



We Are In The Storm Together *But We Are Not in the Same Boat*

*A Message from the Building Better Lives
Initiative of the Franklin County Family &
Children First Council*



The COVID-19 pandemic is a global event that is impacting everyone. The phrase “We are all in this together” has become a way to express solidarity and connection during the crisis. However, for a range of reasons, different communities and persons are experiencing the pandemic in very different ways.

One analogy is that the pandemic is like being caught in a storm: The *storm* affects everyone - but not everyone is in the same *boat*. **Past experiences** and **current resources** are two important factors that change how an individual or community is experiencing the pandemic.



Trauma-Informed Care recognizes that past experiences shape the brain and the body. Therefore, a new experience impacts individuals and communities in very different ways.

- **Adverse experiences impact us emotionally *and* physically, primarily through the body’s stress-response system** (Search “ACE Study” on [cdc.gov](https://www.cdc.gov) for more information)

The result is that some individuals may have a weakened immune system or may be more prone to mental illness, putting them at a higher risk in a pandemic.

- **Adverse experiences affect a person’s overall social well-being.** Individuals develop a response to stress that helps them survive the situation. Sometimes, these survival behaviors can negatively impact overall social conditions or well-being. Factors such as lower graduation rates, increased substance abuse, increased social isolation or a less robust personal support system may make them more susceptible to impact of a pandemic.
- **Adverse experiences impact groups of people.** Oppressed and marginalized groups have been subjected to stress and trauma due to their race, gender, sexual-orientation or other factors. The stress for individuals in these groups may contribute to placing them at higher risk of being negatively affected by a widespread threat.



- **History leads to the current situation.** Individuals and groups that have experienced trauma or did not have access to resources in the past are not as well-equipped to face the current crisis. Examples may include money, safe and affordable housing, adequate healthcare and strong relationships.

Trauma-informed care recognizes that the level of current resources an individual has either empowers or limits their capacity to respond well to crisis. Below are examples of factors that might stabilize or threaten well-being.

- **Work from home? Or have to go to work?** Some “essential workers” are required to leave home in order to continue to work, putting themselves and family members at risk.

- **Employed? Or Unemployed?** Many businesses and industries have been dramatically impacted, leading to a staggering number of layoffs and unemployed adults reducing their capacity to meet family basic needs.
- **Insured with access to healthcare? Or uninsured and can't find a doctor?** Access to affordable healthcare is one of the greatest challenges for many people during the current crisis, and the ability to get medical help (of any kind) when needed is not a guarantee. This jeopardizes early diagnosis and treatment.
- **Stable and safe housing? Or housing insecure?** Factors such as employment and life-savings directly impact a person's ability to secure safe and stable housing. Without safe housing, a person's health risks increase, and employment is also tough to maintain.
- **Relational Wealth? Or Isolated?** Having a network of supportive friends and family members is important when going through a crisis. Some individuals are living alone, or living with someone who is not supportive, or worse physically or emotionally abusive.



Summary

“We are in the storm together, but we are not in the same boat.”

Past experiences impact the “size and condition of your boat.”

Current resources shape how capable you are to “navigate the storm.”

Past experiences that are shaped by structural inequalities, systematic oppression and marginalization (poverty, racism, homophobia, etc.) lead to a current situation in which individuals and groups of people are not equally prepared and equipped to respond to a global crisis.

Current resources (money, housing, health care, relationship support, etc.) empower individuals and groups of people to access what is needed in a crisis. Without adequate resources, individuals are at a greater risk both physically and economically.

There are many factors contributing to the COVID-19 crisis, and our understanding of the pandemic is changing rapidly. Trauma-informed care recognizes that *any* threat or danger will be experienced and responded to differently by each person.



A trauma-informed and brain-based response honors the unique experience of each person and seeks to empower individuals to have the resources needed to survive a storm....Together.

Questions to Consider:

- How will you use your resilience factors to support others as they weather the storm?
- How can we acknowledge and see the differences of others' experiences?
- How do we know when we have fallen out of our “boat” and what do we do to recover?
- How do we help others that are in danger of falling out of their “boat”?



For more information and resources, contact:
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