

ACEs, Rage, Stranglers, and the Science of HOPE

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April 23, 2025



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Casey Gwinn

President,
Alliance for HOPE International

“In America, we raise most of our criminals and many of our victims at home...and robbed of hope, they cannot thrive until hope is restored...”




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And...Paisley Gwinn



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Gael Strack

Chief Executive Officer,
Alliance for HOPE International

“Once I understood the science of hope, it changed everything for how we do our work now...”




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You are training who?




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Alliance for HOPE Programs

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March 26, 2017 in Tecumseh, Oklahoma

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In Memory of Justin Terney, 22

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Byron Shepard – DV Strangler/Killer

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They are killers of law enforcement officers...



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Craig Kingsbury
Police Chief of
Twinfalls, Idaho



The link to officer safety



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2013 Treasure Valley (ID) Study

- Evaluated ten officer-involved critical incidents where officer shot a suspect or suspect shot an officer
- 80% of suspects with domestic violence history
- Non-fatal strangulation history in 30%
- Based only on public records history
- More research needed
- We all should be looking for it/tracking it



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Riverside County District Attorney's Office
2013 Study by Gerald Fineman, J.D.

- Law enforcement officers killed in the line of duty
- 1993-2013
- 50% of officers were killed by a criminal suspect with a public records act history of strangulation assault against a woman in a prior relationship



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And we honor so many...




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2017 Analysis of Alliance for
HOPE International

33 of 44 law enforcement officers killed in 2017 in intentional homicides were killed by men with a history of domestic violence (and often strangulation) in a simple Internet search...



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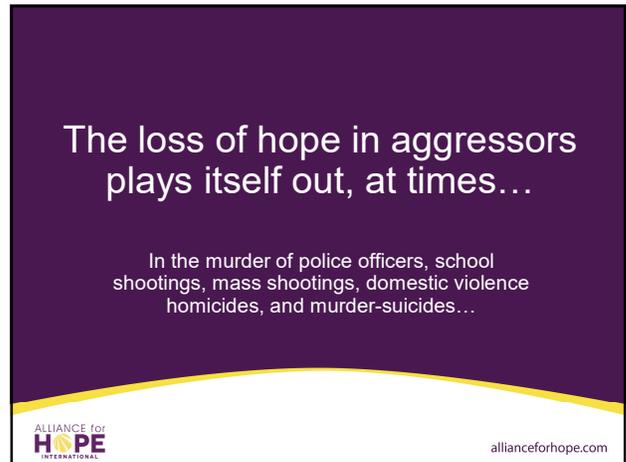
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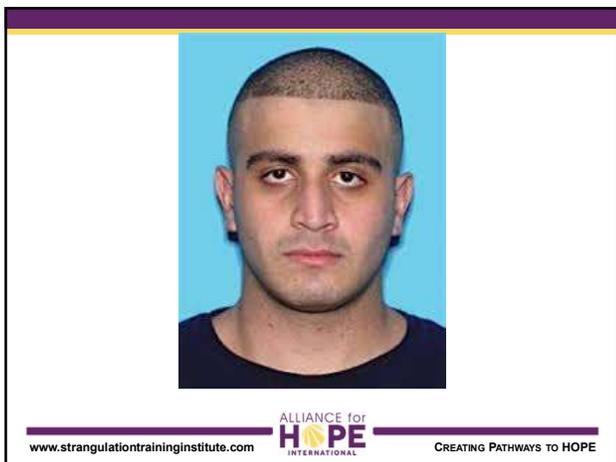
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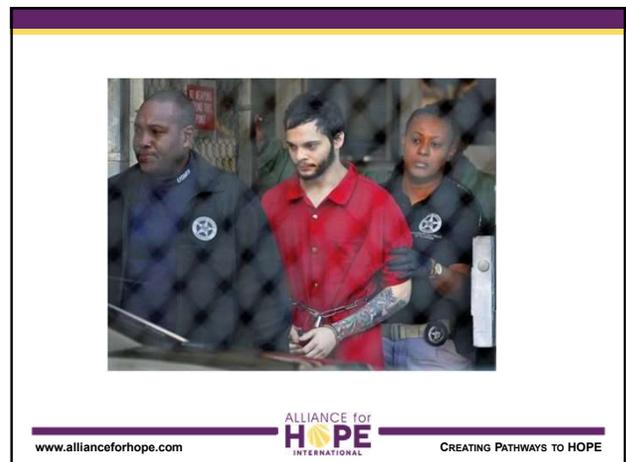
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Mohamed Lahouaiej Bouhlel
 – July 2016 – Nice, France – Killed more than 80 including 10 children



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Devon Patrick Kelly



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Dylan Roof --- Charleston Church Mass Killing (9/1); Elliott Rodger (6/14) – UCSB; Robert Lewis Dear – Colorado Springs Planned Parenthood (3/9); John Muhammed (10/3); Cedric Larry Ford (3/14); Adam Lanza (28/2)



Dylann Roof, Elliot Rodger, Robert Lewis Dear Photo: Getty; AP; Getty

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Borderline Bar
 Thousands Oaks, CA



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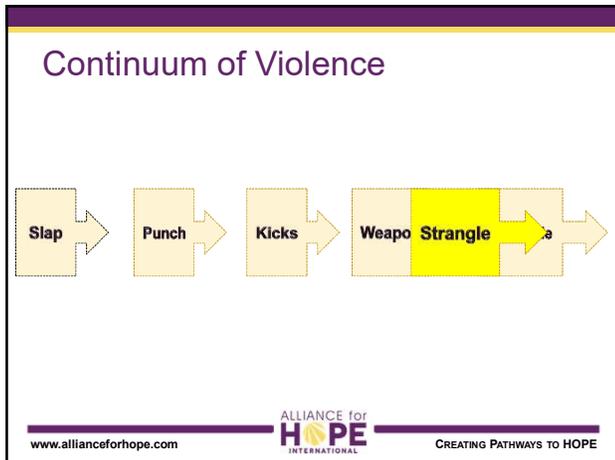
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Connor Betts – DV Strangler



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- **Victims of prior strangulation are 750% more likely of becoming a homicide victim.**
- **(Glass, et al, 2008).**

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They are the killers of women...

Rose Jovero

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And children...

The Dumas Children

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Men who **STRANGLE** women are the most **DANGEROUS** men on the planet.

- Casey Gwinn

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Training Institute on Strangulation Prevention

The most comprehensive program of its kind in the country...with the goal of homicide prevention at its core...

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And our Newest Focus on
"Hidden Homicides"

HIDDEN HOMICIDES:
OVERCOMING THE CHALLENGES OF STAGED CRIME SCENES
SEPTEMBER 21-26, 2025
JOIN US IN ESTES PARK, CO *Save the Date!*




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Dateline – "The Sisterhood"



- ME ruled the case as "undetermined" – Needed to be 99% certain
- Family friend reaches out to us.
- We reach out to friends at the Denver DA's Office
- We arrange for meetings.
- Det. was always suspicious, just didn't know how to overcome "undermined"
- We reach out to Dr. Smock.

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WGN Investigates (2024)



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Institute's List of Factors to Consider in Suspicious Death Cases

- Victim dies prematurely
- Suicide/accident scene
- One partner wanted to end the relationship
- Prior history of domestic violence (with current or former partner)
- Victim found dead in home/residence
- Victim found by current or previous partner
- Prior history of domestic violence includes strangulation/suffocation
- Partner is the last to see the victim alive
- Partner has control of the crime scene before the police arrive
- Body moved or scene/evidence altered in some way
 - Research: Bitton, Dayan, 2019 (Items 1-6); Glass, Campbell et al, 2008 (Item 6); Parker, 2009 (Items 8-9); Pettler, 2011, Geberth, 2010 (Item 10)

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And now...SB 989 in California, Joanna's Law

Just passed the first law focused on staged crime scene cases with a history of domestic violence before the death...

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And they are linked to childhood trauma...every single time...

It is not an excuse...just an explanation...

And childhood trauma survivors fill the prisons of California...and the rest of the country...



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“In my beginning is my end”

T.S. Eliot



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“In America, we raise our criminals at home”

Casey Gwinn, Esq.



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“And in America, we raise many of our victims at home as well.”

Casey Gwinn, Esq.



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Our mass murderers, mass shooters, workplace shooters, school shooters, cop killers, and terrorists are intricately linked to violence against women and childhood trauma...



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It is not an excuse...just an explanation...



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"He was a perfectly normal young man. He was very happy with this job. He was satisfied and happy. He had achieved his dream: from an amateur pilot, he became a professional. He had no problems. I don't believe him capable of such a thing."

"Andreas Lubitz was 100% fit to fly."

"He was very happy. He gave off a good feeling."

"He was 100% flight worthy without any limitations."

"He was a quiet, friendly man"

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"He struggled with depression."

"He was being treated by a psychotherapist, for what is documented as being suicidal tendencies at that time."

"He was in the midst of a heartbreak with the mother of his unborn child".

"He suffered from suicidal tendencies."

"He tried to tell her (his girlfriend) what to wear and who to speak with."

"He was a control freak of the highest order."

"She became more fearful over time."

"She was looking for another place to live at the time of the crash."

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Florida school failed Parkland shooter, report says
By Paula McMahon and Brittany Wallman

Florida school officials released a long-awaited report on Parkland, Fla., shooter Nikolas Cruz, here in April court appearance. (Tamy Alvarez / South Florida Sun-Sentinel via Associated Press)

The Broward school district mishandled the case of student Nikolas Cruz when he asked for special help, long before he killed 17 staff and students at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School on Tuesday, Feb. 14, 2012, according to a report released Friday.

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Latest Research on the Children of Domestic Violence Homes

- Study was based on the National Youth Survey Family Study, a national sample of 1,683 families, and followed 353 second-generation parents and their third-generation offspring over a 20-year period.
- Children from 75% of the families ended up becoming victims as adults
- Children from 78.6% of the families ended up becoming perpetrators as adults
- <http://dev.cjcenter.org/files/cvi/Generation%20Cycles%20IPVforweb.pdf>
- http://dev.cjcenter.org/files/cvi/Gang_Crime_Victimization_final.pdf

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Thank you, Dr. Rick Snyder...

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“

We are born with HOPE...
It is the *essence* of who we are
as human beings

Casey Gwinn



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“

Direct as well as vicarious trauma and
adversity in life can rob us all of HOPE...
and children are always robbed first.



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We all get robbed of hope!

- Direct Trauma
- Childhood/Adult
- Vicarious Trauma
- Historic Oppression/
Racism/Injustice
- Burnout
- Illness
- Disease
- Heartbreak
- COVID-19



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Karianne Gwinn Johansen survived grey zone lymphoma. Then, she had a 12 lb. 10 ounce baby boy named Bennett.

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We want to create hope for every
person...we must give hope,
always hope...

Mother Teresa



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Hope

Self-Respect,
Agency,
Healing

Connection, Support,
Community

Safety, Protection, Security

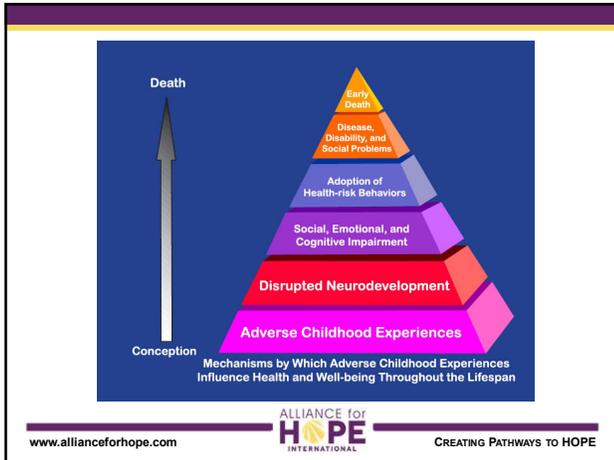
Food, Shelter, Clothing, Transportation



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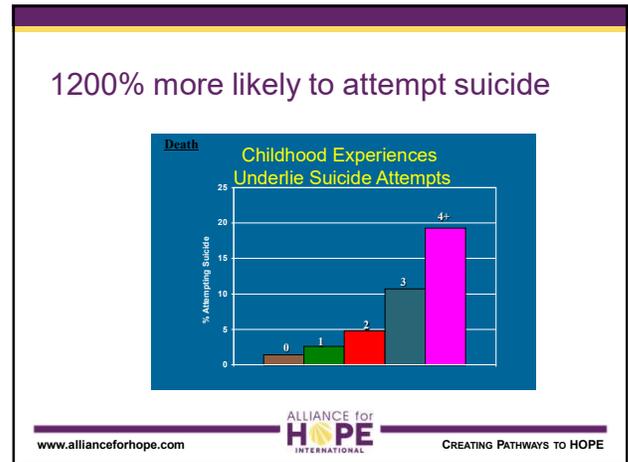
Adverse Childhood Experiences Study (ACE)

- Ten questions/ten trauma experiences
- Predictive of adult illness, disease, and criminality
- www.cestudy.org
- www.cestoohigh.org

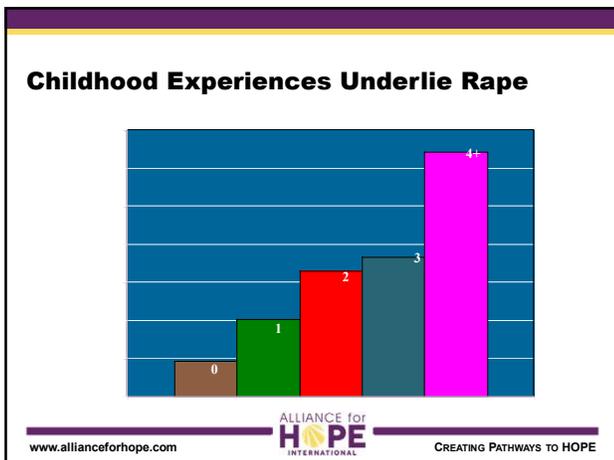
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The most significant study ever done on the predictive nature of unmitigated childhood trauma on illness, disease, victimization, and criminality...

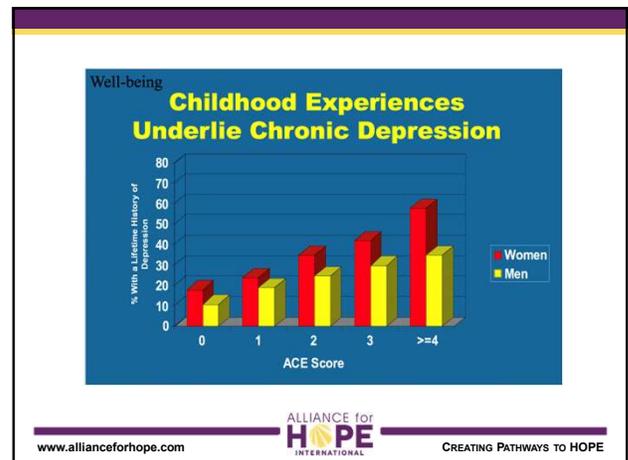
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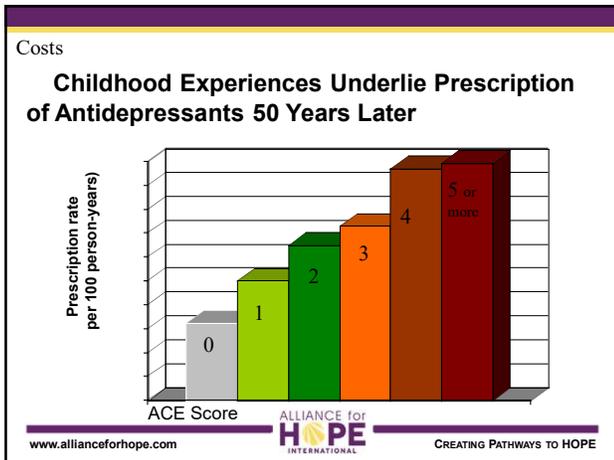
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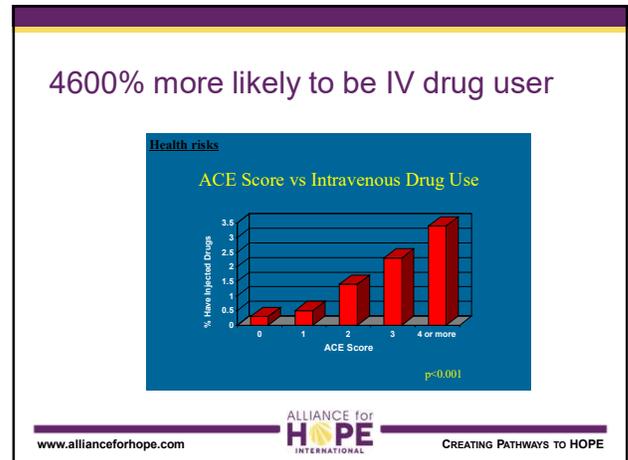
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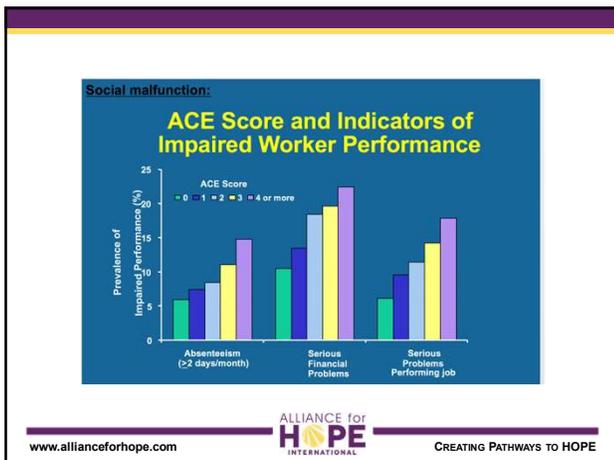
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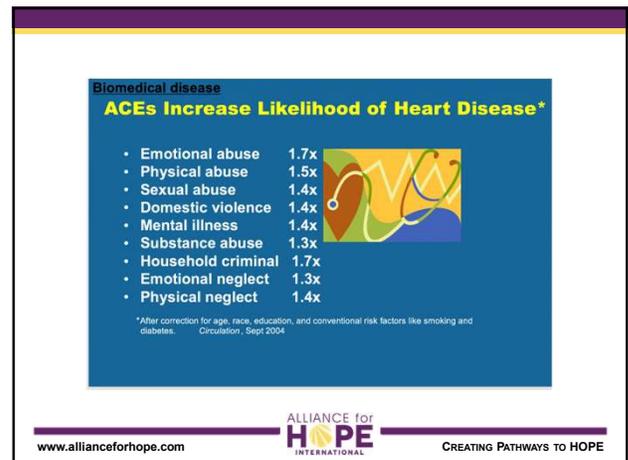
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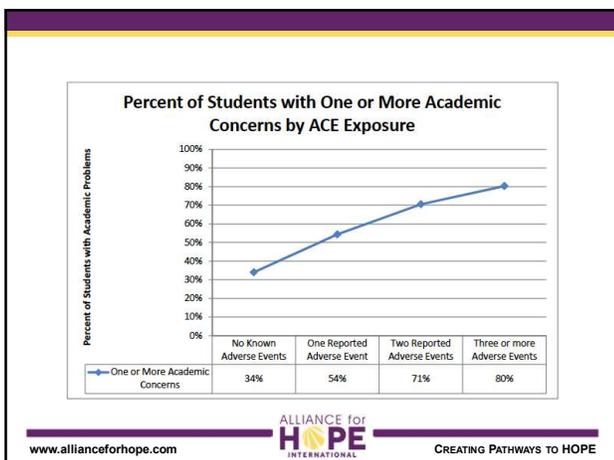
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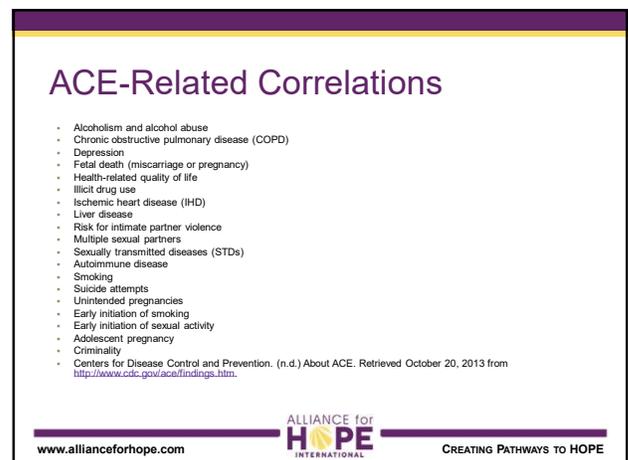
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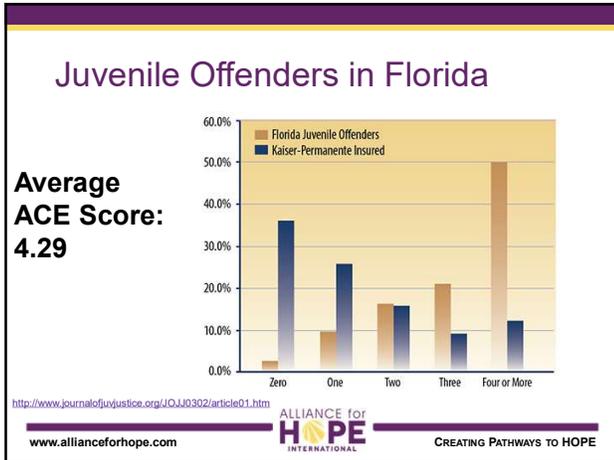
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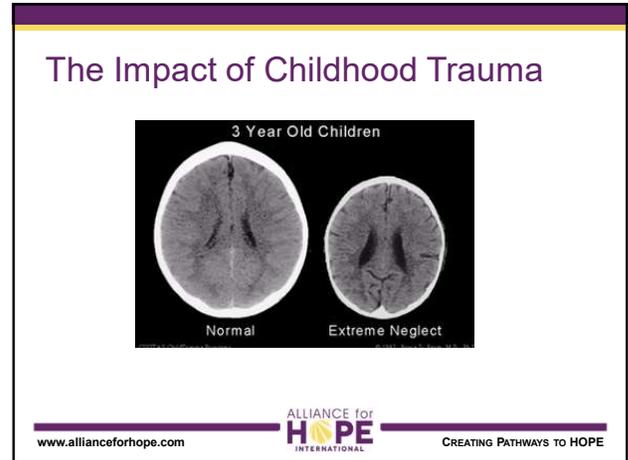
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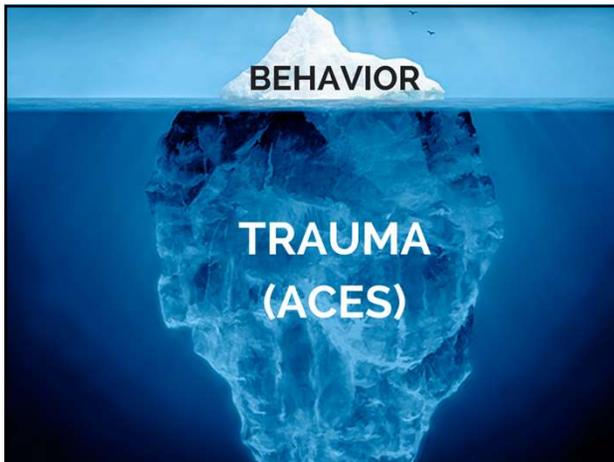
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We Know What Grows in Our Communities...

Ronald Wayne Frye killed his landlord over a rent dispute...

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RONALD WAYNE FRYE

October 9, 1968

EXECUTION DATE:
AUGUST 31, 2001 (North Carolina)

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Henderson Study 2021

- 50% of offenders in his batterers' group admitted to strangulation – all of them were prosecuted as misdemeanors
- 100% had high ACE scores and 90% of the stranglers were sexually assaulted as children
- 80% of them were not believed by their mothers when they disclosed

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<https://radaronline.com/photos/ve-gas-shooter-stephen-paddock-sex-slave-tells-all/>



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27% of Military Members Have ACE Score of 4

<http://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamapsychiatry/fullarticle/1890091>



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Our Alliance Team



Casey Gwin, Gael Strack, Younsu Acker, Ivo Blanco, Susan Booth, Jill Brigg, Hannah Craig, Fernanda Espinoza, Jahlyssa Franco, Catherine Johnson, Jessica Kinsey, Mary Claire Lasky, Rachel Myers, Ken Shetter, Theresa Raubeck, Amy Stobbe, Jamal Stroud, Montgomery Turner-Lime, Erica Yamaguchi, Bill Smock, MD Medical Director



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Average ACE Score of our Alliance Team: 4.4



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Finding Your Own ACE Score
While you were growing up, during your first 18 years of life:

- Did a parent or other adult in the household often or very often...
Swear at you, treat you badly, or humiliate you?
OR Act in a way that made you afraid that you might be physically hurt?
Yes No if yes enter 1
- Did a parent or other adult in the household often or very often...
Push, grab, slap, or throw something at you?
OR Even hit you so hard that you had marks or were injured?
Yes No if yes enter 1
- Did an adult or person at least five years older than you ever...
Touch or fondle you or have you touch their body in a sexual way?
OR Attempt or actually have oral, anal, or vaginal intercourse with you?
Yes No if yes enter 1
- Did you often or very often feel that...
No one in your family loved you or thought you were important or special?
OR Your family didn't look out for each other, feel close to each other, or support each other?
Yes No if yes enter 1
- Did you often or very often feel that...
You didn't have enough to eat, had to wear dirty clothes, and had no one to protect you?
OR Your parents were too drunk or high to take care of you or take you to the doctor if you needed it?
Yes No if yes enter 1
- Were your parents ever separated or divorced?
Yes No if yes enter 1
- Was your mother or stepmother... Often or very often pushed, grabbed, slapped, or had something thrown at her?
OR Sometimes, often, or very often kicked, bitten, hit with a fist, or hit with something hard?
OR Ever repeatedly hit for at least a few minutes or threatened with a gun or knife?
Yes No if yes enter 1
- Did you live with anyone who was a problem drinker or alcoholic or who used street drugs?
Yes No if yes enter 1
- Was a household member depressed or mentally ill, or did a household member attempt suicide?
Yes No if yes enter 1
- Did a household member go to prison?
Yes No if yes enter 1

Now, add up your "Yes" answers. This is your ACE score.



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A high ACE Score is not a destiny...and neither is adult victimization because...



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Hope heals trauma...so now we are focused on the science of hope in all we do...

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Hope heals trauma...

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“

We are born with HOPE...
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Casey Gwinn

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Karianne Gwinn Johansen survived grey zone lymphoma. Then, she had a 12 lb. 10 ounce baby boy named Bennett.

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We all get robbed of hope!

- Direct Trauma
- Childhood/Adult
- Vicarious Trauma
- Historic Oppression/ Racism/Injustice
- Burnout
- Illness
- Disease
- Heartbreak
- COVID-19

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“Hope is the belief that your future can be brighter than your past and that you play a role in making it happen.”

Casey Gwinn & Chan Hellman in *Hope Rising: How the Science of HOPE Can Change Your Life* (2018)



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Hope is... believing in yourself, believing in others, and believing in your dreams...



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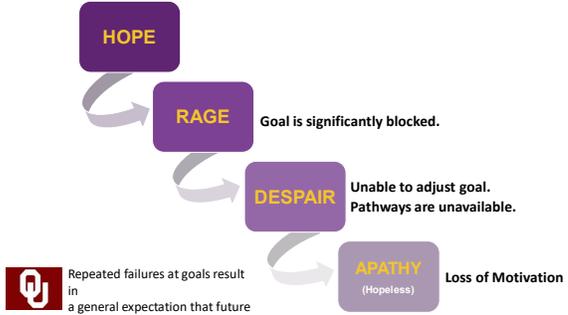
“You cannot give what you do not have...”



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The Hope Continuum



HOPE

RAGE Goal is significantly blocked.

DESPAIR Unable to adjust goal. Pathways are unavailable.

APATHY (Hopeless) Loss of Motivation

Repeated failures at goals result in a general expectation that future goal attainment is not likely. “Why try?”

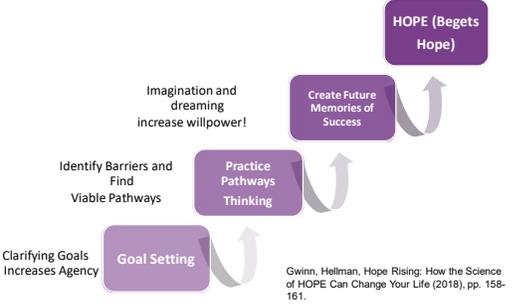


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Nurturing Hope in Children and Adults

Imagination and dreaming increase willpower!

Create Future Memories of Success

Identify Barriers and Find Viable Pathways

Practice Pathways Thinking

Clarifying Goals Increases Agency

Goal Setting

Gwinn, Hellman, *Hope Rising: How the Science of HOPE Can Change Your Life* (2018), pp. 158-161.



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Violence: Recognition, Management, and Prevention

SURVEY RESULTS OF WOMEN WHO HAVE BEEN STRANGLERED WHILE IN AN ABUSIVE RELATIONSHIP

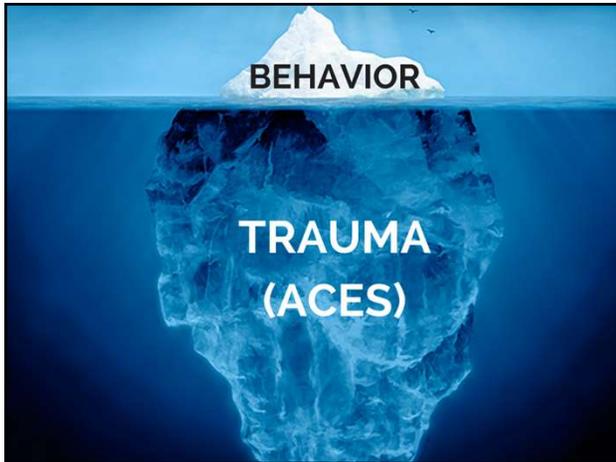
Lee Wilbur, MD,* Michelle Higley, MD,† Jason Hatfield, MD,‡ Zita Surprenant, MD, MPH,‡ Ellen Tallafiero, MD,§ Donald J. Smith, Jr., MD,¶ and Anthony Paolo, MD#

- The study participants reported that 77% of the abusers had a history of being physically or sexually abused as children.



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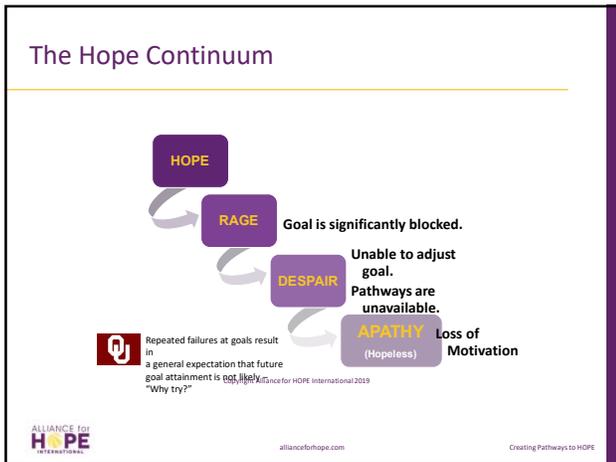
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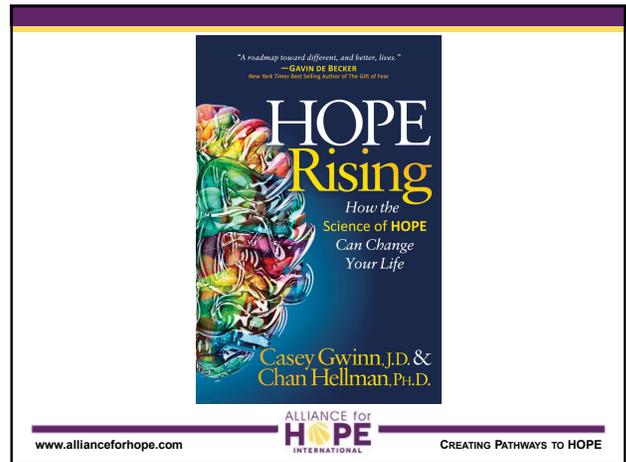
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The Science of HOPE

- We are driven by our goals:
 - To the extent we can establish clear strategies (pathways) to achieving the goal and are willing to direct mental energy (agency) toward pursuing these pathways, we are experiencing hope. (Snyder, 2002).
- Agency and Pathway Thinking Are Both Required

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2,000 Published Studies on the Science of HOPE

“In every published study of hope, every single one, hope is the single best predictor of well-being compared to any other measures of trauma recovery. This finding is consistently corroborated with other published studies from top universities showing that hope is the best predictor for a life well-lived.”

Casey Gwinn & Chan Hellman
Hope Rising: How the Science of HOPE Can Change Your Life

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THE SCIENCE OF HOPE



Why Hope Matters

- Snyder's hope measures have been cited over 2,000 times in scholarly journals.
- Empirical evidence supports that high hope matters!
 - Improved pro-social behaviors.
 - Increased ability to self-regulate.
 - Serves as a coping resource (e.g., cancer, HIV, spinal cord injury, trauma).
 - Predicts goal attainment.
 - Protects against burnout and vicarious trauma
 - Reduces the intensity of physical suffering.
 - Predicts substance abstinence
 - Predicts lower recidivism and lower levels of violence
 - Improves well-being.
- High hope individuals flourish within their environment.
- Hope Scores are more predictive of college success than SAT Scores
- Children can be taught hope in the public school system and rising Hope Scores improve grades, behavior, and performance

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The Science of Hope



Why Hope Matters

- Lower hope individuals often do not recognize their deficiency in pathways and agency.
 - Lack sense of long term goals.
 - Feel blocked from their goals.
 - Approach goals with negative emotion and focus on failure.
- Individuals with low hope:
 - Higher negative affect
 - Higher likelihood of quitting goal pursuits.
 - Higher anxiety and depression.
 - Lower self-esteem.
 - Lower problem solving skills.
 - Higher likelihood of externalizing negative behaviors.
 - Perform more poorly at work...

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HOPE is measurable, malleable, and cultivatable...

THE ADULT HOPE SCALE

Directions: Read each sentence carefully. For each sentence, choose how often you are most frequently thinking, feeling, or acting this way. Circle the number that best describes YOU and put that number in the blank provided. There are no right or wrong answers.

Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Often	Very Often
1	2	3	4	5

1. I look back at many ways to get out of a jam.
2. I never really pursue my goals.
3. There are lots of ways to solve any problem.
4. I've learned to change my perspective on things with that view most important to me.
5. I can often get things done that I don't think I can.
6. My past experiences have prepared me well for my future.
7. I'm usually successful at things.
8. I avoid the goals that I don't want to do.

Notes: The Agency subscale score is the sum of items 1, 4, 7, 8, 9. The Pathways subscale score is the sum of items 1, 2, 3, 4, 5. Hope is the sum of the two Pathways and the Agency items. Scores can range from a low of 0 to a high of 30.

Agency Score: (Add items 1, 4, 7, 8, and 9)
 Pathways Score: (Add items 1, 2, 3, and 5)
 Total Hope Score: (Agency Score + Pathways Score)

THE CHILDREN'S HOPE SCALE

Directions: Read each sentence carefully. For each sentence, choose how often you are most frequently thinking, feeling, or acting this way. Circle the number that best describes YOU and put that number in the blank provided. There are no right or wrong answers.

Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Often	Very Often
1	2	3	4	5

1. I think I am doing pretty well.
2. I use lots of ways to get things in life that are most important to me.
3. I am doing just as well as other kids my age.
4. When I have a problem, I can come up with lots of ways to solve it.
5. I think the things that I have done in the past will help me in the future.
6. I can often get things done that I don't think I can.

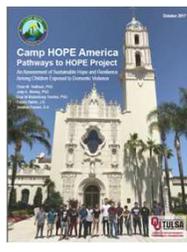
Notes: The Agency subscale score is the sum of items 1, 3, 5, 6. The Pathways subscale score is the sum of items 1, 2, 4, 5. Hope is the sum of the two Pathways and the Agency items. Scores can range from a low of 0 to a high of 30.

Agency Score: (Add items 1, 3, 5, and 6)
 Pathways Score: (Add items 1, 2, 4, and 5)
 Total Hope Score: (Agency Score + Pathways Score)

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Hope is measurable, malleable, and cultivatable.....





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Measure your HOPE Score...

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Hope Scores should be measured in every workplace in America annually...

2016: Hope Score Average 54.06
 2017: Hope Score Average 57.25
 2018: Hope Score Average 56.10
 2020: Hope Score Average 56.41
 2022: Hope Score Average 56.49

Our average ACE Score on our team is 4.4. Hope Scores above 40 put you in the hopeful category. Scores above 48 bump you to a higher level of hope. Scores of 56 or higher make you a high hope person. Everyone on our team was 48 or above. 70% of the staff had high hope...

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Gallup:

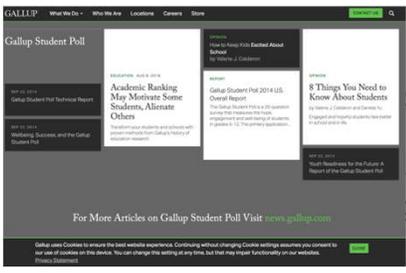
“Higher hope employees can do in seven hours what it takes lower hope employees to do in eight hours.”



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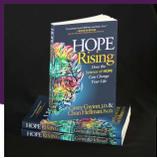
The Gallup Student Poll: Hope Matters in Schools...




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Hope Rising must remain a priority in the our lives and the lives of those we serve because hope is the pathway to wellbeing




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CREATING PATHWAYS TO HOPE

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Our work must be about creating cultures of hope...




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But what about resiliency?
Shouldn't we all be focusing on resiliency?




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“Hope is the mindset that drives resilient behavior.”

Dr. Chan Hellman, Director
Hope Research Center
University of Oklahoma




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Resiliency is the ability to bounce back or recover...hope takes us forward...



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“The term resilience has, to at least some extent, become an empty word that can be filled with almost any meaning” (van Breda, 2018).

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New Article: Pending Publication in the APA’s Traumatology Journal (Munoz, Hellman, 2019)

“Resilience is described as a characteristic important to coping with adversity. Yet there is a longstanding debate over the precise definition of resilience. Hope is an alternative construct that is also referenced as important to coping with adversity. C.R. Snyder, a pioneer in hope theory, contended that while hope shares similarities with resilience, hope is distinct and easier to understand and apply.”

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“Based on Snyder’s theoretical formulation of hope as a distinct construct apart from resilience, we hypothesized that among a sample of childhood trauma survivors: 1.) hope and resilience would operate as distinct psychological states and 2.) that each would make unique contributions to mental well-being as measured by the state of psychological flourishing. Should the data support that hope and resilience are unique contributors to flourishing, such results would have implications for further research and practice for survivors of childhood trauma.”

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Negative/Avoidance Goaling Strategies are evidence of low hope and...they often produce only lower hope.

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“Hope again significantly predicted flourishing while resilience proved a non-significant predictor. The paper concludes with a discussion of the study’s implications, which include the suggestion that hope is an important targeted outcome variable for interventions designed to assist survivors of childhood trauma.”

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Camp HOPE America

Hope is...believing in yourself,
believing in others, and believing in
your dreams...



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**CHA 2021 National Average
ACE Score : 6.14**

Camp HOPE 2015




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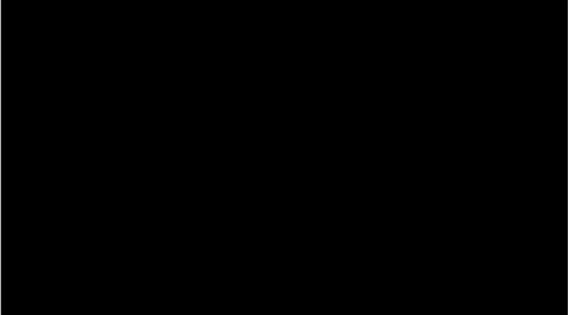
**Let's Watch the Newest Camp HOPE
America Video**



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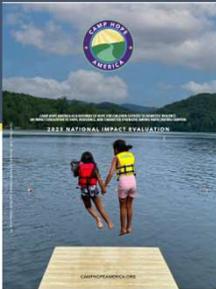
Camp HOPE America – Newest Video




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**Camp HOPE America –
2023 National Results**

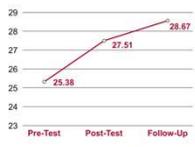
2023 NATIONAL IMPACT EVALUATION

Camp HOPE America – Operating in
28 states in 2025 with more than
65 weeks of camps and year-round
mentoring programs...

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FIGURE 1. Children's Hope Index.

Hope reflects the individual's capacity to develop pathways and dedicate agency toward desirable goals.



Assessment	Score
Pre-Test	25.38
Post-Test	27.51
Follow-Up	28.87

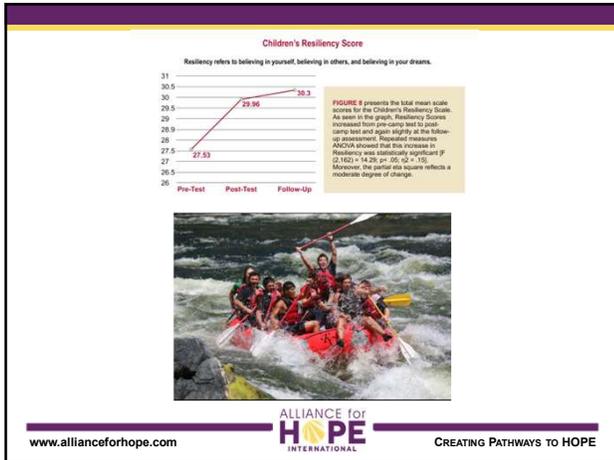
FIGURE 1 presents the total mean scale scores for the Children's Hope Scale. As seen in the graph, hope scores increased from pre-camp test and post-camp test and again at the follow-up assessment. A repeated measures ANOVA showed that this increase in hope was statistically significant [$F(2,172) = 9.22, p < .05, \eta^2 = .10$]. Moreover, the partial eta square reflects a moderate degree of change. Useful to stress and serve as an important indicator of personal well-being (Park & Peterson, 2009).



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And, we advocate for Family Justice Centers across the country...

First, Child Advocacy Centers; Then, Rape Crisis Centers; Then, DV Shelters; Now, Family Justice Centers...because collective hope has more power than individual hope...

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One Safe Place

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Sojourner Family Peace Center

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Rose Adom Center

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Nashville Family Safety Center

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Nashville Jean Crowe Advocacy Center

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Family Justice Centers Increase Hope Which Increases Well-being in Domestic and Sexual Violence Survivors

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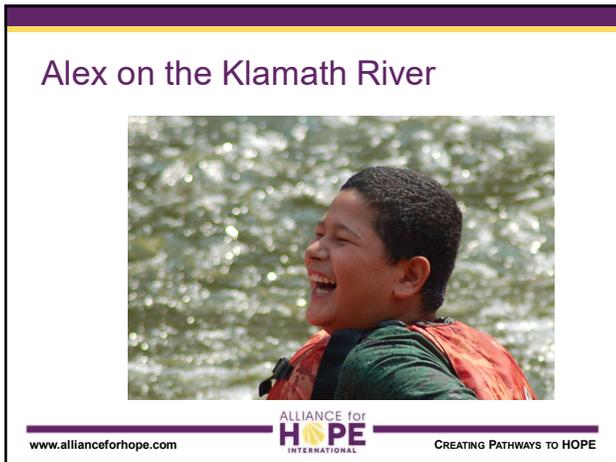
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Calvin Serrano (Age, 25)



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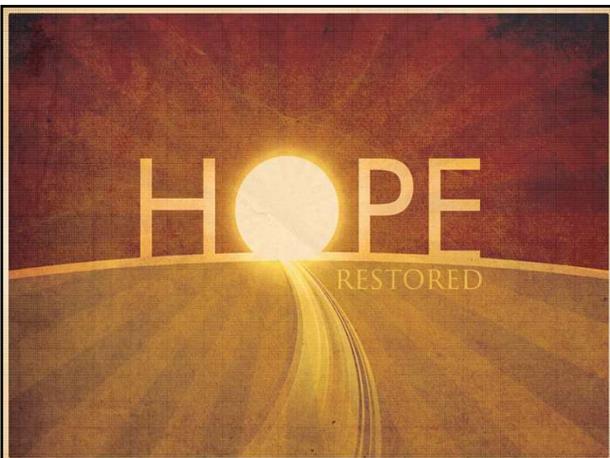
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Our calling for a life well lived and helping others find wellbeing is to be...trauma informed and hope centered in our lives and work...

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