International Transformational Resilience Coalition
Building Human Resilience for Climate Change

Community of Practice Co-Sponsors:

# The ITRC Community of Practice (CoP)

## On Using a Public Health Approach in Communities to Enhance Universal Capacity for Mental Wellness and Resilience for the Climate Crisis

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# Trauma and Toxic Stress Are Epidemic Today

**Covid-19 Pandemic**
**Health Impacts and Fear**

**Racism and Other Inequalities & Oppressions**

**Low Wages and High Poverty**

**Violence and Fear of It**

**Political Polarization**

**Toxic Social Isolation and Disconnection**

**Vast Economic and Social Inequalities**

**Many Other Individual, Family, Community, and Societal Traumatic Stresses**

**Many of Today's Traumas Result From Unresolved Past Traumas that Resurface and also Create New Sources of Trauma**

# To These Stressors Now Add Accelerating "Wicked" Climate Impacts

- Almost ***Zero Chance*** now to prevent global temps. from **overshooting the 2.7 F (1.5 C)** temperature threshold that activates **relentlessly harmful and possibly irreversible impacts.** (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) April 2022).

- ***Now 50-50 chance*** it will happen in the ***NEXT 5 YEARS***—and if not ***soon thereafter***!
  (World Meteorological Organization, May 2022)

- Under current emission path abrupt **"collapses of ecosystems"** and **"catastrophic" biodiversity loss** begin ***before* 2030** in tropical oceans and **then spread northward**.
  (Nature, April 2020, many other studies)

We are in the midst of a rapidly accelerating global

***Climate-Ecosystem-Biodiversity Mega-Emergency***

that is *Already* and will *Increasingly* alter *Every Aspect of Society*!

If we remain unprepared individual, community, and societal traumas will occur at scale never before seen in modern society:

We will enter a new era: "*The Traumacene*!"

# Most *Pervasive* Impacts:

## Cascading Disruptions to the Ecological, Social, and Economic Systems People Rely on for Basic Needs that *Severely Stress Everyone*

- Water, food, and other key resource disruptions and shortages
- Job and income losses
- New illnesses and diseases
- Loss of place, community, culture, and natural environment
- Disruption of close family and friend social support networks
- Involuntary migration and in-migration
- Disaster and stress-triggered crime, aggression, and violence
- Intensified racism, sexism, and other systemic oppressions
- Worries about our future and our children's future
- Many other surprising never-ending 'stress pileups'

# Combined With
# More Frequent, Extreme & Prolonged *Disasters* that *Traumatize Millions*

- In 2021, more that **40 percent of Americans** lived in a County that was impacted by a climate change related disaster: that **number *will likely double***.
- **Similar** dynamics can be found in the **EU and other nations**.
- **20-40% of people** who are directly impacted can experience **mental health problems**—as can those who **know some** impacted or even **watch it** from afar.

**Wind, Rain, and Snow Storms**

**Heat Waves and More Extremes**

**Sea Level Rise and Storm Surges**

**Wildfires**

**Floods**

**Droughts**

**And many other surprise disasters…**

**The dynamics are occurring at a global scale**

**but the impacts are experienced *locally*!**

# Left Unaddressed the Result Will be a Global Pandemic of "Wicked" Individual, Community, and Societal Distresses and Traumas

## Psychological, Emotional, and Spiritual Distress

An understandable and normal response associated with stressors and demands that are difficult to cope with, or that result from witnessing others in harmful situations, or that result from fantasizing about future impacts.

## Individual Trauma

"a blow to the psyche that breaks through one's defenses with such brutal force that one cannot react to it effectively... As so often happens in catastrophes...(people) withdraw into themselves, feeling numbed, afraid, vulnerable, and very alone." (Kai Erickson)

# Community and Societal Trauma are *Not* Well Understood

## Community Trauma

An event or series of events that create …

"a blow to the basic tissue of social life that damages the bonds attaching people together and impairs their prevailing sense of community… (it is) a gradual realization that the community no longer exists as an effective source of support and that an important part of the self has disappeared." (Kai Erickson)

Community trauma can also affect people with shared identities, such as religious or spiritual, refugee, and internet-based groups.

## Societal Trauma

Goes beyond a specific geographical area or group with a shared identity to affect entire cultures, nations, all of humanity: e.g. the COVID-19 Pandemic.

# Pervasive Individual, Community, and Societal Traumas Feed On Themselves

Unaddressed trauma becomes buried in the nervous system and can cause people to

**Deny**, **Dissociate**, **Blame**, **Attack Others**, **Self-Sabotage** or **Reenact** leading to:

- Distorted perceptions, facts, and truths
- Harmful social norms, institutions, and policies
- 'We vs them' tribalism that creates dangerous polarization between people
- Abuse, aggression, and violence including more ACEs and other
- Resurfaced and intensified unresolved historic racism, genocide, and other injustices.
- Creation of many new forms of injustice and inequality, including by climate solutions.

**The Combo Can Unravel Families, Groups, Communities, and Societies!**

# The Impacts Go Far Beyond Health, Safety, and Security!

**Unaddressed Pervasive Traumas Will Also Make It *More Difficult* to Reduce the Wicked Climate Crisis to Manageable Levels!**

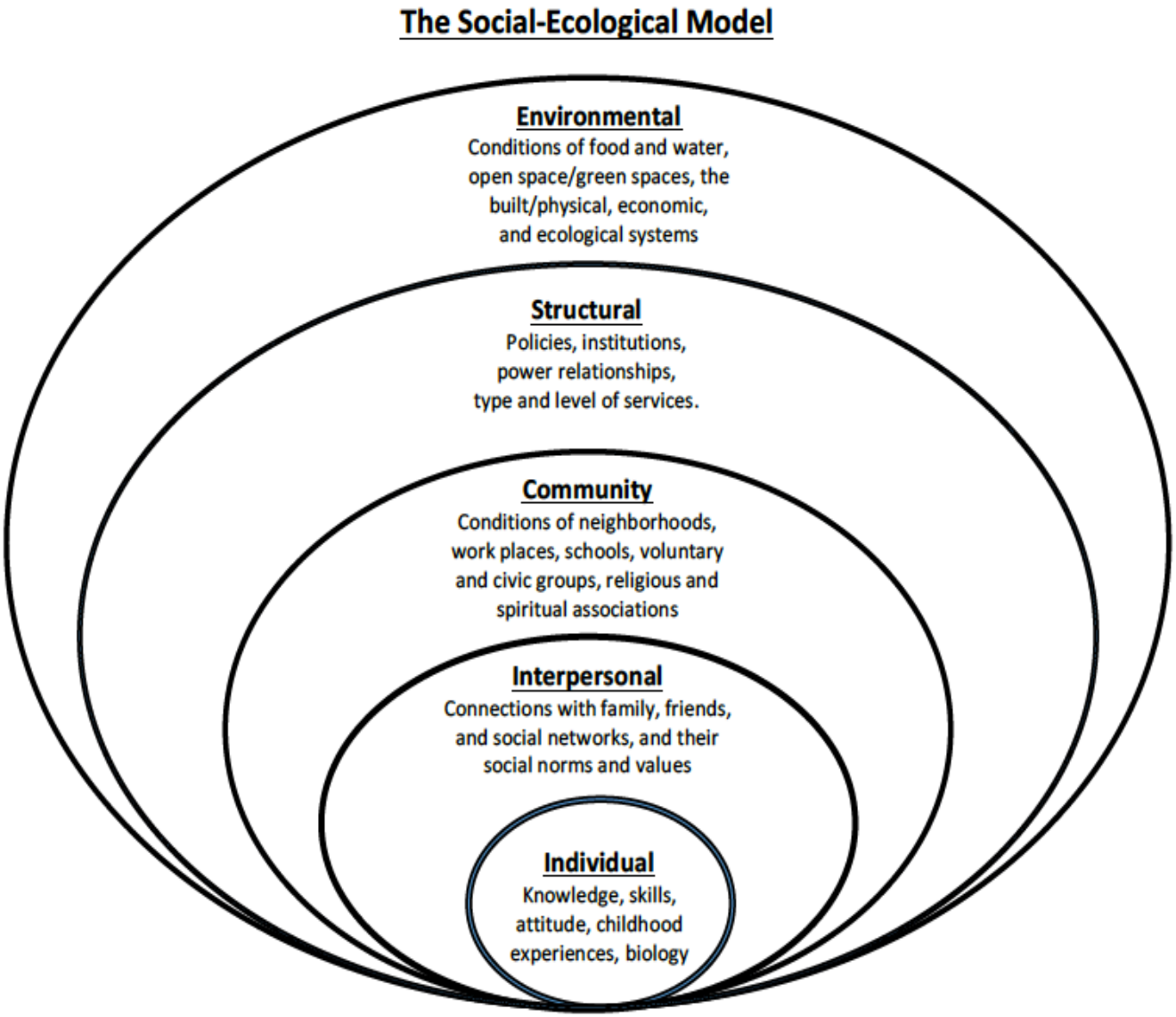
Traumatized people

**retreat into a self-protective survival mode**

that prevents them from

**grasping or addressing complex problems like the climate crisis**.

# The Traumas Result From Multiple Interacting Individual, Family, Social, Economic, Physical/Built and Ecological Factors



**Our Mental Health, Human Service, and Disaster Response Systems Focus on Crisis and Illness…**

## They Cannot Prevent or Heal the Scope and Scale of Challenges Speeding Our Way!

New **thinking** and **approaches** are urgently needed that establish safe, healthy, just and equitable ***Regenerative*** solutions.

If we take this path the climate mega-emergency can become

## humanities greatest teacher!

## This Requires Systemic Thinking and Holistic Responses

We must respond ***now*** to both the

***Scope*** and ***Scale*** of the challenges that lie ahead!

This requires **moving out of our siloes.**

# We Must Build Population-Level Capacity For "Transformational Resilience"

When suffering is caused by previously unseen **external forces** that have **no end point**, **resolution,** or simple **cure** the priority must be to help people develop the capacity to…

- **buffer themselves from** and **push back against** the stressors and...
- find constructive new sources of **meaning, purpose**, and **healthy hope**.

# "Transformational Resilience"

Help **everyone** develop the capacity for:

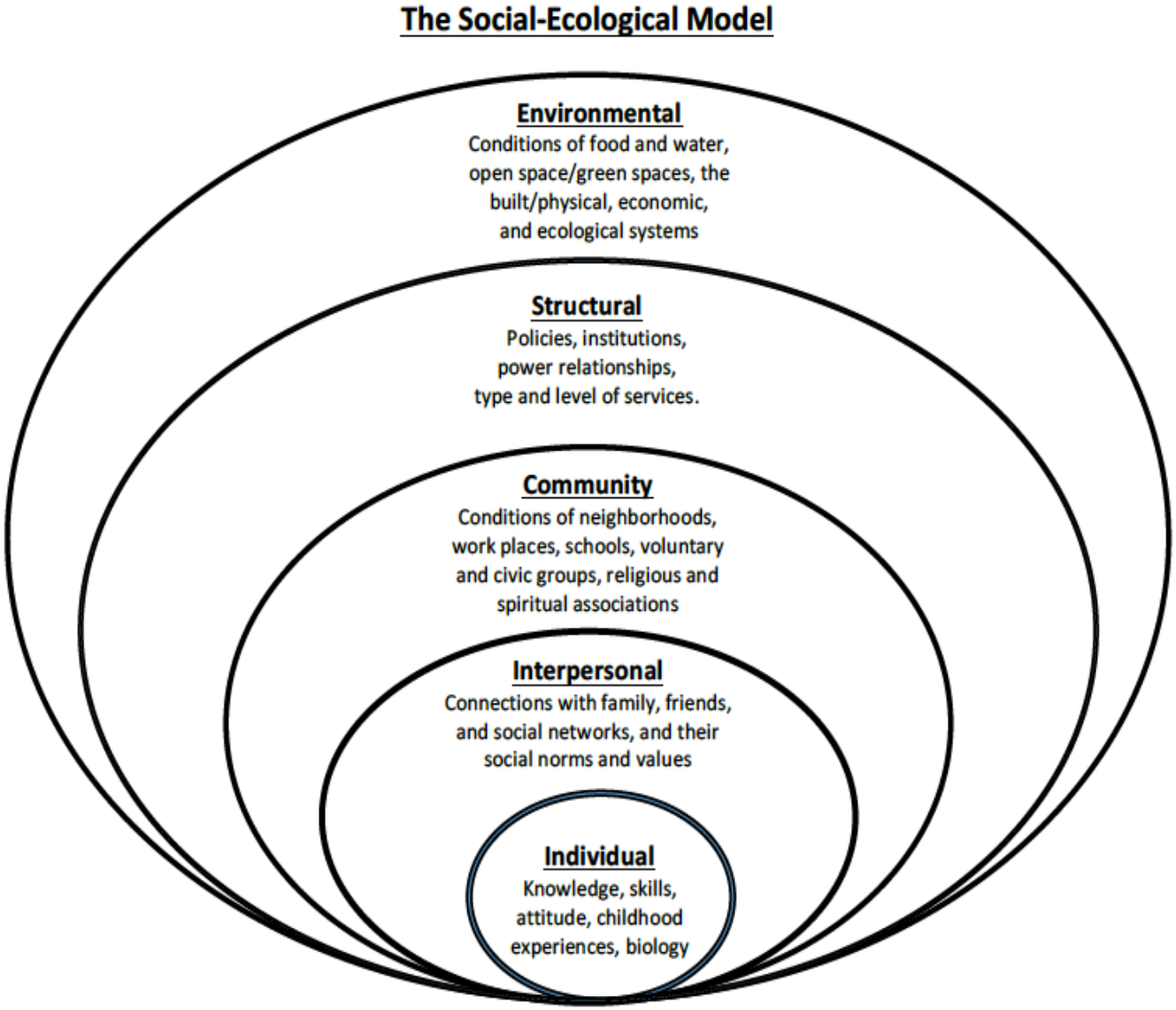
**Presencing** (or self-regulation) to calm their body, mind, emotions, and behaviors in the midst of adversities…

*and*

**Purposing** (or adversity-based growth) to find new sources of meaning, purpose, and healthy hope in life.

**The combination can rebuild faith in the future!**

# The Capacity for Transformational Resilience is Also Shaped by Interrelated Individual, Family, Social, Economic, Physical/Built and Ecological Factors



# Addressing These Multisystemic Factors Requires a Public Health Approach to Mental Health

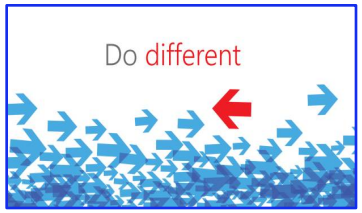
# A Public Health Approach to Mental Health

- Takes a **population-level approach** --- not one that merely focuses on 'high risk' or 'vulnerable' individuals or groups (though they must be given special attention and integrated into population-level work):

  Our mantra should be "***Leave No One Behind***."

- Prioritizes **preventing problems before they occur** --- not merely reacting to or treating them after they emerge.

- Focusing on **strengthening protective factors** –social norms, skills, strengths, resources, and policies -- that shift thinking, habits, and behaviors -- not just fixing deficits or treating symptoms of pathology.



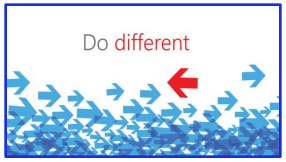
- Research shows that mental health & psycho-social-spiritual problems ***can* be prevented** and mental wellness and resilience ***can* be enhanced**.

- Shows the **most effective way** to address **widespread** mental health & psycho-social-spiritual problems is to:

  - establish the **social infrastructure** in communities—what we call a **"Resilience Coordinating Coalition" (RCC)--**that…

  - engages a **broad and diverse array** of grass roots and neighborhood leaders, civic groups, non-profit, private, and public organizations…

  - in **planning, implementing,** and **continually improving actions** that build and sustain the capacity for mental wellness and transformational resilience among ***all*** adults and youth.



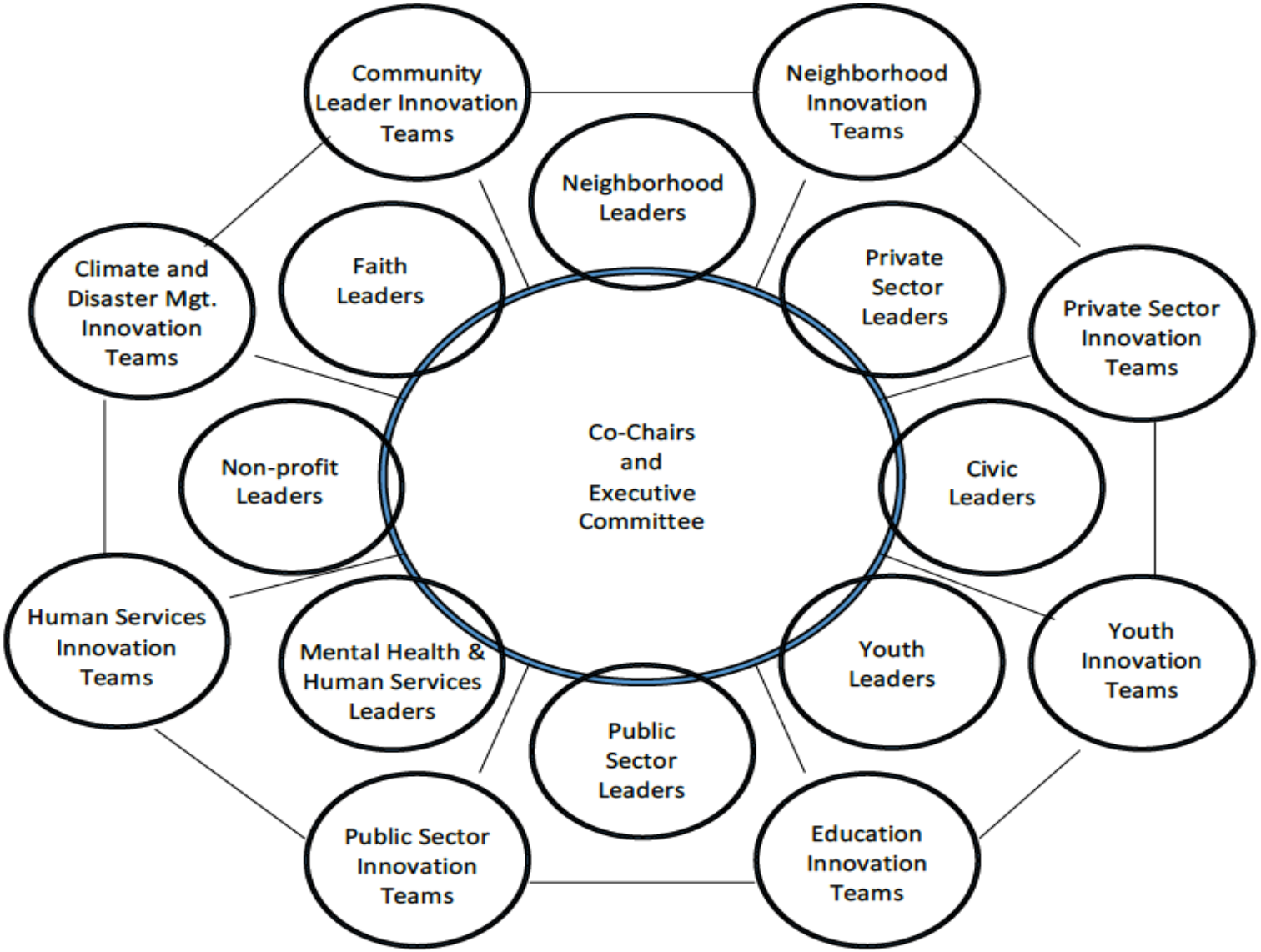
- Community initiatives must **link** engaging residents in mental wellness and resilience activities with efforts to **slash local GHG emissions, restore ecosystems**, and **prepare for** and **adapt to climate impacts.**

- Disaster preparedness, behavioral health, and other human services will **remain important**– but will become **more effective** when **integrated** into multisystemic **community-based resilience building initiatives.**

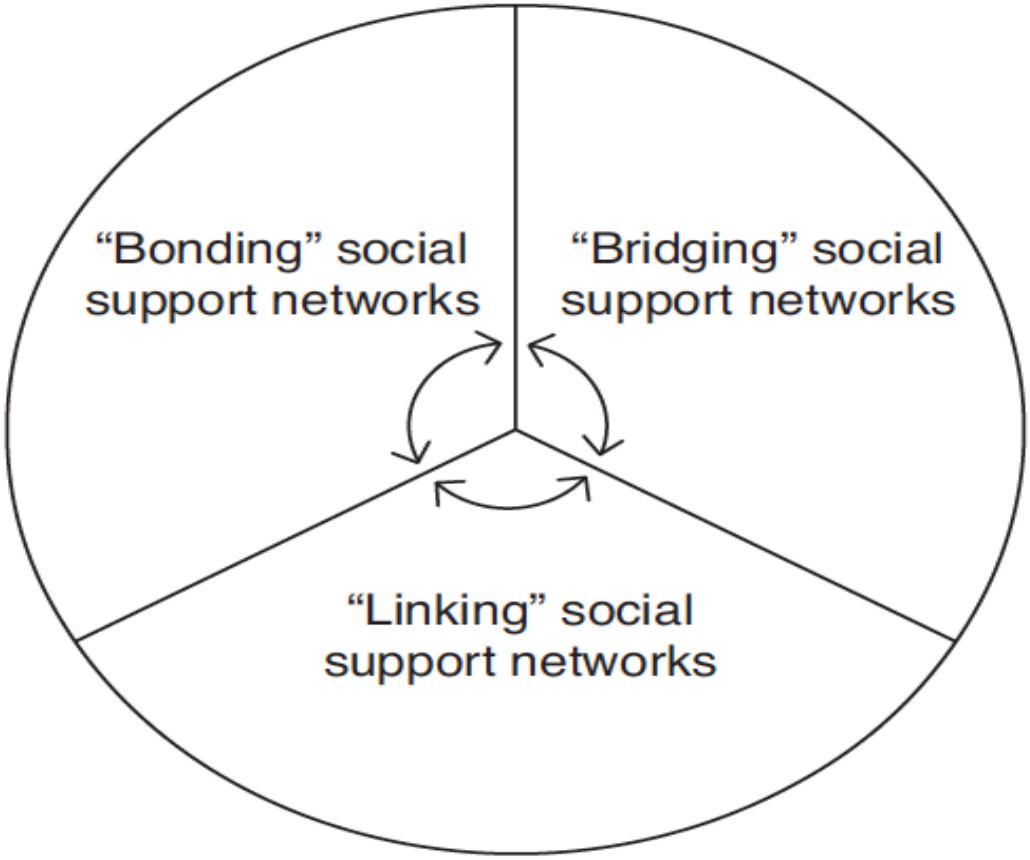
- Every **small** but **visible sign of progress** will help **build healthy hope!**

# A "Ring Team" Example of a Resilience Coordinating Coalition (RCC):

# "*Well-Coordinated Decentralization*"

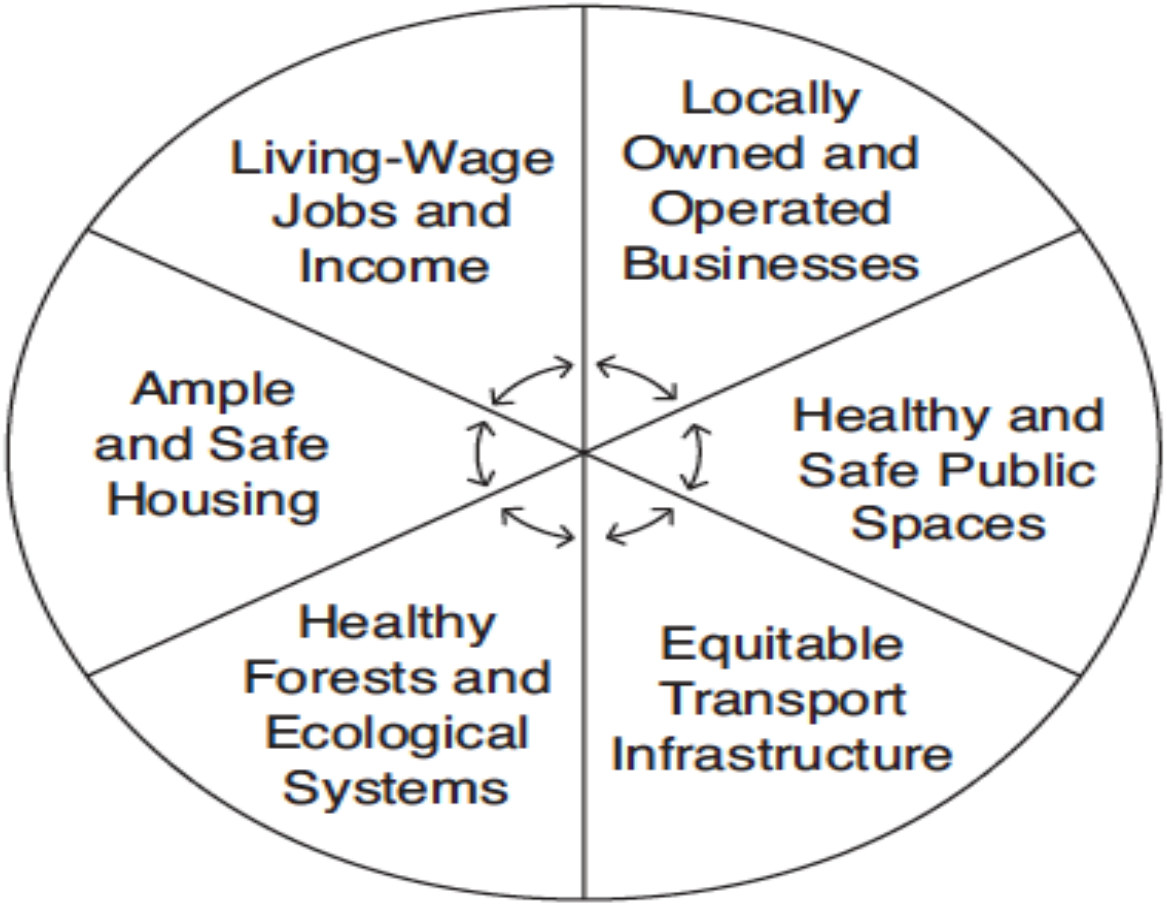


# Build Social Support Networks Across Cultural, Economic, and Geographic Boundaries in the Community

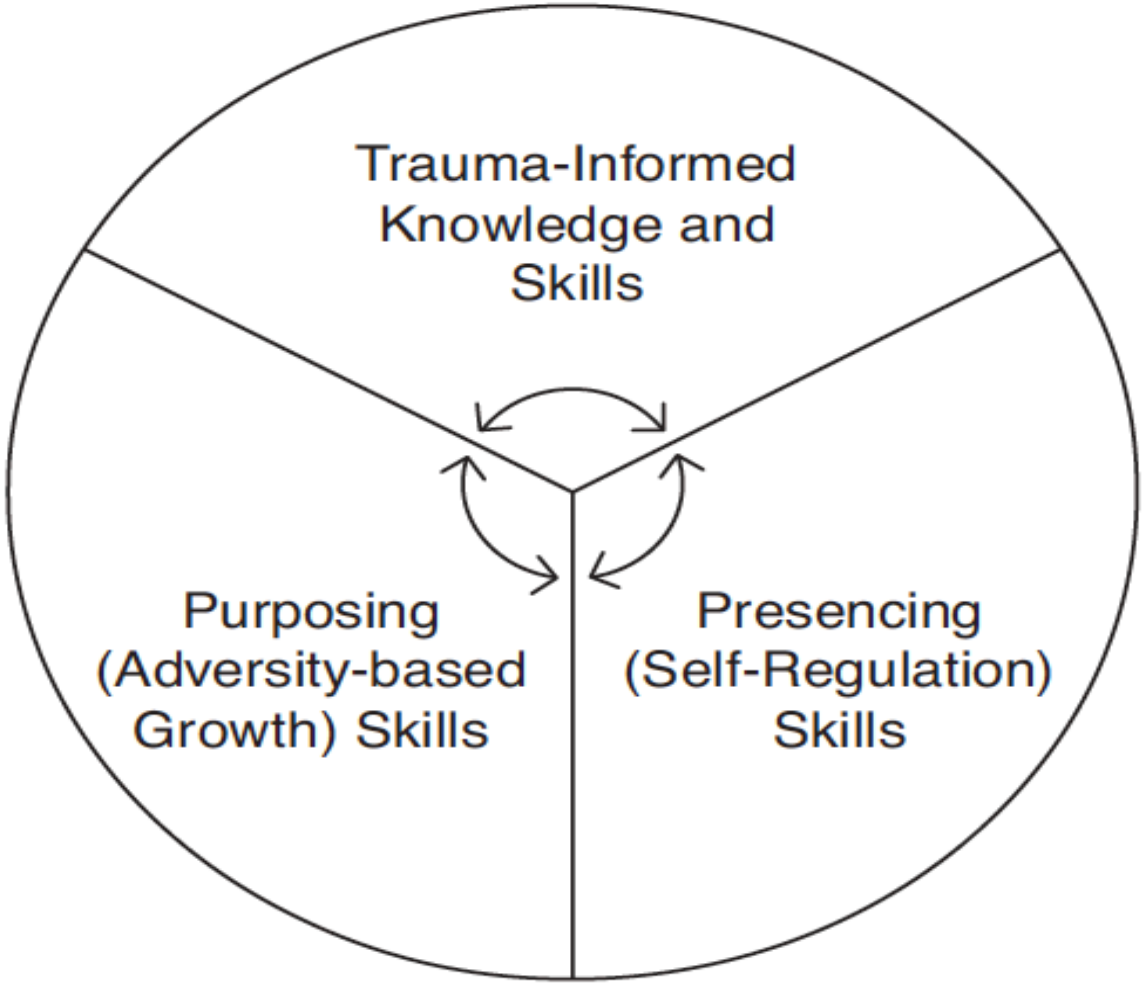


# The Five Foundational Areas Required to Build Universal Capacity for Transformational Resilience for the Climate Mega-Emergency

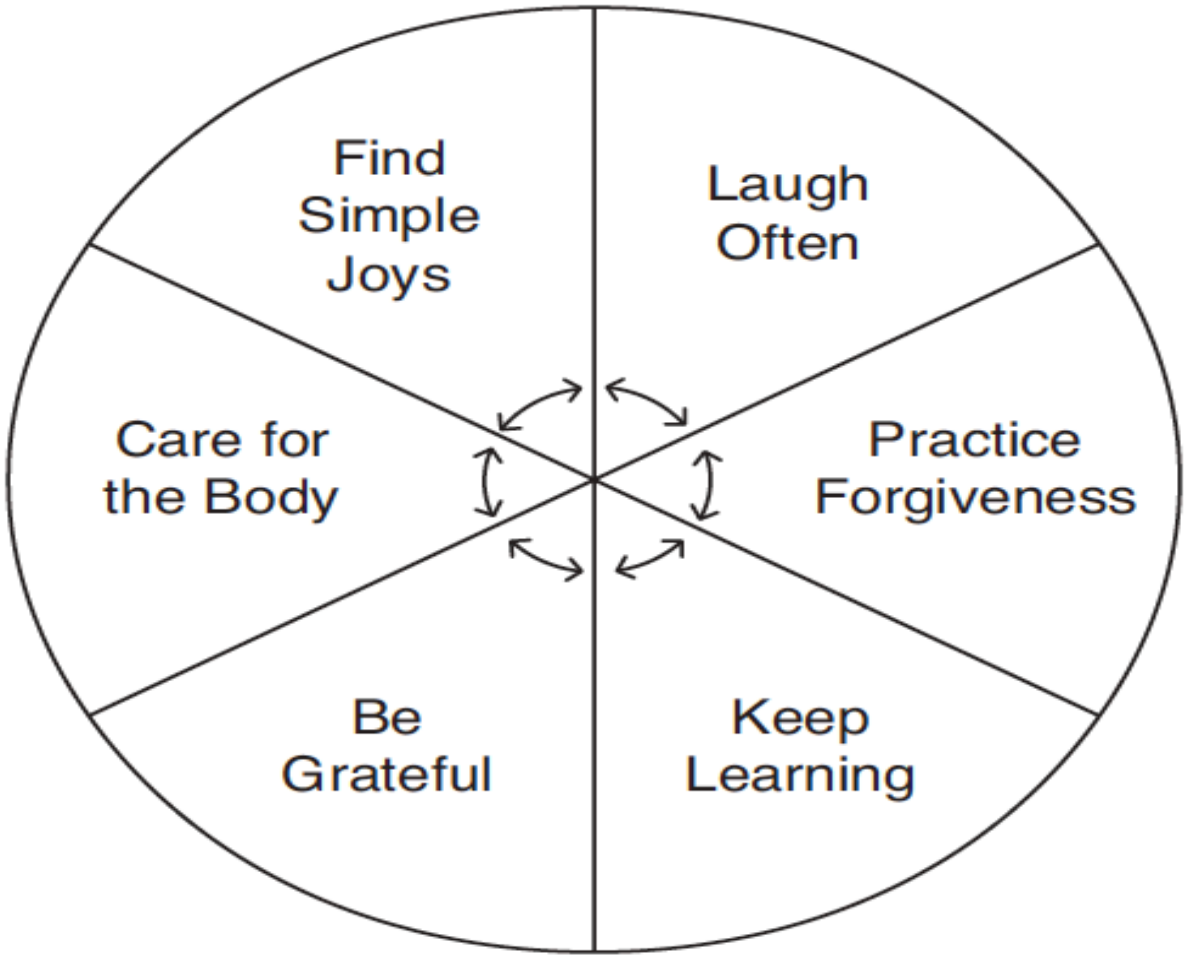
## Ensure a "Just Transition" by Engaging Residents in Creating Supportive Local Physical/Built, Economic, and Ecological Conditions



## Build Universal "Literacy" About Mental Wellness and Resilience

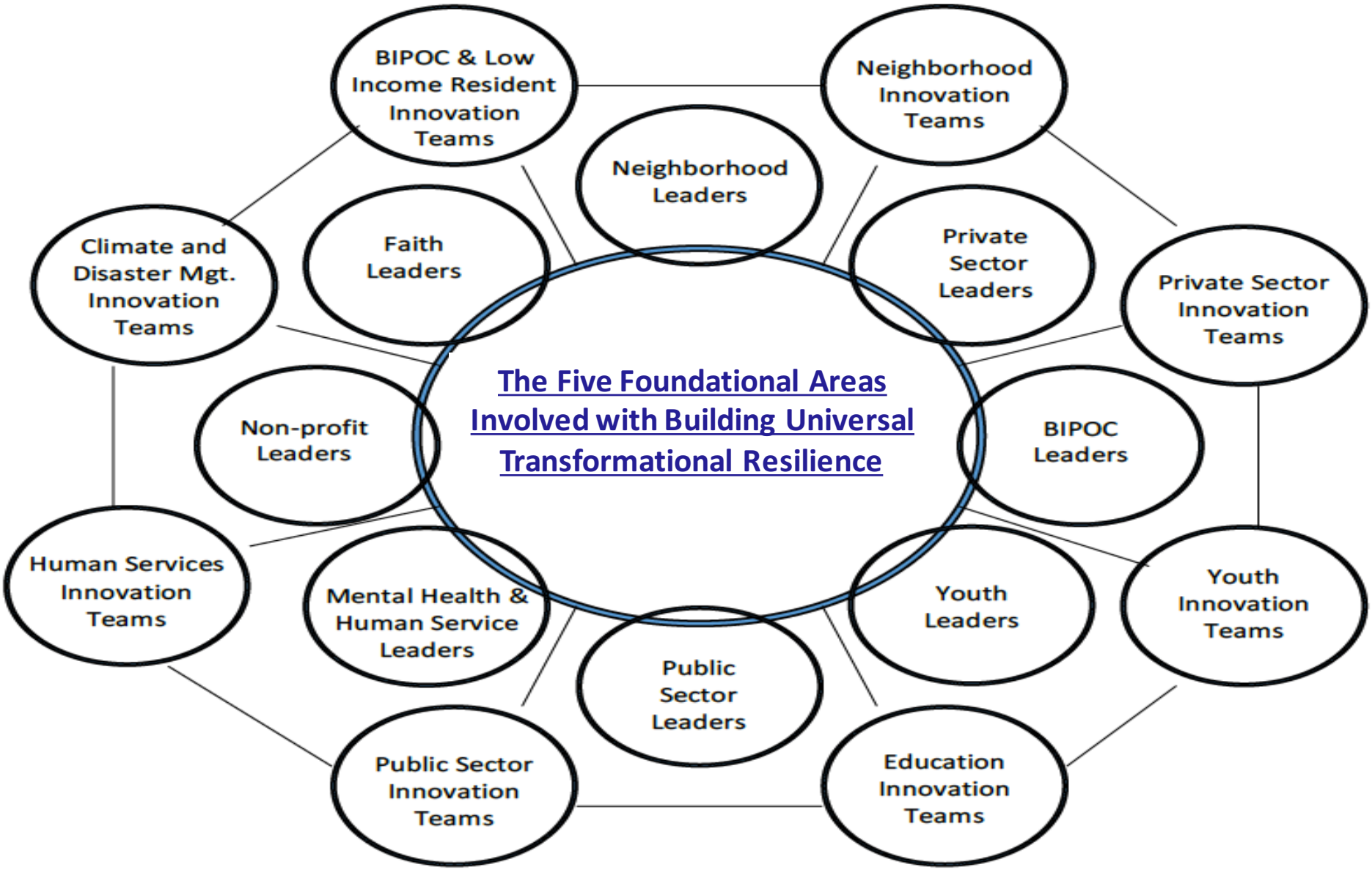


# Help Residents Regularly Engage in Specific Practices that Enhance Mental Wellness and Transformational Resilience



# Establish Ongoing Age and Culturally Appropriate Opportunities for Residents to Heal their Trauma

# Again: the "Social Infrastructure" is Required to Address the 5 Core Focuses: A "Resilience Coordinating Coalition" (RCC)



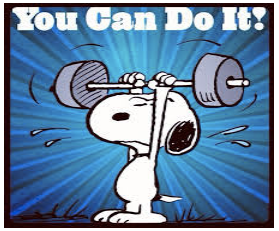
## Just a Few Examples of Resilience Coordination Coalitions (RCCs)

- Community Resilience Initiative, Walla Walla, Washington.
- New Hanover County Resiliency Task Force, North Carolina.
- Putnam County Community Resilience Coalition, New York.
- San Francisco Neighborhood Empowerment Network (the NEN)
- Over 200 associated with MARC: Mobilizing Action for Resilient Communities.

- **Only a few** of these initiatives frame their work as a **public health program**.
- **Each is unique** and **none** address **all five** of the core foundational areas.
- **Only a few** are explicitly focused on the **climate emergency**.

But **if they expand** their focus –and **thousands of new initiatives are launched**, we ***CAN*** build universal capacity for transformational resilience!

# Community-based, Culturally Appropriate, Population-Level Resilience Building Initiatives Will Help Prevent and Heal *MANY* Types of Traumas




## Human-Caused Emergencies and Traumas Such As:

- Community violence
- Economic inequities and poverty
- Substance abuse and addiction
- Adverse childhood experiences (ACEs)
- Racism and other systemic oppressions
- Much more

## Non-Climate Related Environmental Emergencies like:

- Pandemics
- Earthquakes
- Tsunamis

# Mental Health Professionals Can Play Important Roles

**If they have the right mindset, knowledge, and skills:**

- Actively participate in (but not lead) a Resilience Coordinating Coalition (RCC).
- Educate RCC members about individual, community, and societal trauma.
- Train RCC members and residents in age and culturally appropriate Presencing (self-regulation) and Purposing (adversity based growth) resilience skills.
- Help form and oversee peer-to-peer programs where residents teach others about trauma and Presencing (self-regulation) and Purposing (adversity based growth) resilience skills.
- Help form and support healing circles, therapeutic art, nature-based, and other community-based healing programs.
- Connect RCCs with state, national, and international experts, resources, and funding.
- **Most Important**: provide treatment to people who still cannot function, or are at risk of harming themselves or others.

# The ITRC Community of Practice (CoP)

- Will **educate**, **connect**, and **empower** participants to **organize** and **operate community-based initiatives** that use a **public health approach** to enhance the **entire population's** capacity for mental wellness and transformational resilience.

- Will begin on **Tuesday October 18** and meet weekly for 8 weeks (2 hrs per session).

- Will continue **into 2023** with meeting days, times, and frequency determined by participants.

# The ITRC Community of Practice (CoP)

- There is **no cost** to participate in the CoP.
- But participation **requires pre-approval by submitting an online application**.
- To be approved applicants will need to agree to **actively apply what they learn** to **assist an existing community coalition** expand its focus, or **organize a new one** focused on building universal capacity for mental wellness and resilience.
- **CE credits** are available through the American Public Health Association.

# The CoP will Focus On:

- **Principles and practices of a public health approach** to enhancing age and culturally appropriate population-level capacity for mental wellness and transformational resilience for the climate crisis--and other adversities.

- How to **organize**, **staff**, **fund**, **facilitate** and **continually improve** community-based mental wellness and resilience building initiatives

- The **five core foundational areas** that ITRC research has determined must be addressed to enhance universal capacity for mental wellness and resilience for the climate crisis in communities.

- Meetings will include **presentations by experts** and ample time for **group discussions**, **problem solving**, **sharing** and **applications**.

# Takeaways

- **Humanity is in the midst of a civilization-altering mega-emergency** that, left unaddressed, will produce an **unprecedented scale and scope** of **individual, community** and **societal** distresses and traumas.

- A **public health approach** is needed that implements **community-based** age and culturally appropriate initiatives that enhanced **population-level** capacity for mental wellness and transformational resilience for persistent adversities.

- The ITRC CoP will **educate, connect, and support a growing network of leaders** who **work in their community** to enhance universal capacity for mental wellness and transformational resilience.

## Please join us!

**To apply to attend the ITRC Community of Practice (CoP) go to the link on the ITRC website:**

http://www.theresourceinnovationgroup.org/

**And please tell your colleagues about it!**

**This webinar will be repeated on Tuesday September 13!**

# Thank you for attending today's webinar!

**And Many Thanks to the *Campaign for Trauma Informed Policy and Practice* (CTIPP) for Hosting it!**