



## From Self Harm to Self Care

Self-destructive behaviors  
measure one's need for safety

Gabriella Grant, MA, Director  
Trauma Informed California



# Welcome!

I am Gabriella Grant, Director  
of Trauma Informed California

Email: [gabby@trauma-informed-california.org](mailto:gabby@trauma-informed-california.org)

Website: [www.trauma-informed-california.org](http://www.trauma-informed-california.org)

Connect with me on LinkedIn!

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/gabriella-grant-3bb0793a>



## Get informed!

Our website includes trauma-informed resources, white papers and other tools to help you learn more about trauma-informed care.



[www.trauma-informed-california.org](http://www.trauma-informed-california.org)

Helping agencies throughout California and the US better serve trauma-exposed populations



STAY UPDATED ON TRAUMA INFORMED CARE

## Handouts

<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1mMg7WycSMVlhy164WBzjVW7aDKfgXZel?usp=sharing>

- Self-Injury Interventions Compendium (2024)
- Human Needs Checklist (2024)
- Create A Safety Trigger Loop infographic (2024)
- Umbrella image PDF
- Self Harm Intensity Scale Worksheet



# Self-Injury

## A compendium of trauma informed interventions for people who self injure (2024)



## Essential Reading

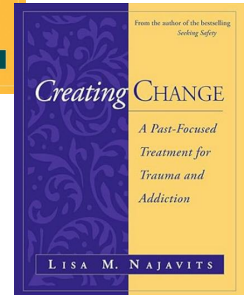
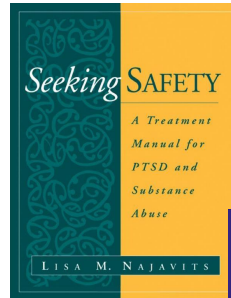
This list and more resources are in the Compendium!

- **Healing Self-Injury: A Compassionate Guide for Parents and Other Loved Ones** by Janis Whitlock, PhD and Elizabeth Lloyd-Richardson, PhD, 2019
- **The Tender Cut: Inside the Hidden World of Self-Injury** by Patricia A. Adler and Peter Adler, 2011
- **Women Who Hurt Themselves: A Book of Hope and Understanding** by Dusty Miller, 10th anniversary edition, 2005
- **Self-Injury: Psychotherapy with People Who Engage in Self-Inflicted Violence** by Robin E. Connors, 2000
- **Bodily Harm: The Breakthrough Healing Program for Self-Injurers** by Karen Conterio and Wendy Lader, PhD with Jennifer Kingson Bloom, 1999
- **The Scarred Soul: Understanding & Ending Self-Inflicted Violence** by Tracy Alderman, PhD, 1997



# Treatment Recommendation: Seeking Safety

- Manualized treatment for PTSD and SUD + other unsafe behaviors
- Evidence-based, effective, safe and low-cost
- In several languages and formats
- Present-focused, promotes changes related to unsafe behavior
- Follows Dr. J. Herman's Stages of Trauma Recovery
- New treatment available: Creating Change
- Learn more:  
<https://www.treatment-innovations.org/>



## Research on Trauma and Unsafe Behaviors

Unsafe behaviors are trauma symptoms

Unsafe thoughts

Unsafe relationships

Unsafe behaviors



### Rarely Observed Order of Magnitude

“

An expanding body of research suggests that childhood trauma and adverse experiences can lead to a variety of negative health outcomes, including substance abuse, depressive disorders and attempted suicide among adolescents and adults....Our estimates of the ARFs [Attributable Risk Factors] are of an order of magnitude that is rarely observed in epidemiology and public health data.

(Dube et al., 2001)

An order of magnitude is a class in a system of classification determined by ascending size, with each class being 10 times greater than the one before.

”

## The higher the exposure, the more dangerous the behavior

- Higher prevalence of unsafe behaviors among trauma-exposed populations, compared to non-trauma-exposed populations (Batey & Andrade, 2010)
- Higher ACEs exposure rates produced an increasingly stronger likelihood of more dangerous behaviors:
  - A weaker odds ratio ( $\leq 2$  ACEs) found for potentially unhealthy but not imminently dangerous behaviors
    - ▶ e.g., physical inactivity, overweight/obesity and diabetes
  - The strongest odds ratio ( $\geq 7$  ACEs) found for very dangerous behaviors
    - ▶ e.g., problematic drug use, interpersonal violence and self-directed violence

(Hughes et al., 2017)

## Self-Harming: Where there's one, there's more

- Lifetime prevalence rates of self-injury in US:
  - 6% of all adults
  - 2.7% of all adults had self-injured five or more times
  - 22% of all veterans
  - 15-20% of all adolescents and young adults
  - 42% of all runaway and homeless youth(Armoon et al., 2024; Halverson et al., 2022; Klonsky et al., 2012).
- Severe self-injurers had significantly elevated rates of
  - alcohol and drug abuse
  - disordered eating
  - sexual compulsivity
  - dysfunctional interpersonal relationships

(MacLaren & Best, 2010)



## Trauma exposure + PTSD: Increases substance abuse risk

- All types of traumatic exposures were associated with higher risk for SUD.  
(Carliner et al., 2017)
- Adolescents in outpatient substance abuse treatment:
  - 71.5% self-reported trauma exposure, specifically direct physical abuse or assault, sexual abuse or assault and/or witnessing intimate partner violence of a parent
  - Severity of SUD associated with the number of types of Criterion A events for Post Traumatic Stress Disorder  
(Cole et al., 2019)
- Multiple types of substance use are highly related to exposure to a traumatic event and posttraumatic stress reactions among youth.  
(Blumenthal, 2008)



### Most Salient Environmental Risk Factor

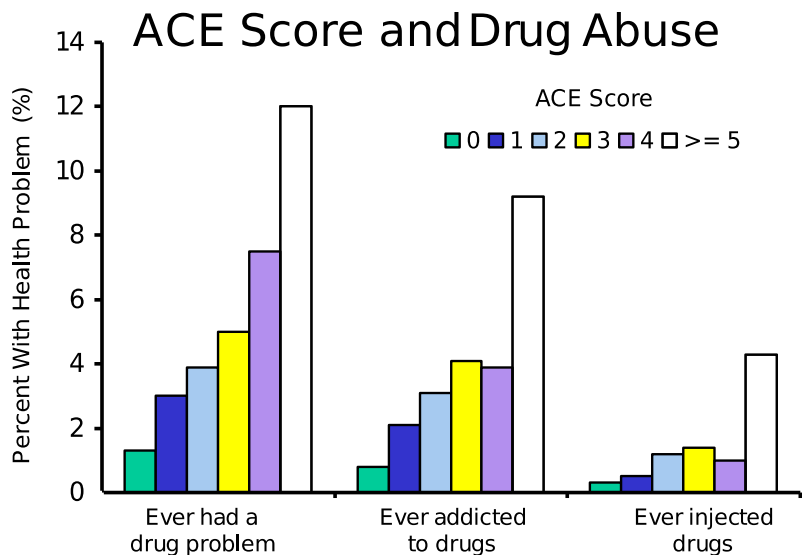
“

Exposure to child maltreatment, including sexual and physical abuse and neglect, is the most salient environmental risk factor for self-injury identified to date.

(Lang & Sharma-Patel, 2011)

”

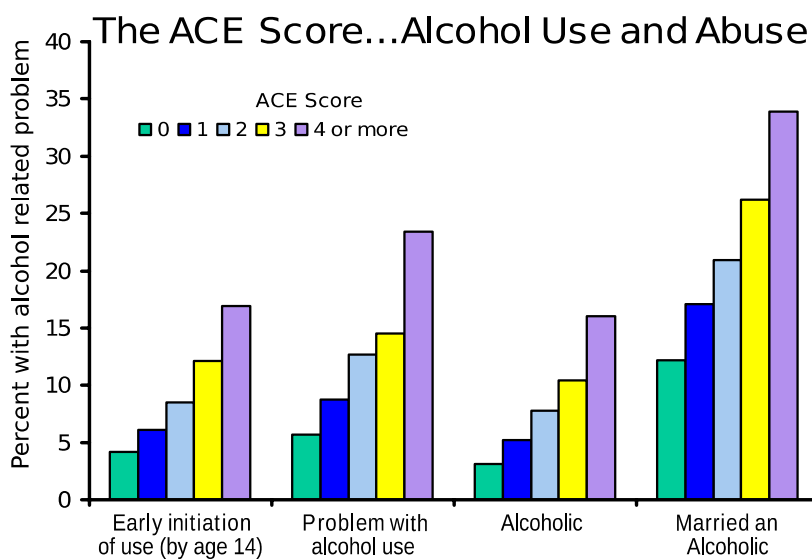
## ACEs and Drug Abuse – CDC-Kaiser ACE Study



Source: Overview of the Adverse Childhood Experiences Study, 2012 slide presentation by Robert F. Anda, MD



## ACEs and Alcoholism – CDC-Kaiser ACE Study

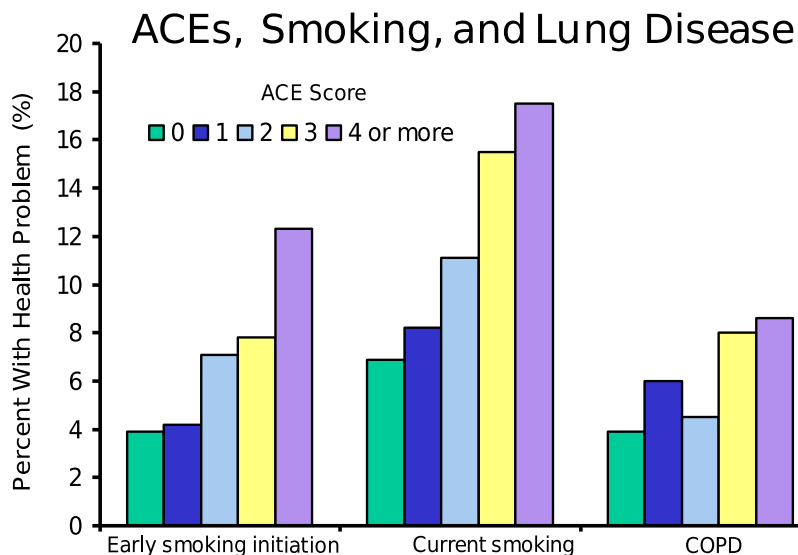


Source: Overview of the Adverse Childhood Experiences Study, 2012 slide presentation by Robert F. Anda, MD



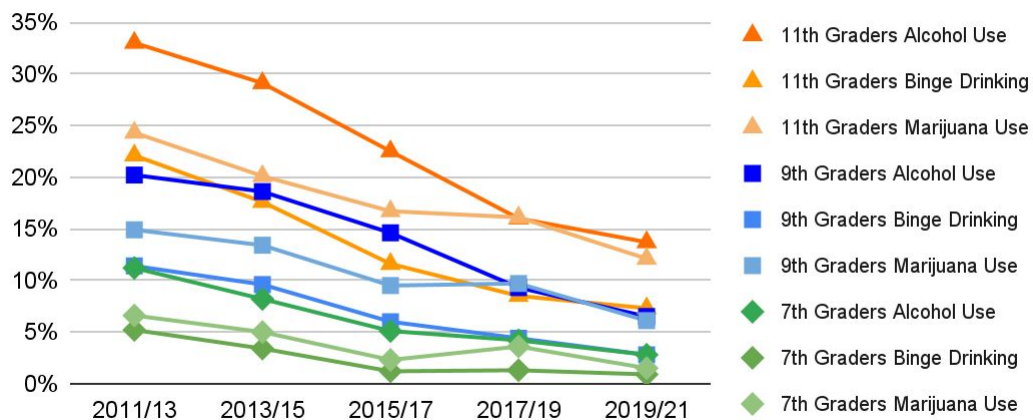


# ACEs and Smoking – CDC-Kaiser ACE Study



# California: Substance Use by 7th, 9th & 11th Graders

Current Alcohol or Other Drug Use, Past 30 Days, 7th, 9th and 11th Graders by percent using reported in five biennial surveys



Source: Results of the Eighteenth Biennial State California Healthy Kids Survey, Grades 7, 9 and 11 (Austin et al., 2023)

## Self-Medication

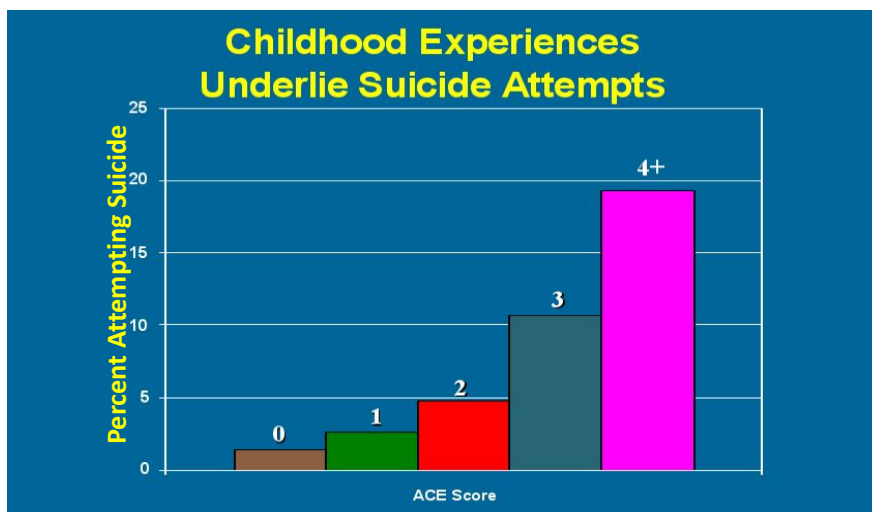
“

Self-medication is a common behavior among people with PTSD in the community, yet has potentially hazardous consequences, particularly suicide.

(Leeies et al., 2010)

”

## Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and Suicide Attempts



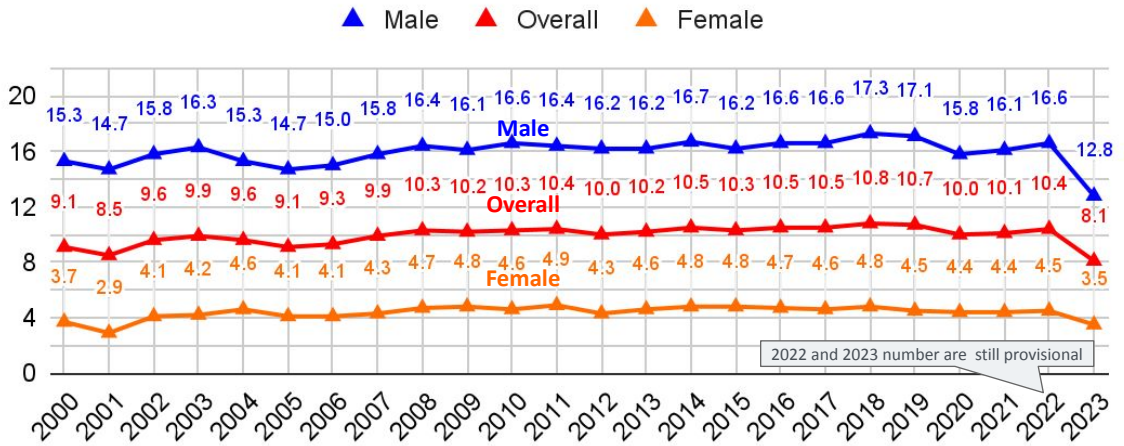
Increased risk for suicide attempts by ACE score:

- 1 = 40%,
- 2 = 630%,
- 3 = 850%,
- 4 = 1190%
- 7+ = 3000% (adult)
- 7+ = 5100% (child)

(Anda & Filetti, 2011;  
Dube et al., 2001))

# Suicide Death Rates by Sex: California

Age-Adjusted Death by Suicide Rates Per 100,000 People, 2000–2023



Data Source: CDC Wonder Underlying Cause of Death, 1999-2020 Results, Deaths through 2020 and Provisional Mortality Statistics, 2018 through Last Week Results; queried April 17, 2024

## PTSD and Suicide

“

It is not trauma [exposure] but PTSD [lasting symptoms] that is an independent predictor of subsequent suicide attempt.

Dr. Holly C. Wilcox  
The Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine

(Rauscher, 2009)

”

## Killer Cocktail

- Multiple unacknowledged traumatic exposures
- Frequent negative intrusive thoughts
- Undiagnosed or untreated PTSD
- Chronic depression
- Abundant alcohol with or without other drugs
- Sprinkle of insomnia
- Mix well and garnish with an assortment of impulsive, unsafe behaviors



## Agreement: Are you willing to measure?

Write down several ways to measure unsafe behaviors:

- How much money it costs
- How often you do it
- How much you do (by weight)
- Count containers, e.g. number of bottles
- Related countables, e.g. number of emergency room visits or jail visits
- Others?

What are methods to track measurements of unsafe behaviors?



# Self-Harm Intensity Scale

Self-harm can be understood to include a range of behaviors on an intensity scale.

**Highest:** Self-annihilation

- suicide, unsafe sex, terminating essential treatment

**High:** Self-injury

- cutting, burning, unhygienic tattooing or piercing

**Lower:** Self-defeating

- isolating, anger, rejection of help

**None:** Seldom, slight or silly

- very few, only occasional or low risk behaviors

## Umbrella Exercise

- Use an umbrella image
- List common unsafe behaviors
- Use example that clients or other populations engage in
- Organize by level of intensity
  - Time and frequency
  - Amount or duration of use
  - Money and costs
  - Dangerousness

# Use real intensity scales!

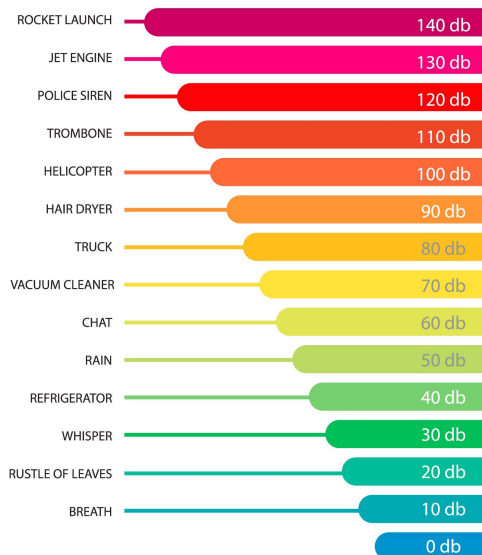
The decibel sound levels chart is a visual example of an intensity scale.

Others:

- Scoville Scale
- Richter Scale
- Hurricane or Tornado scale
- The Volcanic Explosivity Index
- Beaufort Wind Scale
- ...many, many more...

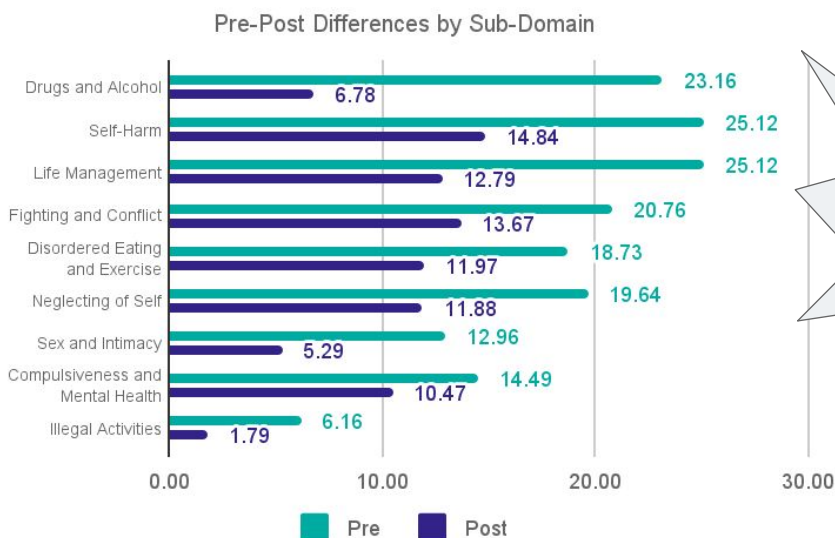
Download a copy of the  
Self Harm Intensity Scale  
Worksheet in your handouts!

## DECIBEL SCALE



(Image by brgfx on Freepik)

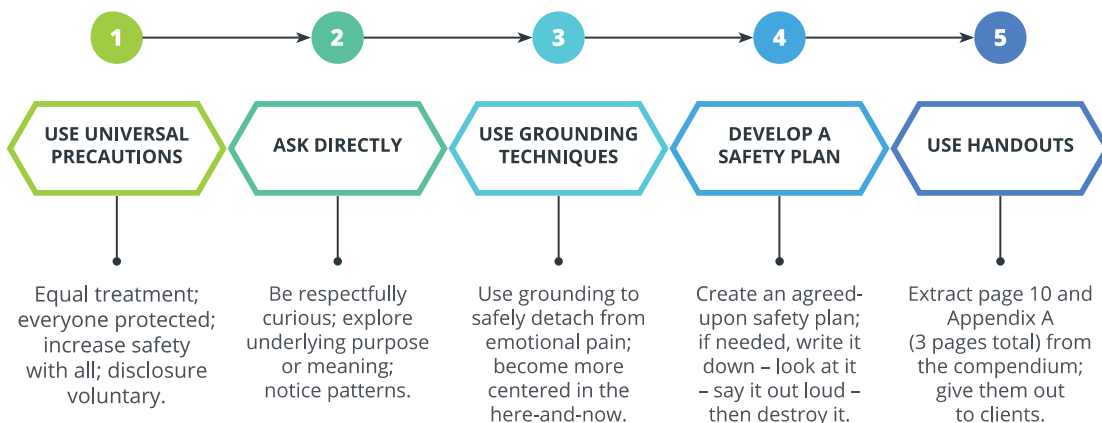
# Reductions in Unsafe Behaviors by Domain

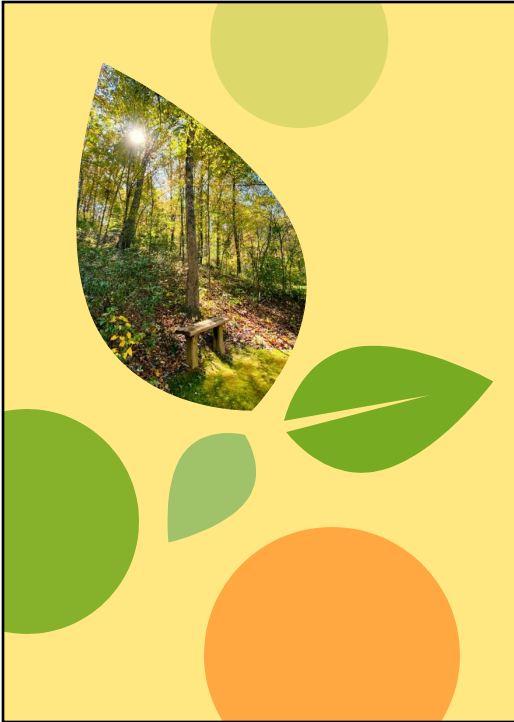


# Safety is the best way forward.

Download a copy of the Compendium in your handouts!

## Recommended Trauma Informed Intervention Process





# Self Care: A Public Health Approach

Caring for Self

## WHO (Five) Well-Being Index (1998 version)

	<i>Over the last two weeks</i>	All of the time	Most of the time	More than half of the time	Less than half of the time	Some of the time	At no time
1	I have felt cheerful and in good spirits	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 0
2	I have felt calm and relaxed	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 0
3	I have felt active and vigorous	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 0
4	I woke up feeling fresh and rested	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 0
5	My daily life has been filled with things that interest me	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 0

### Scoring:

- The raw score is calculated by totalling the figures of the five answers. The raw score ranges from 0 to 25, 0 representing worst possible and 25 representing best possible quality of life.
- To obtain a percentage score ranging from 0 to 100, the raw score is multiplied by 4. A percentage score of 0 represents worst possible, whereas a score of 100 represents best possible quality of life.



## What is self care?

- Self Care     v     Relationship care
- Autonomy    v     Control
- Self Care    v     Pampering
- Well-being   v     “Wellness”

## Is control a universal human need?

Check your handouts for a list of universal human needs!

Autonomy	Control
A status or condition	An outcome or result
The right or condition of self-government	The power to influence or direct people’s behavior or the course of events
Auto = self Nomos = custom or law	Originally used as a check or verification
Automatic Autopilot Autodidact	Controlled Controlling Controllable
Synonyms? Independence Self-rule Freedom	Synonyms? Power Dominance Mastery

(Rosenberg, 2015)





## The Wellness Industry Umbrella



The wellness industry sells pampering, not self care

GLOBAL WELLNESS ECONOMY:  
**\$5.6 trillion in 2022**



Note: Numbers do not add to total due to overlap in sectors. (Global Wellness Institute, 2023)

## Well-Being versus Wellness

Well-Being (autonomy)	Wellness (control)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● A universal part of human experience</li> <li>● Desired universally among people</li> <li>● A direct communication of safety and health from one's own body</li> <li>● Done for one's self by one's self—free or already paid for</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● An industry that caters to those with expendable income</li> <li>● Marketed as a “personalized” antidote to general malaise or health concerns</li> <li>● A confusing message that disconnects one from one's own body</li> <li>● Done by someone else for a fee that is often extra high for “luxe” experience</li> </ul>

## Self Care Creates Well-Being

Self Care → Well-Being	Well-Being → 4 Dimensions of Well-Being
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Alimentation (vitamins, minerals, protein)</li> <li>● Water, fluids</li> <li>● Fresh air, oxygen</li> <li>● Sleep, rest</li> <li>● Movement, muscle fatigue</li> <li>● Shelter and clothing</li> <li>● Sunshine and nature</li> <li>● Needed medical attention</li> <li>● Safety</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Hedonia</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ the experience of positive emotional states and satisfaction of desires</li> </ul> </li> <li>● <b>Agape ~ Caritas</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ unconditional love extended to all people, whether family members or distant strangers.</li> </ul> </li> <li>● <b>Eudaimonia</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ the presence of meaning and development of one's potentials</li> </ul> </li> <li>● <b>Filosofia</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ the study of the most basic and profound matters of human existence</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

(Disabato et al., 2016)



# Self care is the innate ability to provide to self one's human needs safely.

- Self care is using autonomy to care for self.
- Self care is essential for functioning.
- Self care is learned early in life via caregiving.
- Self care can be learned later in life, with effort.



## Create a Safety Trigger Loop

9 Ideas for Self Care

Cold, uncomfortable, insecure, indecisive



Lift weights

Cough, scratch, chest pain, dry skin, dizziness, fainting feeling



Drink water

Aching muscles, backache, sore neck, nausea



Do 5 minutes of restorative yoga

Drinking alcohol or lots of sugar drinks



Add lemon or apple cider vinegar to water; try with sparkling water and ice

Negative thoughts, ruminating over the same things, helplessness



Open a window, look outside and admire nature, breathe

Revenge planning, self-harm, simmering rage



Dig in dirt or sand, garden, pull up weeds

Worrying about the future, fearing the unknown, drowning in debt



Draw a storyboard; design yourself a story with a better ending

Angry, anxious, antsy



Dance with or without music

Despairing today



Read a book (try a real one!)

This infographic is brought to you as a public service by



Trauma Informed California

[www.trauma-informed-california.org](http://www.trauma-informed-california.org)

© 2024 by GGC INC

## Ideas for Self Care

Download a copy in your handouts!





## What self care change will you make?

---

- What will you do differently?
- What can you use to measure whether it works?
- Try addressing an unsafe behavior!



## Interested in using the UBI-Y and participating in science?

- The UBI-Y is under study with an IRB and is available at no charge.
- A memorandum of understanding with obligations is required for clinical use.
- No cost is assessed for use within the study.

**Email: [admin@trauma-informed-california.org](mailto:admin@trauma-informed-california.org)**



# Thank You!

Gabriella Grant, Director  
Trauma Informed California

[gabby@trauma-informed-california.org](mailto:gabby@trauma-informed-california.org)

[www.trauma-informed-california.org](http://www.trauma-informed-california.org)

831-607-9835