Spreading HOPE

HEALTHY OUTCOMES FROM POSITIVE EXPERIENCES

The DNA of HOPE: The Science of the Positive Framework
Dr. Jeffrey Linkenbach

The First Annual HOPE Summit
April 9, 2021, Afternoon Breakouts

The DNA of HOPE: The Science of the Positive Framework
This materials packet includes:

1. The DNA of HOPE PowerPoint
2. Applying the Science of the Positive to Health and Safety
3. Essentials for Childhood: Promoting Positive Community Norms
4. HOPE Executive Summary
5. Pediatrics article—Essentials for Childhood: Promoting Healthy Outcomes from Positive Experiences
6. Prevent Child Abuse America: Why Prevention Matters
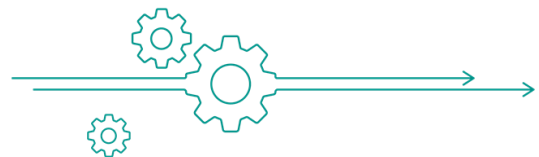
For more on HOPE, visit
https://positiveexperience.org/

Dr. Jeffrey W. Linkenbach,
Director / Research Scientist / Author
The Montana Institute

- Founder of Science of the Positive Framework and the Positive Community Norms Approach

- Co-Investigator of H.O.P.E. (Healthy Outcomes from Positive Experiences)

- 30 years experience in norms research & health promotion

- Developed national award-winning programs to change norms

Hope is the thing with feathers that perches in the soul and sings the tune without words and never stops at all.

Emily Dickinson

Why does HOPE matter to you?

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OBJECTIVES

Spirit
Experience the energy of the Science of the Positive Framework

Science
Explore how H.O.P.E. emerged from Positive Community Norms

Action
Brainstorm ways we can integrate these ideas into our work

Return
Reflect on some of the BIG THINGS you learned

science positive

Acronym

H.O.P.E.

Healthy Outcomes from Positive Experiences

Sege, R., & Linkenbach, J. (2014). Essentials for childhood: Promoting healthy outcomes from positive experiences. *Pediatrics, 133*(6) 1-3. doi:10.1542/peds.2013-3425.
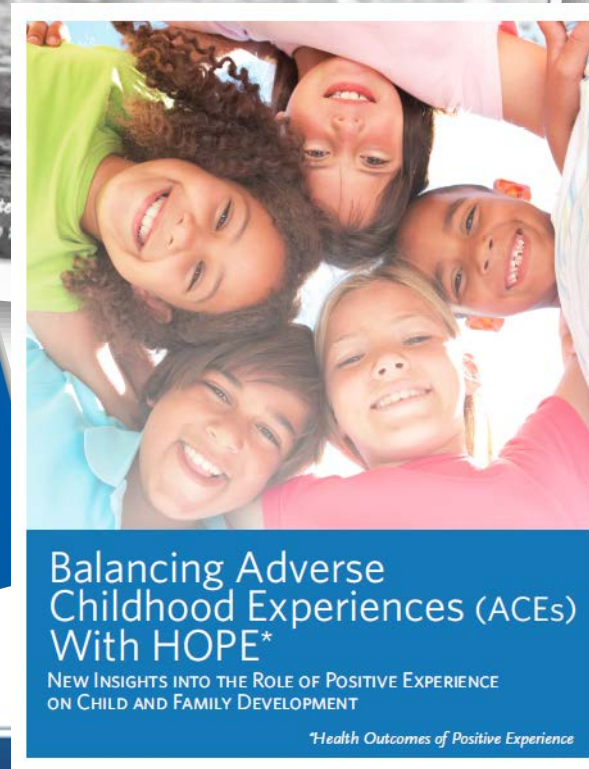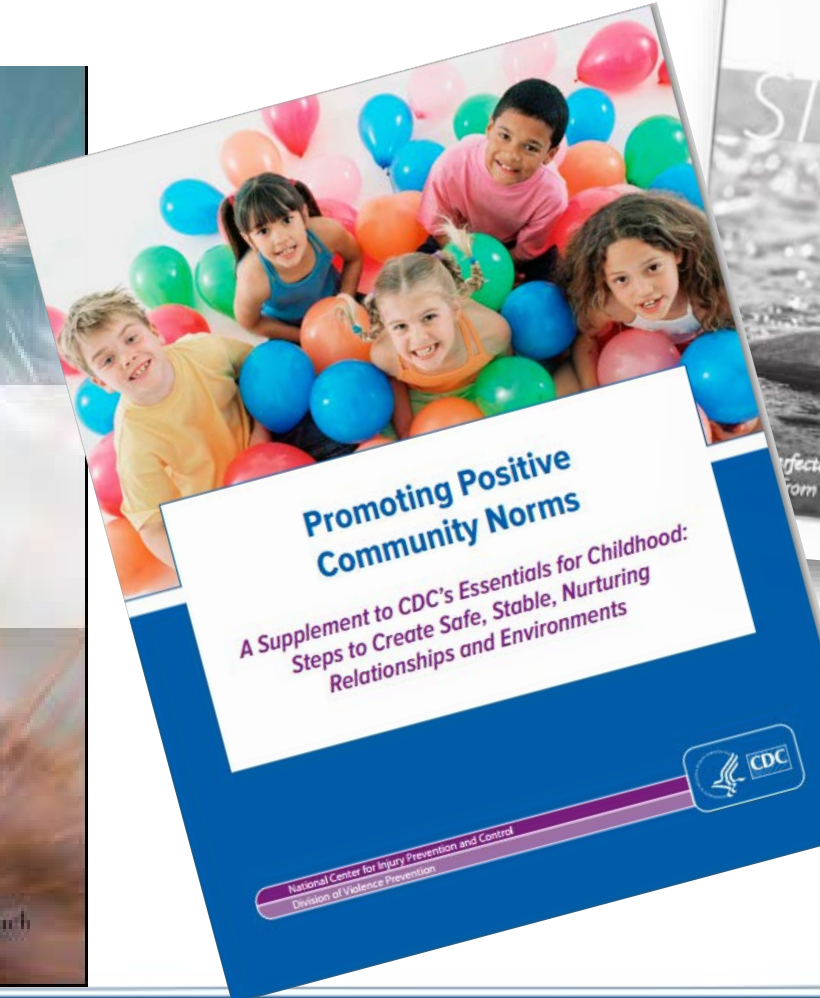
H.O.P.E TUFTS UNIVERSITY
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The DNA of HOPE is the Science of the Positive Framework

In the past week…
When have you had a
POSITIVE
EXPERIENCE?

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THE POSITIVE COMMUNITY NORMS FRAMEWORK

PILOT TEST AND REFINE MATERIALS

STEP 5

SEEDS OF *Fire*
ROOTS OF *Hope*

seven principles of inspiration
for the courageous leader

Dr. Jeffrey W. Linkenbach

Promoting Positive Community Norms

A Supplement to CDC's Essentials for Childhood:
Steps to Create Safe, Stable, Nurturing
Relationships and Environments

National Center for Injury Prevention and Control
Division of Violence Prevention

CDC

Balancing Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) With HOPE*

NEW INSIGHTS INTO THE ROLE OF POSITIVE EXPERIENCE
ON CHILD AND FAMILY DEVELOPMENT

*Health Outcomes of Positive Experience

science:positive

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A Core Assumption

Is your community a friendly place?

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A Core Assumption

Linkenbach, J. (2007). The Seven Core Principles of the Science of the Positive Workbook: A publication of The Montana Institute, LLC.

WWW.**MONTANAINSTITUTE**.COM

A Core Assumption?

Def: The deep central, core of all beliefs. The root of all assumptions, perceptions, values, worldviews and identities...

Linkenbach, J. (2010) Introducing The Science of the Positive.

WWW.**MONTANA**INSTITUTE.COM

Hmm?...

What is your core assumption?

Core Assumption
of The Science of the Positive:

The **POSITIVE** exists, it is real, and is worth growing

Linkenbach, J. (2007, 2018). The Science of the Positive: The Seven Core Principles Workbook: A Publication of The Montana Institute, LLC.

The solutions are in community.

Linkenbach, J. (2007, 2009-2011,2015-2016). The Science of the Positive: The Seven Core Principles Workbook.

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SPIRIT

DARE TO BRING HOPE

Transformational leaders Create Conditions To Honor The Positive

The Cycle of Transformation

of the Science of the Positive

Science of the Positive

Cycle of Transformation

SPIRIT

SCIENCE

ACTION

RETURN

Energy-giving
Positive
Hopeful

Rest
Reflection
Evaluation

Learning
Planning
Effectiveness

Integrating
Change and
Transformation

Linkenbach, 2015

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Guiding Questions

Spirit
What will be the spirit of our work?

Science
How will we approach the science?

Action
What will be our actions?
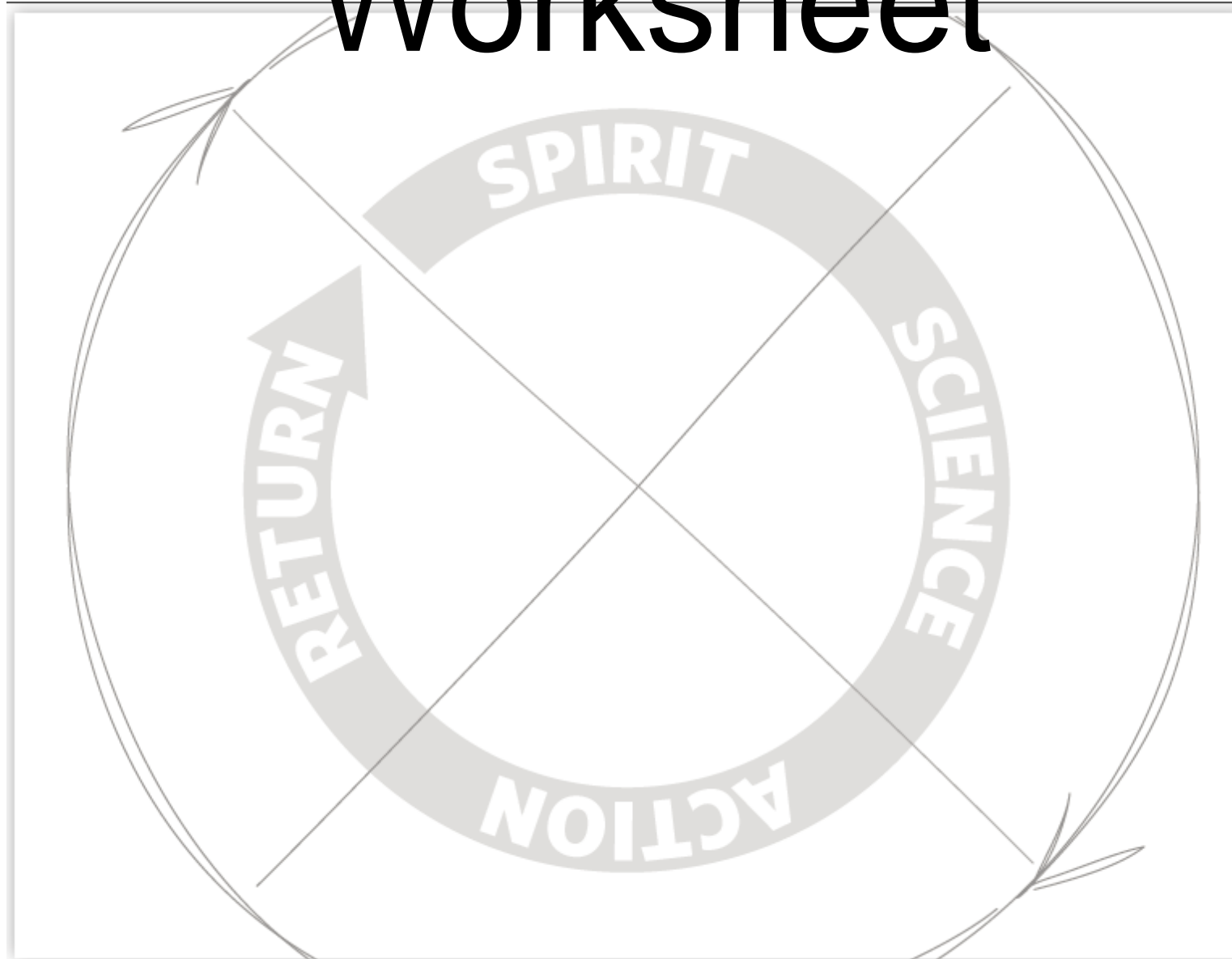
Return
What returns will we seek?

Science of the Positive – Cycle of Transfomation
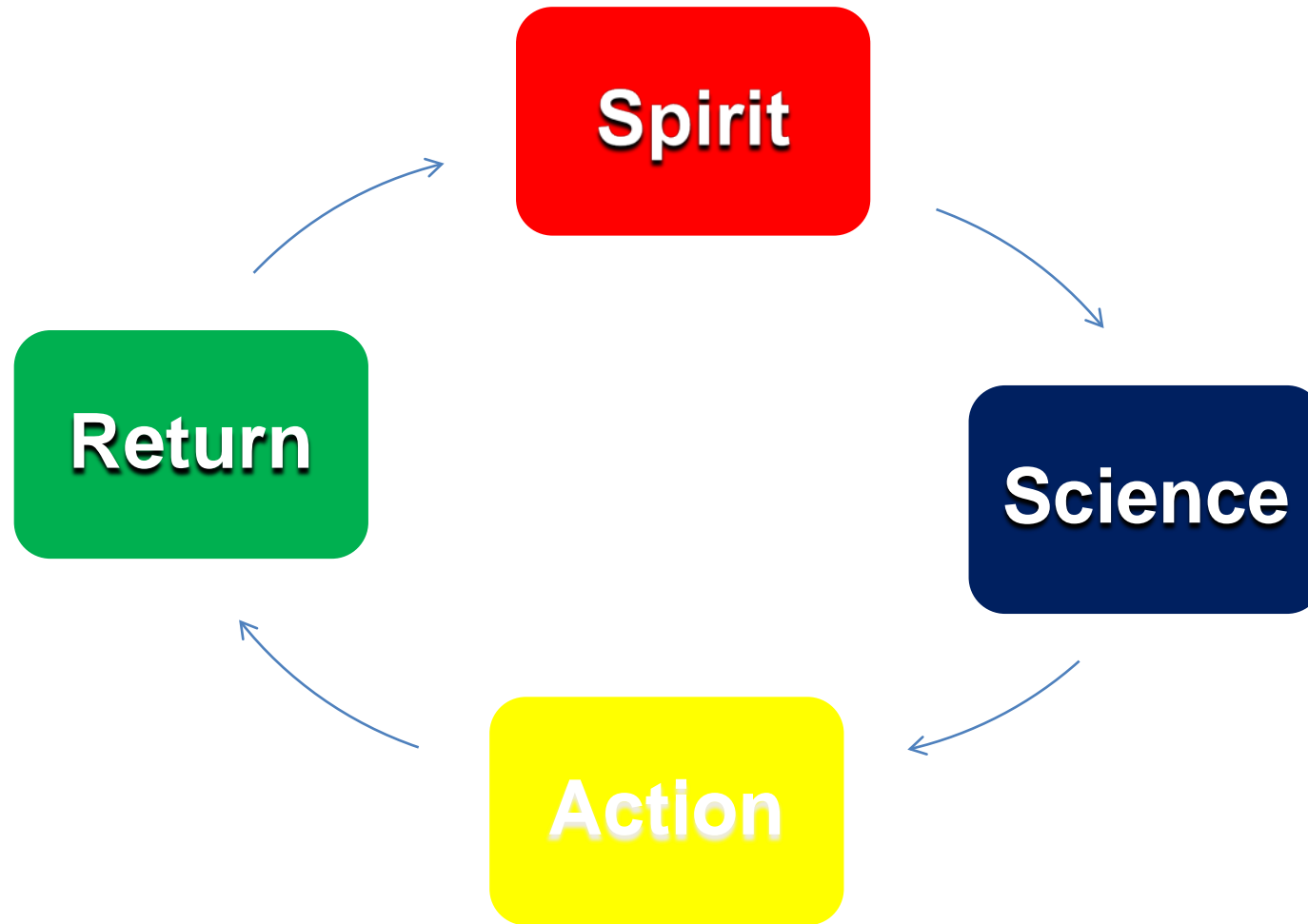
Worksheet

What will be the "**spirit**" of our work?

ACTUALLY, DOING METH WON'T MAKE IT EASIER TO HOOK UP.

strength in numbers

Draw the Line.

Establish clear rights, rules and limits within the family.
83% of ETHS parents have talked to their children at least once in the past year about family rules and consequences related to alcohol, tobacco and other drug use.

2004 Strength in Numbers Parent Survey. N=317 ETHS parents. This publication is supported by Drug-Free Communities Support Program grant number 2003-ND-FX-0041, funded by the Office of National Drug Control Policy, the Rotary Club of Evanston Lighthouse & Tobacco Settlement Funds.

For more information and resources, visit www.peerservices.org

science positive™

Applying the
Science of the Positive
to
Health and Safety

By Dr. *Jeffrey W. Linkenbach*

The Montana Institute
www.montanainstitute.org

"The Importance of Hope

By grounding our efforts in a positive spirit, we breathe life into our work. We call this breath hope. Hope is necessary to renew our daily energy, to bring critical resources and partners to the table, and to sustain our efforts for the challenges to come. We cannot overlook the importance of hope in our work."

Linkenbach, 2016

SPIRIT

- Positive childhood experiences that supported you:

  - Adult(s) who cared about you
  - Family time / traditions
  - Cultural Events & Celebrations

How might you apply this cycle of transformation in your work?

SCIENCE

HOPE IS A STRATEGY BASED ON THE SCIENCE OF THE POSITIVE FRAMEWORK

We seek to grow POSITIVE experience and norms in children, adults, systems and cultures

What if.. THE POSITIVE has lasting impacts similar to trauma…???

HOPE is a strategy that emerged from the Science of the Positive and Positive Community Norms Frameworks

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Essentials for Childhood:

Promoting Healthy Outcomes from Positive Experiences

Sege & Linkenbach, 2014

PEDIATRICS®

OFFICIAL JOURNAL OF THE AMERICAN ACADEMY OF PEDIATRICS

The online version of this article, along with updated information and services, is located on the World Wide Web at:
http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/early/2014/04/29/peds.2013-3425.citation

American Academy of Pediatrics

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Public Health 101

Risks

Protections

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The Science of the Positive

Concern

Hope

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Spoiler Alert!

ACES

Adverse Childhood Experiences

PCES

Positive Childhood Experiences

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WE GROW HOPE
BY PRACTICING
THE SCIENCE OF
THE POSITIVE

The Science of the Positive Framework

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What is the Science of the Positive?

The Science of the Positive is the study of how positive factors impact culture and experience.

The focus is on how to measure and grow the positive, and is based upon the core assumption that the positive is real and is worth growing – in ourselves, our families, our workplaces and our communities.

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Science of the Positive Framework

Core Assumption
of The Science of the Positive:

The **POSITIVE** exists, it is real, and is worth growing

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Linkenbach, J. (2007, 2009-2011,2015-2016). The Science of the Positive: The Seven Core Principles Workbook.
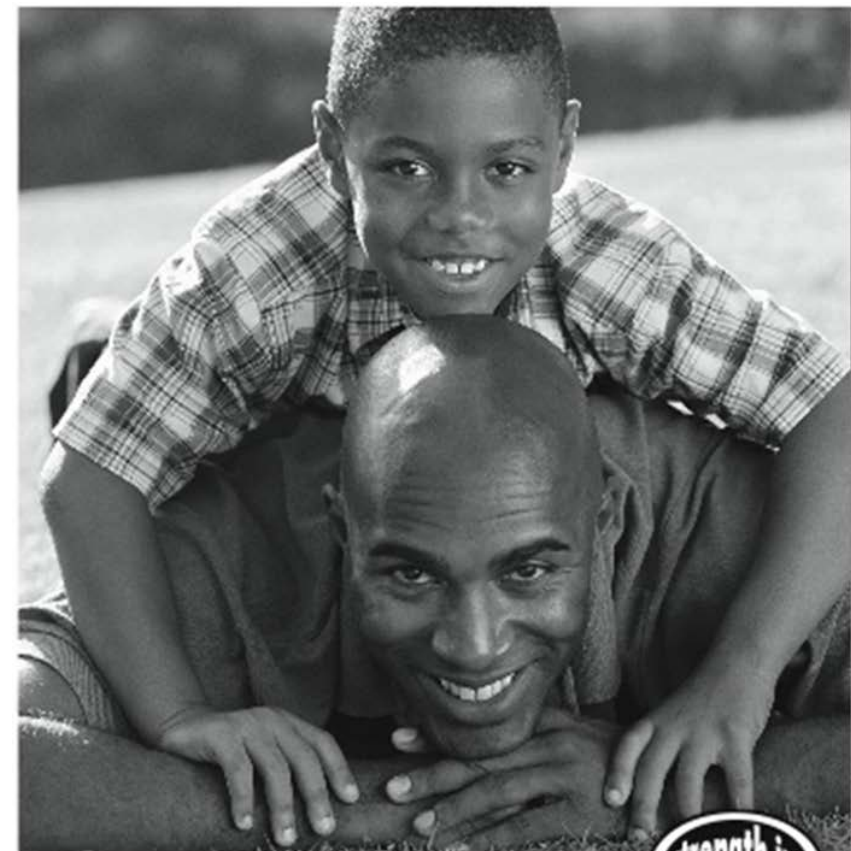
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Science of the Positive

Cycle of Transformation

"If we want **HEALTH,** we must promote **HEALTH**."

Be a Role Model.

Provide children with positive examples.
78% of ETHS parents don't think it's okay to give alcohol to their own children, even if they're there to supervise.

2004 Strength in Numbers Parent Survey. N=317 ETHS parents. This publication is supported by Drug-Free Communities Support Program grant number 2003-ND-FX-0041, funded by the Office of National Drug Control Policy, the Rotary Club of Evanston Lighthouse & Tobacco Settlement Funds.

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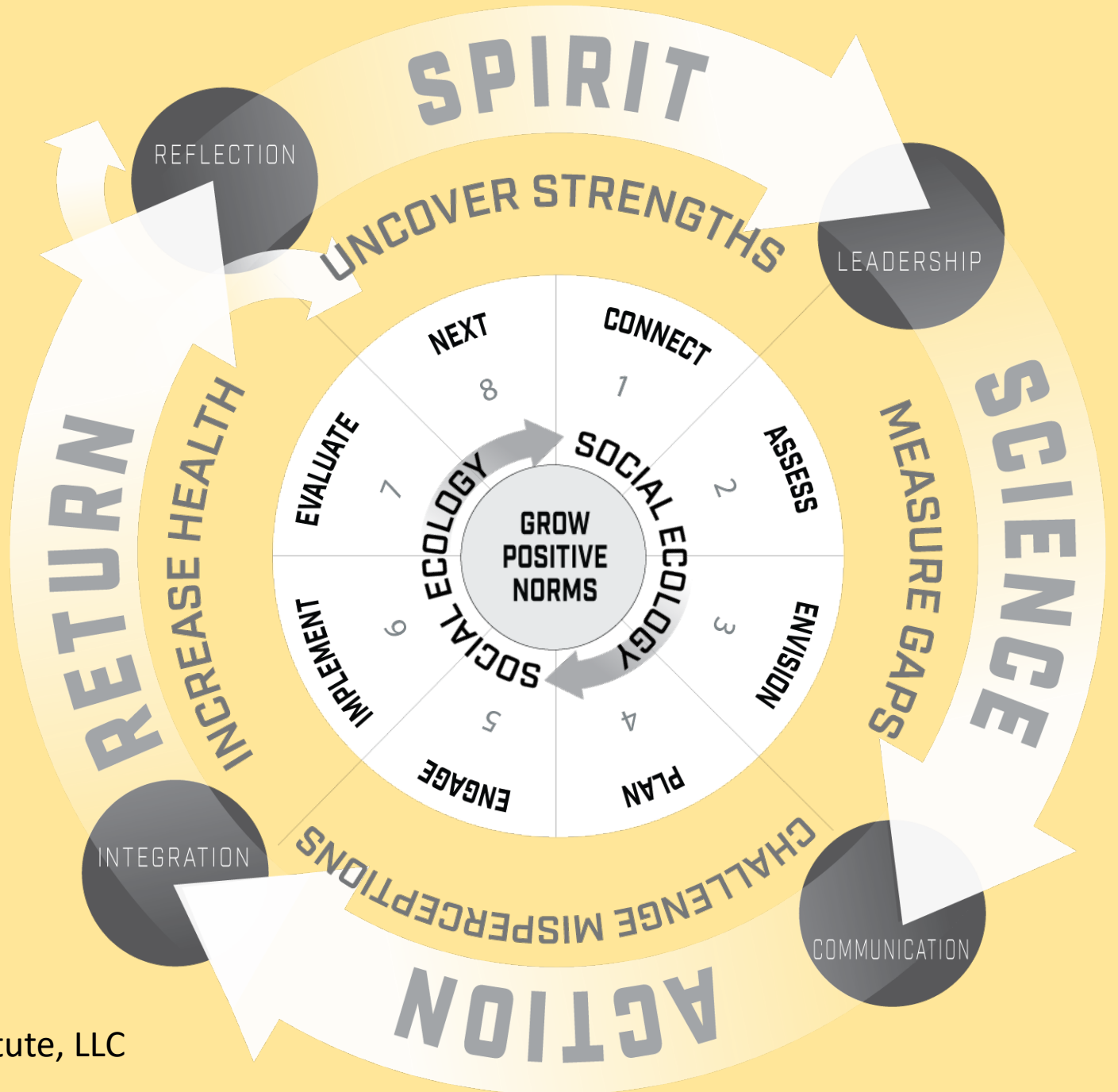
strength in numbers

Linkenbach, J. (2001) "Cultural Cataracts: Identifying and Correcting Misperceptions in the Media." The Report on Social Norms: Working Paper No (1). Paper Clip Communications.

Positive Community Norms Framework

What's a norm?

Social norms are the perceived standards of acceptable attitudes and behaviors prevalent among the members of a community.

What's a norm?

51% or more

Majority

Most

Almost All

Examples of Norms

Norms are majority data (51% or better)

➤ 75% of MN high school 11th grade girls (76% boys) report <u>not</u> drinking alcohol in the past 30 days.

➤ 88% of MN high school 11th grade girls (86% boys) report <u>not</u> binge drinking in the past 30 days.

➤ 91% of MN 5th grade girls (84% boys) report <u>never</u> having pushed, shoved, slapped, hit or kicked someone, when they were not kidding around (last 30 days).

➤ 93% of MN high school 9th grade girls (93% boys) have <u>not</u> used marijuana or hashish in the past 30 days. (Not counting medicinal MJ prescribed by a doctor).

2016 Minnesota Student Survey

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Two Types of Norms

*Injunctive norms –
"The Ought's"*

*Descriptive norms –
"The Is's"*

Social Norms Theories

Norm

The GAP

Perceived Norm

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Key Terms

Actual Norm

The actual behavior or attitude of the majority of a population; what **most people** do or believe.

Perceived Norm

The perceived behavior or perceived attitude of most people; what we think **most people** do or believe.

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RUDYARD

596 Nice People - 1 Old Sore Head!

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BREAKING NEWS!!!

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MIND THE GAP

What We Focus On Becomes Our Reality

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Perception is Everything...

Linkenbach, J.W. "The Eye of the Beholder." The Prevention Connection: A Publication of the Montana Prevention Resource Center and the Addictive and Mental Disorders Division of the Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services. Spring (2008). Vol. XIII (1), 17.

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Actual and **Perceived** Norms Across the Social Ecology

Actual Norm

84% of students reported <u>never</u> trying marijuana.

Perceived Norms

- 65% of students thought MOST students had tried it
- 63% of students thought MOST adults had tried it
- 77% of parents thought MOST students had tried it
- 74% of school staff / teachers thought MOST students had tried it
- 80% of school staff / teachers thought MOST adults had tried it

Sources: MN P&I PCN Student Survey 2013 (grades 6-12), n= 5137; PCN Parent Survey, 2013, n= 2016; PCN School Survey, 2012, n= 479.
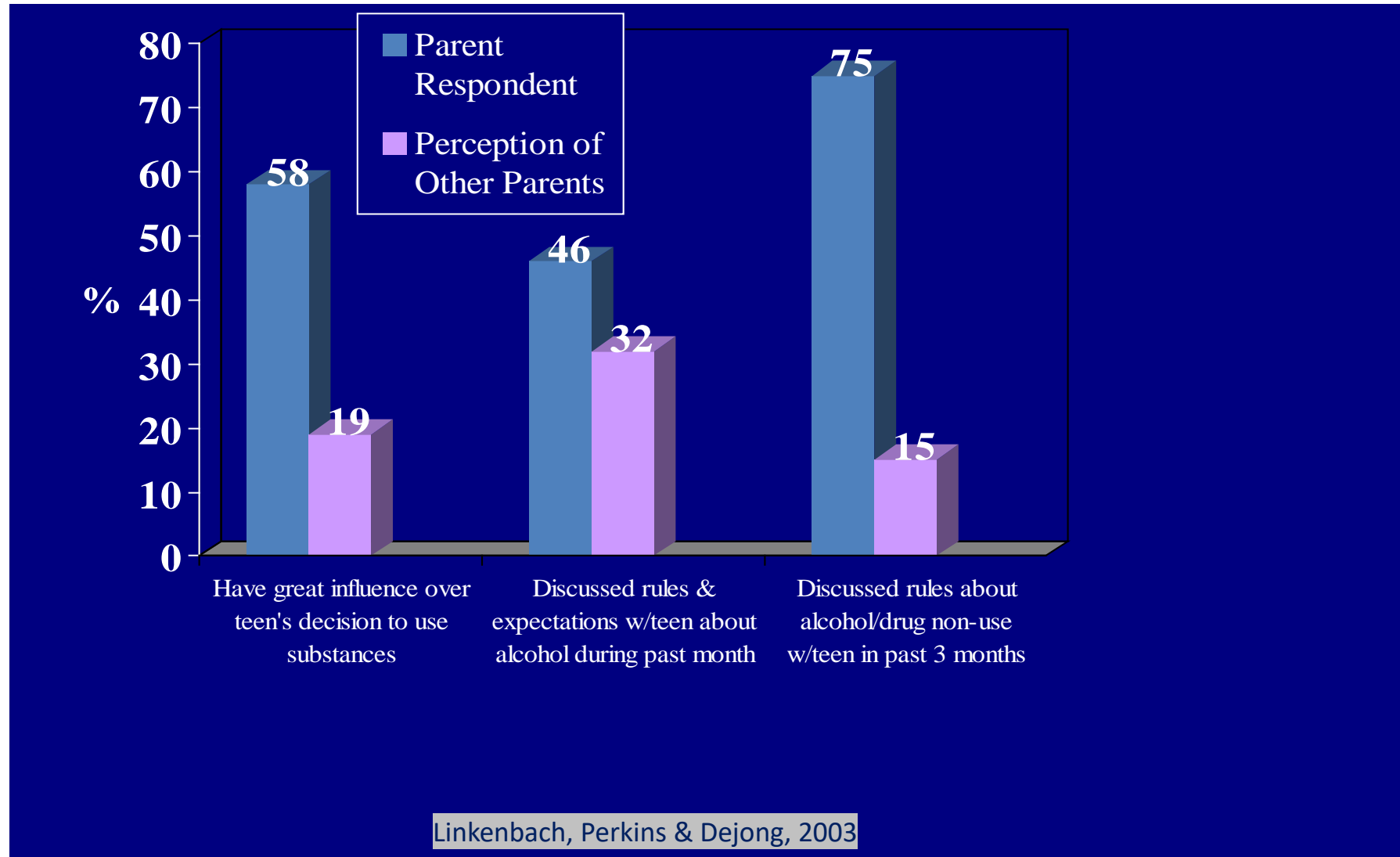
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Misperceptions of norms impact BOTH **RISK** and **PROTECTION**

➢ **Over-estimate the amount of risky or harmful behaviors in their "peers."**

➢ **Under-estimate the amount of healthy or protective behaviors.**

Misperception of norms is a "hidden risk factor."

Wambeam, R.A, Canen, E. L., Linkenbach, J. & Otto, J. (2014). *Youth misperception of peer substance use norms: A hidden risk factor for state and community prevention.* Prevention Science (2014) 15:75–84 DOI 10.1007/s11121-013-0384-8

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Actual vs. **Perceived** **Norms**

MOST **(85%)**, Minnesota High School students in 10 schools, reported using alcohol **less than monthly**.

However, **48%** of these same students perceived that MOST students drink monthly or more often.

These students were 5 times more likely to drink monthly than students who did NOT misperceive the norm.

Source: ten schools, MN P&I 2013 PCN Student Survey, grades 6-12, n=5137

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Dark & Negative Thoughts About Youth

Cultural Cataracts

Linkenbach, J. (2001) "Cultural Cataracts: Identifying and Correcting Misperceptions in the Media." The Report on Social Norms: Working Paper No (1). PaperClip Communications.

CONGRATULATIONS GRADUATES!

STATISTICS SHOW:

3 out of 4 San Juan County High School Students Disapprove of Drinking Alcohol Regularly

2011 Youth Risk & Resiliency Survey (YRRS), San Juan County (n=2087). New Mexico Department of Health

93% NIZHONI
of High School Students in Shiprock
Have **NEVER** Tried Meth

SHIPROCK NIZHONI PCN YOUTH SURVEY
Shiprock, Northwest & Career Prep High Schools,
March 2013, (n=520)
San Juan County Partnership &
Dine' Ba' Hozho Coalition

Publication of the U.S. Department of
Health and Human Services: May, 2014

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Where are your gaps?

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Positive Community Norms

The Norm

MOST Wisconsin adults, **(70%),** strongly agree that improving the well-being of children and families is important for healthy, strong communities.

The GAP

The Perceived Norm

However, **(72%)** did not think most other Wisconsin adults felt the same way.

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99% of WV parents strongly agree that it is important that their child never experiences child abuse or neglect.

TEAM for West Virginia Children
www.teamwv.org • www.preventchildabusewv.org

Safe Sleeping *(Injunctive Norm)* *WV Study*

Most parents, **70% strongly agree**: "Babies should only sleep or nap in safety-approved cribs, bassinets or 'pack and play' with a firm mattress that fits close to the sides."

- However, **83%** of parents did **<u>not</u>** think most parents would strongly agree.

- And, **97%** of HV service providers did **<u>not</u>** think most parents would strongly agree. (Q27)

TEAM for West Virginia Children

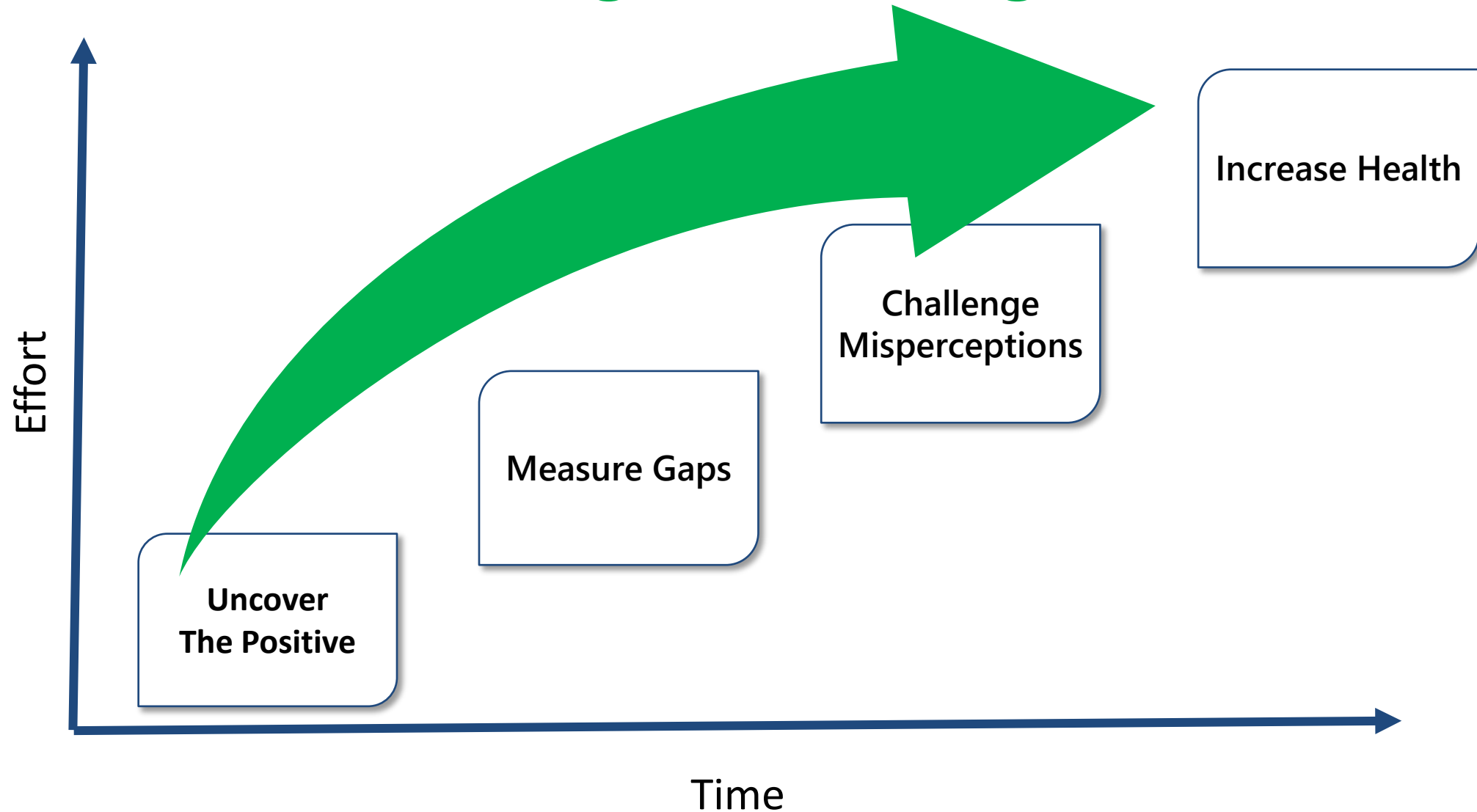www.teamwv.org • www.preventchildabusewv.org

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WE NEED TO QUESTION OUR PERCEPTIONS

DOES THE POSITIVE EXIST HERE?

Evaluation Using the PCN Logic Model

Effort

Uncover The Positive

Measure Gaps

Challenge Misperceptions

Increase Health

Time

Increase Positive Community Norms

Improve Health, Safety & Nurturing

What do you want to grow in your community?
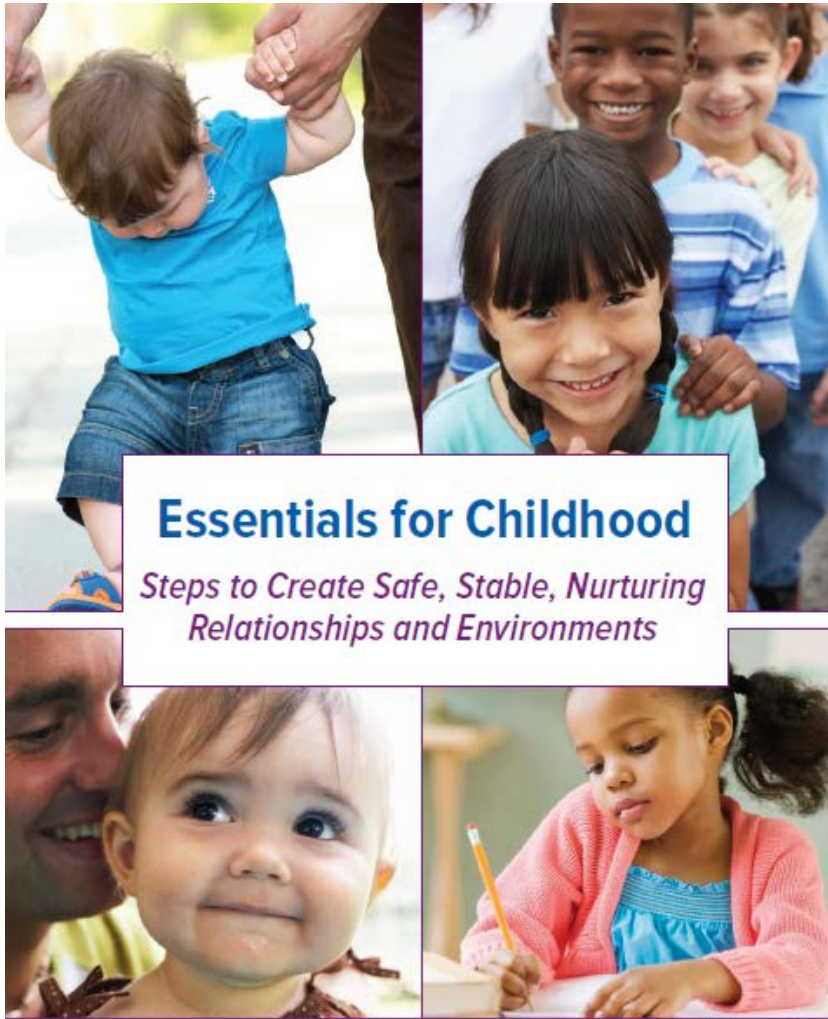
Returns?

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ACTION

Essentials for Childhood

Steps to Create Safe, Stable, Nurturing Relationships and Environments

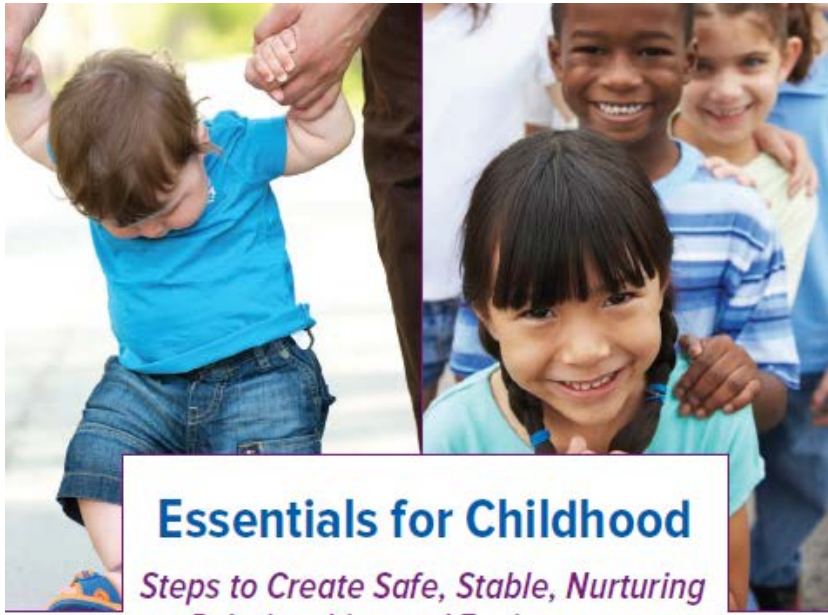National Center for Injury Prevention and Control
Division of Violence Prevention
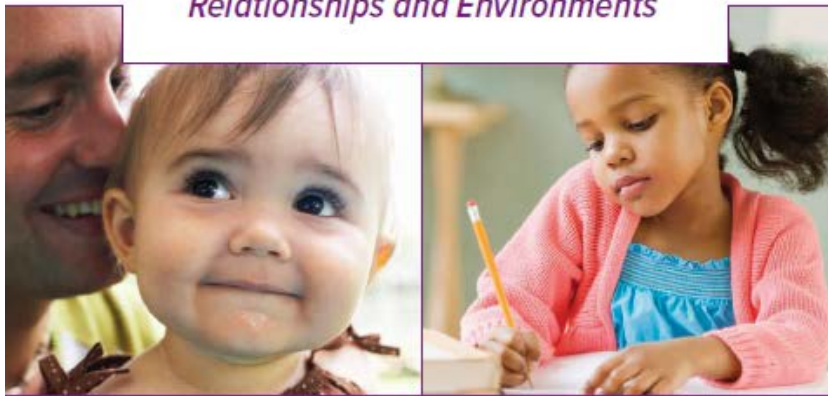
■ <u>Safety:</u> The extent to which a child is free from fear and secure from physical or psychological harm within their social and physical environment.

■ <u>Stability:</u> The degree of predictability and consistency in a child's social, emotional, and physical environment.

■ <u>Nurturing:</u> The extent to which a parent or caregiver is available and able to sensitively and consistently respond to and meet the needs of their child. SSNRs are important to promote.

There is reason to believe SSNRs can help to:
■ Reduce the occurrence of CM and other adverse childhood experiences
■ Reduce the negative effects of CM and other adverse childhood experiences
■ Influence many physical, cognitive, emotional outcomes throughout a child's life
■ Reduce health disparities
■ Have a cumulative impact on health

"While child maltreatment is a significant public health problem, it is also a preventable one. The steps suggested in Essentials for Childhood—along with your commitment to preventing child maltreatment—can help create neighborhoods, communities, and a world in which every child can thrive."
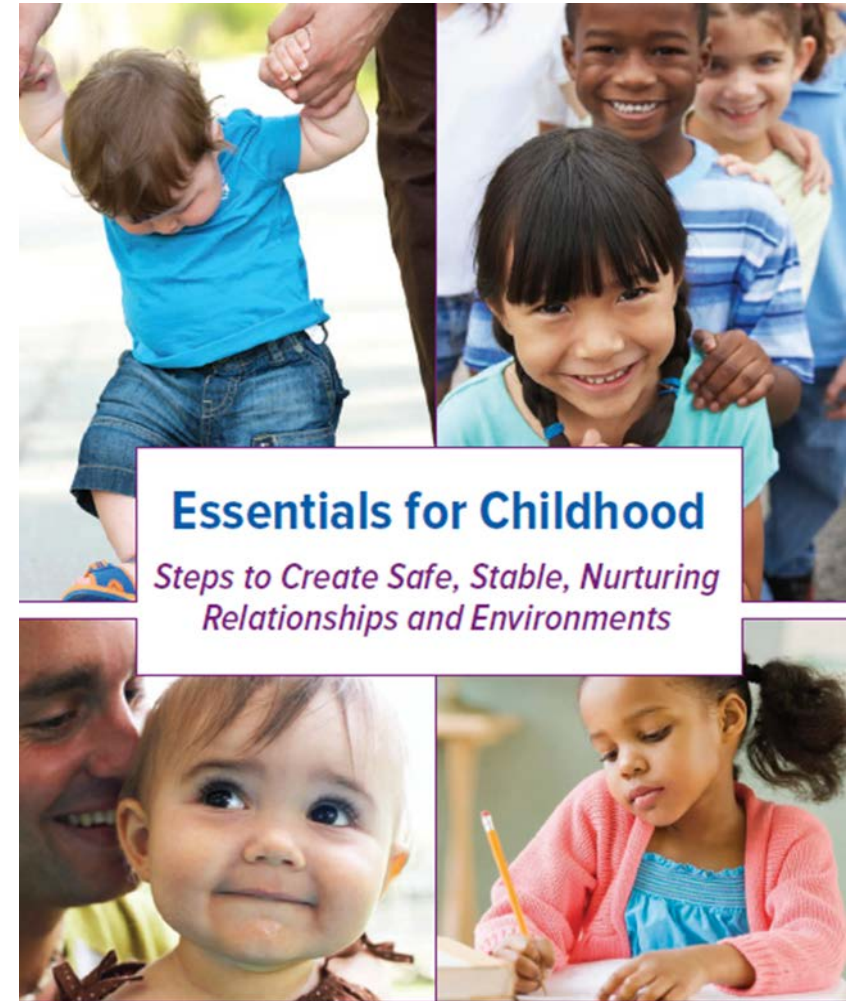
Essentials for Childhood
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CDC
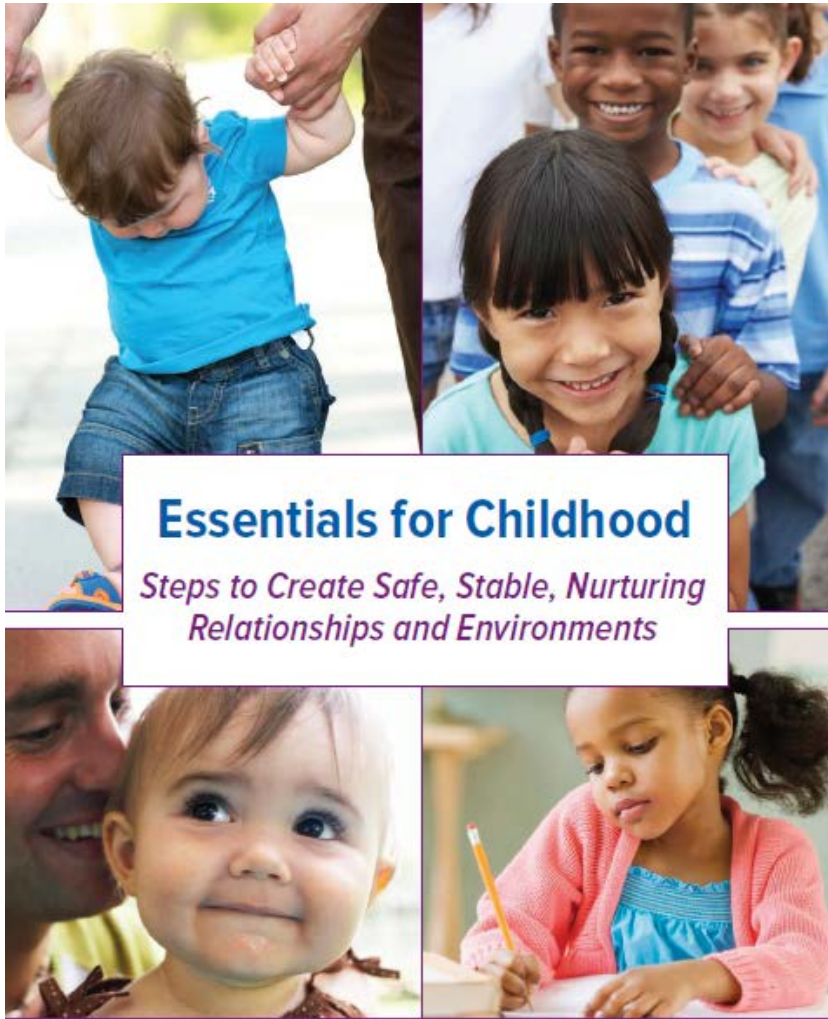
Essentials for Childhood
Steps to Create Safe, Stable, Nurturing Relationships and Environments

National Center for Injury Prevention and Control
Division of Violence Prevention

**Goal 1: Raise Awareness and Commitment to Promote Safe, Stable, Nurturing Relationships and Environments and Prevent Child Maltreatment** • Adopt the vision of "assuring safe, stable, nurturing relationships and environments to protect children from child maltreatment" • Raise awareness in support of the vision • Partner with others to unite behind the vision

Goal 2: Use Data to Inform Actions • Build a partnership to gather and synthesize relevant data • Take stock of existing data • Identify and fill critical data gaps • Use the data to support other action steps

Goal 3: Create the Context for Healthy Children and Families through Norms Change and Programs • Promote the community norm that we all share responsibility for the well-being of children • Promote positive community norms about parenting programs and acceptable parenting behaviors • Implement evidence-based programs for parents and caregivers

Goal 4: Create the Context for Healthy Children and Families through Policies • Identify and assess which policies may positively impact the lives of children and families in your community • Provide decision-makers and community leaders with information on the benefits of evidence based strategies and rigorous evaluation
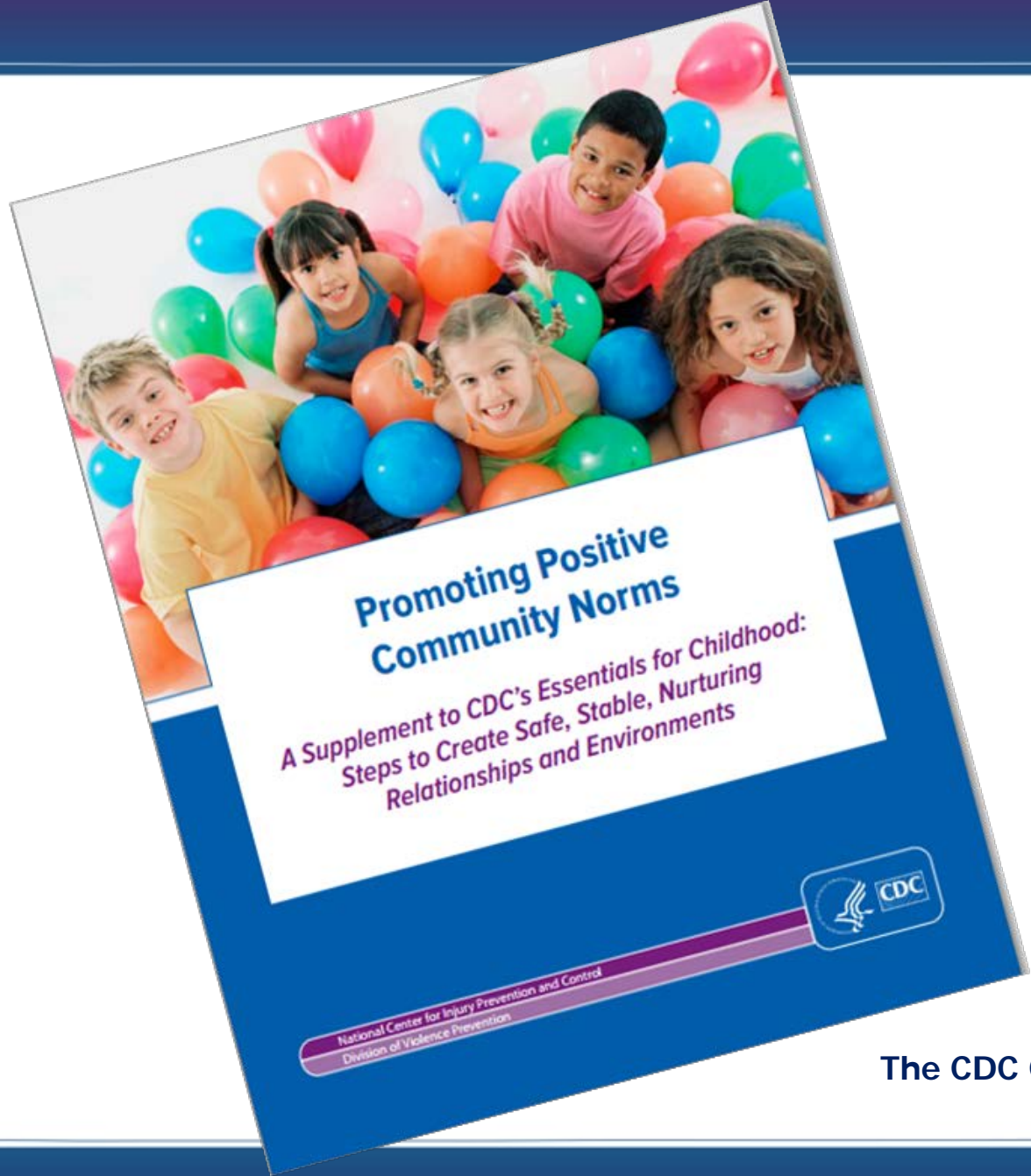
CDC Essentials for Childhood Goal #3

Create the Context for Healthy Children and Families through Norms Change and Programs

The CDC Commissioned The Montana Institute to Develop this publication

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SEVEN STEPS FOR PROMOTING POSITIVE COMMUNITY NORMS

1. Planning, Engaging, and Educating
2. Assess Norms
3. Establish a Common Understanding and Prioritize Opportunities
4. Develop a Portfolio of Strategies
5. Pilot Test, Select and Refine
6. Implement Portfolio of Strategies
7. Evaluate Effectiveness and Future Needs
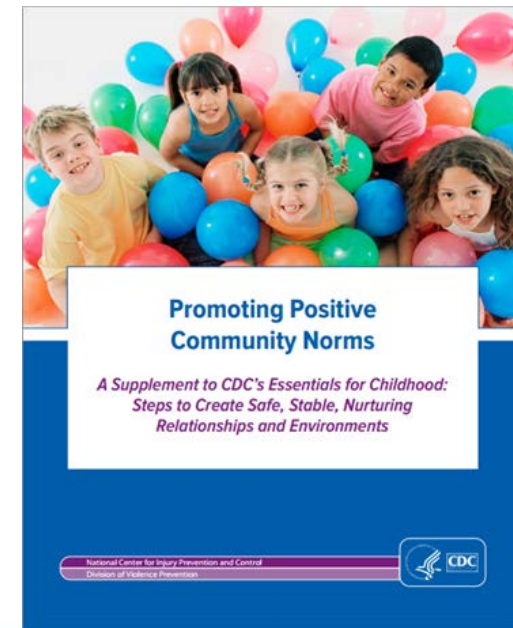
Promoting Positive Community Norms

A Supplement to CDC's Essentials for Childhood:
Steps to Create Safe, Stable, Nurturing
Relationships and Environments

National Center for Injury Prevention and Control
Division of Violence Prevention

https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/efc-promoting-positive-community-norms.pdf

Experience shapes the human brain

- **Experience** shapes brain growth and development

- **Positive Experiences** promote healthy development

- **Adverse experiences** can derail healthy development

- Especially during **rapid periods** of brain growth and
  - Early Childhood Adolescence
  - And...Continues Throughout Adult Lifespan

WE CAN DISCOVER...

ITS NEVER TOO LATE TO HAVE A HAPPY CHILDHOOD!!!

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ACES disrupt healthy brain development by impacting the Essentials for Childhood

PCES promote ~~ACES disrupt~~ healthy brain development by impacting the Essentials for Childhood

Balancing Adverse
Childhood Experiences (ACEs)
With HOPE*

NEW INSIGHTS INTO THE ROLE OF POSITIVE EXPERIENCE
ON CHILD AND FAMILY DEVELOPMENT

*Health Outcomes of Positive Experience

Abstract Balancing ACES With HOPE

- Establish a ==spirit== of hope and optimism and make the case that positive experiences have lasting impact on human development and functioning, without ignoring well-documented concerns related to toxic environments.

- Demonstrate, through ==science==, the powerful contribution of positive relationships and experiences to the development of healthy children and adults.

- Describe ==actions== related to current social norms regarding parenting practices, particularly those associated with healthy child development. These actions are based on data that suggest that American adults are willing to intervene personally to prevent child abuse and neglect.

- Reflect upon the positive ==returns== on investment that our society can expect as we make changes in policies, practices, and future research to support positive childhood environments that foster the healthy development of children.

Sege, R., Bethell, C., Linkenbach, J., Jones, J., Klika, B. & Pecora, P.J. (2017). *Balancing adverse childhood experiences with HOPE: New insights into the role of positive experience on child and family development*. Boston: The Medical Foundation. Accessed at www.cssp.org

The Wisconsin CTF Positive Community Norms Project asked about
Positive Childhood Experiences (PCEs) questions - how often respondent:

1. **Felt able to talk to their family about feelings**
2. **Felt their family stood by them during difficult times**
3. **Enjoyed participating in community traditions**
4. **Felt a sense of belonging in high school**
5. **Felt supported by friends**
6. **Had at least two non-parent adults who took genuine interest in them**
7. **Felt safe and protected by an adult in their home**
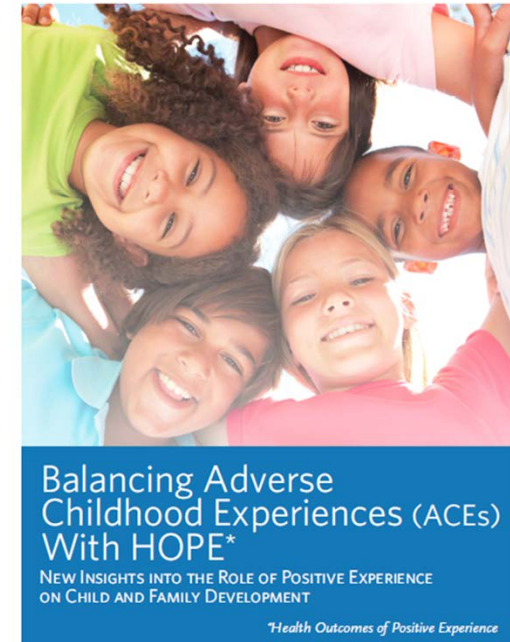
These 2015 questions were adapted from the Child and Youth Resilience Measure developed by Dr. Michael Ungar at the Resilience Research Centre at Dalhousie University in Halifax, Nova Scotia.

- Internal consistency reliability: 0.77
- Principal components factor analysis: single factor with an Eigenvalue > 1 (2.95).
- Factor loadings ranged from 0.57 ("felt safe/home") to 0.72 ("family stood by/difficult times")

Bethell C, Jones J, Gombojav N, Linkenbach J, Sege R. Positive Childhood Experiences and Adult Mental and Relational Health in a Statewide Sample: Associations Across Adverse Childhood Experiences Levels. JAMA Pediatr. 2019:e193007.

Figure 1. Balancing ACEs with HOPE Logic Model

Each of these factors influence parent and family beliefs and behaviors.

Source: Prevent Child Abuse America

CULTURE POLICY RESOURCES ENVIRONMENT

Childhood experiences directly impact brain development.

Source: The Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University

BRAIN DEVELOPMENT

Positive childhood experiences can impact adult health, even among adults who reported adverse childhood experiences.

Source: 2015 Wisconsin Behavioral Risk Factor Survey

ADULT HEALTH

PARENT AND FAMILY

Positive experiences and social norms regarding parenting practices contribute to child development.

Sources: CDC Essentials for Childhood Program & Prevent Child Abuse America

PHYSICAL HEALTH AND BEHAVIORAL OUTCOMES

Brain development and childhood experiences directly affect physical health and behavioral outcomes.

Sources: The National Survey of Children's Health 2011-2012

Balancing Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) With HOPE*

NEW INSIGHTS INTO THE ROLE OF POSITIVE EXPERIENCE ON CHILD AND FAMILY DEVELOPMENT

*Health Outcomes of Positive Experience

Sege, R., Bethell, C., Linkenbach, J., Jones, J., Klika, B. & Pecora, P.J. (2017). *Balancing adverse childhood experiences with HOPE: New insights into the role of positive experience on child and family development*. Boston: The Medical Foundation. Accessed at www.cssp.org

Healing and solutions are in ourselves - our relationships - communities – cultures & environments...

We are the medicine

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How can you integrate the Science of the Positive into your work?

PLEASE SHARE IN THE CHAT BOX

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RETURN

OBJECTIVES

Spirit
Experience the energy of the Science of the Positive Framework

Science
Explore how H.O.P.E. emerged from Positive Community Norms

Action
Brainstorm ways we can integrate these ideas into our work

Return
Reflect on some of the BIG THINGS you learned

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Reflections

What are some of the BIG things you learned or heard?

Join Us at the Virtual Montana Summer Institute June - Sept

MontanaInstitute.com/MSI

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Changing norms and transforming cultures to create healthier, safer communities.

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We respect your privacy.

The Science of the Positive & Positive Community Norms

*The 2021 **VIRTUAL** Montana Summer Institute*

Dr. Jeffrey W. Linkenbach, Director & Chief Research Scientist

May you dare to HOPE!

In our stillness
we allow
Space

For hope, to surface
From the
deep

Dr. Jeffrey W. Linkenbach, 2014

Applying the

Science of the Positive

to

Health and Safety

By Dr. *Jeffrey W. Linkenbach*

The Montana Institute
www.montanainstitute.org

Table of Contents

The Science of the Positive

The Science of the Positive (Linkenbach, 2007) is the study of the ways in which positive factors impact culture and experience. It is based on the core assumption that the Positive is real and is worth growing, and its aim is to systematize the identification, measurement and growth of the positive in ourselves, our families, our workplaces, and our communities (Linkenbach, 2007).

Those of us who work as health and safety professionals can sometimes forget this core truth, as we become so focused on the dangers and problems we are trying to decrease. The Science of the Positive reverses this problem-centered frame, and focuses on growing the healthy, positive, protective factors that already exist in our communities. When we start to look at the world from a position of hope, it has a profound on impact the questions we ask, the data we collect, and the way we address health and safety issues.

"The Positive" that lies at the center of this framework is made up of the behaviors, attitudes, perceptions, traditions, language, and other factors that have a beneficial impact on human health, culture, and experience. For this reason, the Science of the Positive should not be confused with simple "positive thinking." It is a scientific process that works across entire cultures. And while the Science of the Positive is based on the core assumption that the positive exists in every community and culture, it recognizes that suffering, pain, and harm are very real. One of its principal aims is to reduce suffering in our families, our communities, and ourselves.

The Science of the Positive is currently in use by organizations seeking to change perceptions, behaviors, and outcomes across communities, as well as by individuals looking to uncover opportunities to fulfill their own potential. It is especially relevant in the field of health promotion, where it can guide the development and use of best practices in our work.

Science of the Positive in Practice:
A major federal agency developed a strategic communications process around the Science of the Positive. Expert researchers and practitioners from across the nation utilized Science of the Positive to help create a positive communications framework and guiding core leadership principles for framing and discussing important national health issues.
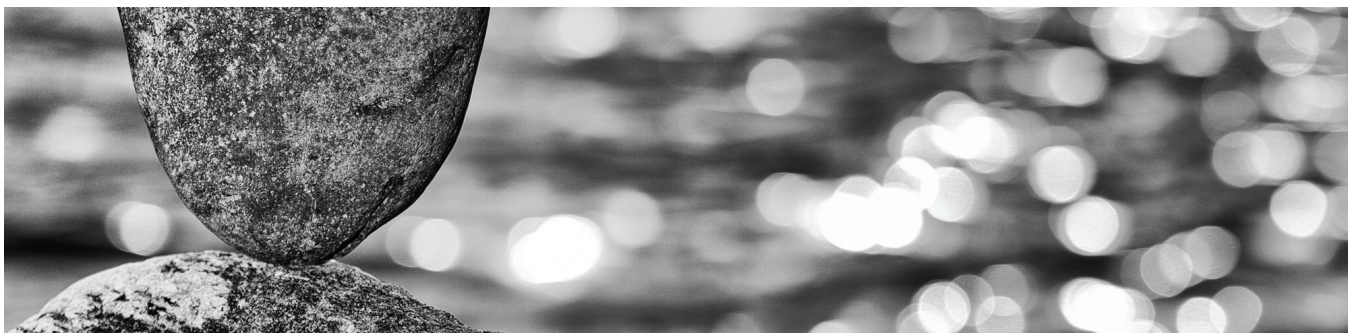
3

The Transformational Cycle of the Science of the Positive: *Spirit, Science, Action…and Return*

Many of us have gotten locked into a two-dimensional approach to our work, in which science leads to action. The Science of the Positive directs our efforts in a unique way by integrating spirit into this process. By re-engaging with spirit and re-igniting hope, our work proceeds guided by core values that allow us to ask different questions, reach people with more authenticity and truly create room for cultural transformation.
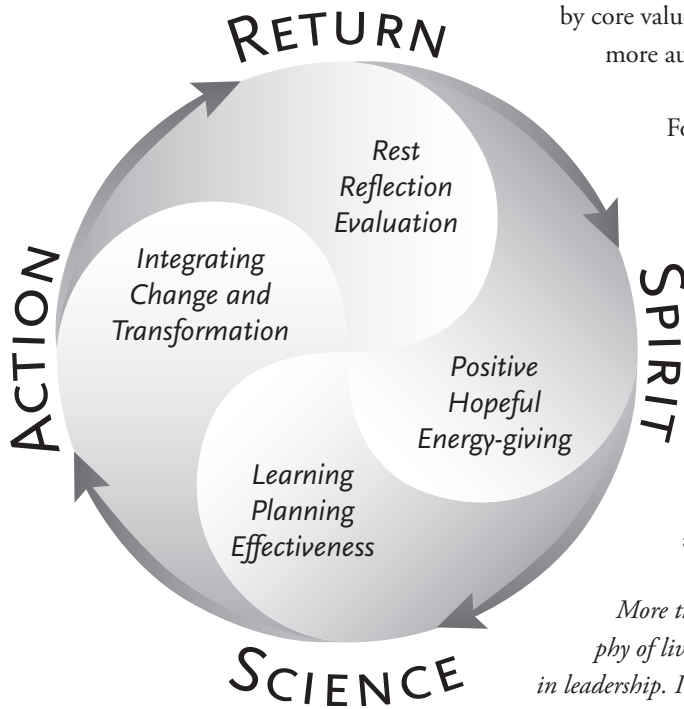
Four core elements – Spirit, Science, and Action, plus the cyclical action of Return – make up the transformational process of the Science of the Positive. Spirit, Science, Action, and Return work together to create a synergistic cycle that facilitates both change and transformation.

RETURN

ACTION

SPIRIT

SCIENCE

Rest
Reflection
Evaluation

Integrating
Change and
Transformation

Positive
Hopeful
Energy-giving

Learning
Planning
Effectiveness

This cycle can help us understand our current circumstances, articulate where we aspire to be and envision how we can get there. And by helping us examine our decisions and develop a deeper understanding of why we make them, the cycle allows us become more effective and purposeful in our actions and in our lives.

More than just a scientific inquiry, the Science of the Positive is a philosophy of living and a blueprint for cultivating community and developing soul in leadership. It is also a powerful tool that can guide us through the change and transformation that's necessary when things are not working as they should.

Order Matters: Spirit First, Then Science, To Lead Action

Spirit First   We must always begin by identifying the true essence of what we're trying to achieve. This is why Spirit always comes first. When we speak of Spirit, we refer to the deep "why" behind what we do. If we fail to identify the core purpose or value behind our actions, we can create confusion that allows our work to go off course.

The Importance of Hope   The word "spirit" comes from the Latin word *spiritus*, which literally means "breath." It is the breath that gives us life. By grounding our efforts in a positive spirit, we breathe life into our work. We call this breath hope. Hope is necessary to renew our daily energy, to bring critical resources and partners to the table, and to sustain our efforts for the challenges to come. We cannot overlook the importance of hope in our work.

In our efforts to promote health and safety, groups sometimes focus their communications campaigns on the harm associated with a problem. But when our communications (especially stories that appear in the media) focus on the negative, we risk creating misperceptions in an attempt to elicit concern in others.

While engaging the community is a critical tool in fostering change, our work has shown that we must be careful not to focus our outreach on the negative; ironically, doing so can create the opposite result from the one we seek. As a society, it is as if we have cultural cataracts: our vision can be distorted by the media's "if it bleeds, it leads" focus on the harm caused by the behavior of a small percentage of people (*Linkenbach, 2001*). Our media obsessively focus on problems, risk, and danger, fueling ever more exaggerated perceptions of their prevalence. This can perpetuate the very behavior we're trying to reduce or eliminate.

A negative focus can also lead to a sense of powerlessness and hopelessness, and negative emotions like these are unlikely to ever create positive change.

Spirit First, Then Science

Once we identify our core values and purpose, we must next seek an accurate understanding of the world around us. Science is about asking the right questions, answering those questions with rigor, and seeking the best possible understanding of the communities in which we work. Our perceptions of what is happening both in our communities and in our own organizations are often inaccurate. These misperceptions will cause us to get stuck in our work.

Am I Busy or Am I Effective?

A key question for all of us – one which can be frightening because it gets to the heart of the matter – is how are we managing our energy? We often talk about how busy we are, but is busy-ness what we want for ourselves? Does busy-ness result in transformative action? The mere fact that you are taking the time to step away from your busy-ness to engage in this learning is a great indication of your desire to become more effective. *Am I busy or effective*? This is the question to continually ask yourself and your colleagues.

The first step towards moving from busy to effective is to begin utilizing the cycle of Spirit, Science, Action, and Return. Start looking for the cycle in your own life and work, and you will start to notice where you are acting without first setting goals and intentions (Spirit) and basing your decisions on the best available information (Science).

As we seek to become more effective, we may realize that we have to change what we are doing. We may have to stop doing certain things altogether. Changing our approaches can be hard, but let us not forget the definition of insanity: doing what we have always done and expecting different results.

When we embrace Science in our prevention efforts, we will become more successful with each and every iteration of our work. Our evaluations will lead us to new insights, which in turn will lead us to better implementation. Without Science, we are prone to misperceptions and hit-or-miss outcomes. By embracing a scientific approach to our work, our efforts at improving health and safety become experiments that help us increase our effectiveness.

It is important for us to acknowledge the complexity of the social sciences. While we have tremendous knowledge about how to send an object to the moon, it is still very difficult for us to predict the decision a teenager will make in various social situations. Yet even given this complexity and the limitations of current research, we must continually strive to improve our understanding and engage in a scientific process.

5

Spirit First, Then Science, To Lead Action Health promotion professionals are always eager to jump in and take Action. We want to start improving the health of our communities immediately and start seeing results yesterday. But Action must come last. Without clear understanding of our purpose and the community we are working in, we cannot engage in meaningful Action that fosters both change and transformation.

Fostering Change and Transformation Through our actions, we seek to have an impact on ourselves and on those we serve. This impact includes both change and transformation. Change often happens in incremental improvements in behaviors or attitudes. Sometimes change is temporary, and hard-won improvements may be followed by setbacks. Change often happens only at the surface and does not create deep impacts in community systems.

Transformation, on the other hand, can result in quantum leaps in beliefs or behavior. Though it occurs less frequently than change, transformation also tends to be more lasting, and has much deeper impact. Typically, it is hard to "un-do" transformation – once we have gained a new perspective, we can never go back to our old way of seeing things.

CHANGE	TRANSFORMATION
Happens on the surface	Happens on a deep core level
Recombines existing elements	New elements, synergistic reactions
More common	More rare
Easier to measure	Difficult to measure
Progresses in linear stages	Happens in quantum leaps
Happens within current paradigms	Shifts paradigms
Supports current assumptions	Dissolves current assumptions
Linear	Cyclical

The Science of the Positive creates both change and transformation by fostering conditions in which transformation is more likely to occur. It will be the transformation that results in the sustainable, long-lasting impacts of our work.

Transformation can often be hard to notice – especially when we are right in the middle of it. But if we look at health and safety related behaviors over time, we can see transformation more clearly. Think about issues like smoking on airplanes, using car seats and helmets for children, and the use of hard hats and other protective equipment in the workplace. Today, these practices are so accepted that we wonder that it took so long for them to be implemented. It is from this perspective that we can appreciate the depth of the cultural transformation that has taken place, and take hope that more transformation can occur when we embrace new paradigms for change.

Resetting the Cycle: Return

A crucial and often overlooked part of health promotion work is the element of Return: a time of rest, recovery, and renewal before the cycle begins again. Our dominant culture is fixated on action. But the reflection required by Return is hard work. Stillness takes enormous energy. This last step of the Spirit-Science-Action-Return Cycle is a place of humility and authenticity. We have set our intentions, used our best science, and taken action to make change. We have grown, learned, and been tested, and now have wisdom from the journey. And it is because of this authenticity that we have something of value to return to the community.

If the Action phase has a motto it is, "Don't just sit there…DO SOMETHING!" In the Return phase the motto would be, "Don't just do something…SIT THERE!" This is a necessary pause that so many in our field never take for themselves. Once we have had time to reflect on what we have accomplished, to restore our energies, and to recharge our excitement for what we do, it is time to start again with Spirit, to set new intentions and move forward into the Big Next phase in our work.

Science of the Positive in Practice:
At a corporate occupational health and safety organization representing 3.3 million service workers and 83,000 businesses across Ontario, Canada, Science of the Positive principles were used to develop executive team leadership goals and a communication framework. After this work, the company CEO came to Montana for a Science of the Positive "boot camp" – an onsite visit where, over three days, she focused on the spirit of transformation in leadership, the science of planned change, and actions to implement best practices. The CEO later sent key leaders to Montana in order to align her entire executive team with the Science of the Positive principles.

The Seven Core Principles of the Science of the Positive

The Core Principles of the Science of the Positive provide a concrete process to help us frame, execute, and evaluate our work in a way that increases our effectiveness both within our organizations and in our communities. They also guide us to integrate much-needed periods of rest and reflection into our work. These periods allow us to reconnect with our goals and values, and return to our work with a renewed sense of energy and understanding.

By engaging with these principles, we can create a positive, strength-based frame for our work; identify and connect with the true spirit and purpose of what we do; build greater leadership capacity within our organizations; ask the right questions and collect the most salient data; find effective, authentic ways to engage with our communities; and create the conditions most favorable to lasting cultural transformation. These principles become an invaluable tool to help us navigate the complexity of our health and safety work.

Core Principle 1: *BE POSITIVE* The Positive is our natural state. It is who we truly are underneath the defenses and protections we create in response to painful life experiences. To be Positive is to shed these protections to identify and claim who we really are.

How we respond to the existence of the Positive within us and others directs our lives: either the Positive is experienced by us in the form of hope, acceptance, love, and forgiveness, or it is not and we find ourselves are guided by fear. Our common quest as individuals, communities, and cultures is defined by how effective we are at directing the positive energies of our lives or, conversely, how busy we become constructing diversions from the truth that we are Positive.

If we dare to look deeply, we must confront our greatest fears, which are not about death or loss, but rather about living: What we fear the most is a life transformed by the knowledge that the Positive exists within us.

To be Positive is a daring adventure of facing and then living out the goodness that exists within ourselves, and accepting the tremendous responsibility we have to serve the needs of others. The Positive is the spirit of hope and community that we all share. Deep down, we all know that irrespective of our temporary conditions, we have everything we need to better ourselves, our organizations, our cultures, and the world.

Core Principle 2: *BE PRESENT*

The Present is the only reality that exists. By focusing our attention on the current moment, we work with what is, not what was or what might be, creating a readiness for transformation to occur. The positive wholeness that we all long for is not found in a re-interpreted past or a romanticized future – it is only found in the here and now.

The Present is where all of the answers to life's mysteries are immediately accessible. We often create an illusion of certainty and attempt to control the unknown by focusing on the past or the future. This shuts down the potential for transformation. Life's conditions are always moving and changing, but only in the Present can we access truth and the Positive. Creating the space for the Positive to emerge in the Present involves courageous language and authentic dialogue. Honoring people's experience in the Present – not asking them to be someone else for the sake of our own comfort – co-creates conditions of hope, courage, and the willingness to receive the goodness that is here and awaits discovery. Be real right now – it's the best we can do.

Core Principle 3: *BE PERCEPTIVE* Perception is everything. What we perceive to be real is what we create in our lives and in the world. The way we perceive something solidifies it as that – whether or not it is an accurate reflection of what is really there. This is why perception is so important.

Perception is the misty interface between the human trinity of our thoughts, actions, and our deeper spiritual self. Through attention and effort, we can develop our perceptual ability to see the Positive in every person and situation. We can choose how we perceive things. This unique human ability to choose what and how we perceive is the existential freedom and responsibility that enables us to co-create positive outcomes for ourselves, our organizations, and cultures around the world.

As perception is everything, so too is misperception. Often we filter information in through a distorted lens (formed by past experiences) of fear, distrust and judgment. This creates misperceptions. Being Perceptive is an active process that involves correcting misperceptions, the root source of all problems, pain, and suffering.

Positive transformation requires true humility, which is to acknowledge our tendency to err in what we perceive to be real. We must resist using our distorted lenses to map the territory around us, because these lenses don't accurately reflect what exists in the Present. Instead, we must choose to perceive the deeper truth of the Positive that exists in ourselves, in others, and in what happens around us.

Core Principle 4: BE PURPOSEFUL

When we are Purposeful, we bring positive results into our own lives and hope into the lives of others. We create what we truly seek in our lives by aligning our intentions with positive transformation.

To be Purposeful is to be inspired by the potential of the future, not pushed or driven by the past. By consciously choosing positive intentions, we know exactly how to direct our speech and actions to manifest the Positive in the next moment. By being Purposeful we can learn to bring the Positive into being.

We all share a common yearning to experience authentic community; after all, it is only by serving others that our deepest meaning can be realized. Self-transformation is vital, but incomplete. The hero's journey involves service. Being Purposeful means choosing a Positive intention.

Core Principle 5: BE PERFECTED

To be Perfected is to understand we are in a process of transformation, moving toward wholeness and community. The path to being Perfected is through humility – the critical skill of consciously choosing to dissolve our limited views in dedication to seeking a deeper reality. We need the courage to be imperfect in order to be made more whole. Having the courage to claim that we are works in progress always results in a greater sense of connectedness to self, Spirit, nature, and others. True transformation cannot occur unless we acknowledge and embrace our own imperfectness.

Core Principle 6: BE PROACTIVE

To be Proactive is to actively choose where we place our attention and what actions we will take. By noticing what is happening – both inside and outside ourselves – we transcend reaction, and can instead choose whether and how to respond to our circumstances. This process produces an experience of hope: we trust ourselves within the natural ebb and flow of life without having the illusion that we need to be in control. When we misperceive or fail to trust, we need to be in control because we're afraid reality is determined by what happens outside ourselves.

Being proactive is critical because it is only with awareness of our reactions and the limits of our current thinking that we create room to see a deeper reality. We can be Proactive by consciously choosing to look beyond our distorted internal lenses, which are always based on past circumstances.
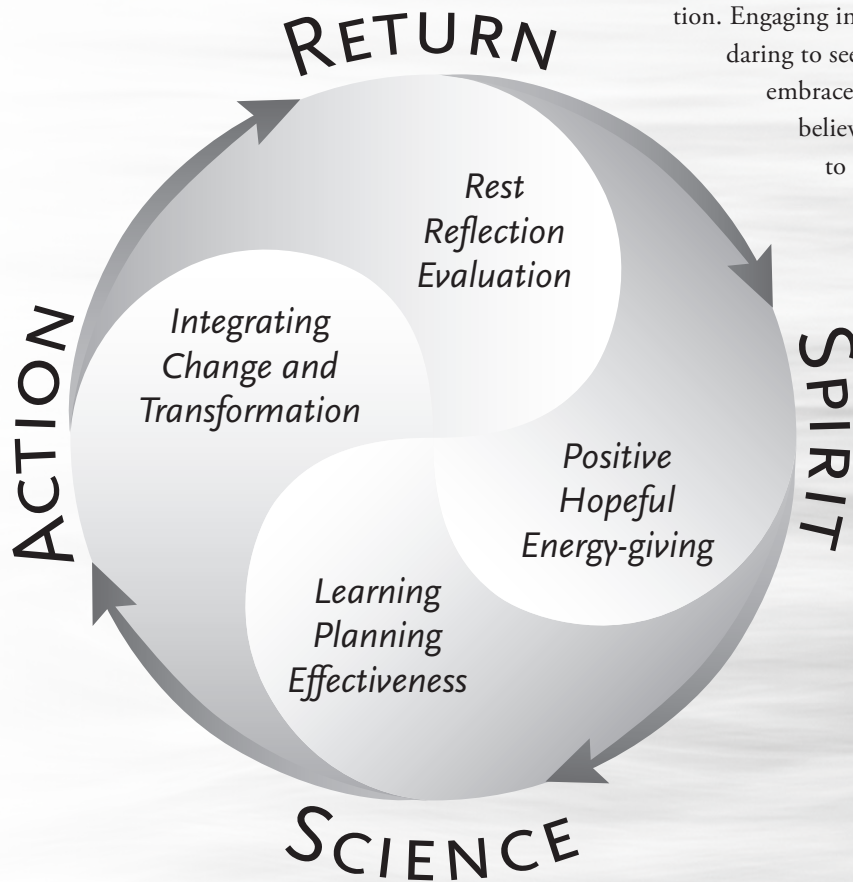
By watching our own thoughts, feelings, and actions – and perceiving them without judgment – we experience a deeper reality, one in which we are able to see how best to act (or not act) in order to positively impact others. Positive transformation is an active, not a passive or reactive process.

Core Principle 7: BE PASSIONATE

To be Passionate is to unleash the wild and meaningful life our souls desire and be in the moment-to-moment flow of connectedness to others. It is to live out and share with others the energy of being Positive and the gift of being alive.

Becoming more Passionate in our growth towards the Positive is one side of the human equation, but a self-help focus is not enough to sustain us. We must also direct our passion toward serving others in order to be whole. It is impossible to create positive transformation in our individual lives without also directing our attention toward positively impacting others, and vice versa. True enlightenment, and the enthusiasm of transforming a more positive life, must always express itself in community. Being Passionate is about directing the energy of self-transformation into the act of serving others.

Putting the Science of the Positive into Practice

When we apply the Science of the Positive to health and safety, the spirit of our work is positive, hopeful, and creates energy. Our process embraces learning, replication, and effectiveness. And our actions create change and cultivate deep, lasting transformation. Engaging in the Science of the Positive is about daring to see things as they really are, in order to embrace the future with the willingness to believe that something wonderful is about to happen.

RETURN

Rest
Reflection
Evaluation

Integrating
Change and
Transformation

ACTION

SPIRIT

Positive
Hopeful
Energy-giving

Learning
Planning
Effectiveness

SCIENCE

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Promoting Positive Community Norms

A Supplement to CDC's Essentials for Childhood:
Steps to Create Safe, Stable, Nurturing
Relationships and Environments

National Center for Injury Prevention and Control
Division of Violence Prevention

This guide provides information about creating a context for increasing safe, stable, nurturing relationships and environments for children and families by promoting positive community norms. The key aim is to provide prevention leaders one way of learning about the power of positive community norms, the importance of understanding the difference between actual and perceived norms, and the ways they can grow positive norms in their communities.

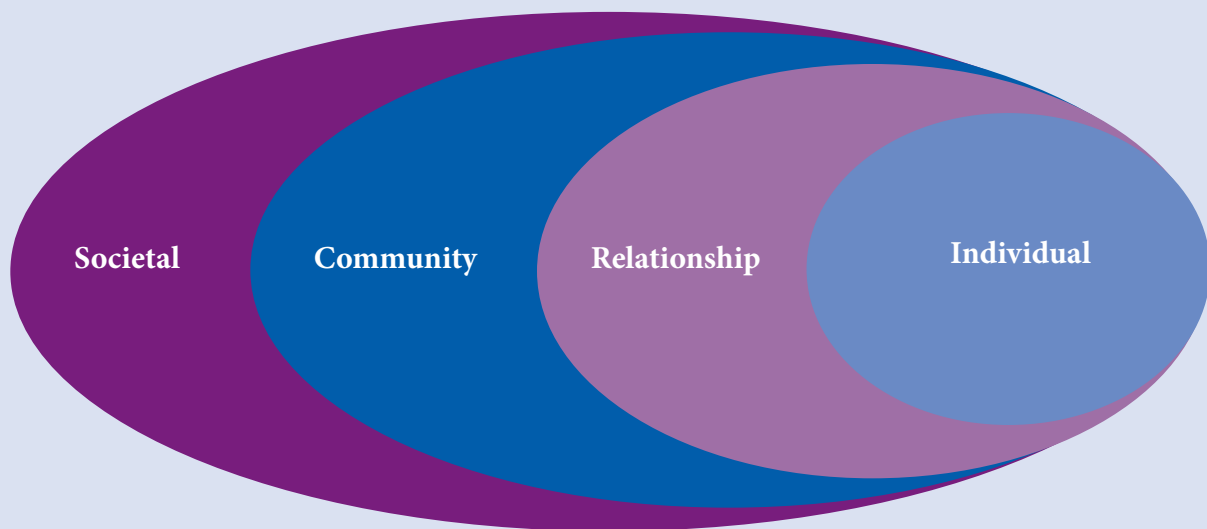## The Power of Promoting Positive Community Norms

Recognizing safe, stable, nurturing relationships (SSNRs) and environments as essentials for childhood provides a new and exciting shift in the prevention of child maltreatment. This focus on healthy relationships moves beyond focusing on reducing risk. To be successful in increasing safe, stable, nurturing relationships and environments in our communities, we will need broad engagement with not just parents and primary caregivers, but with all those who provide such relationships with children (teachers, day care providers, and coaches), as well as those in decision-making positions (healthcare providers, school principals, and elected officials). To foster broad engagement and adoption, it is critical to establish a context in our communities that supports safe, stable, nurturing relationships and environments.

One way to think about community context is by examining norms. Norms are defined as those values, beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors shared by most people in a "group."[1] In other words, norms are what most people value, believe, and do. The group could be a physical community (like a town or county), students within a school, employees of an organization or workplace, people linked by a common experience (such as first-time parents), or any other affiliation that allows individuals to establish a group identity.

Often, a group's norms align with child well-being. For example, if survey data show that most people in the community recognize the importance of early childhood education and believe it should be readily available in their community, then such support is the 'normative' attitude or the community norm. Early childhood education is expected in the community and this support might also be expressed in perceptions, language, voting behavior, and public conversations. This community norm about early education is an example of a positive norm because it is associated with improved health and safety. For example, in preventing child maltreatment, positive norms may include valuing children as special members of our community, using age-appropriate discipline, providing engaging activities and interaction, supporting public investment in quality day care services, and the like. There are many positive norms that are associated with improving child well-being.

To foster a broad context in support of safe, stable, nurturing relationships and environments, it is helpful to increase positive norms within our communities: among individuals, families and peers; workplaces, schools, and community organizations; local governments and entities; and state organizations. While it may seem daunting, there is tremendous opportunity to embed support for safe, stable, nurturing relationships in a community's culture by strengthening positive norms across these different levels of community systems known as the social ecology. (Figure 1) Prevention strategies should include a continuum of activities that address multiple levels of the social ecological model. These activities should be developmentally appropriate and conducted across the lifespan. This approach is more likely to sustain prevention efforts over time than any single intervention.

Societal   Community   Relationship   Individual

Through years of research and engagement in community-based projects, prevention leaders have learned the importance of promoting positive community norms. This approach is founded on the principle that the solutions to issues such as preventing child maltreatment exist in our communities. Such a belief establishes hope for the future and thereby creates energy for engagement for local practitioners. Promoting positive community norms does not deny or minimize the very serious and prevalent issues of child maltreatment, but instead promotes hope from a strength-based orientation. It is through this combination of concern and hope that communities can do the work of growing safe, stable, nurturing relationships and environments. Creating a context of positive norms matters because it establishes an expectation and acceptance of healthy attitudes, behaviors, programs, and policies. Momentum for positive change grows when more people in a community recognize that the norms of people around them support such change.

Perceptions Matter

Thus far, we have discussed actual norms—the actual values, beliefs, attitudes or behaviors shared by most members of a group. But it is essential to recognize that positive norms are often misperceived. Therefore, it is important to examine both actual norms and the perception of norms, or perceived norms.

Perceived norms are what individuals think are the actual norms of a group of people. For example, research involving parents and their protective behaviors with adolescent children found that most parents (86 percent) always knew when their teenage children did not come home on time. Among these parents, there was a norm of parental monitoring. However, this norm was not accurately perceived. In fact, when asked their belief about this behavior for other parents, only 6 percent of these same parents thought this behavior was the norm.[2] Misperceptions of norms occur not only for norms about behaviors but also norms about beliefs (see box on page 5 for more examples of actual and perceived norms).

Among parents in Montana, when asked about school truancy: 60% of parents surveyed said they would be extremely concerned if their teen skipped school one or two times during the semester (actual norm); however, only 15% of these same respondents thought that typical Montana parents of teens would be extremely concerned (perceived norm). (Source: Montana Parent Norms Survey, 2000, n = 787.)

Among adults in Wyoming, 75% reported they strongly agreed that adults who supply alcohol to youth under age 21 in violation of Wyoming law should be prosecuted (actual norm); however, only 22% perceived that MOST Wyoming adults would strongly agree (perceived norm). (Source: Wyoming PCN 2008 Community Survey Results, n=4659.)

Among adults in Idaho, 82% reported they had NOT driven a motor vehicle within two hours after drinking alcohol in the past 60 days (actual norm); however, 95%, perceived that MOST Idaho adults had driven after drinking (perceived norm). (Source: Idaho 2011 PCN Community Survey, n=553.)

Among parents of high school students in Minnesota, 92% of parents responded that they did not allow their child to drink alcohol (actual norm); however, 84% of parents who responded perceived most parents of students in their child's school allowed their children to drink (perceived norm). (Source: Minnesota PCN 2010 Parent Survey, n=274.)

Research shows that perceptions of norms can be strong predictors of behavior. Experiments have shown that perceived norms influence a wide variety of behaviors including high risk drinking,[3] tobacco usage,[4] impaired driving,[5] home electrical usage,[6] bullying,[7] and even the use of sunscreen.[8] However, perceived norms often remain hidden because we do not ask the right questions to measure them.

Both actual and perceived norms are important. A number of psychosocial theories predicting individual behavior recognize that perceived norms can influence the decisions of individuals within that group. We are social beings who look for cues in our environments about how to think, act, and belong. One way we search for these cues is by looking to the opinions and behaviors of others, as well as those expressed in the media. Therefore, even if the norm within a group aligns with improved health and safety (such as using age-appropriate discipline), if parents misperceive the norm and believe that most people do not use age-appropriate discipline, those parents may be more likely to engage in similar behavior.

Normative misperceptions may not only create risk for engaging in unhealthy behaviors, but they can also inhibit protective practices across the social ecology. For example, if key leaders perceive that most of the members of their community oppose implementation of a new program, the leaders may be less likely to support the program themselves, even if most people actually do support the program. Correcting this misperception could be a critical step in fostering the adoption of the new program.

Therefore, the work of promoting positive community norms to create a context supportive of safe, stable, nurturing relationships involves more than just focusing on actual norms; it must also include correcting misperceptions of norms. These normative misperceptions are pervasive across the social ecology and influence a wide variety of behaviors, both risky and protective. For the community leader seeking to promote positive community norms to support safe, stable, nurturing relationships and environments, understanding the roles of accurate perceptions and misperceptions is critical. Strategies to grow positive community norms are explored in the next section.

Seven Steps for Promoting Positive community Norms

The work of promoting positive community norms can be daunting. While a high percentage of people in a community may agree with supporting child well-being and reducing child maltreatment, their misperceptions about the norms of their community (and of specific groups within the community) can be very strongly held and can inhibit progress. Challenging misperceptions of norms is really about challenging people's core assumptions. And when we challenge people's core assumptions, they may become anxious and appear resistant.

Research on positive community norms informed the development of a seven-step process to grow positive community norms at state and community levels.[9] Clearly, each community's journey is unique, and there is still much to learn through ongoing research. Development of these seven steps has continued to evolve with different projects and issues. While these steps are presented as if they are linear, many of them will overlap and, in fact, they will eventually loop back to the beginning in a cyclical process.

Step 1. Planning, Engaging, and Educating

Any comprehensive effort to grow positive community norms should be well thought out, engage the necessary partners, and receive appropriate resources. While we all become excited to get into the work, conducting careful planning and engaging partners and stakeholders is part of the work. Our experience has shown that of all the steps, Step 1 can be most predictive of successful efforts. Critical activities include carefully developing operating principles; clarifying purpose; identifying, recruiting, and educating key partners; and establishing goals, focus audiences, and timelines.

In the case of creating a context to grow safe, stable, nurturing relationships and environments, Step 1 involves assembling a diverse coalition of community members representing a wide variety of businesses, government, and organizational sectors. This coalition needs to establish clear principles for how they will operate, clarify their purpose, and identify resources. In some cases, this effort might take several months or even a year.

Step 2. Assess Norms

Each of the many groups involved across the social ecology have common and unique values, beliefs, and behaviors. An assessment of the actual and perceived norms amongst different community groups (across the social ecology) will reveal opportunities to establish a common understanding of existing positive norms as well as identify opportunities that need to be addressed. A variety of techniques may be used to achieve this assessment including surveys, observational studies, focus groups, reviewing archival data, and epidemiological studies. It is critical to recognize the difference between actual and perceived norms.

A coalition growing safe, stable, nurturing relationships would benefit from gathering a wide variety of data about child maltreatment agencies and existing programs in their community. Interviews with various key leaders may help the coalition better understand how child maltreatment and the role of safe, stable, nurturing relationships are perceived in their community. For example, leaders may believe that child maltreatment is very common among certain sub-populations in their community and that there is little that can be done about so large a problem. Others may believe that child maltreatment is the sole responsibility of parents and that there is little that can be done outside of "fixing" families.

Step 3. Establish a Common Understanding and Prioritize Opportunities

The assessment of the norms among the many groups across the social ecology will reveal a better understanding of how the issue and norms are perceived. Establishing a common understanding will help foster engagement among and between the various groups by sharing common language and values. Furthermore, the assessment will reveal critical gaps in beliefs and behaviors which will inform the selection of strategies to address these gaps. The assessment may reveal a fundamental misunderstanding of child maltreatment issues, child development, or skills for fostering safe, stable, nurturing relationships and environments. It may reveal significant misperceptions about norms in the community. It may reveal a critical lack of resources. Sharing data about these gaps with the different audiences is an important step in building a supportive context.

For example, a community survey reveals very strong norms for caring about children and public investment in after school programs and child care resources. However, upon careful review of interview notes, the coalition learns that leaders and community members perceive that some parents are not engaged with their children because they don't care or are being irresponsible when in fact many are working multiple jobs. Using the strong norms revealed in the survey, the coalition seeks to clarify misunderstandings and transform how the leaders and the community view after-school programs and child care resources.

Step 4. Develop a Portfolio of Strategies

Based on the opportunities identified in Step 3, a variety of strategies can be identified that are appropriate for different levels of the social ecology. These strategies should be aligned with the common understanding developed in Step 3. These various strategies will form a portfolio. In some cases, strategies may involve communication efforts to close normative gaps. These communication efforts may be formal media campaigns, focused conversations, or education programs. It is important to recognize that there is no one strategy that will close all gaps and work for all groups across the social ecology. A key task will be to prioritize efforts and recognize the limitations of available resources. The work of closing gaps and correcting misperceptions takes time and concentrated effort. It may be much more effective in the long-term to narrow the initial focus and concentrate resources, than to do it all and end up with an intervention that is "a mile wide and an inch deep."

For example, upon careful review and discussion with their community, a coalition elects to focus its limited resources and time on promoting affordable child care options co-located with major employers. They develop educational resources about reduced turn-over among employees, fewer missed work days, and enhanced recruiting opportunities. They build on the community's strong positive norms in support of children to establish a context for their conversations with local employers.

Step 5. Pilot Test, Select and Refine

To make the best use of limited resources and optimize outcomes, the strategies should be pilot-tested, selected, and refined before they are implemented community-wide. This step involves extensive testing as well as listening and demonstration projects implemented with attention to cultural sensitivities. Future refining of strategies is anticipated and planned for in work timelines. The work of changing misperceptions is complex, and community prevention leaders are often limited by their own misperceptions. Being open to change and learning is critical.

Following our on-going example, the local coalition schedules a meeting with local business leaders. Several members of the coalition participate in the presentation and dialog. They do so in a spirit of learning—truly interested in how the business leader sees the issue. Based on their experience, they refine their presentation, they seek additional data to answer the business leader's questions, and they create sample organizational practices that businesses could use such as providing affordable child care options to employees.

Step 6. Implement Portfolio of Strategies

Once strategies are pilot-tested and refined, they can be implemented broadly with ongoing monitoring and evaluation. Based upon resource availability, the portfolio may be implemented in phases or stages. Leaders can play a strong role in supporting implementation and in fostering integration with existing practices and systems. During implementation, the next "layer" of misperceptions is often revealed. These additional misperceptions can be the focus of future efforts at shaping context for promoting safe, stable, nurturing relationships and environments.

After refining their presentation and resources, the local coalition trains several members so that others can approach businesses. They develop a press release and work with the local newspaper and media agencies to promote their ideas. They provide presentations at several Chamber of Commerce meetings as well as other local community organizations. They expand their network to include members of faith communities to see how they can assist as well.

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1 day THIS → AD will no longer BE NEEDED.

Improving the well-being of kids and families is something over 70% of Wisconsinites agree on. So let's do what it takes to make Wisconsin a safe, stable, nurturing place for *every* kid. Because we're all in this together.

WISCONSIN'S IN IT FOR KIDS | INITFORKIDS.ORG

This ad is from the 2014 *Wisconsin's In It for Kids Campaign* focused on growing positive norms to increase safe, stable, nurturing environments. It is based upon formative research and stakeholder input extending over a year. This is the first ad for the campaign and establishes a common-values platform for future efforts. The campaign's communications strategy includes print, radio, billboards, and social media.

Ongoing evaluation is important in order to increase the effectiveness of implementation and inform future needs. Critical questions to be asked include what norms changed and how context was transformed. The process of evaluation occurs with every cycle through the steps. By comparing outcomes to baseline data, new normative issues are revealed to guide next efforts.

The local coalition creates a community map of businesses and child care facilities. They strive to keep the map current and promote businesses that establish or partner with child care facilities in the local newspaper. They celebrate their successes and continue to follow up with businesses who may be interested.

Tips For Community Leaders

1. **Focus on concern and hope.** Child maltreatment is a very serious and challenging topic. People need a sense of hope that their community can make a difference.

2. **Understand your community's positive norms and misperceptions before jumping to solutions.** Your community has many positive norms; however, these are often misunderstood. Taking the time to understand first will help you later.

3. **Establish a common understanding by correcting misperceptions.** Our perceptions are our impression of the world around us. Our perceptions create our context. Correcting misperceptions and clarifying existing positive norms create a context to move forward.

4. **Be effective by narrowing your efforts to address the best strategies for your community.** By spending the time to understand your community and its best opportunities to grow safe, stable, nurturing relationships, you can narrow your focus and be more effective.

5. **Listen and learn.** We must listen and learn from our own community and from what other communities are doing. The science will constantly shed new light on how best to do our work. We must embrace ongoing learning.

6. **Don't be afraid to challenge misperceptions.** Challenging misperceptions takes courage. However, proactively helping our community overcome misperceptions will lead us to a better future.

7. **Celebrate the successes. Celebrate as positive norms grow.** This work is hard and takes time. We must invest in rejuvenating ourselves and others. Don't forget to connect with the passion of serving our community and our community's children.

The Positive Community Norms Journey Ahead

Moving beyond only focusing on reducing risk and recognizing safe, stable, nurturing relationships and environments as essentials for childhood provides a new, exciting and even transformational shift in the prevention of child maltreatment. This document provides information about creating a context for this prevention work by promoting positive community norms. By understanding the difference between actual and perceived norms and learning strategies to grow positive norms in their communities, prevention leaders can be more effective. This work is a cyclical and expanding process. As we succeed in promoting a positive context and measuring increases in safe, stable, nurturing relationships and environments, we will discover new gaps and misperceptions that must be addressed. As we strive to improve child wellbeing we must remember that creating context takes time, but the rewards of healthier children and families are worth our efforts.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
BALANCING ADVERSE CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCEs WITH HOPE:
New Insights into the Role of Positive Experience on Child and Family Development

INTRODUCTION

All of us, from parents to politicians, realize that the future of our country rests with our children. With the huge changes in society from agricultural to industrial to post-industrial, there have been tremendous changes in the environments in which children live and grow. What have we learned that will help us, as a society, best position them to learn and grow?

There has been a great deal of focus, rightly so, on the impact of childhood adversity on healthy child development. At the same time, mounting evidence suggests that we can create the conditions that allow children to experience the safety, stability, and nurturance necessary for healthy development. This report, produced in partnership with Casey Family Programs, illuminates the importance of HOPE – Health Outcomes of Positive Experiences – a framework that studies and promotes positive child and family well-being (Sege and Brown, 2017).

Figure 1. Balancing ACEs with HOPE Logic Model
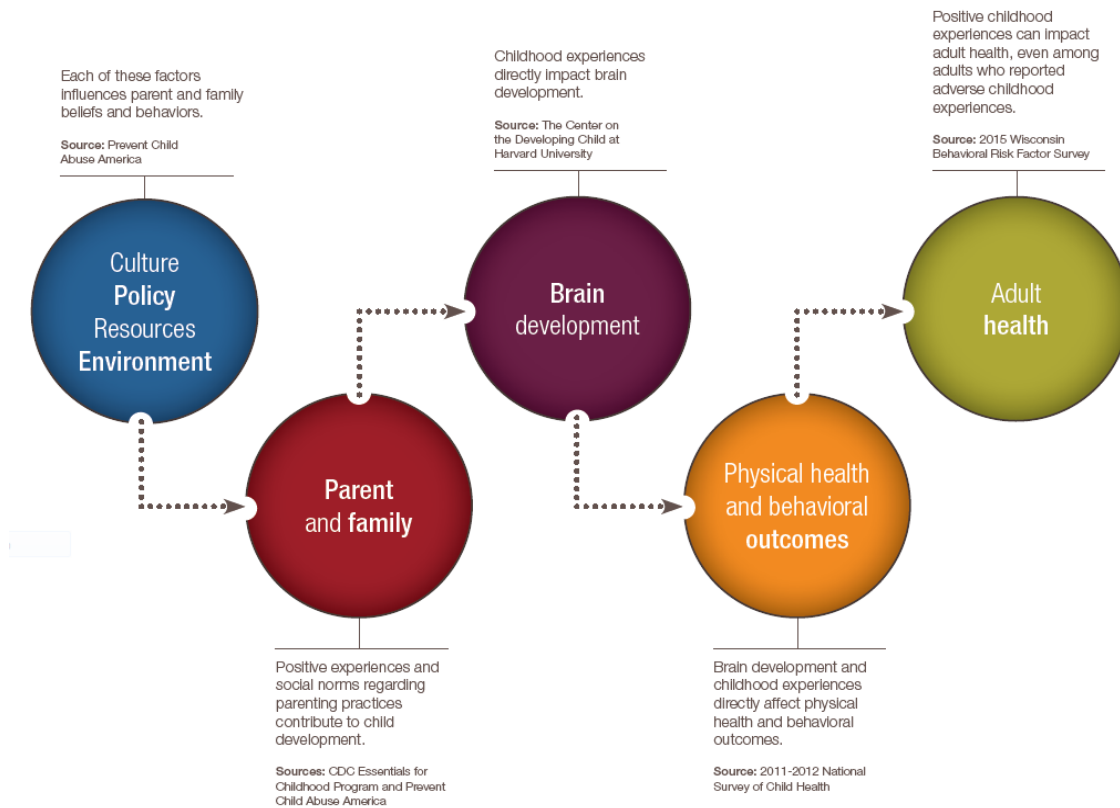
We present newly-released, compelling data that reinforce the need and opportunity to support families and communities in the cultivation of relationships and environments that promote healthy childhood development. This approach, which adds to the growing body of work on the Science of Thriving, seeks to foster strong families

and promote the prevention, mitigation, and healing from adversity. This report contains information derived from four recent population surveys to:

- Explore the role of positive experiences on child and adult health,

- Assess the cultural and political readiness to support children and their families,

- Demonstrate the contribution of positive relationships and experiences to the development of healthy children and adults, and

- Describe current social norms regarding parenting practices, particularly those associated with healthy child development.

FINDINGS

1. The 2011-12 National Survey of Children's Health (NSCH) demonstrates those aspects of a nurturing environment that contribute to the development of psychological resilience in children, including prevention of many of the effects of adversity.

2. Data from the 2015 Wisconsin Behavioral Risk Factor Survey (BRFS) suggests that positive childhood experiences promote adult health, even among adults who reported adverse childhood experiences.

3. Population surveys released for this report by the CDC Essentials for Childhood Program (EfC) and Prevent Child Abuse America (PCAA) demonstrate the social and political support for a positive approach to parenting. This support and these practices have been linked to reductions in certain adverse experiences – in particular, reductions in child neglect and physical abuse.

CONCLUSION

This report presents evidence for HOPE (Health Outcomes of Positive Experiences) based on newly-released, compelling data that reinforce the need to promote positive experiences for children and families in ordr to foster healthy childhood development despite the adversity common to so many families. These data, when looked at through the Transformational Cycle of the Science of the Positive (Linkenbach, 2016):

1. Establish a spirit of hope and optimism that positive experiences have lasting impact on human development and functioning, without ignoring well-documented concerns related to toxic environments;

2. Demonstrate, through science, the powerful contribution of positive relationships and experiences to the development of healthy children and adults;

3. Describe actions related to current social norms regarding parenting practices, particularly those associated with healthy child development. These actions are based on data that suggest that American adults are willing to intervene personally to prevent child abuse and neglect; and

4. Reflect upon the positive returns on investment that our society can expect as we make changes in policies, practices and future research to support positive childhood environments that foster the healthy development of children.

This report encourages researchers to understand how to better support optimal child health and development through the promotion of positive factors.

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Essentials for Childhood: Promoting Healthy Outcomes From Positive Experiences

Robert Sege and Jeff Linkenbach

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PEDIATRICS PERSPECTIVES

Essentials for Childhood: Promoting Healthy Outcomes From Positive Experiences

AUTHORS: Robert Sege, MD, PhD,[a] and Jeff Linkenbach, EdD[b]

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The field of child maltreatment prevention is undergoing a transformation. Clinical practice is moving toward the promotion of factors that support optimal child development and broadening its focus to include the healthy outcomes that arise from positive childhood experiences. In January 2014, the Centers for Disease Control held a kickoff meeting in Atlanta to begin state-level implementation of *Essentials for Childhood: Steps to Creating Safe, Stable, Nurturing Relationships,*[1] a strategy designed to promote the development of family environments in which children thrive. We were members of a working group that advised the CDC on *Essentials*. This Perspective will highlight the new strength-based approach that guided its development.

By focusing on the key role of safe, stable, nurturing relationships (SSNRs), *Essentials* highlights the health effects of positive experiences in childhood. This emphasis reflects the evolution in the field from prevention of maltreatment to promotion of family health.

Essentials relies on 2 types of evidence that support this change. First, citing recent surveys,[2] *Essentials* notes that "many, if not most, [cases of abuse] are never reported to social service agencies or the police." This realization calls for broad-based campaigns to reduce maltreatment, because narrowly focused risk-based efforts may leave out many children and families. We also know that abuse affects the growing brain[3] and has lifelong health consequences.[4,5]

Second, the presence of SSNRs helps reduce the incidence of child maltreatment and also improves child health and development. All families benefit from efforts to support these relationships, laying the foundation for a broad-based, universally applicable public health approach.

Essentials begins with a vision of ensuring that all children experience SSNRs. In departing from approaches that sought to identify and serve at-risk people, *Essentials* endorses the use of frameworks that emphasize the development of family strengths[6] as the key to both preventing maltreatment and promoting child health. Helping parents understand their child's development, learn effective parenting strategies, and experience the joys of child-raising now form the foundation of both *Bright Futures*[7] and efforts that, like *Essentials,* seek to reduce child maltreatment.

Essentials identifies 4 main goals:

● Raise awareness and commitment to promote SSNRs and prevent child maltreatment.

1

- Use data to inform actions.
- Create the context for healthy children and families through norm change and programs.
- Create the context for healthy children and families through policies.

Clinicians have important roles to play in reaching these goals. Primary care for children directly aligns with the first *Essentials* goal of promoting SSNRs. *Essentials* next calls for development of data systems to monitor progress; these same systems may help broaden the evidence base for primary care.

Physicians can influence the development of community norms, commonly defined as values, beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors shared by most people in a group. Physicians' connections with families with young children allow us to support the development of social norms related to SSNRs. Public health departments can develop and implement large-scale public education campaigns that promote health at the community level. As physicians, we can relate these campaigns to each family we serve. Anticipatory guidance encompasses a broad range of advice intended to address injuries, illness, and the new morbidities[8] that share psychosocial etiologies. Beyond screening for and treating problems, clinicians have a role to play in cultivating an environment for positive childhood experiences that are the centerpiece of *Essentials*. When physicians promote back-to-sleep messages, encourage breastfeeding, and explain the need for car seats, we reinforce emerging social norms that have reduced the incidence of sudden unexpected infant death, increased the rate of breastfeeding, and decreased child passenger deaths.

Essentials calls for alignment of programmatic efforts to support SSNRs. Specific programs (including not only health care but also maternal–infant child home visiting and early intervention) offer crucial assistance to families with young children. However effective, each program on its own may be insufficient to create an overall context in which children thrive. *Essentials* calls for developing a shared vision of child and family support that will better align programs that differ in whom they serve and the services they offer. This approach also suggests that we can expand from programs that react to specific needs to include those that create conditions that will prevent some of those needs from arising. *Essentials* offers strategies that promote child health and create a positive context in which SSNRs can be cultivated.

Child health care is central to the CDC's vision for *Essentials*. Nearly universal access to health care for infants and children allows the patient-centered medical home to play a key role in the promotion of SSNRs. Although their plans differ, each state is responsible for organizing a small group of local leaders who will form a backbone agency to align state efforts. This leadership team, in turn, will establish a large collective action team to develop messages, coordinate efforts, and work collaboratively to shift social norms and adopt policies that favor the development of strong families. Each state's chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics is a key component of the leadership and action teams. American Academy of Pediatrics chapters bring a commitment to the health of children and families, an understanding of the science of early brain development, and practical knowledge of how to work within complex, data-driven systems. Physicians reach families of infants and young children long before they enroll in school and are often the only professionals they interact with during infancy and early childhood.

The take-home lesson for physicians is simple yet profound: Health outcomes from positive experiences may be just as important as toxic outcomes from adverse experiences. SSNRs may promote one and prevent the other. Transforming clinical practice toward the promotion of factors that support optimal child development allows us to work collaboratively with families and communities and increases opportunities to align health care with other early childhood programs and policies. *Essentials* harnesses the public health approach to bridge the gap between harm prevention and health promotion. More research is needed on how we can continue to improve child health and well-being by focusing on the healthy outcomes of positive experiences. This is a transformation that physicians and the families we serve can work toward collaboratively.

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Prevention Creates the Future by Transforming Culture

– Dr. Jeff Linkenbach

Author's note: My view of preventing child abuse and neglect is shaped by what I term the Science of the Positive—a framework which seeks to transform cultures by integrating spirit, science, and action. I believe positive solutions exist in every community, but are often hidden. When this hidden goodness is revealed in a way that does not simply change culture, but transforms it, safer, healthier communities emerge.

What follows is a description of how this process works and how it can lead to a culture in which child abuse and neglect are not only unacceptable, but also one where prioritizing the needs of children is the key to positively transforming society.

Prevention Creates the Future

The best way to prepare for the future is to create it. Prevention is the process of proactively cultivating positive cultures, leading to a better future for children and their families. To create that future we must challenge some of the ways that we view, discuss and fund prevention. For example, while intervention policies and ways to stop incidents of child abuse and neglect are critical, such policies are by definition reactive. Prevention must move 'upstream' from the problem and address norms in the culture. This is where we must combine the 'spirit' of being proactive with prevention science to drive best practices.

Prevention Begins in the Community

Everyone who is part of a community is an active participant in creating that community's culture. Communities, by their nature, want the best for their children, and citizens are driven by a strong sense of doing what is good. But there is often a drumbeat of negative conversation about parents and young people that hides this sense of goodness. The culture of a community can in-part be understood by the conversations that members have about themselves. It is critical that our community's conversations reflect strong norms of prioritizing the needs of children. We must align our talk with our values.

The Science of the Positive™

When cultures of health and safety are transformed in positive ways, one result will be prevention of child abuse and neglect. The Science of the Positive is an important framework for bringing about this transformation by aligning the three core domains of spirit, science, and action.

- Spirit refers to meaning, essence, and values.
  We all share a common spirit of care and concern for the wellbeing of children.
- Science refers to understanding, investigation, and knowledge. Science guides discovery.
- Action refers to behaviors, practices, and habits. Best practices are actions guided by science.

Transformation occurs through the alignment of spirit followed by use of science to drive actions that improve conditions for children. Spirit first, then Science drives Actions.

Transformation versus Change

It is not enough to simply change behaviors that already exist. For prevention of child abuse and neglect, behaviors that damage children have to be stopped before they begin. In other words, change is often a temporary solution, the result, perhaps, of throwing money at a problem. When the money stops the problem returns. Change works within an existing framework and simply supports existing perceptions and definitions.

Transformation, however, involves a process of shifting frameworks based upon careful consideration and then alteration of the underlying assumptions of those frameworks. It includes structural changes in the way people think about an issue and in the structures of society. The process of transforming cultural norms involves critical reflection in order to create a deep, structural shift in basic premises of thoughts, feelings and actions. This is how we begin to completely shift norms.

An effective approach to prevention of child abuse and neglect must address both change and transformation. Change is necessary because abuse and neglect exist and the factors that cause them must be altered. Prevention is the goal because at its best, abuse and neglect will not exist, and when that happens, transformation will have taken place.

How to Bring about Transformation

Many people do not recognize the factors in their community that are essential in protecting children from abuse and neglect. These misperceptions are a problem because cultural norms exert a tremendous influence on conversations, attitudes, and the way people govern themselves.

Transformation of culture involves bringing about a clear view of prevention factors—factors that already exist and need to be expanded. For example, most lawmakers and a majority of the public want to pass laws that increase support for early education. Standing in the way are the outspoken statements of special interest groups that skew the debate. The result is legislation that is less than effective in transforming antiquated laws into those that are aligned with deeper values of concern for children and the desire to do what is best for them.

The transformation of culture involves transforming peoples' views, mental structures, beliefs, conversations, and assumptions in ways that uncover the goodness and solutions in the community, leading to a healthy future. It's not magic—it's intentional and planned.

Prevention Matters Because Children Matter

America needs leaders who recognize the difference between transformation and change and act boldly to transform culture in a positive way. This means creating conditions through health and safety legislation that allow children and their communities to thrive. Prevention of child abuse and neglect represents a transformation of culture, one in which families are strong and children thrive because they feel safe, stable, and nurtured.

This vision of safer communities, healthier people and a more democratic society is the hope and dream of America. The factors that are needed to accomplish this vision may be hidden, but they already exist and they can be revealed. When they are, we will find that prevention is at the core of our values.

About the Author

Dr. Jeff Linkenbach is the Director of the Center for Health and Safety Culture at Montana State University. His research and consulting always seek to challenge the traditionally negative and typically ineffective ways that institutions approach issues associated with health—instead he stimulates a dialogue about how we can utilize "the Science of the Positive" as a framework for approaching all social health issues. Jeff lives in Bozeman, Montana with his wife Cindy and his two children who bring joy and meaning to his work and life. Visit his website at www.mostofus.org

Questions with the Author

Prevention Creates the Future by Transforming Culture

Author: Dr. Jeff Linkenbach, Director of the Center for Health and Safety Culture at Montana State University

Q. Why Does Prevention Matter?

A. Prevention matters because it transforms culture. It is only through a process of transformation that we actually get 'deep enough' to shift the underlying structures of our assumptions. Our shared assumptions are the taproot of everything else that happens in society and how we treat children. It is from our assumptions that we form perceptions, frameworks, beliefs, feelings and actions. Effective prevention is a pro-active process that challenges and transforms assumptions and this is "Why Prevention Matters".

Q. How Is Transformation Different from Change?

A. Change is a process that works within a current paradigm or framework. Change stays within the boundaries of the current paradigm and builds on or adds to this existing view. It utilizes the same language, stories and solutions to problems. Change is critical and easier to quantify and scientifically measure than transformation. Transformation is different because it creates a new form, and impacts underlying structures. This new form results in a shift of assumptions, worldviews, language and culture. Transformation is an entirely different framework. Prevention matters because it transforms culture and makes change possible and sustainable. We need both—change and transformation.

Q. Why is Transformation More Difficult than Change?

A. At the heart of transformation is the challenge of facing ourselves and reinventing individual and cultural assumptions. As a society, we have difficulty seeing how we participate in constructing the norms that surround us. This is why transformation is more difficult than change—but it is also why we have hope to change. Since we co-created the norms and frameworks that we live in, we can also alter them. That means that while we are shaped by our environments and social context—we can also act upon and transform them. In essence, we are both the painters and the paintings.

Q. Is Transformation of Culture Really Possible?

A. Transformation is happening all the time and is what defines us as humans and gives us hope as a society. America is built upon intentional transformation from the original colonists transforming taxation and government to more recent social and health movements such as social justice, women's suffrage and tobacco prevention. Culture is constantly alive and ready for transformation into more positive possibilities. The Science of the Positive joins with this readiness by aligning spirit, science and action.

Q. How Does the Science of the Positive View Prevention?

A. According to the Science of the Positive prevention is a process of transforming cultures. Accordingly, cultural transformation involves the process of 'praxis' which engages people in a process of critical reflection, critical dialogue and actions. This process involves examination of 7 Core Principles that then translate into actions that make a difference. People must be engaged in a process of examining the norms that matter to them.

Q. Doesn't Prevention Already Have Frameworks?

A. The prevention field has many frameworks and, so too does the public when it comes to preventing child maltreatment. A framework, like the development of any worldview is an on-going iterative process—not a one-time event. This dynamic is precisely why a transformative learning process is needed. Conducting research into common frames and then marketing those frames to different audiences is important, but it is only one part of an on-going process of engaging critical reflection and dialogue regarding assumptions we all hold about the wellbeing of children. Cultural transformation is the prevention process-in-action and is needed to ensure that this dialogue about challenging policies and practices is effective.

Q. What is the Science of the Positive™?

A. The Science of the Positive is a transformative theory to improve community health and safety cultures. It works by integrating the three domains of Spirit, Science and Action to achieve lasting results. It is based upon 7 Core Principles that translate into 7 Key Steps. The Science of the Positive transforms culture by creating conditions for critically examining core assumptions, perceptions, beliefs and actions. These are integrated through a process of aligning core principles. The Science of the Positive has had dramatic impacts on a variety of health and safety issues.

Q. How Quickly Can We Transform Culture?

A. Cultural transformation is not a quick fix change. Culturally endorsed values are deeply seated and shifting these assumptions takes years. Any short-term view of "using culture" as a "strategy" to quickly change behaviors must be dissolved against the reality of the work and dedication that is involved. When we talk about transformation of culture we are not talking about a media campaign, toolkit or drive through therapy. Transformation requires dedicated work.

Q. What Makes People Actually Want to Take Action? How Do We Do That?

A. People are inherently good and want to participate in making the world a better place. The problem is that with a focus on negativity and fear, we often withdraw and engage in conversations and voting that is against our heart-felt desire. People want to take action when they feel hopeful and realize that they can make a positive difference. By exposing positive norms and ways for people to engage in these norms and programs more and more people will want to participate in a shared solution. This is the essence of all positive social movements—connecting to the positive values that already exist and giving people clear directives for how they can become involved. The key is to make it visible—because the untold goodness often remains hidden.

Q. Is Funding Prevention More Important Than Funding Intervention?

A. Prevention and intervention are two sides of the same coin. Prevention is proactive and intervention is reactive. They both have different aims that work together to promote cultures that care and heal. Proactive-prevention funding is long-term oriented and designed to create conditions that support families and reduce the likelihood of child abuse and neglect. However, when people fall through our system—interventions to reduce harm and restore broken lives are needed. Currently our culture tends to react with our funding and priorities. This pendulum must swing toward the preventative side because interventions are not designed to transform culture. At this time it is critical that we increase funding and attention to proactive prevention.

Q. Why Do We Tend to Misperceive the Goodness in our Communities?

A. Misperceptions of positive norms is pervasive due to a number of cultural factors and why we need a "Science of the Positive." Research demonstrates that in spite of serious problems, an overall goodness and protection prevails in our society. However, due to a hyper-focus on negative issues through sensationalized media, public conversations and the focused attention of prevention advocates—misperceptions

of these positive, protective norms perpetuate. This environment creates what I call 'cultural cataracts' – dark, negatively skewed views of our young people, families and communities.

Q. What Is the One Thing We Should Focus on to Reduce Child Abuse?

A. Prevention science demonstrates that no single solution exists to reduce child abuse and neglect. Instead, a comprehensive approach of strategies must be employed to create safe, stable, nurturing relationships and environments. Strategies must include policies, enforcement, media communications, intervention, education and skill training to give examples. The "one thing" that we should focus on to reduce child abuse is communicating cultural norms that make the well-being of children the benchmark for the health of our society.

Q. Can't We Stop Child Abuse by Locking Up the Perpetrators Forever?

A. Reactive strategies like arresting and locking up perpetrators will not work to create a healthier culture or future for children. Clearly enforcement remains very important, yet proactive strategies are needed to break the cycles of abuse. Proactive strategies are designed to prevent the abuse from happening in the first place. It is here where we must increase funding and attention in order to cultivate positive cultures characterized by protective norms.

Q. Doesn't Taking a Positive Approach Just Hide the Pain and Suffering of Child Abuse?

A. Effective positive approaches don't deny or hide the pain and suffering associated with child abuse. It is critical to acknowledge the reality of the hurt and damage caused by child abuse and at the same time we must instill hope that we can overcome these problems. The Science of the Positive framework stresses both concern and hope as a balanced approach to serious issues like child abuse. Growing positive norms is the best strategy for reducing harmful ones. Prevention is about creating conditions that stop problems before they start.

Q. Aren't We Powerless to Move Forward until More People Realize the Devastating Impacts of Child Abuse?

A. This is the classic question of "aren't we just in denial?" The answer is "no." Child abuse prevention has made tremendous progress in the past few decades and this momentum must continue. Understanding the negative impacts of child abuse is important—but so too is increasing the widespread understanding of protective solutions. Just focusing on the devastating impacts will do little to further advance child abuse prevention in a general public that goes numb to bombardment of health terrorism advertising. Our research demonstrates that people are hungry for solutions and positive ways to engage—not just focus on the problem. This is how we can turn social concern into social action.