**Trauma all c1.mp3**

[01:00:10] So much pain so much pain so much brokenness.

[01:00:15] Dane County juvenile court judge Everett Mitchell says when he first took the bench in 2016 his days would often end in tears. His own tears.

[01:00:26] As I listen to these children and relay stories and letting them talk to me. I realized like there's been nobody in their lives and every adult that's been in their life has caused them more more pain.

[01:00:37] Mitchell presides over cases of children who've been removed from their homes for dangerous circumstances including abuse and neglect and cases where children are charged with the juvenile equivalent of crimes.

[01:00:50] At the onset the traumatized children who experience all sorts of trauma from removal of home abuse neglect. It's not always clear that they're able to get the resources and the help they need to process all that pain. So it starts with emotion outbursts and those emotional outbursts turn into disorder complex.

[01:01:09] Mitchell says he sees a steady progression of the same juveniles catching adult criminal charges. He calls it the child welfare to adult prison pipeline.

[01:01:19] You go to take the handcuffs off.

[01:01:22] On this day the courtroom door opens to a case in point. Bailiffs bring in a boy held in the juvenile detention center who looks much younger than his 16 years. The judge orders the boy's handcuffs removed. It's an effort he says to try to change what it's like to be a child in the system.

[01:01:42] We know these children are traumatized. We knew that they were in pain. It made no sense to indiscriminately bring them into court into the courtroom in handcuffs. There. Are. Many today.

[01:01:56] Think long before he appeared in this courtroom. The boy lived a life of relentless adverse childhood experiences in the child welfare system since the age of five. First as a victim of 23 reports of physical abuse neglect sexual abuse. Living in institutions since he was nine. Group homes foster homes treatment centers juvenile prison. More than 30 placements. I don't have anybody. He told a social worker. A court transcript reads at the age of 10 years old he could not understand why his mother would not want to see him. It says while living in a foster home the boy's mother told him she was coming to visit. Testimony showed he walked around for two days with his backpack looking out and watching for his mother to come and visit with him. But she never showed up. And now he is before a judge with his own public defender sitting next to him in court.

[01:02:56] I don't think anybody entered the world predisposed to sell drugs or steal cars necessarily in the nature versus nurture debate. How did that 12 year old who may or may not even be able to touch the ground with his feet. How did they end up in that chair. Because as children become teenagers criminal charges can amass as in this case.

[01:03:18] State Representative Evan Gorky plainly connects trauma to incarceration. In fact state statistics show 98 percent of incarcerated youth have multiple aces.

[01:03:30] The vast majority of juveniles that are in custody tonight had some kind of child welfare intervention when they were younger likely where that trauma was experienced.

[01:03:40] For his part Mitchell sends children to the state juvenile correctional facilities sparingly. In fact the judge ordered the boy before him here removed from Lincoln Hills when the teenager wrote to him complaining about being repeatedly jumped and beaten at the prison because you know he's just getting beat up too bad. I brought him here the first time. And nobody showed up from his family to take custody of home. And yet what to do in the face of continued criminal and risky behavior like the alleged behavior of the 16 year old before Judge Mitchell. This police pursuit video shows a chase and crash on a Madison highway in February of 2018 according to prosecutors. The teen before Judge Mitchell was the driver of the stolen car involved.

[01:04:30] As a result prosecutors in court that day told the judge they deemed the juvenile a danger to public safety I think that the safety of the community should be of paramount consideration here and that at this point we have enough of a track record just in the recent months that at the time we have released them we have had new victims. We've had new crimes.

[01:04:55] There are a lot of juveniles that have been incarcerated at substandard facilities and we see the evidence through the high recidivism rate. We see that that program doesn't work by the fact that they continue to engage in criminal and risky behavior. If this facility was working that number would be lower.

[01:05:11] There is conflict between acknowledging a person's traumatized background and holding them accountable for their actions especially when those actions can be crimes. Mental health police officer Andrew Muir confronts deep trauma in the communities he serves.

[01:05:29] We see horrible things. We see horrible abuse. We see horrible neglect.

[01:05:37] We encounter some kids with really profound traumas and such an early age that it impacts brain development let alone their relationship with with almost anyone. The catch 22 if you will for law enforcement and being trauma informed is that there's there's only a certain extent to which we can compensate for that based on.

[01:06:00] Sort of our very nature and what we exist for. That being to protect and serve public safety.

[01:06:10] Prosecutors in juvenile court lamented that every time the boy before Judge Mitchell was released he committed new crimes. One new crime landed the 16 year old in court again this time in adult court on serious felony charges and facing up to 65 years in prison. The pipeline. This is to me like the worst chips case ever. You know because he's alone. And. And now is he alone now now he's alone facing adult. Consequences.

[01:06:46] For some of the choices that he got involved in with some of his friends. He falls into this unique place where. I don't take all of his needs have been taken care of and I know all of his treatment these have not been addressed and there's not enough apologies that one could give to say I'm sorry for what your mother didn't show up or how your father didn't show up how family didn't show up or the Times in which you abused in these places.

[01:07:16] Even as he presides from the bench. Mitchell relates to the children of trauma who come before him.

[01:07:23] Part of my patience for these children is you know that was me. Every last one of them you know I grew up you know you know protecting my sister from an abuser for 12 years. I grew up being abused myself sexually and I know what it's like to be locked inside of yourself and so gone and so confused and so angry.

[01:07:46] And so I tell the kids all the time I'm not your judge. I'm not here to judge you. I'm here to show you that I'm your reflection. Whatever you see in me you can be the exact same thing. Because somebody is smarter than I was. You're a survivor. You have power that you just have not even began to tap into. So if you think I'm special then remember that I'm just your reflection.

[01:08:10] If we could go back in time maybe and kind of start when these kids were younger and use that model of not what's wrong with you but what's happened to you if that would have been the mantra of when these my clients now were 12 and 13 were 4 and 5. I don't think we'd be where we are right now.

[01:08:50] My mom side a lot in her life with a lot of drug abuse. I think I started kind of falling apart a little bit trying to find some connection.

[01:09:01] Raina Saldana says she tells her personal story so people can understand what happens because of trauma. I was actually abused when I was younger before I was adopted and then again after I was adopted.

[01:09:16] The prevalence sort of the occurrence of kids who experience overwhelming unsupported stress is far greater than all of us would want to appreciate.

[01:09:27] A child who's been traumatized may have that kind of fight flight or freeze response. So the the fight or aggressive external behaviors so they may be impulsive in class they may act out they may approach others and be physical it may be outbursts. That's kind of externalizing some of those kids can have the flight where they withdraw.

[01:09:55] Shut down. Was of the biggest areas shut down and locked and I was wall that I built. Was. An aggressive one.

[01:10:06] I would go into a room that was empty and I pretty much just demolished things. I have people that would block the door they corner me. Are they trying to not leave and then I would have an outburst and they be like you're hurting people your your door saying things.

[01:10:20] Today Raina finds healing in writing and caring for horses. As a child she describes feeling confused and alone.

[01:10:30] That would try to do something God like and then it would just all come crashing down as soon as I have one outburst.

[01:10:36] You know I always thought people withDr. Lin sheets is director of Child Abuse Programs at Children's Hospital of Wisconsin. She says in addition to flight or fight which Raina exhibited there's another typical response to trauma.

[01:10:51] And then you have this freeze that might be hard to recognize because it's sometimes it's somebody who's dissociating basically they're no longer with you as far as they may be looking at you but not really responding.

[01:11:08] When I was 14 I was bad. I get flashbacks nightmares. I would space out I'd sit in class and four hours later I'd still be in the same seat like oh supposed to go to lunch like I guess that didn't happen.

[01:11:21] Experts in trauma say these kinds of behaviors often result from what are called adverse childhood experiences or ACEs for short. Their specific childhood traumas now recognized as resulting in toxic stress that damages the brain.

[01:11:38] There are physical impacts. There are neuro physiological impacts. There are social and emotional impacts that are produced.

[01:11:45] Tim Grove is chief clinical officer atSt. A child welfare agency in Milwaukee. He says physical and psychological impacts are worse. The more ACS a person has experienced 10 such adverse experiences are measured to result in a score ranging from low to high. Nearly half of children in Wisconsin have at least one ace more than 10 percent have experienced more than three. Alicia Fox reports and a score of nine.

[01:12:18] So when I was four to 14 I got sexually abused and raped by my father for 10 years and then after that I was diagnosed with severe PTSD. And in and out of mental hospitals and suicidal at times.

[01:12:31] Professionals say she describes her experiences with a flattened affect of a survivor. I really like that.

[01:12:37] We see kids who have PTSD outcomes or trauma outcomes that are similar to what that's experience after three tours of duty.

[01:12:46] The impacts of even extreme neglect can be seen on brain scans.

[01:12:51] What we have here is a normal child here on the left and a child here on the right who has experienced extreme neglect. And so what you can see here is the obvious is that head is much smaller.

[01:13:05] And the reason why is that it's just the brain itself is smaller abuse that results in the fear response causes additional harm.

[01:13:16] Your brain then is constantly dispersing cortisol all the time which it's meant to do that for short periods of time. But if it's constant it impacts the brain.

[01:13:27] While Packer County Health and Human Services Director Chuck Price doesn't see the effects on a CAT scan.

[01:13:34] But in the struggles he sees within families your neural pathways get set on certain ways and if you've been raised in an environment of of a lot of trauma or adversities or it's consistent and constant you're you're going to be set up more in survival mode you know where everything is fight or flight. And how do I how do I protect myself and the brain sets up the pathways like that.

[01:13:59] I used to be like a bad kid but that's only because I feel like that's because how I've been treated. I've never been treated with love or been taught what's right. I never been. I never had like the mother and father that I should have. Tammy Fry has her own high a score and has worked through her teenage years to control her angry outbursts. She had so much trauma with her mom dying and then her being sexually abused by her father and then being adopted. By biological and. My mom passed away in a car accident when asked during the half and then I lived with my dad and my dad. He was abusive to my aunt took me in. She said that she couldn't handle me when she locked me in my room. As like like she treated me basically like an animal. And then after that she said she couldn't handle me and put me into foster care.

[01:15:01] Like many children of trauma. Tammy ended up in the system the child welfare system and then the juvenile justice system.

[01:15:08] She is guided by her attorney Eileen Fredericks.

[01:15:12] You see this with a lot of kids is like they kind of give up like where they just feel like I'm going to test everybody to see if everybody is gonna give up on me. And then the testing does lead to everybody giving up because it's very difficult like they're showing.

[01:15:28] For her part Rayna Saldana says she could tell people around her had all but given up only adding to her pain and isolation.

[01:15:37] I always thought people always saw the bad before they saw the guys like I can never do anything right. So as a kid. I guess I felt really trapped you know. Like where. Like who could understand that you know there wasn't really anybody you know.

[01:15:52] So isolation and sadness and anger often not cured by being removed from home in foster homes.

[01:16:01] They just put you in there with anybody. They don't care. So like if you got. Anger issues or depression anxiety. Or any other thing like that put you in there with somebody else. Because I've always got into fights so that's why I've been bounced around.

[01:16:37] Most foster parents are really good and they're really loving and they want to open their home and their family. But you have those moments where it's hard for you to receive that kind of love and support because you think OK your entire life is mostly filled with the abandonment and the rejection I mean I often ask people think about how you would feel as an adult if I walked into your home and said You have to come with me.

[01:17:00] I can't tell you very much about where we're going. I don't know when you're going to see your mom and dad again. You're gonna leave your school you're going to leave your friends you're gonna leave your family and I don't know when you're going to see them again. Age one I was removed from my mom and her significant other.

[01:17:18] Trauma so prevalent and so highly prevalent in foster youth. Because that's usually why they enter into foster care.

[01:17:27] One of the hard parts about being in foster care is often kids move to three four or five times.

[01:17:33] These kids are being held hostage in the system when they might be able to find a permanent home. They give them that permanency.

[01:17:41] State representative Pat Snyder worked on 11 legislative foster care bills signed into law in 2018 including provisions increasing incentive funding to retain foster homes and encourage permanent homes. He says the need is high for more placements. UW Whitewater social work major Tina Zappa formerly advocates for such bills in her leadership role in the statewide youth advisory council made up of current and former foster care children. She says after entering foster care at age 1 she moved repeatedly between her biological family and foster homes including emergency placements due to abuse and neglect.

[01:18:27] That area have places that they knew where they were going to put me in their eyes. There's I really struggle with shortage of foster home placements.

[01:18:34] The problem of having enough placements increasingly plagues those responsible for making that decision. What do you think you're working on that's going right like Dane County juvenile court judge Shelley Gaylord presiding this day during a hearing concerning a child in a residential care center. Gaylord says she likes to accentuate the positive and give children the first chance to speak.

[01:19:00] We've heard from many children who've come through the system as foster home placements. Talk often about how they feel like they don't get a chance to talk and when they do they feel like nobody hears them. The girl in court appears by telephone updating the judge about how she's working through her trauma that resulted from extreme abuse at home. I think we're all in agreement that the types of trauma that kids are enduring and repeated trauma that they're enduring is just seems to be more severe and more long lasting. The reason this was a phone hearing is because the child was at a treatment center that's out-of-state.

[01:19:50] 400 miles from Wisconsin.

[01:19:53] I think people would be concerned if they knew that. Right now our options are so limited that we're sending kids out of state. We used to have a lot more options for kids. And I feel like they have just over the past nine years I've been here just gotten worse and worse in terms of foster homes group homes treatment centers all of them those options have kind of gone away.

[01:20:15] In 2018 Wisconsin placed upwards of 50 juveniles in out of state mental health residential care facilities across the country because the children have such high treatment needs they can't be maintained in their own community with existing services. When you have higher needs and fewer resources that's a perfect storm. Another Dane County child placed out of state talked with us about being so far from family at a treatment center in Arkansas. Her parents did not want to show her identity.

[01:20:48] I want to go home. I really do.

[01:20:50] This 14 year old Wisconsin girl was being treated at Mill Creek behavioral health care in a small town an hour south of Little Rock. Do you know why you had to be sent here instead of staying there.

[01:21:04] Because no other facilities would accept me and most council the thing that was really bothering me and I thought the reason I think I was most happy to have you come and shine a light on this is this idea that we're things have gotten to a point where we're sending kids hundreds of miles away from whatever supports they have which are not great but they're still the most important supports in that kid's life. And the idea that we're sending them 500 900 miles away was just unconscionable to me. Hundreds of miles from home the girl in Arkansas and the girl appearing by telephone in court where her biological parents had their say after the father continues to object to her being placed staved off.

[01:21:53] Her family but it was due to extreme abuse by her family that authorities were forced to remove the child from her home. The child's artwork fills the walls of her attorney who helped guide her care. What happened to her resulted in the need for high level mental health care in a secured setting not available in Wisconsin.

[01:22:16] Judge Gaylord calmly presides over tense interactions. Hearing from the child's mother also by phone.

[01:22:23] And this is going to be slow when there's a history of this kind of treatment frankly by you and by others.

[01:22:32] No ma'am ma'am it's my it's my turn to talk.

[01:22:34] But you have not have a plan. She does not have that check.

[01:22:39] The process is often fraught. Gaylord concluded the hearing encouraging the girl on the phone to keep up the hard work of dealing with her trauma and left her with these words.

[01:22:51] Things that happen to you are not your fault.

[01:22:54] Things that the teenager we visited in Arkansas said the intensive treatment there helped her.

[01:22:59] But she was conflicted about sending other children like her out of state if it's going to help and then go for it. But I would love to see every kid in Wisconsin just stay there just stay at home.

[01:23:14] Sending children out of state is a last resort. But even in the home community the kinds of transitions children in foster care can experience layers trauma on top of trauma.

[01:23:25] According to those who've lived it just the uncertainty of knowing where your next battle is gonna be who is going to be your family next and who you can really chosen who's being there and being real for you. It's very confusing and unsettling for a child.

[01:23:40] Foster youth advocates like Tina Zappa are giving back. Hopeful for a new generation hopeful because of an emerging awareness of the impacts of trauma and new responses to it. She offers this advice to children who've experienced the trauma of abuse or neglect of repeated placements of being in the system.

[01:24:00] You didn't choose it and it was someone else's choice and control. And that doesn't make you like wrong or damaged or someone that can't be loved. And that's really an eye opening important part in the healing of any trauma that someone goes through because that's definitely a thought that occurs very frequently is What is wrong with me.

[01:24:21] These kids already are going through pride neglect and abuse at home. So there's a couple of aces traumas. Now suddenly they're removed from the home they know and then put into another home. And we're finding that the trauma builds up and continues.

[01:24:54] I think if people knew Wojtyla from care I don't think I would have gone through as much trauma informed care is about a culture change.

[01:25:02] It's about shifting the way we understand behavior and how we respond to it and understanding of traumas impact on physical and mental health.

[01:25:11] First emerged more than 20 years ago trauma informed care has emerged in the decades since. In response to that understanding.

[01:25:20] How do we start you know asking every single time we're working with families that question that the trauma form question of switching the lens from you know what. What's wrong with you. To what happened to.

[01:25:32] This so-called switching the lens results in a perspective shift allowing teachers or caregivers to recognize why a child might be acting out or shutting down shifts.

[01:25:45] What becomes hard is when the behaviors push people away or turn people off.

[01:25:51] Tammy Fry says after her mother died and she was removed from her father's care because of abuse her anger would erupt. I got charged with battery and then I spent most of my years in detention. One of the big shifts in perspective is being able to see the behavior as a communication. Communication as the expression of trauma. But with trauma informed care The point is to stop blaming and shaming people for behavior.

[01:26:25] We know that one of the hallmark symptoms of kids trying to sort of work their way through that overwhelming stress for some of them is to stare blankly at the chalkboard.

[01:26:35] Alicia Fox was diagnosed with PTSD after 10 years of being sexually abused by her father.

[01:26:43] I would space out I'd sit in class and four hours later it's still be in the same seat like oh and the teachers approach is critical if I approach her and I say hey and maybe startle her further by banging on the table. I'm actually potentially going to make it worse if I'm more careful and informed about how I approach her I might actually help her relax and settle down and make it better.

[01:27:09] But what we know about many of these kids is they have had to adapt to the stress in their life by in many ways shutting down when it comes to relationships because relationships have been the hardship and they have caused the danger and the lack of safety.

[01:27:27] I built this wall where it was like I'm really on edge. I knew that it was only me.

[01:27:33] Raina Saldana was removed from her home because of abuse and placed in a succession of facilities. But when she was 12 years old she says a writing mentor made a critical connection.

[01:27:46] I didn't leave anybody until I met her. I've had so many people tell me that I'm wrong and that it's not ok to feel this way. It's not okay to do these things. It's not you know but it's not intentional. It's like I'm trying to have you know. And she let me know that like everything is about me that she loves that I do that I just had to understand myself.

[01:28:06] Trauma informed care experts say safe and trusted human connections are the key to healing and behavior change. We know it's the relational dance with other people that is going to build their neural capacity to have stronger relationships.

[01:28:24] One of the kind of insidious and lesser known impacts of kids who experienced trauma is often it's their source of identity their families that are that are hurting them. How do you make sense of that.

[01:28:38] Those just cannot survive until I got older and you become more knowledgeable about relationships and things like that. And then I finally was like well this doesn't seem right.

[01:28:48] The trauma informed care model helps survivors build trust and new relationships. It emphasizes physical psychological and emotional safety. With enough grown men and women who help you.

[01:29:01] Who provide safety who provide regulation or relaxation. Eventually you can at least establish a competing truth and then you've at least got a fighting chance.

[01:29:13] That fighting chance comes from developing resilience that's the ability to overcome adversities. Research shows the number one factor for children who develop resilience is having at least one stable and committed relationship with a caring adult.

[01:29:31] Once you make connections like that you're strong enough to tell your story and you deserve a better life than what you're living right now.

[01:29:38] Resilience also comes from learning how to self regulate especially when overcome by anger.

[01:29:45] As soon as I start to feel an emotion like that and then process it away from people and collect myself helps me be able to go back and then approach the situation at a different angle.

[01:29:56] Caring adults can show children how to regain the calm within themselves.

[01:30:01] One of the main things that we can do for kids and families in these situations is allow ourselves to be at peace and balanced during our interactions. The idea that the possibility of another alternative exists is the beginning prospect of hope and we see those stories all the time.

[01:30:24] Kids Families adults even now a growing number of communities who are feeling the effects of saying huh. There's a whole new truth. There is a whole new possibility maybe all humans don't hurt. Maybe I can relax and take some relational risk. Maybe I can feel safe. That really is the essence of what the outcome of trauma informed care is all about. That's really about taking on that whole philosophy and really embedding that.

[01:31:09] Child welfare agencies courts schools and workplaces across Wisconsin are starting to take on the philosophy of trauma informed care. It first began with write the number one goal that we're not going to place any children with a stranger.

[01:31:27] Chuck Price is director of what Parker County's Health and Human Services Department.

[01:31:32] We've seen a pretty significant reduction in the amount of placements that we're doing outside of the parental home. And so when we're talking about foster care or foster care numbers have been down. When we talk about deeper and residential care we've seen significant drops in those types of placements. Price credits his agency's new model. My first the whole thing with trauma informed care was about how we're gonna treat the folks coming through the front door better than they've ever been served. And with a whole different understanding of traumas and adversities that they're bringing and not to further traumatize folks.

[01:32:13] Prices Human Services staff describes how they work under this new model.

[01:32:18] I think of how many families would say don't take my kids away the first time I met them I said Well I don't even know you. I don't even know who your family is. That's why I'm here today to figure out who you guys are what you do.

[01:32:35] So we're entering homes not giving off judgment really wanting to welcome them into into our role are our services. Building that trust with them as far as just taking time figuring out what it is that they could use help with you're not shaming or blaming them obviously. I don't think anybody wakes up in the morning and says I want to hurt my child. And so really identifying that we know that they love they love their kids and that they just need help in this situation and trying to find a way to partner with them.

[01:33:11] Is the safety issue President the home most of the time or is this something that happened once. Because you know dad lost his cool. And now how can we get it to support him in the home. So that next time when this comes up he's not responding in that way.

[01:33:27] Director Pryce first learned of trauma informed care when former first lady Tony at Walker was touring the state promoting her fostering futures platform.

[01:33:41] It's talking about what happened to someone and really moving on from that point not staying there in dwelling on that but really saying you know what. We know that you can. We can teach resiliency. We can change the way that you act that we can change your behavior and moving forward. And so for us it's a philosophy change.

[01:34:05] And given her position Walker was able to get trauma informed principles incorporated into seven state agencies.

[01:34:13] I know that people across the country are calling us and they're asking us how we're doing this. We are getting attention internationally. We have a voice that is saying this is important and we. Definitely within our governmental structures. This is unheard of for a cabinet to be told they're going to implement this paradigm shift because it can change the outcomes for everyone. That is not happening anywhere else in the country.

[01:34:46] We brought the three branch of government together. We had judges and legislators together Republicans Democrats. We never even asked if we were Republican or Democrat. It doesn't matter.

[01:34:58] What Pasco County found it's human services agency was able to save costs by not placing children in expensive residential treatment centers and instead put more resources into prevention. The shift allowed for more staff less turnover and more creative solutions like hiring in-home parenting aides to help families learn and heal all in efforts to keep families together because experts acknowledge repeated out-of-home placements result in their own new trauma.

[01:35:29] And I think that's the hard thing about trying I think a lot of people here a lot of people say you know just get over it or just go through it or just get done with it. That is not the way it is.

[01:35:37] Trauma sits with this woman cares for a boy while Packer county placed with her after removing him from his own home. She's a relative so he's not with his parents but he's also not with strangers in foster care.

[01:35:50] It became very evident that they understand trauma they understand how to help people with trauma they understand how to come into a home and be respectful of every player and in the situation. No judgment was ever felt.

[01:36:21] Every morning Superintendent of the Menominee Indian school district when the walkout greets grade school students at the front doors.

[01:36:30] Why can't our kids before they even walk into the classroom. Why can't they be greeted by caring adults.

[01:36:44] A social worker and trauma coach also man the buzzer rivals.

[01:36:48] We're both on our buses at the end of the day too and the kids come out and we're all you know have a good night. We'll see you tomorrow. Just to remind them that we'll be here tomorrow and we welcome them back again.

[01:36:59] The school works in many of what they call positive touches that happened before the students even open a book.

[01:37:09] Early Hawthorn meet. Hello. Early.

[01:37:13] Identity that may have been stripped through the generations is reinforced. I teach Menominee language and culture.

[01:37:21] And I'd like to introduce myself in my native language. Margaret snowing ask. We see him on a witness and. My English name is Margaret snow.

[01:37:32] Reinforced to help heal from historical trauma where abuse and neglect can trace back hundreds of years. One term I heard from a from an elder was you know basically what happened to us is we got an ethnic cleansing. We were told we were no longer.

[01:37:52] My nominees. And today we addressed that by going back. And honoring our our ancestors who endured all of that. That pain and suffering that. Allowed us to be here today. Take the example of kids who were taken removed from their homes. And then placed in boarding schools. Well essentially what happened was you took away the parent's right to parent. They were learning their language their culture and their identity. And you took that away from. This was passed on through generations.

[01:38:31] When you live in this community and you work in this community I think that we don't realize how deep the trauma can be for some of our students. But when it comes down to it our community is really broken.

[01:38:44] There is like a cycle that goes on drinking and drugs and alcoholism and it repeats itself a lot in like it affects the kids growing up because you have to deal with it. The school helps us get in trouble. They won't. Yell at you or tell you the question you and let you talk to them and they want to know how you feel. Wendell Walker went to these schools and later returned as superintendent.

[01:39:14] I am I am from the Menominee Nation proud.

[01:39:19] Ten years ago walkouts set out to address factors like adverse childhood experiences that he believes result in his district having some of the lowest student achievement rankings in the state.

[01:39:32] He says tribal leaders embrace the concept of healing and resiliency in partnership with the state initiative. Walker says it's a community public health effort not just eight to three. During the school day but in the schools the work is deliberate and encompassing reaching from the high school.

[01:39:50] If they're five minutes late or a half an hour late it's still high. I'm glad you're here not you're late. Where were you. Why didn't you show up on time and I check in with them. How is your day going so far. How was last night. What are you going to work on today to the grade school.

[01:40:06] Last week we were doing our state testing and one came in and out of the ordinary he had his hood on and he sat and I could tell there was something wrong. I knew from all that training that we had that we weren't going to get any results from this test that we needed. So I had him pause that night took him out took him for a walk and talked about what the problem was got him something to eat. That's pretty much all he needed was just some time to say it's OK. Whatever happened this morning it's done it's I here at school. In this fifth grade classroom students arrive to calming music and dimmed lights.

[01:40:49] In time they're asked to check in. This means they register how they're feeling that morning by marking on a computer whether they're in the front seat of a car and ready to go or in the trunk. Feeling bad and not ready to learn.

[01:41:04] It also lets me know that OK I can't push this child so hard today. There's something why not in his or her life that I need to be more understanding of what's happening with them today. In the younger grades the children put a stick and a colored pot green for good yellow for not so good and red for feeling bad.

[01:41:34] The teacher immediately responds asking about the student's family. The child says she's hungry so it's snacks all around. The classrooms have safe zones and calm down boxes and children can go to them at any time.

[01:41:51] We're finding out that kids from trauma when they come into schools they have walls up because they have trust issues sometimes and so we need to build those relationships first before any learning can take place.

[01:42:05] Ryan Coffey is the trauma coach on staff in the grade school. His office is always open for children who need more help understanding their feelings. It's called the Peace Room.

[01:42:22] It's part of the coping process. They need to know what it is inside and how. Or what the best strategy is to deal with those feelings. I mean we want them to know that no feeling that they ever have is bad feelings are good and they're there for a reason. I go to the student health center every Wednesday to talk to somebody.

[01:42:45] For students in all grades who need additional help the health center is right on school district grounds staffed by behavioral health professionals. The schools also provide dental care because walkout says it's hard to concentrate on school when you're in pain whether from trauma or a sore tooth.

[01:43:05] Our promise was that we would engage the community in a process that could build it could help heal a lot of our our social and health determinants that impact so many so many things education being one of them.

[01:43:21] He says the district has moved beyond trauma informed to trauma responsive and it's working. We have put resources into key grade levels particularly ninth grade where now instead of graduating 60 percent of our kids on time. Were at 90 percent but slowing down calming down talking who can do that and still teach you know people say well you don't have enough time. Well yeah but that's all we have and now the Menominee Indian School District has brought its trauma responsiveness into its preschools.

[01:44:00] Well we're not done because we need to get into the pediatrician's office. But more importantly if this is really going to work we've got to get this into the homes because those are where the teachers are.

[01:44:13] We understand so much more about trauma and its impact on our families and behavior of our families in the state's largest city.

[01:44:24] Trauma informed care starts with baby's first breath.

[01:44:28] You say to yourself Well there's something out we have to do something else.

[01:44:31] There's another way at getting at these root causes these Milwaukee County judges are getting at root causes and starting early. They preside over a healthy infant court the first in Wisconsin. Babies are the largest population of those that are removed from parents in our system both locally statewide and nationally and mostly for neglect. I came home now. At.

[01:45:02] Twenty three. I was 23 when I lost my kids.

[01:45:09] I couldn't believe that was me. I was my mother all over.

[01:45:13] Joni Hsia a former drug user lost five children to child welfare authorities including an infant who is now 3. She was the first graduate of the healthy infant court. Her children are back at home with her but by her telling. Going through the court process to regain custody was not easy.

[01:45:32] Even when I was referred there it still wasn't mentally hitting me. I'd always be the person sitting in the back of my head and just sitting there like crying every time I thought of it as as his cry.

[01:45:49] It was the point of my life where I had to start trusting somebody that reality of knowing that I have to start trust and I have to start believing in something. And Katie was the person I walked through the door.

[01:46:02] The judges are equipped with expert training to learn about infant mental health and signs of toxic stress in babies.

[01:46:11] A child who might cry incessantly for hours and hours and a parent not being able to comfort them or a child who you would think is going to cry when they're hungry but just sort of the sullen glassy look to them Joanie's shoes babies showed such signs of stress and she didn't know how to feed him without a struggle.

[01:46:34] Joni she admits she didn't have a good model in her own mother and there was trauma going back.

[01:46:41] My mom was a drug addict.

[01:46:44] See. Get married to an abusive guy. Which was my step dad still is my dad.

[01:46:51] It's not just who that parents who that child are. It goes back to how you were parents. So what we find so often is. There's there's ghosts in the nursery. That's what into mental health is all about. There's ghosts in the nurseries. When a mother who has been impacted by years and years of toxic toxic stress whether that mother was a child welfare child herself or was abused or neglected or sexually assaulted they don't create those procedural memories that we might have from watching our mothers breastfeed comfort a child you know watch for babies cuz they have no really good procedural memories how to do that so we're actually creating new procedural memories by helping them work with the infant mental health specialist to learn how to parent.

[01:47:46] I say like my answer below what I was doing. Katie you say you actually start looking at me alive.

[01:47:54] It's amazing when you actually see the connection when there is a strong and healthy bond between mother and child and father and child. And then the child when they are secure and healthy also develop the ability to exercise some self-regulation.

[01:48:15] This connection and newly patterned parenting skills allowed junior show to bring her children home.

[01:48:22] We knew that we could protect the brain development of those children so that they would have a better chance of not being pulled deeper into the system.

[01:48:33] Johnny shore says after successfully learning how to parent all her children are doing well they're happy that's all that matters. Yeah they're happy. Her bond with her once fussy baby is clear.

[01:48:50] Oh he is just lovely. I love you. I love you.

[01:48:56] And so all across Wisconsin a growing culture change toward positive futures for generations to come.

[01:49:21] She came to live with me when she was 16.

[01:49:23] She was living with Michele after being abused by her father for 10 years. Alicia Fox his grandmother gained custody of her. Alicia's and Shelly lives in the same house. They say it took four years for Alicia to be able to communicate with them. It was hard for us because Alicia couldn't express herself so I I remember one night when she was having some bad.

[01:49:52] Night terrors or PTSD was going on or flashbacks and she was curled up in her bed in the fetal position and I. She just wouldn't speak or anything and that was when I first got her and I I literally didn't know what to do. So I just pulled a chair from the kitchen and pulled it next to her been just sat there in case she would get up or. Meet me or. I mean so sometimes it's just a matter of. Being here. Even if you don't think you're making a difference just have to be there.

[01:50:27] They knew even in my darkest times that they were there. I'm not concerned about whether somebody is gonna hurt me or whether I'm not gonna have food on the table or whatever the grave situation might be. I can go home I go home and my dog and my family like it's a loving environment and that's where people can strive when they have connections. They strive and when they don't they. Don't get their needs met and my needs are met. And times 10. So that's where that's where healing can begin. That's where your recovery story can happen.

[01:51:07] So I've probably been in over 10 foster homes group homes. Three. Have been in the juvenile shelter home like three four times and then the detention center. I was there probably a lot.

[01:51:24] What advice would Tammy give adults who work with traumatized children. I want people to be mindful and respect what their kids have been through.

[01:51:36] And just kind of work with them and not give up on them give them chances work with them not just thrown back out to be placed in another home.

[01:51:48] After her mother died and shoes removed from her home because her father abused her. Tammy Frye had gotten in enough trouble that the state recommended she be sent to the juvenile prison for girls. The judge in her case did not send her. Instead she went to one last foster home. She is now aged out.

[01:52:08] When I get stressed out sometimes I just pray to my mom. I don't know makes me feel better.

[01:52:25] So being around them sometimes I'm really confused or really stressed out just be on a horse is like really helpful to me because they put me in check I guess with understanding myself.

[01:52:35] Rayna Saldana learned more about how to find calm and be able to pull herself back from violent outbursts she says after coming to understand her trauma trauma resulting from abuse and then repeated placements including those where she was physically restrained.

[01:52:51] Speaking about it sometimes is really raw for me because I haven't even really worked through a lot of it. You know.

[01:52:59] She says when she was a child no one seemed to understand her behavior was the result of trauma. Today she understands she is resilient.

[01:53:10] I don't think giving up is really an option because I feel like I have a lot to say that other people may not have experienced. I really hope that like they keep going and I think if I get those other kids maybe other kids they roomed with facilities and like they want to be restrained. When there was no need for it but I knew that the facility did it.

[01:53:38] I started doing speaking and being able to say my story. It took me a while to even decide to do that because I was like No no I don't know. I don't even want to think about it. I'm still today as an adults working through things that happened to me when I was 10.

[01:54:03] These children. They want to make us happy. They want to be proud but they just need somebody to take the time to slow it down to make sure they get things they need.

[01:54:13] As for the 16 year old in so much trouble who appeared in his court so much pain so much pain so much brokenness Judge Mitchell just wishes someone anyone had taken the time so much earlier to see the trauma and help set the boy and others like him on a better path.

[01:54:34] I really have embraced the idea like Frederick Douglass saying it is far easier to be a strong children than to repair a broken man.