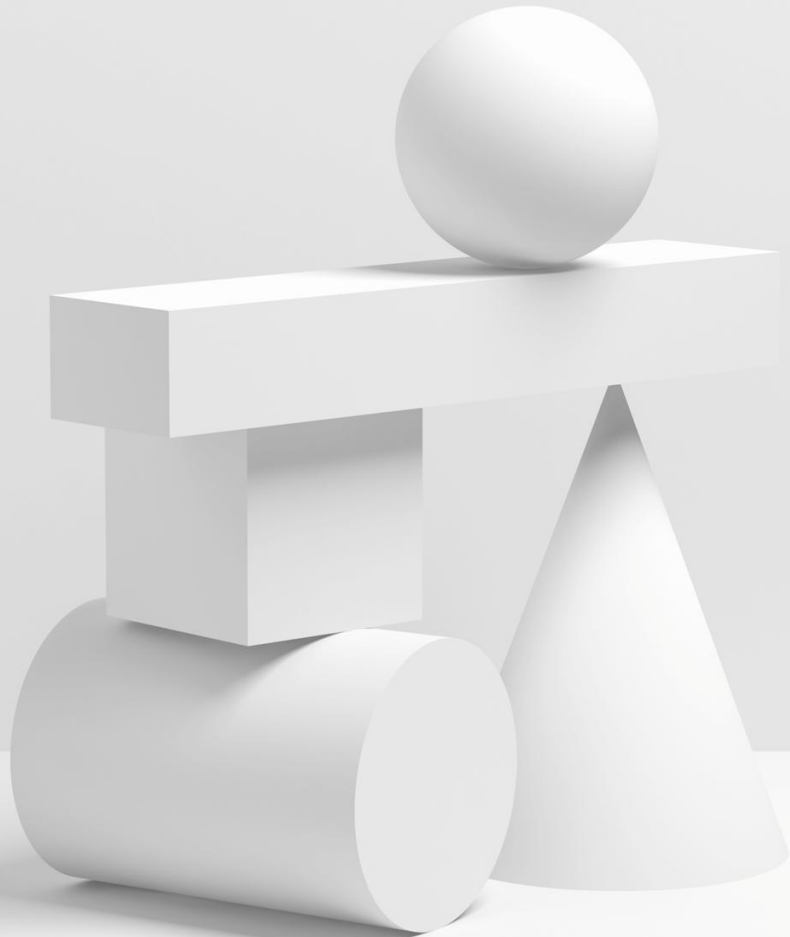




# RECREATING HOPE FOR THIRD CULTURE KIDS

**By Salome Mwangi**

# THIRD CULTURE KIDS?



# Who are TCKs?

**Third Culture Kids (or TCKs)**, a term coined by US sociologist Ruth Hill Useem in the 1950s, for children who spend their formative years in places that are not their parents' homeland.



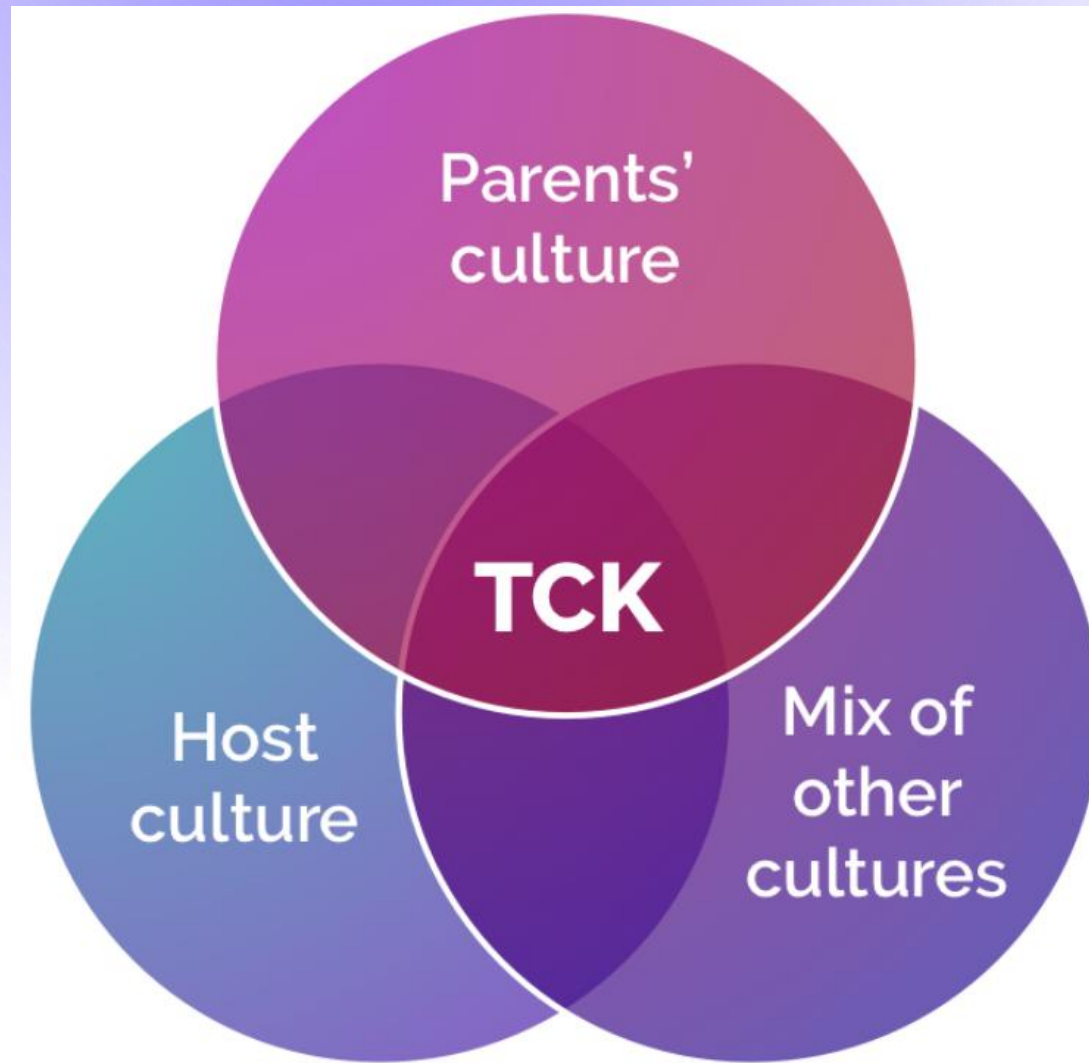
Globalization has made TCKs more common.



Their identity is rooted in people rather than places.



Life as a TCK can create a sense of rootlessness and restlessness, where home is “everywhere and nowhere.”



# ADVERSE CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES (ACES)

## ABUSE



Physical



Emotional



Sexual

## NEGLECT



Physical



Emotional

## HOUSEHOLD DYSFUNCTION



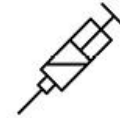
Mental Illness



Incarcerated  
Relative



Mother Treated  
Violently



Substance Abuse

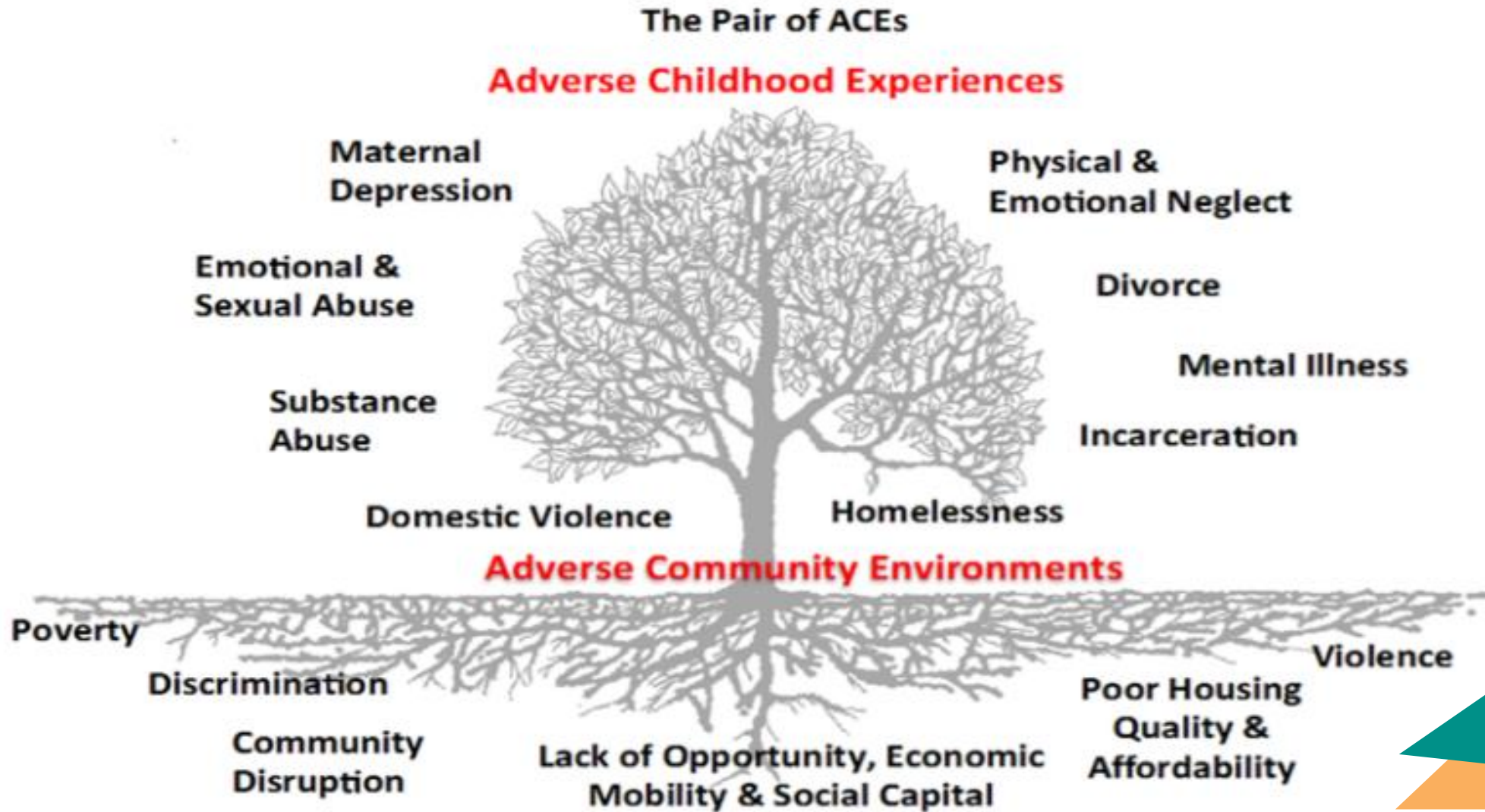


Divorce





# Adverse Community Environments are the root causes of ACEs



Ellis, W., Dietz, W. (2017) A New Framework for Addressing Adverse Childhood and Community Experiences: The Building Community Resilience (BCR) Model. Academic Pediatrics. 17 (2017) pp. S86-S93. DOI information: 10.1016/j.acap.2016.12.011

# LET'S LOOK AT ACES FACED BY MANY REFUGEES AND THEIR FALL OUT

What effect might that have  
on parenting?

- War/conflict: child was exposed to war or conflict
- Shootings, bombs, and riots: child saw or heard people being shot, bombs going off, or street riots
- Displacement: child was forced to flee their home
- Beaten up by soldiers, police, militia, or gangs: child was hurt badly by armed adults, raped
- Family separation: child was separated from their caregiver due to immigration or war

**Table 4** Migration stages in which refugee-relevant ACEs occurred (based on previous research [58–67])

| Refugee relevant forms of ACEs                                    | Stage of migration |        |             |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------|--------|-------------|
|                                                                   | Pre-flight         | Flight | Post-flight |
| <b>War/Conflict</b> 1, 3, 4, 7, 8, 10-14                          |                    |        |             |
| <b>Shootings/bombs &amp; riots</b> 3, 8, 11                       |                    |        |             |
| Destruction of infrastructure                                     |                    |        |             |
| Presence of militant groups                                       |                    |        |             |
| <b>Displacement</b> 1, 10                                         |                    |        |             |
| Deprivation of basic necessities 3, 9, 11                         |                    |        |             |
| <b>Beaten up by police/soldiers/militia etc.</b> 1                |                    |        |             |
| Witnessing/Experiencing violence 1-8, 10-14                       |                    |        |             |
| Kidnapping 8, 10-13                                               |                    |        |             |
| Extortion/exploitation/fraud                                      |                    |        |             |
| Housing insecurity 4, 9, 11                                       |                    |        |             |
| Arrest of the child 6, 12                                         |                    |        |             |
| Assault 1-4, 8, 10-13                                             |                    |        |             |
| Family dysfunction 1-14                                           |                    |        |             |
| Emotional and physical abuse and neglect 1, 3-7                   |                    |        |             |
| Sexual abuse 1-8, 10-14                                           |                    |        |             |
| Parent missing                                                    |                    |        |             |
| Bereavement 1, 4-6, 10-14                                         |                    |        |             |
| Crime/Theft 7, 8, 10, 11, 12, 13                                  |                    |        |             |
| Economic hardship (unemployment, financial difficulties) 3, 9, 11 |                    |        |             |
| Bullying 1-8, 10, 11, 14                                          |                    |        |             |
| Interruption of education                                         |                    |        |             |
| <b>Separation from family</b> 2, 4-6, 9, 11, 13                   |                    |        |             |
| Discrimination 1, 4-6, 8, 10, 11                                  |                    |        |             |
| Immigration detention                                             |                    |        |             |
| Immigration process                                               |                    |        |             |
| Acculturation stress                                              |                    |        |             |

Refugee specific adversity forms identified within this review are accentuated in bold

1. ACE- International Questionnaire (ACE-IQ)
2. Addressing Social Key (ASK) Questions for Health Questionnaire
3. Adverse Childhood Experience Questionnaire-Revised (ACEQ-R)
4. BARC Pediatric Adversity and Trauma Questionnaire
5. Center for Youth Wellness ACE-Questionnaire (CYW ACE-Q Child)
6. Center for Youth Wellness ACE-Questionnaire (CYW ACE-Q Teen)

7. Juvenile Victimization Questionnaire (JVQ)
  8. Lifetime Destabilizing Factor (LDF) Index
  9. Modified UCLA Trauma History Profile
  10. National Surveys of Children's Exposure to Violence (NatSCEV)
  11. Traumatic Events Screening Inventory for Children (TESI-C)
  12. Traumatic Events Screening Inventory for Children (TESI-PRR)
- Yale-Vermont Adverse Childhood Experiences Scale (Y-VACS)

# **BUT WAIT, THERE'S MORE**

Many families who have fled war and persecution manage to create safe environments for their children.

Understanding what vulnerabilities children of parents, who are refugees affected by trauma, are exposed to could help direct preventive efforts to break the cycle of transmission.

# WHAT THE LITERATURE TELLS US

Findings suggest that children with parents from refugee-sending countries have a higher rate of several ACEs compared with the general population.

Many families who have fled war and persecution manage to create safe environments for their children. However, for the most vulnerable families with parents who are refugees affected by trauma, the cohesion and wellbeing of the family can be severely challenged.

The vulnerability experienced by parents who are refugees affected by trauma could increase their children's risk of distressing experiences and have long-lasting implications into adulthood.

In families who are refugees where one or both parents have experienced torture or war, children might be at high risk of experiencing several ACEs. In particular, parents who are refugees affected by trauma and have mental or physical health issues might be less able to provide emotional or material support for their children.

Parental trauma has been linked to harsh parenting style as well as being a risk factor for family-related violence and child abuse.

Increased focus is directed towards the negative effect of postmigration living difficulties, such as economic hardship, in sustaining refugee trauma over time.



PARENTING WITH HIGH ACES

# FAMOUS THIRD CULTURE KIDS



## NOTABLE TCKS

- US President **Barack Obama** born to a Kenyan father and American mother and raised in Indonesia after his mother married an Indonesian.
- **Elon Musk** was born in South Africa, moved to Canada and later became a US citizen. His background helps him as an innovative thinker and the ability to navigate different cultural contexts.
- **Madeleine Albright** was the first woman to hold the US Secretary of State position. She was born in Prague in present day Slovakia and immigrated to the US when she was a teenager. **Madeleine Jana Korbel Albright** - born **Marie Jana Körbelová**
- The late basketball legend **Kobe Bryant** spent part of his childhood in Italy, where his father played professional basketball. This international experience likely influenced his worldview and cultural understanding, contributing to the TCK identity.



Many systems focus on the  
negative

Screening tools, many of which  
codify implicit bias, create a  
presumption of deficit

**HOPE** SHIFTS THE NARRATIVE: PEOPLE  
ARE DEFINED BY THEIR STRENGTHS AS  
WELL AS THEIR CHALLENGES.

**HOPE** CREATES A PRESUMPTION OF  
STRENGTH

# POSITIVE CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES SCALE QUESTIONS

*As a child, how often did you ...*



1. Feel able to talk to your family about feelings
2. Feel your family stood by you during difficult times
3. Enjoy participating in community traditions
4. Feel a sense of belonging in high school
5. Feel supported by friends
6. Have at least two non-parent adults who took genuine interest in you
7. Feel safe and protected by an adult in your home

# WHAT STRENGTHS DO REFUGEE FAMILIES ALREADY HAVE THAT ALIGN WITH HOPE FRAMEWORK?

## Community and Cultural Resilience as PCEs

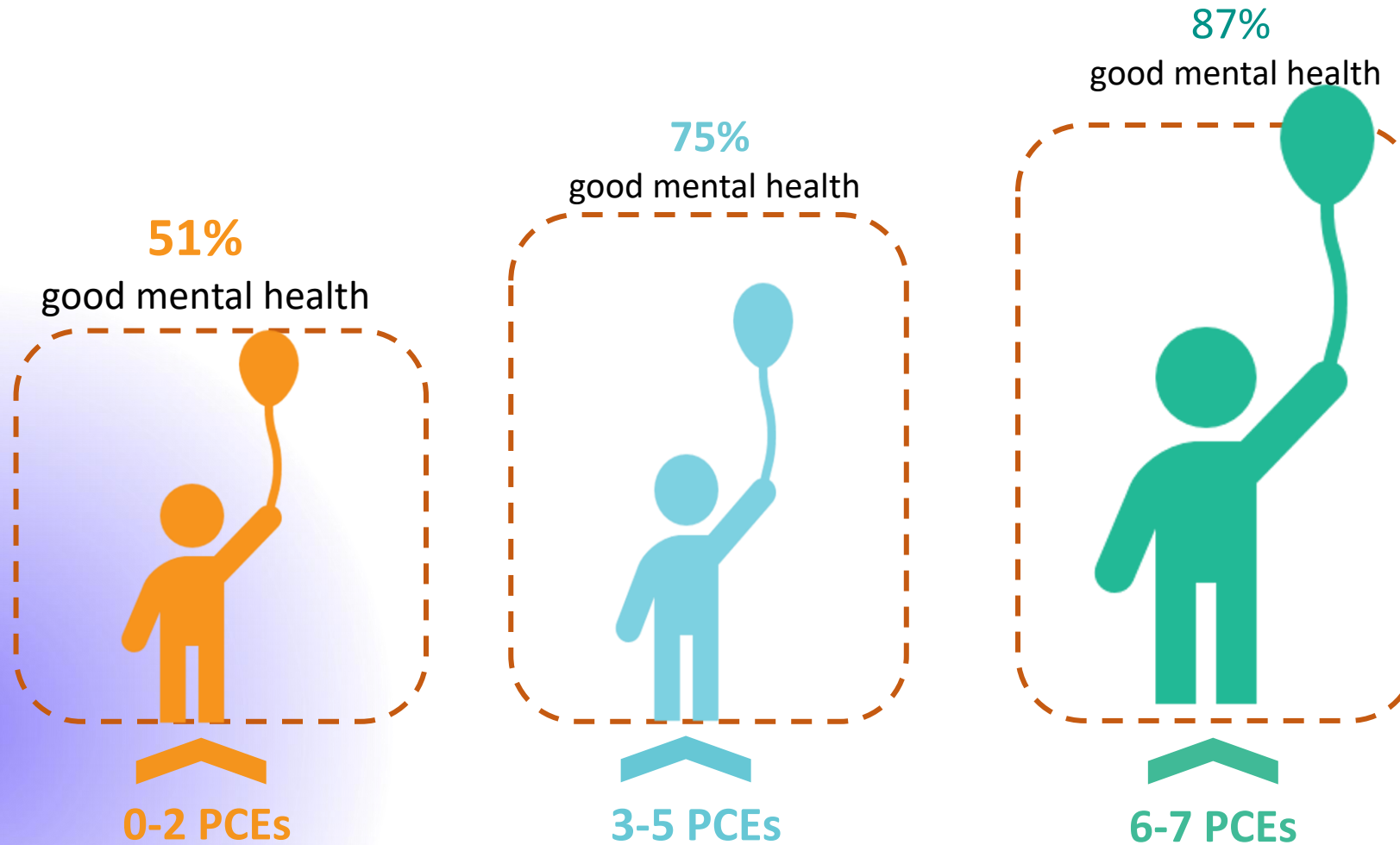
- Studies highlight **strong family bonds**, **cultural identity**, **faith-based involvement**, and **community connectedness** as powerful PCEs in immigrant and refugee populations.
- Example: In Somali and Bhutanese refugee communities, **intergenerational family relationships** and **faith practices** serve as protective factors.

## Supportive relationships build PCEs

- Positive relationships with **teachers**, **mentors**, and **peers** at school have been documented as PCEs that help refugee and immigrant children adjust, particularly in the U.S., Canada, and Europe.
- Programs like **refugee mentoring initiatives**, **culturally responsive trauma-informed classrooms**, and **after-school programs** have been studied for their role in creating PCEs.



# Positive Childhood Experiences (PCEs) Protect Adult Mental Health



*Good mental health – those not reporting depression or poor mental health*



RELATIONSHIPS



ENVIRONMENT



ENGAGEMENT



EMOTIONAL  
GROWTH

# The Four Building Blocks of HOPE





# THE RELATIONSHIPS BUILDING BLOCK



RELATIONSHIPS

Stable nurturing **relationships** with other children and adults through interpersonal activities.

*Sege and Browne. Responding to ACEs with HOPE: Health Outcomes from Positive Experiences. Academic Pediatrics 2017; 17:S79-S85*



# THE ENVIRONMENT BUILDING BLOCK



ENVIRONMENT

Safe, equitable, stable  
environments for living, playing,  
learning at home and in school.

*Sege and Browne. Responding to ACEs with HOPE: Health Outcomes from Positive Experiences. Academic Pediatrics 2017; 17:S79-S85*



# THE ENGAGEMENT BUILDING BLOCK



ENGAGEMENT

Social and civic engagement to develop a sense of belonging and connectedness.

*Sege and Browne. Responding to ACEs with HOPE: Health Outcomes from Positive Experiences. Academic Pediatrics 2017; 17:S79-S85*



# THE EMOTIONAL GROWTH BUILDING



**Emotional growth** through playing and interacting with peers for self-awareness and self regulation.

*Sege and Browne. Responding to ACEs with HOPE: Health Outcomes from Positive Experiences. Academic Pediatrics 2017; 17:S79-S85*





**BUILD THOSE BLOCK  
TOGETHER**

If you want to go quickly, go alone.  
If you want to go far, go together.

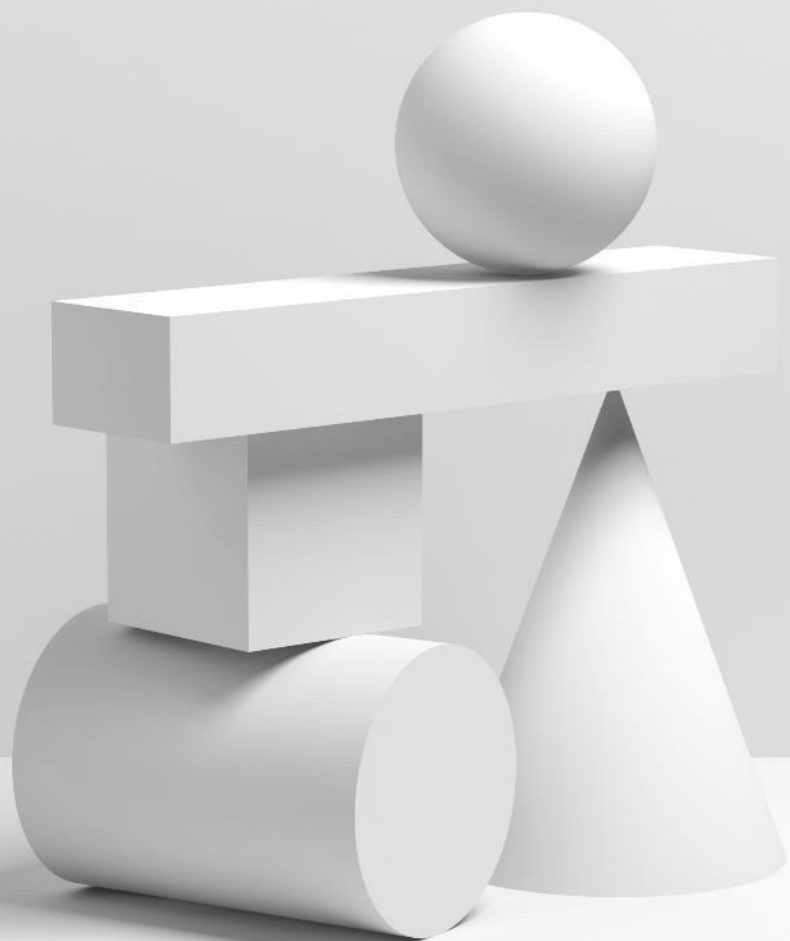
African Proverb



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