

Mental Health for Worker Co-ops

Margaret Tusz-King, B.Sc. (Pharm), M.Ed.

Member, Aster Group Environmental Services Co-operative
Sackville NB






My agenda, for the next 90 minutes

- Overview of Mental Health
 - Definitions
 - Factors that predict or affect mental health challenges
- Overview of the more common mental health challenges
 - This includes what is and is not mental illness
- Helping yourself with mental health (with small group discussion)
- Improving your workplace for mental health, esp. for co-operatives! (with small group discussion)
- Where, when and how to get help (handouts)
- Q&A



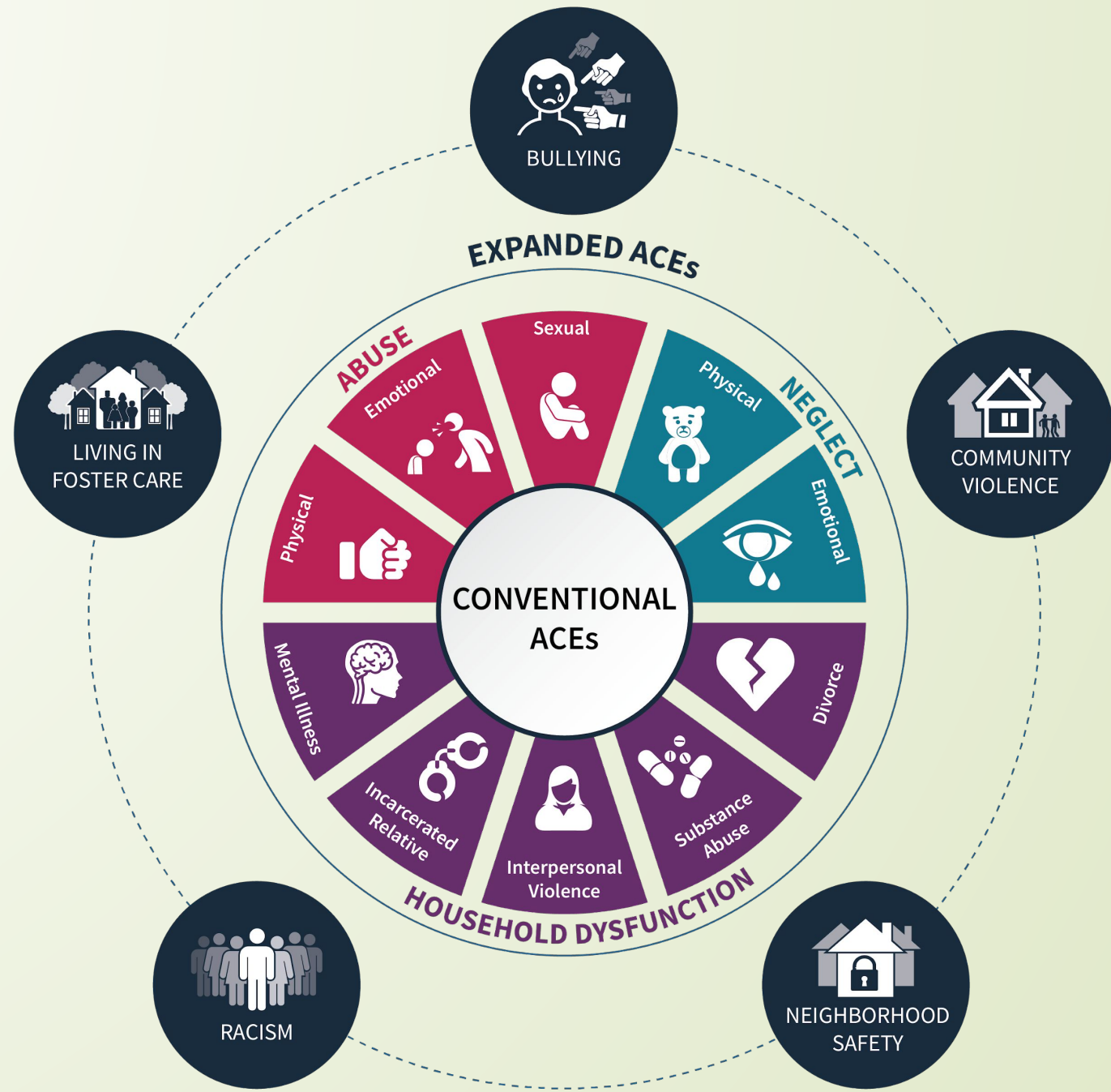
World Health Organization definitions

- What is 'health'?
 - A state of complete physical, mental and social well-being
- What is 'mental health'?
 - ...ability to cope with the stresses of life...
 - ... realize our abilities...
 - ...learn and work well....
 - ...contribute to our community...
 - ...it underpins our ability to make decisions, build relationships and shape the world
 - ...it is crucial to personal, community and socioeconomic development...
- With mental illness or mental health challenges, all of these aspects of our lives could be compromised.



What factors predict or affect mental health challenges?

- Genetics
- Family history or 'culture'
- Poverty
- Adverse Childhood Experiences
 - ACE's - Adverse Childhood Events
 - Summary categories from the ACE Studies
 - New studies are expanding the variables for ACE's, looking at wider society



EXPANDED ACEs

CONVENTIONAL ACEs

HOUSEHOLD DYSFUNCTION

BULLYING

LIVING IN FOSTER CARE

COMMUNITY VIOLENCE

NEIGHBORHOOD SAFETY

RACISM

ABUSE
Emotional

Sexual

Physical
NEGLECT

Emotional

Physical

Mental Illness

Divorce

Incarcerated Relative

Interpersonal Violence

Substance Abuse



How common are ACE's?

- More than 60% of Americans have experienced at least 1 ACE
- 12% have experienced 4 or more ACE's

... so what could this mean for us in our relationships, our workplaces, our communities...?



Additional factors that predict or affect mental health challenges

□ Global and environmental issues

Name a recent global event that probably is affecting or has affected many peoples' mental health?

Given our understanding of ACE's, how might this be impacting children, or our work colleagues of tomorrow?




Being trauma-informed

- Understand that, for many of us, trauma may be underlying the mental health difficulty we are experiencing
 - (recognize the prevalence of ACE's among all people)
- We can do our best to ensure that the person is not 're-traumatized' when we interact or work with them
 - Safety
 - Respect
 - Kindness
 - Offering empowering choices
- Be less judgmental (about ourselves and others!).
 - Rather than asking 'what is wrong with this person!', consider 'what happened to them'. Perhaps their behaviours are their best efforts to cope, given their history, their illness and their current abilities.




The most common mental health challenges and common treatments

- Addictions, substance use
- Anxiety disorders
 - Panic Disorders
 - Stress Reaction Disorders
 - PTSD
- Mood disorders
 - Depression
 - Bipolar Disorder
- Psychotic disorders
- More complex disorders (BPD, OCD, Eating Disorders...)



These are not mental health disorders.
This is neurodiversity.

- ADHD
- Autism
- Dyslexia, other learning disabilities
- How do these relate to mental health?



Impacts and opportunities, for yourself

- Self-care
- 'the Mountain' (handout)
- Seeking help as needed (handout)

In small groups – What are some strategies or ideas for supporting our own mental health, as individuals?



Impacts and opportunities, for your co-op

- Mental health challenges also impact your worker co-op
 - What could a mental health challenge look like in your co-op?
 - How do you and your colleagues feel about mental health challenges?
 - How do mental health challenges impact how your work gets done?

- In Small Groups:

Where are the opportunities in your co-op or workplace to support or mitigate mental health challenges?

- Training
- Policies and procedures
- Workplace culture
- Other



My final words

In our worker co-ops, we have a 'co-op difference' ability to create the workplaces we want to work in. Improving mental health can be a part of this.

If you are experiencing a mental health difficulty, you are not alone. There is effective help available for every difficulty.

See your handout for national organizations that have online or phone-based supports that are free. Also seek out ones in your local or provincial area.

I am trained in Mental Health First Aid. If you need to speak with me following the presentation, please do. I am here until tomorrow morning.



Thank you!

Questions and Answers
Discussion Time

Margaret Tusz-King
margaret.tusz-king@astergroup.ca

