking
- Going to concerts, playing an instrument, writing music
- Traveling, camping, swimming, cooking, baking
- Hanging out with friends
- Other
- Other

Your Recovery Your Life for Teens

Excitement also comes in other forms, such as the enthusiasm of being accepted into a particular program at school or work, accomplishing a goal such as a half-marathon, or performing in a school play.

### What life events or achievements do you foresee that could be exciting?

Here's what other young people in recovery have to say.

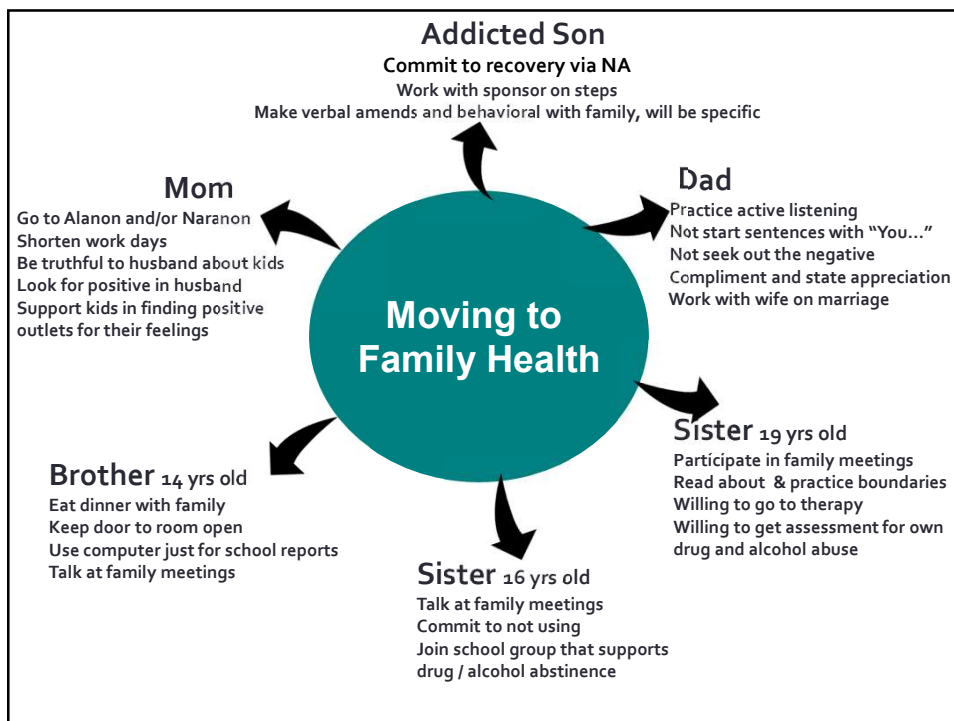
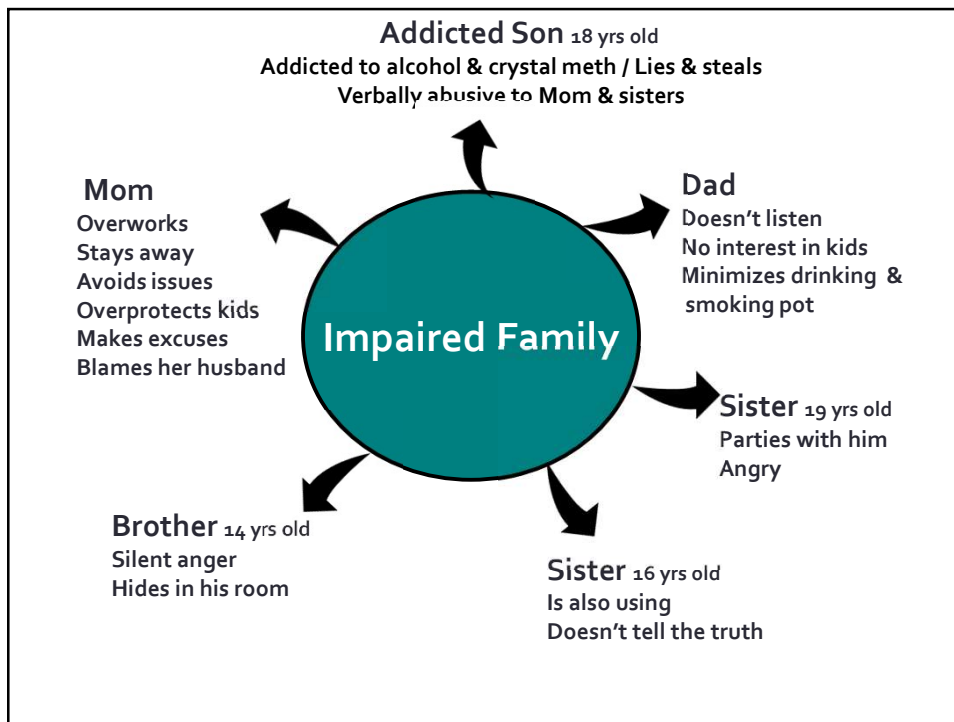
- I skied the black run this past winter and never could have done that when I was using.
- I was accepted into the design program I had always fantasized about, and my submission was done clean and sober.
- When my non-using friends and I go out, we act crazy, singing and dancing without being under the influence. We aren't sick later, we don't do things we regret, and we remember the good time we had the next day.

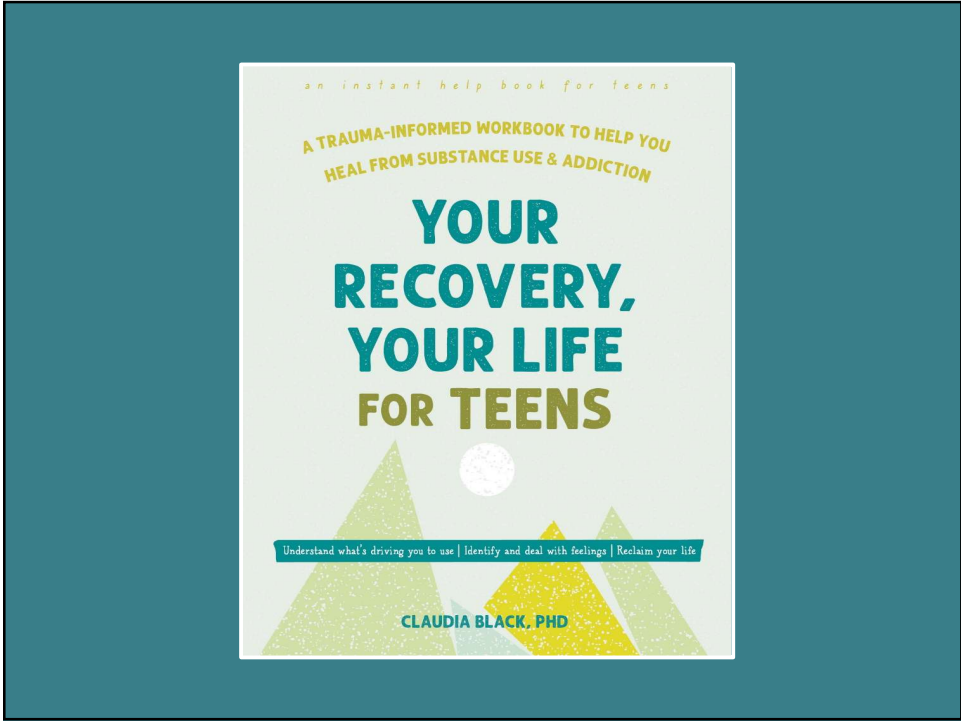
Your Recovery Your Life for Teens

## Core Elements to Treatment

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- Community
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- Life skills
- Validate strengths
- Fun in recovery
- Family treatment

Each time we focus on the person struggling with substance use disorder without focusing on the family, we are in denial that we are breaking the cycle of addiction.





Thank you  
for making a difference

Claudia Black

[www.claudiablack.com](http://www.claudiablack.com)

