



NTTAC

National Training &
Technical Assistance Center
for Child, Youth, & Family Mental Health

A TRAUMA-INFORMED APPROACH TO RELIGIOUS TRAUMA

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SESSION SECURITY

In the case of any security issues that may occur, this session will immediately end and will not resume using the same join link. A separate email will be sent to all participants with further instructions.



NTTAC OVERVIEW

OUR MULTIDISCIPLINARY TEAM





OUR GOAL



All children, youth, young adults, and families with emotional or behavioral health needs can access evidence-based treatment and recovery services in a well-coordinated system of care.

WHO WE SERVE

Examples of our key cross-sector audiences:

- State and local agency leaders
- Mental health workforce - Social workers, clinicians, home visitors, etc.
- Primary care providers
- School workforce
- Community-based providers
- Peer supervisors
- Family partners
- Youth partners

OUR SERVICES

No-cost training, technical assistance, and resources



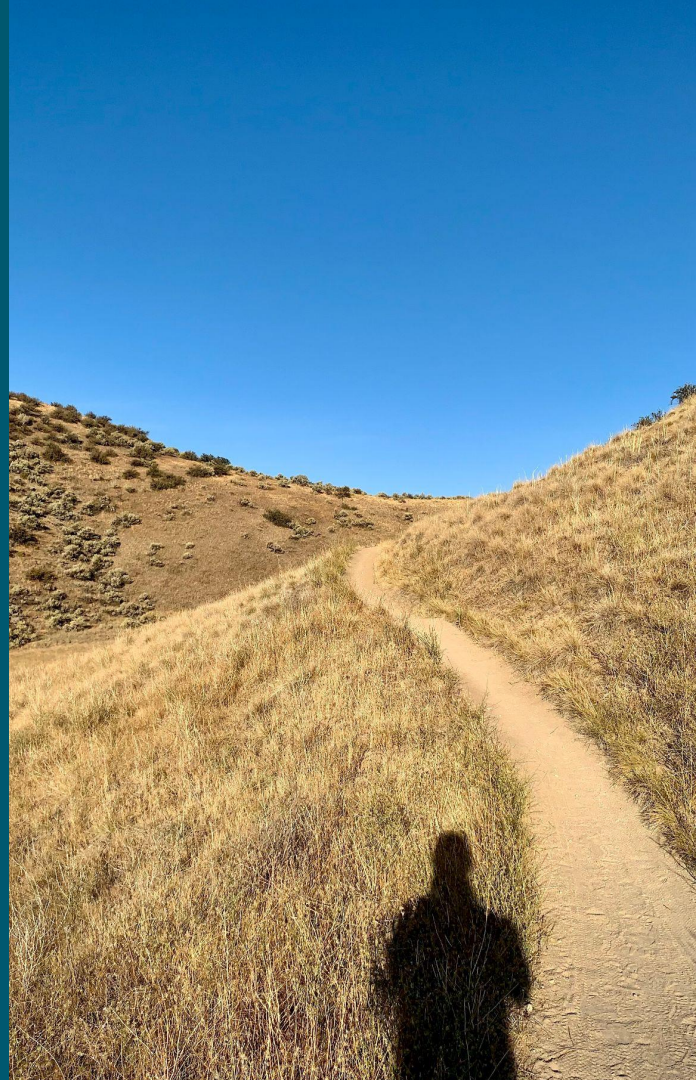
A Trauma-Informed Approach to Religious Trauma

Hi, my name is Brian Peck and my pronouns are he/him. I'm a licensed clinical social worker and a co-founder of the Religious Trauma Institute.



#HonorNativeLand

I'm joining you today from Boise, Idaho—the ancestral homeland of the Shoshone-Paiute and Bannock peoples.



Prioritize Your Wellbeing

This presentation includes references to religious abuse that may be challenging for some nervous systems.

What is Trauma?

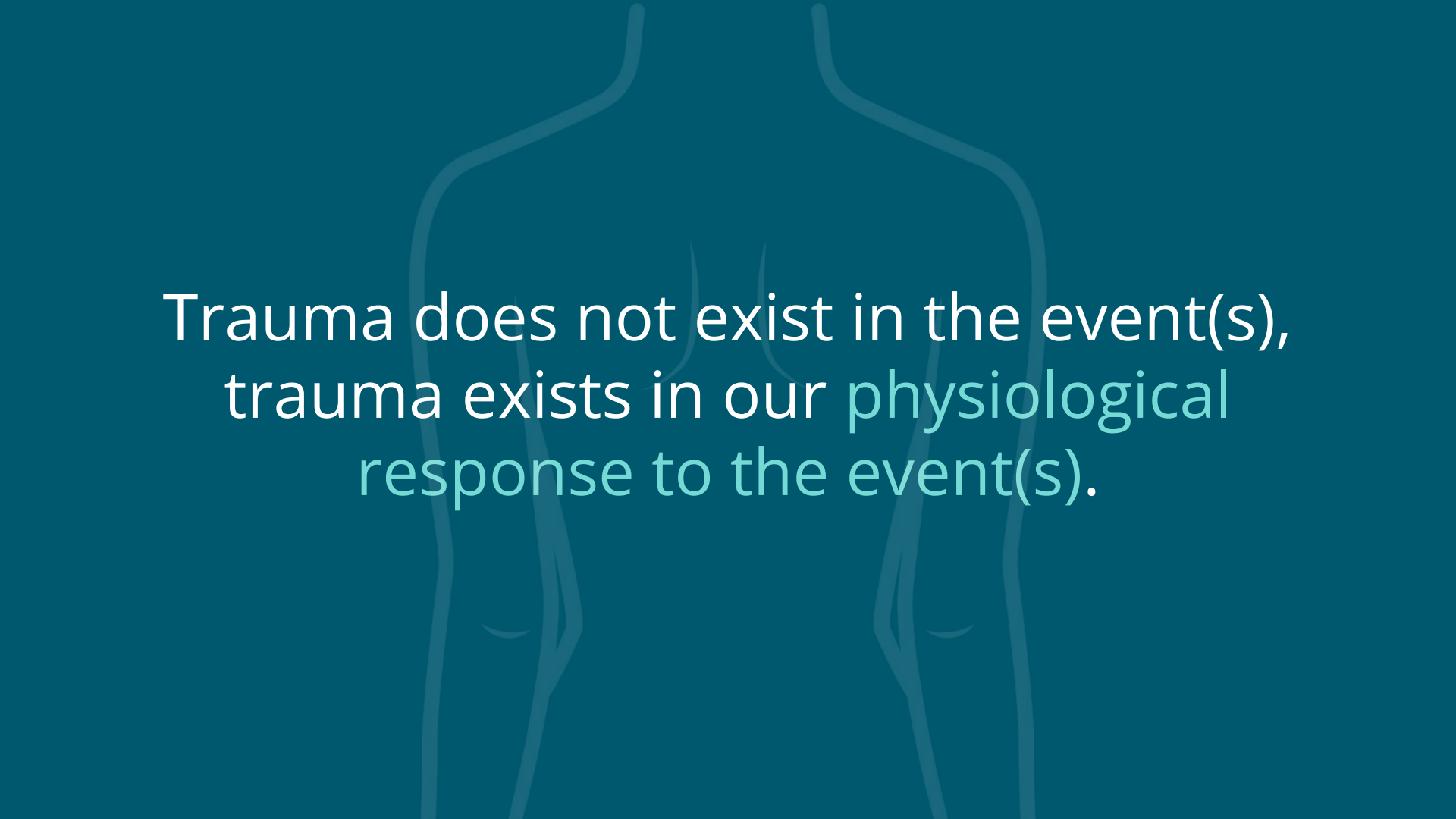
SAMHSA's Concept of Trauma

Individual trauma results from an event, series of events, or set of circumstances that is experienced by an individual as physically or emotionally harmful or life threatening and that has lasting adverse effects on the individual's functioning and mental, physical, social, emotional, or spiritual well-being

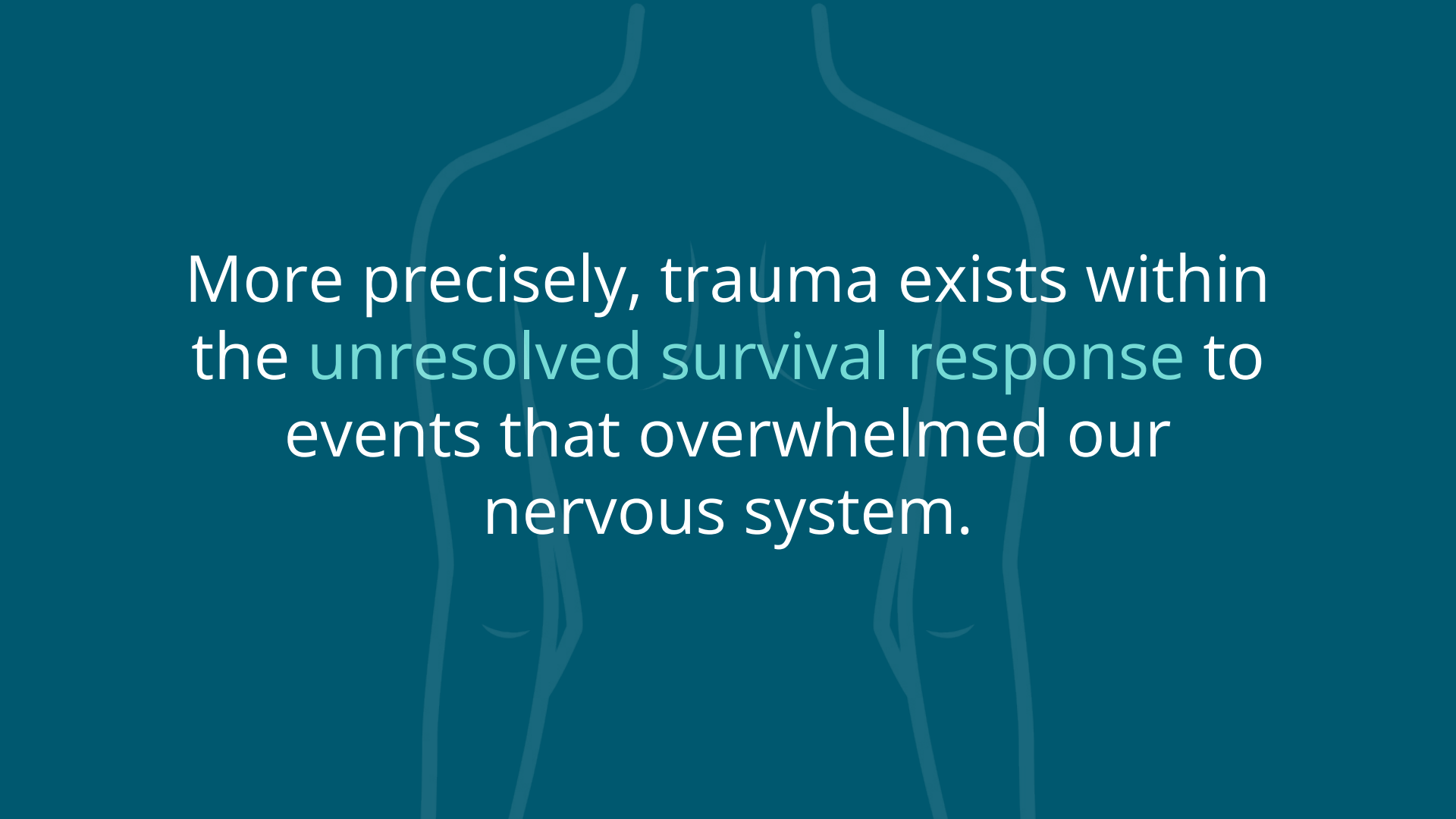
A faint, light blue illustration of a human figure is centered in the background. Overlaid on this figure is a network of lines representing the nervous system, with a denser concentration of lines in the head and torso areas. The background is a solid, dark teal color.

Viewing trauma through the lens of

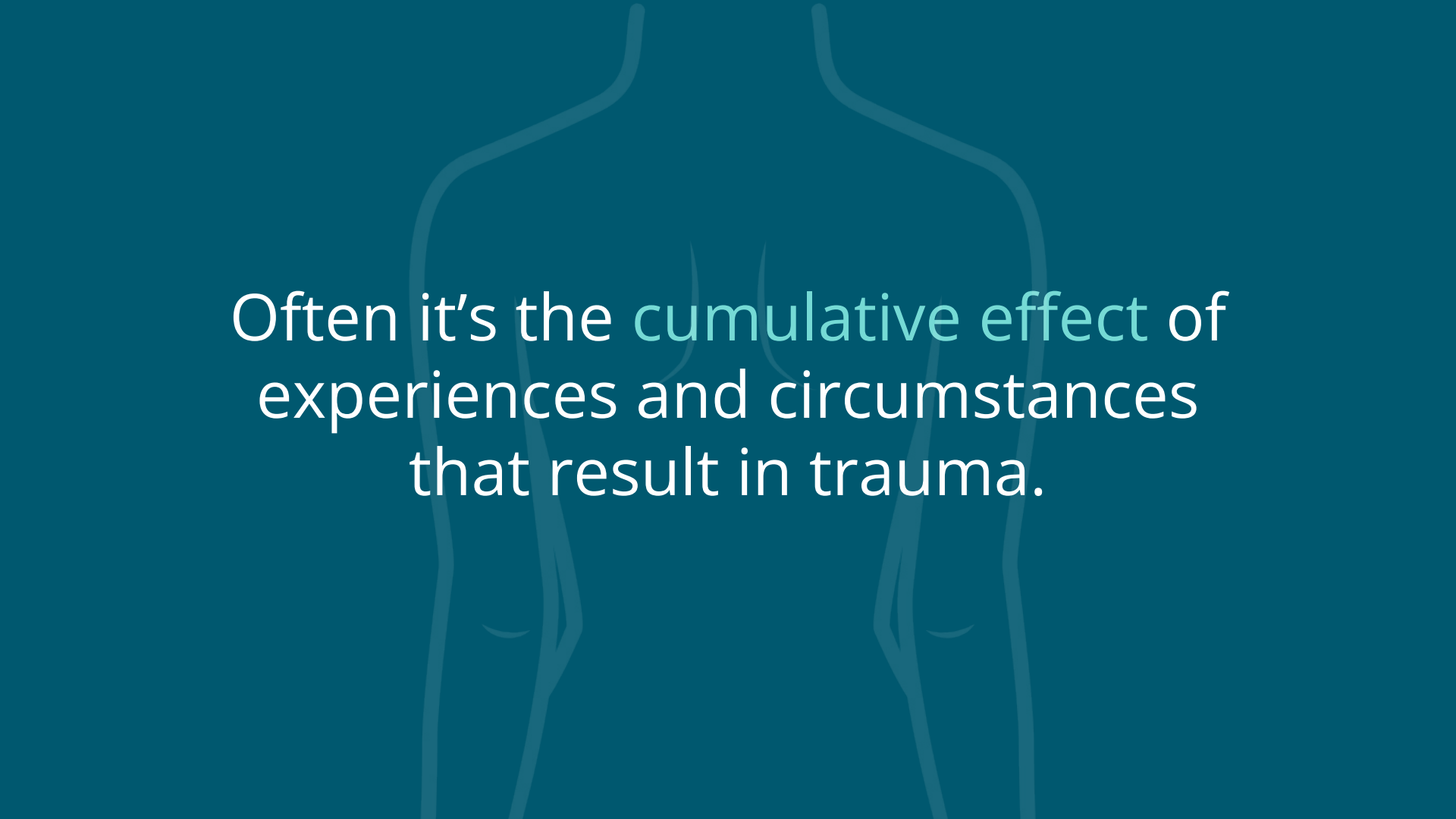
Nervous System Dysregulation



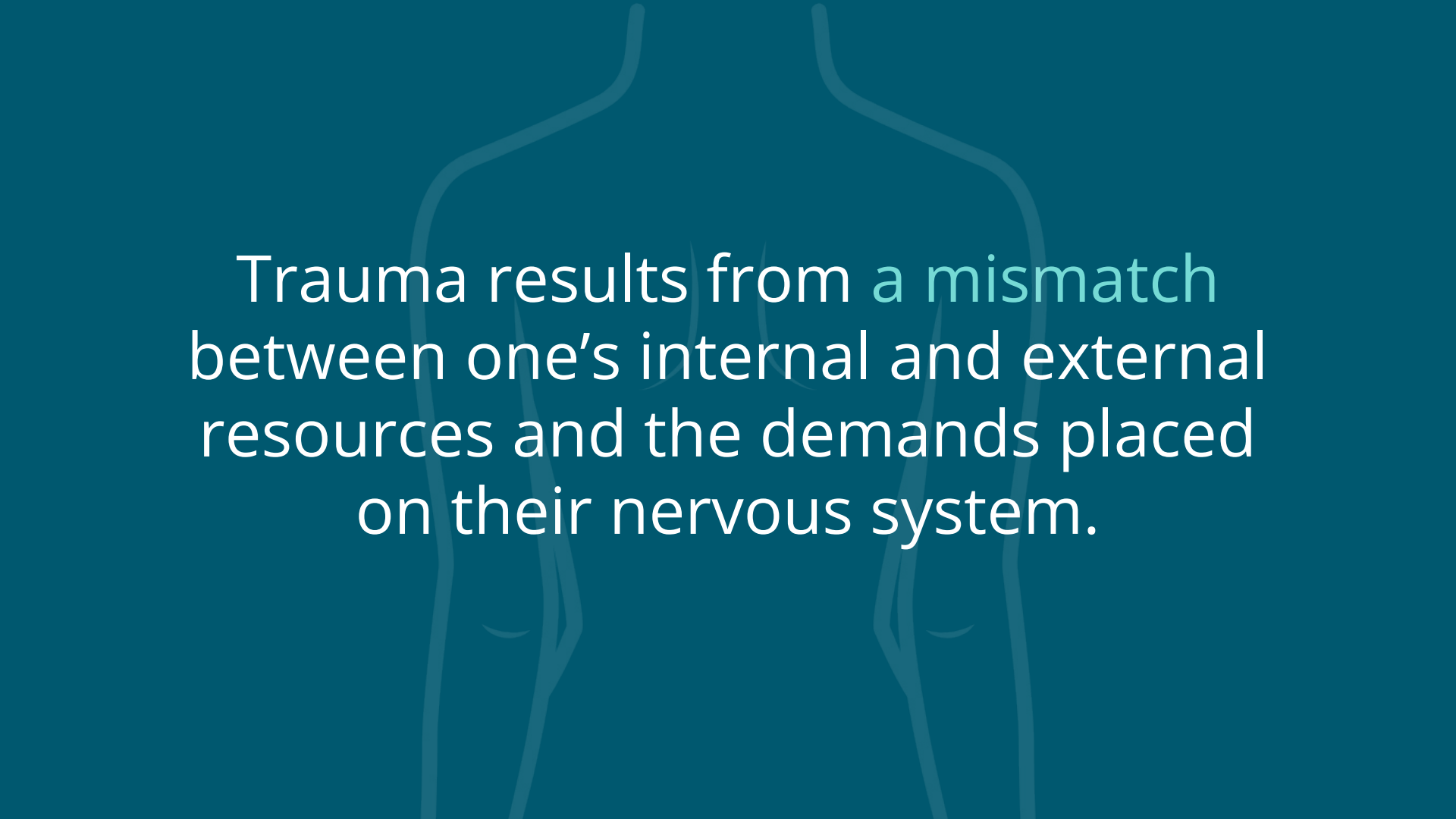
Trauma does not exist in the event(s),
trauma exists in our physiological
response to the event(s).



More precisely, trauma exists within the unresolved survival response to events that overwhelmed our nervous system.



Often it's the cumulative effect of experiences and circumstances that result in trauma.

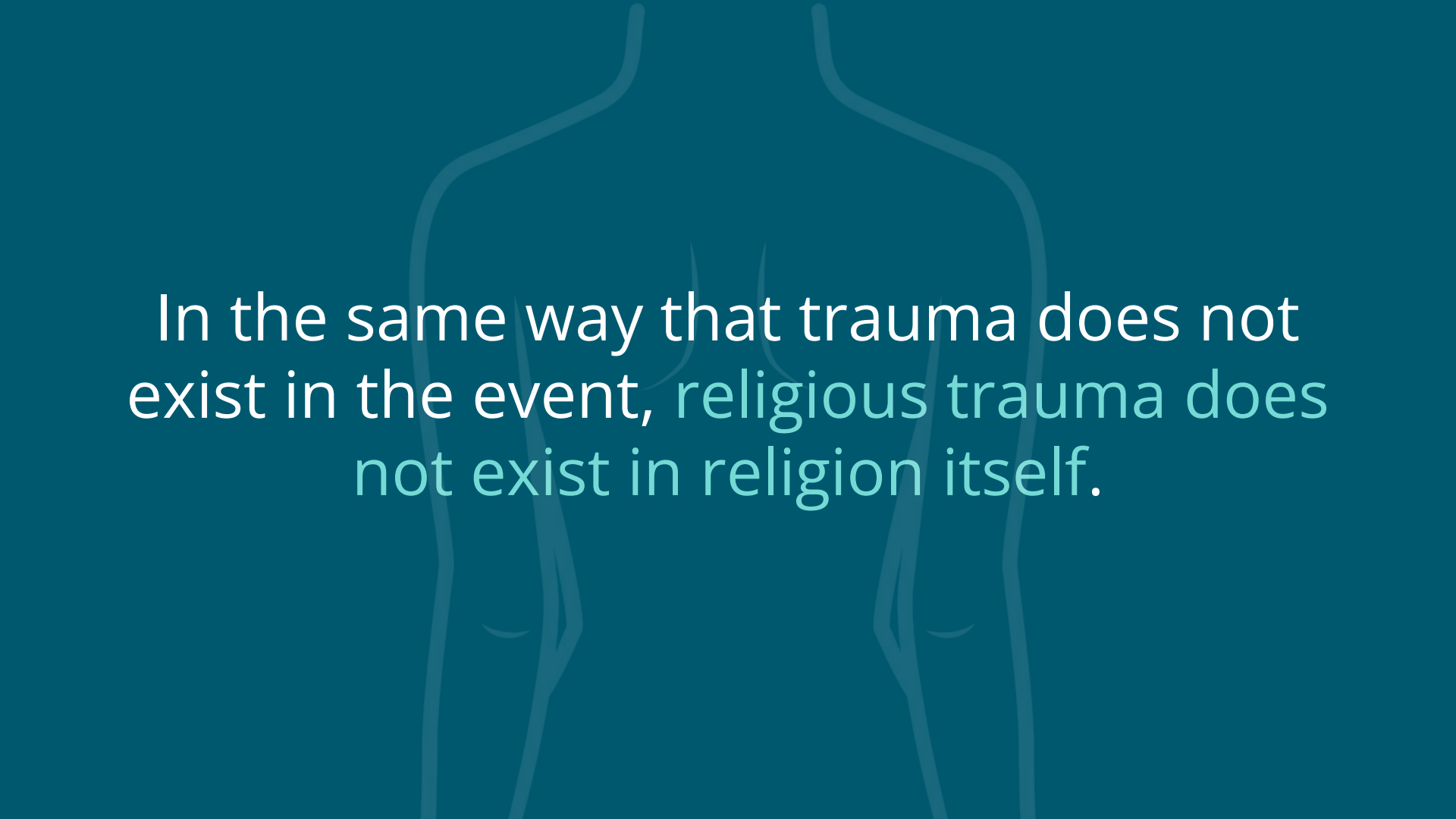
A faint, light-colored outline of a human torso and arms is visible in the background, centered behind the text. The background is a solid teal color.

Trauma results from a mismatch between one's internal and external resources and the demands placed on their nervous system.

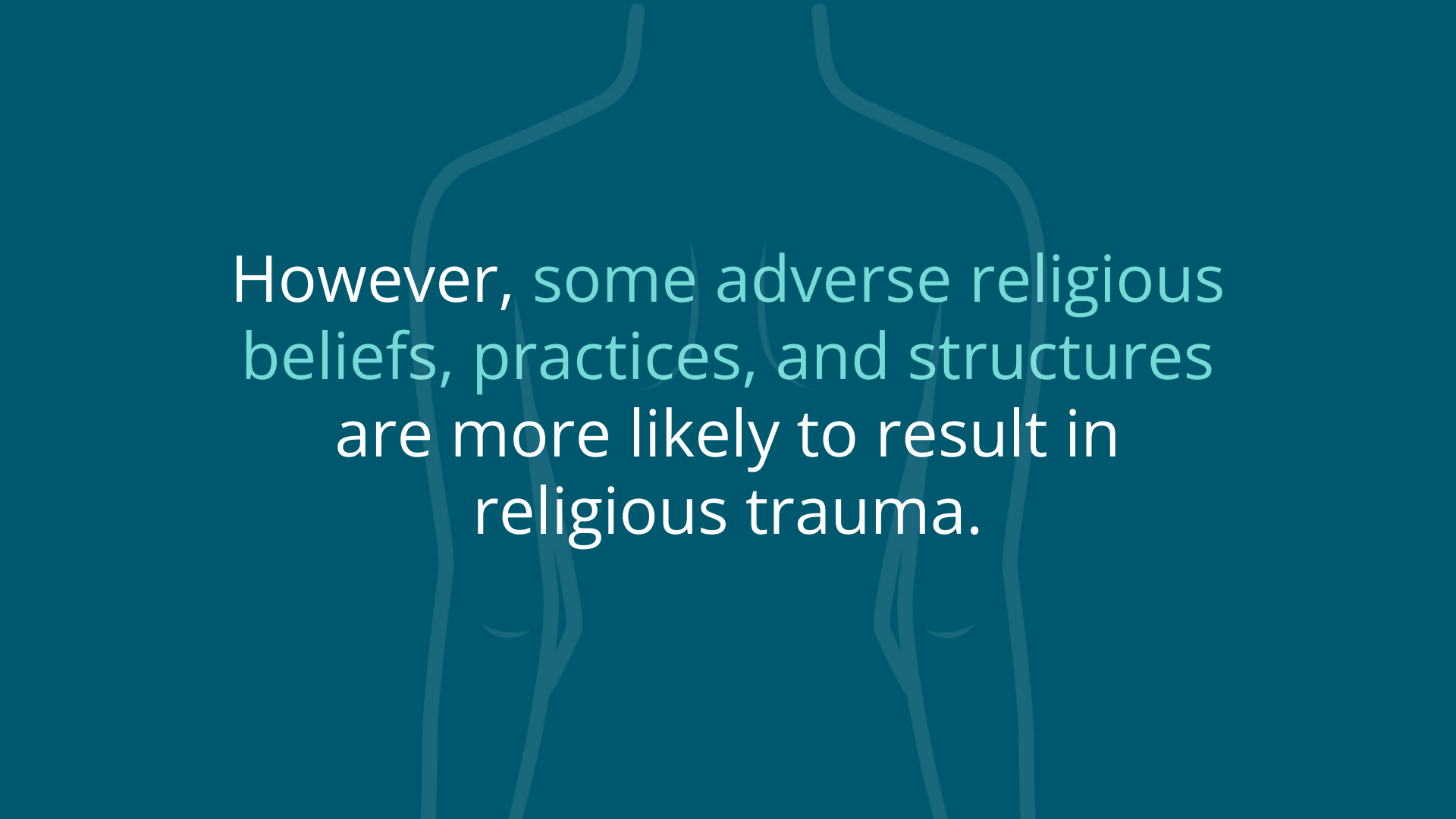
Applying These
Principles to
Religious Trauma.

Religious Trauma

The physical, emotional, or psychological response to religious beliefs, practices, or structures that is experienced by an individual as overwhelming or disruptive and has lasting adverse effects on a person's physical, mental, social, emotional, or spiritual well-being.



In the same way that trauma does not exist in the event, religious trauma does not exist in religion itself.



However, some adverse religious beliefs, practices, and structures are more likely to result in religious trauma.

What are these Adverse
Religious Experiences?

Adverse Religious Experiences

Any experience of a religious belief, practice, or structure that undermines an individual's sense of safety or autonomy and/or negatively impacts their physical, social, emotional, relational, or psychological well-being.

Four Characteristics of Spiritual Abuse

- Abuse of Power
- Conditionality
- Suppression of Expression
- Spiritual Injury

Based on Kathryn Keller's Spiritual Abuse Questionnaire (2016)

Abuse of Power

- Control by Fear
- No Freedom to Ask Questions
- Harsh Criticism is Common
- Lack of Consent

Based on Kathryn Keller's Spiritual Abuse Questionnaire (2016)

Conditionality

- Performance-based Acceptance
- Punishment (by God/Deity or others in the group)
- Absolute Perfection is Demanded
- Transactional Relationships

Based on Kathryn Keller's Spiritual Abuse Questionnaire (2016)

Suppression of Expression

- Certain Feelings are Unacceptable
- Taught to Distrust Your Body/Intuition
- Purity Culture
- Gender Inequality

Based on Kathryn Keller's Spiritual Abuse Questionnaire (2016)

Spiritual Injury

- Frequent Trauma Triggers
- Severe Distrust in Yourself and Others
- Spiritual and Emotional Betrayal
- Complicated Spiritual Grief & Loss

Based on Kathryn Keller's Spiritual Abuse Questionnaire (2016)

Other Examples of Adverse Religious Experiences

- Faith Deconstruction
- Shunning/Excommunication
- “Conversion Therapy”
- Spiritual Bypassing
- Control of Behaviors, Information, Thoughts, and Emotions (Steven Hassen’s BITE model)

"When the culture of an organization mandates that it is more important to protect the reputation of a system and those in power than it is to protect the basic human dignity of individuals or communities, you can be certain that shame is systemic, money drives ethics, and accountability is dead."

-Brené Brown

Findings from our
exploratory survey on
**Adverse Religious
Experiences**

The Top 5 Things Folks Felt in Response to Adverse Religious Experiences



They Reported...

- Blaming Themselves
- Depression
- Social Anxiety
- Difficulty Making Decisions
- Interpersonal Conflict

The Adverse Religious Experiences Impacted Folks'...

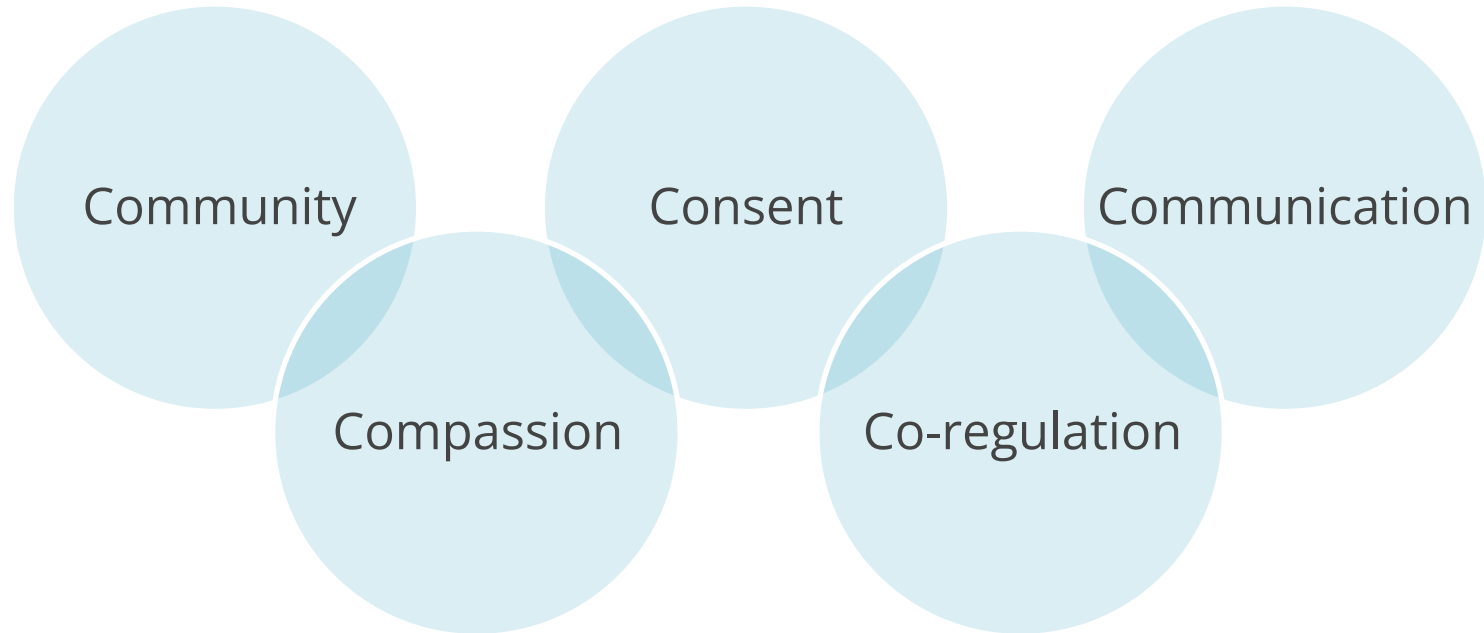
- Mental Health
- Social Relationships
- Personal Identity
- Sexuality
- Intimate Relationships

The majority of folks said the
Adverse Religious Experiences
had a significant impact on
them at the time...

...and they continue to distrust
others and experience anger,
sadness, shame, and rejection.

The Five C's for Religious Trauma-Proofing Our Kids

by Cindy Wang Brandt



Consent

- Honor Our Kids' Consent
- Offer Them Choices
- Teach and Respect Boundaries

Communication

- Encourage Communication of Needs
- Be a Safe & Supportive Listener
- Teach Them the Language of Sensation

Community

- Encourage Diversity
- Connect Beyond Us vs Them Groups
- Model Healthy Relationships

Compassion

- Undermine Shame with Compassion
- Teach and Model Self-Compassion
- Make Your Home/Church/Office a Shame-Free Space

Co-Regulation

- Our Nervous Systems are a Powerful Resource for Our Kids
- Model Regulation & Coping Skills
- Make Repairs When Ruptures Happen

A Bonus C

Curiosity

- Model Curiosity and Openness
- Be Curious About Their Experience
- Exploratory Orienting

**Sensation
vocabulary
to help kids
& adults
develop
resilience**

From: *Trauma-Proofing
Your Kids* by Peter Levine
& Maggie Kline

RoomToThrive.com

cold/warm/hot/chilly
twitchy/butterflies
sharp/dull/itchy
shaky/trembly/tingly
hard/soft/stuck
jittery/icy/weak
relaxed/calm/peaceful
empty/full/dry/moist
flowing/spreading
strong/tight/tense
dizzy/fuzzy/blurry
numb/prickly/jumpy
owie/tearful/goose-bumpy
light/heavy/open
icky/cool/silky
still/clammy/loose



Supporting Survivors as They Resolve Religious Trauma



There are Many Ways to Resolve Religious Trauma

What works for one person
may not work for another.



“The **best** thing for your nervous system is another human and the **worst** thing for your nervous system is another human.”

-Lisa Feldman Barrett



Believe Survivors

Some of the most powerful words you can say to a trauma survivor is...

- I See You
- I Hear You
- I Believe You



Prioritize Safety

“The removal of threat is not the same thing as the experience of safety.”

-Stephen Porges



Don't Force Forgiveness

Forgiveness is not required to resolve trauma, in fact, in some cases it can prevent us from healing.



Religious Trauma is Not “Just in Your Head”

Religious Trauma exists within the nervous system, which is why we can't think, pray, or believe ourselves out of trauma.



Value Their Humanity Over Your Beliefs

Beliefs that are a resource for you may be harmful to others when they are held so tightly you can't see their humanity.



Be Careful About Advice Giving

In most cases, trauma survivors don't want advice; they want to experience safety and connection.



Validate Aggression

“The restoration of healthy aggression is an essential part in the recovery from trauma.”

-Peter Levine

A Good Reminder...

Period
Trauma is not your fault.
~~but healing is your~~
~~responsibility.~~

RoomToThrive.com

I asked survivors what
they **wished therapists**
understood about
religious trauma...

“Religious trauma isn't an add on condition. If faith is the core of your existence, all else radiates from faith, not to it. Treatment needs to come from that understanding.”

–Jennifer

“The experience of religious trauma can be incredibly, even unbearably, difficult to describe, even to a trusted therapist, because it is so deeply contextual.”

-Tiana

“Understand and be sensitive to the fact that minority and intersectional folx (especially us queer ones) had a slightly different, and possibly more deeply damaging experience. Relatively benign churches like the one I grew up in can be a real horror for a scared, closeted gay kid.”

-Dean

“The goal of therapy should never be to help people adjust to oppression.”

–*Carmen Cool*

Together, we can prevent
Adverse Religious Experiences
and resolve Religious Trauma.

Thank You!

Contact information:

Email: Brian@RoomToThrive.com

Socials: [@RoomToThrive](#) & [@ReligiousTraumaInstitute](#)

Websites: RoomToThrive.com & ReligiousTraumaInstitute.com



QUESTIONS
COMMENTS
DISCUSSION

Join us for the rest of the series!

October 29

November 12

December 3

December 17

All sessions start at
9:00 am Pacific Time/10:00 am Mountain Time/
11:00 am Central Time/12:00 pm Eastern Time

[Register Now!](#)

THANK YOU FOR ATTENDING!

We need to hear from you to keep bringing you these FREE resources!

Please take a few minutes to give us your feedback! A link to the feedback form will be included in a follow-up email sent immediately following today's session.

Your completion of the survey is a very important part of our quality control and to our future funding for this project, as it allows us to continue to provide you with resources and training at no-cost. If you could please take a few minutes to let us know your thoughts, it would be greatly appreciated.



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CONTACT INFO

Email: NTTACinfo@cars-rp.org

Phone: 888.945.9377

Website: <http://www.nttacmentalhealth.org>


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Request TA: <https://tinyurl.com/RequestNTTAC-TTA>

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SAMHSA's mission is to reduce
the impact of substance abuse and
mental illness on America's communities.

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