



Advance Behavioral Health
Prevention California

2026 Edition



5 BITES FROM TRAUMA- INFORMED CARE:

An Essential Tool for Engaging Youth

This **5 Bites** brief offers five “sound bites” from the *Trauma-Informed Care: An Essential Tool for Engaging Youth* presentation by Kristin Thorp (Youth MOVE National). Each sound bite is explained and unpacked for quick learning.

What is a trauma-informed approach? Why is it necessary? How can we bring a trauma-informed approach to our work with individuals, communities, youth, and families?

The ideas, information, and opinions in this “5 Bites” brief come from Kristin Thorp’s presentation. They are reproduced here as an alternative learning modality, with appreciation to Kristin.

1.

“Always ask yourself: Am I doing **TO youth? Am I doing **FOR**? Or am I doing **WITH**?”**

For many organizations, developing youth-guided practices involves changing the way adults think about their relationship to youth. When we do to youth, the adult is in control, and there is no intention of youth involvement. Although doing for involves the youth, the adult retains control. It is only when we do with that the youth functions as a partner and control is shared between the youth and the adult. This approach leads to personal growth of youth and adults and increased organizational effectiveness.

Learn more about doing with vs. doing for: [The Foundations of Youth Engagement in Parent Centers](#) (RAISE and Youth MOVE National)

2.

“[Hart’s Ladder of Participation]** allows us to think about where we are as adults and organizations and also where we might really want to be.”**

There are multiple models for thinking about this organizational transition, including Hart’s Ladder of Participation. In Hart’s model, programs climb up the rungs of the ladder. At the bottom rung, youth are not involved in program design or decision-making. At the next rung, youth are incorporated as decorations but are uninformed. Several rungs higher, they are consulted and informed and allowed to make recommendations; it is not until the highest rung of the ladder, however, that youth initiate and direct program development. It may not always be appropriate to operate at the highest rungs, but it is crucial to not operate at the lowest rungs.

Learn more about [Hart's Ladder of Youth Participation](#) (Youth Mental Health and Addiction Champions Initiative)

3.

"Youth can provide really valuable input in designing youth-friendly services and identifying service gaps."

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Learn about [Youth Engagement in Collective Impact Initiatives](#) (Urban Institute) or how to engage youth in [Governance](#) and [Youth Advisory Boards](#) (Youth MOVE National).

4.

"There are multiple pathways to resilience."

Although researchers are continuing to refine their understanding of how resilience is developed, experts tend to agree on the role played by several important conditions that support and promote resilience. These conditions can occur at both the individual and community levels. For example, having strong problem-solving skills or a strong sense of identity and purpose (e.g., faith or culture) are individual traits that can help promote resilience. Relationships with competent, caregiving adults are examples of community-based protective factors. These protective factors can help young people feel safe more quickly after a traumatic experience, and they can help mitigate the effects of trauma.

Learn about [Disparities and Resiliency in Adolescent Health](#) (Youth.gov) and about [Understanding Trauma and Building Resiliency during COVID-19 and when coping with racial trauma](#).

“Post-traumatic growth ... is a positive change experienced as a result of a struggle with a major life crisis or traumatic event.”

Sometimes, after experiencing trauma, people can change in unexpected, positive ways. This change tends to take one of five common forms.

1. A perception that this experience has helped them identify a new opportunity.
2. A change in relationship in which the individual develops an increased sense of connection.
3. An increased sense of one's own strength: “I can do anything.”
4. A greater appreciation for life in general.
5. An increased spiritual or religious view.

While these positive changes can occur, it is important to remember that this does not mean that the pain or trauma has gone away. It simply means that the person has been able to identify meaning and opportunity.

Learn more about youth trauma: [A Guide for Youth: Understanding Trauma](#) (Youth MOVE National).