Psychological Safety:
Strengthening Interpersonal Relationships in the Digital Age

**Mercedes Brewster, BS, Brianny Alvarado, BA, Lauren Baney, MPH,
John Leman, MSEd, Zoë Peterson, PhD, & Catherine Sherwood-Laughlin, HSD, MPH
Indiana University Bloomington**

June 15, 2023

Objectives

1) Strategize ways we can foster psychological safety in our schools/communities and in our relationships

2) Name community-relevant and culturally-sensitive resources for promoting youth digital safety and interpersonal relationship health

3) Describe current research findings related to youth's technology use, prevention models, and psychological safety

Presentation Overview

❖ **About Us**
  ➢ Who we are, our origin story, our goals

❖ **Our Train-the-Trainer Program**
  ➢ We would love to have you be involved!

❖ **Psychological Safety**
  ➢ Reflection, what it is, why it matters

❖ **Resources & Solutions**
  ➢ Digital safety, healthy relationships

❖ **Concluding Remarks**

About Us

Who We Are

———

Our Origin Story

———

Our Goals

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Healthy Relationships for Rural Youth Initiative

Sexual violence prevention research project in rural Indiana

Principal Investigators (PIs):
Dr. Zoë Peterson & Dr. Catherine Sherwood-Laughlin

Origin:
In Fall 2019, PIs met with school and community leaders in two rural counties to create educational programs aimed at preventing sexual violence through an ecological approach

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Healthy Relationships for Rural Youth Initiative

The Team:

Lauren Baney - PhD Candidate IUB

John Leman- Incoming PhD Student at Northeastern University

Mercedes Brewster - Master's Student IUB

Bri Alvarado - Master's Student IUB

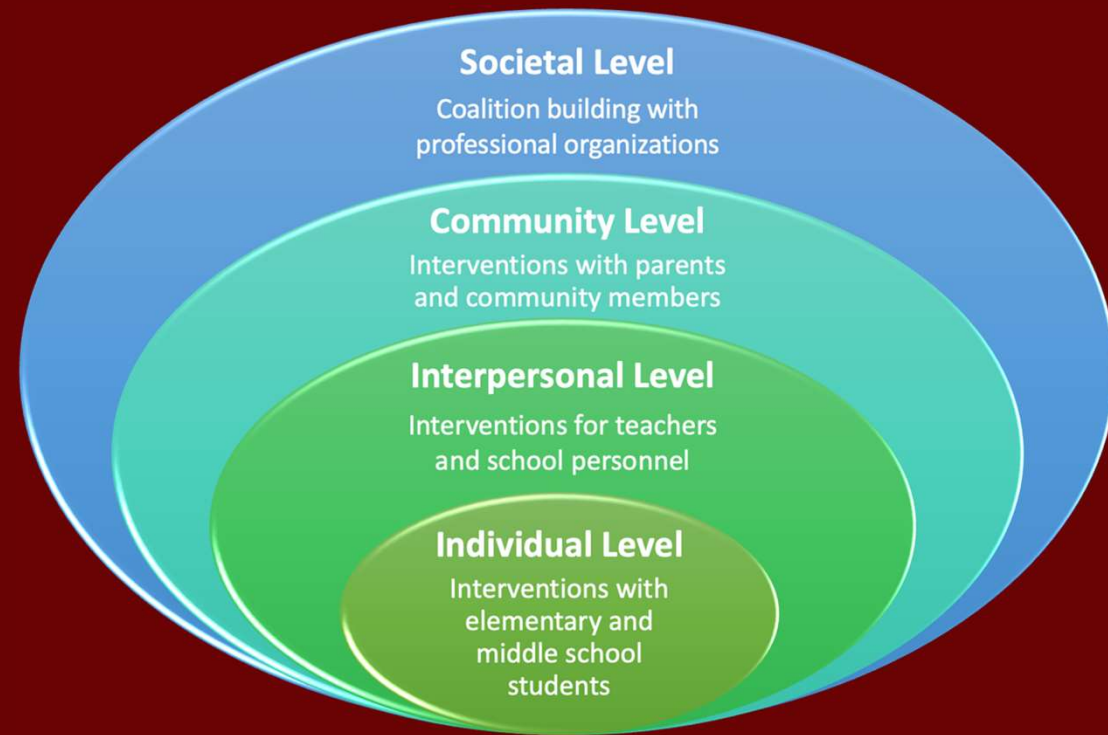School Health Coordinators- Meagan Shipley, Lisa Greathouse, Jamie Walker

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Healthy Relationships for Rural Youth Initiative

Our Goal:

To empower school and community-based organizations with the knowledge and skills needed to encourage the development of healthy relationships and digital safety practices among youth

Societal Level
Coalition building with professional organizations

Community Level
Interventions with parents and community members

Interpersonal Level
Interventions for teachers and school personnel

Individual Level
Interventions with elementary and middle school students

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Healthy Relationships for Rural Youth Initiative

1 *To Date:*

Over 700 children and parents attended a total of 30 educational sessions

Over 120 teachers and youth-serving professionals trained

Sustainability- what can we do to help communities keep this initiative going?

So What's Next?

We are launching our train-the-trainer program!

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1   If we were to run data and get updated numbers on community surveys, could we include these findings?

John Leman, 5/31/2023

About Our Train-the-Trainer Program

90-Minute Sessions
Skills-focused professional development trainings designed with educators and youth advocates in mind

Topics
Interpersonal communication, trusted adults, digital safety, cyberbullying, social media, consent, boundaries, bodily autonomy, sexual harassment

It's Free!
Trainings are delivered at your site at no cost

Training Activities
Participants will engage in small and large group discussions, collaboration with colleagues, games, demonstrations, informational lecture, and Q&A sessions

Optional Research Participation
Financial incentives offered: $20 gift card after training, $15 gift card after 3-months)

Follow Up From Training
All we ask is that you implement the program within three months of training completion

About Trainings for Youth-Serving Professionals

90-Minute Sessions
Training sessions cover content and skills educators and professionals can use to promote positive relationships and digital safety in their schools, organizations, and communities

Topics Covered
Interpersonal communication, trusted adults, digital safety, social media, cyberbullying, consent, sexual harassment, boundary setting, bodily autonomy

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Training Activities
Participants will engage in small and large group discussions, collaboration with colleagues, games, demonstrations, informational lecture, and Q&A sessions with HRRYI trainers

HRRYI
THE HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS
FOR RURAL YOUTH INITIATIVE

Trainings for Youth-Serving Professionals

Brought to you by Indiana University Bloomington, Kinsey Institute, & IU Health, with funding from the Indiana Clinical and Translational Sciences Institute (CTSI) & Indiana Department of Health (IDOH)

Optional Research Participation

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Interested in Our Trainings? Contact:

Lauren Baney:
lrbaney@indiana.edu

Check out our flyers and handouts!

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Psychological Safety

What Is It?

**Why Is It Important?**

How Do We Make It Happen?

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Reflection Activity!

Before we talk about psychological safety:

 1) Write down the name of someone—or multiple people—who you deeply trust and/or feel safe with.

2)   Reflect on this person(s): *What about them allows you to feel safe?*

3)   After a few minutes of reflection, share what you feel comfortable sharing with your neighbors
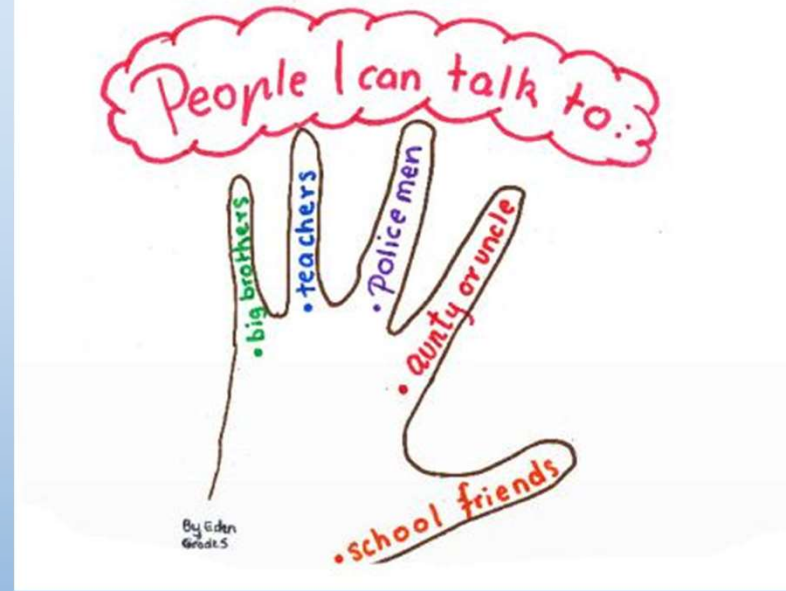
What Is Psychological Safety?

A shared belief amongst individuals as to whether it is safe to engage in interpersonal risk-taking in the workplace (Edmondson, 1999)

Extensively studied in organizational literature (Newman et al., 2017)

What about in schools, community-based organizations? Psychology research?

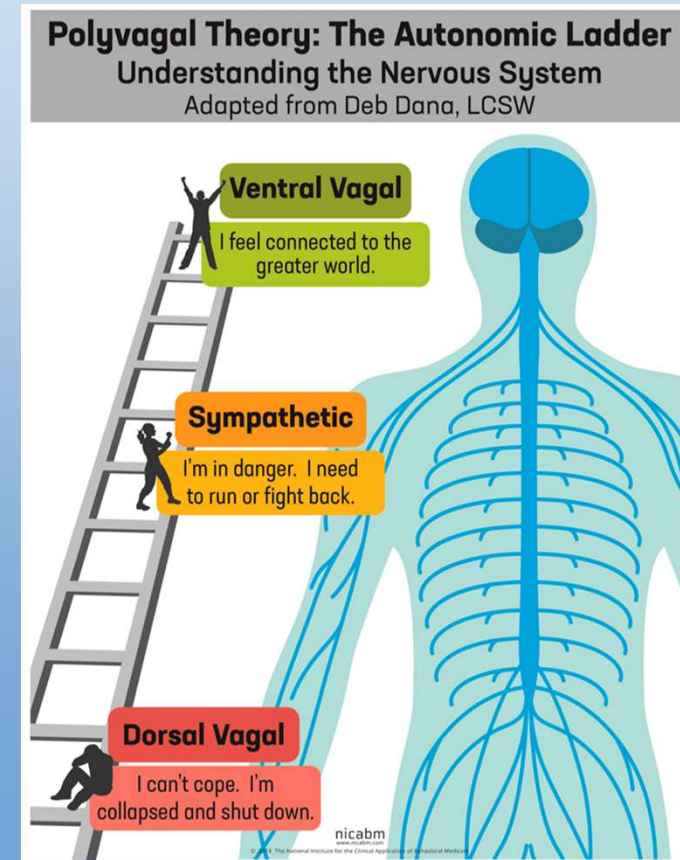My biggest contribution to workplace safety is having a cup of coffee in the morning.

What Is Psychological Safety?

Situations perceived as safe will activate autonomic processes to optimize social engagement (e.g., compassion for others, openness to connection)

Situations detected as unsafe will optimize self-defense and survival strategies
(Kolacz et al., 2019; Morton et al., 2022)

Polyvagal Theory: The Autonomic Ladder
Understanding the Nervous System
Adapted from Deb Dana, LCSW

Ventral Vagal
I feel connected to the greater world.

Sympathetic
I'm in danger. I need to run or fight back.

Dorsal Vagal
I can't cope. I'm collapsed and shut down.

nicabm

What Is Psychological Safety?

The Neuroception of Psychological Safety Scale (NPSS) contextualizes psychological safety in three categories:

Social Engagement   **Compassion**   **Bodily Sensations**

Some indicators of experiencing psychological safety:

"I felt valued"   "I felt respected"   "I felt compassion for others"

"There was someone who made me feel safe"   "There was someone that I could trust"

"I didn't feel judged by others"   "I felt able to comfort another person if needed"

Discussion

What are your thoughts about how use of technology and social media is affecting youth psychological safety?

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Why Is Psychological Safety Important?

Mental Health Impact of Social Media:

Pros: Cons:
Socialization   Dopamine
depletion
Support networks   Anxiety and depression
Access to learning   Impaired sleep
and resources   Cyberbullying

Nearly 6 in 10 adolescent girls say they have been contacted by a stranger on social media platforms in ways that make them feel uncomfortable (Nesi et al., 2017)

Why Is Psychological Safety Important?

23.2% of students report being cyberbullied in the last 30 days (Hinduja & Patchin, 2021)

Nearly ⅔ students who experienced cyberbullying stated that it affected their ability **to learn** _and_ **feel safe** at school (Patchin, 2016)

Victimization has negative, long-term impacts on health (stopbullying.gov, 2021)

79% of racial minority youth experienced at least one individual form of social media racial discrimination (Tao & Fisher 2022)

Self-actualization
desire to become the most that one can be

Esteem
respect, self-esteem, status, recognition, strength, freedom

Love and belonging
friendship, intimacy, family, sense of connection

Safety needs
personal security, employment, resources, health, property

Physiological needs
air, water, food, shelter, sleep, clothing, reproduction

Maslow's hierarchy of needs

Why Is Psychological Safety Important?

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and sexual violence prevention:

- ACEs are a risk factor for sexual violence victimization and perpertation (Ports et al., 2016)

- A child having a trusted adult in their life can build resilience that helps buffer the effects of ACEs later in life (Ashton et al., 2021)

- Protective factors such as a positive adult role model and empathy can decrease the effects ACEs on teen dating violence (Davis et al., 2019)

- Response to first disclosure of victimization can alter the trajectory of a survivor's posttraumatic growth and healing process (Thompson, 2020)

Why Is Psychological Safety Important?

Central to well-being, mental health, posttraumatic growth, and understanding trauma-related conditions and trauma-informed care (Morton et al., 2022)

"Beneath every behavior there is a feeling. And beneath each feeling there is a sensation that drives our needs for safety, connection, and calm."

- Dr. Lori Desautels, Butler University

"One of the greatest gifts we can give each other is the gift of safety."

- Troy Tiberi, LMHC

How Do We Make It Happen?

Address Issues Impacting Safety

Digital Safety:

- See the **U.S. Surgeon General's Advisory on Social Media and Youth Mental Health**
- Also see the **American Psychological Association's Health Advisory on Social Media Use in Adolescence** (*both released in May 2023*)

Interpersonal Relationships:

- Ensure youth gain skills to create and maintain mutually supportive and positive connections with others (e.g., social-emotional learning)
- Are we modeling the kinds of relationships we want youth to have?

How Do We Make It Happen?

Connection Over Correction

Therapeutic Presence: soothing tone of voice, active listening, reflecting what is heard back to speaker, conveying care in facial expressions and body language
(Geller & Porges, 2014)

Three Core Conditions: empathy, unconditional positive regard, genuineness
(Rogers, 1957)

Trauma-Informed Care: shifting the focus is from "What's wrong with you?" to "What happened to you?"

How Do We Make It Happen?

Activities for Cultivating Psychological Safety

Engage the Senses: Relaxing sounds (e.g., soothing music, rain sticks, chimes), mindfulness or guided meditations, deep breathing exercises (e.g., "hot hands")

Opportunities for Connection: Creating experiences for students to practice empathy and compassion (e.g., storytelling and active listening)

Brain Breaks: Intentional breaks from learning to aid in processing new information and to increase engagement (e.g., games, creative expression activities)

Did Someone Say Brain Break?!

Resources
&
Solutions

Digital Safety

Healthy Relationships
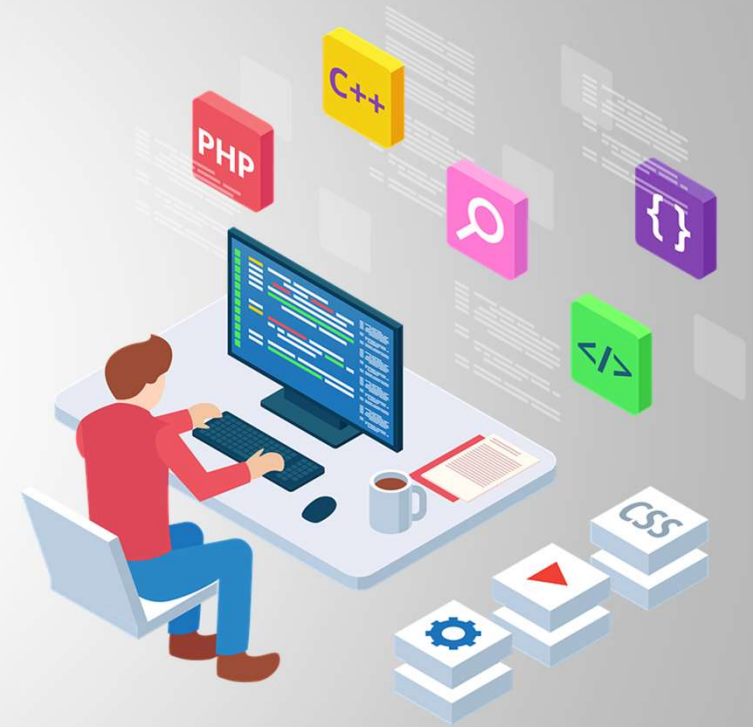
Digital Safety Solutions

Some Suggestions from the U.S. Surgeon General's Advisory

- ❖ Development and implement digital and media literacy curricula in schools

- ❖ Discuss the benefits and risks of social media use with children

- ❖ Create tech-free zones and encourage children to foster in-person friendships

- ❖ Create a family media plan

- ❖ Model responsible social media behavior for youth in our own lives

- ❖ Encourage youth to report cyberbullying, not hiding or taking part in online harassment

- ❖ Exercise caution around what is shared online

Digital Safety: Resources

Family Media Plan, American Academy of Pediatrics

Safe School Helpline (anonymous bullying reporting system)

The Download, MIT Technology Review (stay up to date on tech developments)

Internet Safety for Students, School District of Philadelphia

Internet Safety, Internet Crimes Against Children (ICAC) Task Force Program

Common Sense Media   **Be Internet Awesome** (digital citizenship curricula)

Healthy Relationships: Solutions

❖ Remember: our behaviors and relationships model the kinds of behaviors and relationships our children will have themselves

❖ Help students create and assert their own boundaries—and recognize and respect others boundaries

❖ Respond to disclosures of victimization—from cyberbullying to sexual violence—with empathy and validation

❖ Implement peer leadership and upstream prevention programs in schools

❖ Show—and model—curiosity, appreciation, and empathy for others

❖ Exercising therapeutic presence, core conditions, and trauma-informed care practices

Healthy Relationships: Resources

Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child (WSCC) Model (CDC)

Sources of Strength (peer leadership and suicide prevention program)

Child Mind Institute (children's mental health advocacy organization)

Our Whole Lives (lifespan sexuality education)

Revelations in Education (from Dr. Lori Desautels, Butler University)

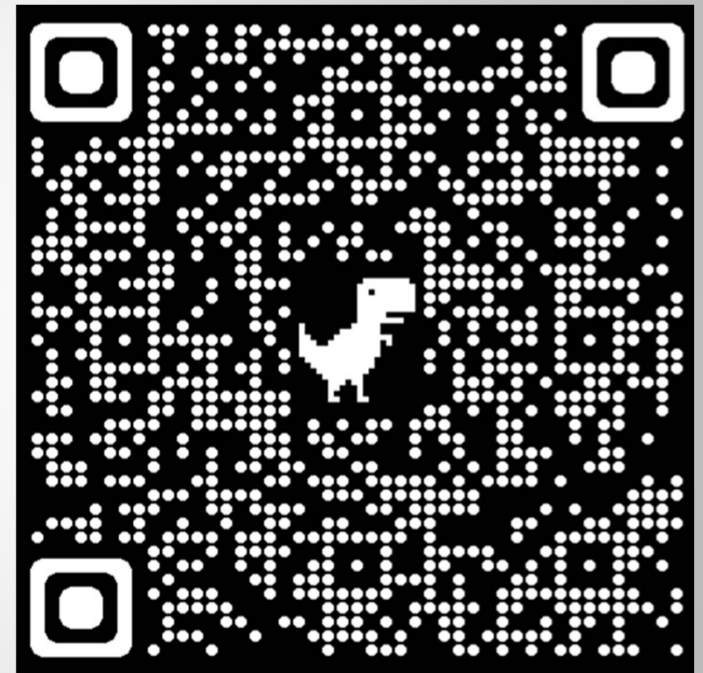**Trauma-Informed Schools**, National Education Association

HRRYI Database of Resources

Scan QR code or click link below:

Database of Resources

by the Healthy Relationships for Rural

Youth Initiative (HRRYI)

Discussion

What are your key takeaways from today's presentation?

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1   I think…
I feel…
I wonder…
I will….
I need….
I wonder for the sake of time if we could use this reflection method? Turn to a neighbor and start a sentence with one of these phrases.
Thoughts?
Lauren Baney, 6/2/2023

We Appreciate You

Thank you for for the difference you are making in the lives of your students and your school communities

Thank you for your time, attention, and participation

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Acknowledgements

- We are grateful to our community partners and stakeholders who make this project possible:

  IU Health, Thrive Orange County, Covering Kids and Families of Indiana, Hoosier Uplands, Orleans Elementary School, Mitchell Community Schools, Love Never Fails United Christian Church, Youth First, Indiana Department of Education, Purdue Extension Orange County, Indiana University School of Medicine, Kinsey Institute, and Indiana Youth Institute

- This initiative is supported by the Indiana Department of Health with funding from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) through the Rape Prevention and Education (RPE) program, as well as the Indiana Clinical and Translational Sciences Institute (CTSI) through the Community Health Partnerships (CHeP) Trailblazer program

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lrbaney@indiana.edu

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Questions? Comments?

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leman.j@northeastern.edu
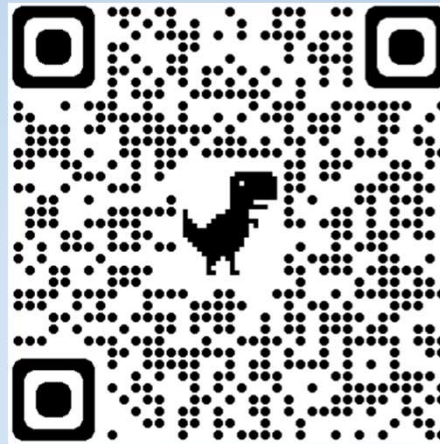
Scan this QR code for:

- Additional Contact Info

- Resources for Parents, School Personnel, and Community Leaders

- References

Scan this QR code to provide contact information for more information on the Train-the Trainer workshop

CKF QR code slide for session evaluation

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