# From Struggle to Strength: A Person-Centered Trauma-Informed Model for Supporting Older Adults with Disabilities

JFNA Training Workshop
June 24, 2025



# Presenters



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# Objectives

After attending this session, participants will be able to…

- Specify common sources of trauma experienced by older adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD), family caregivers, and professionals.
- List ways in which trauma impacts the physical and emotional well-being of older adults with IDD, family caregivers, and professionals.
- Recognize that there is a lack of person-centered trauma-informed care (PCTI) for older adults with IDD.
- Identify PCTI practices that can be incorporated into programs that support individuals who have experienced primary or secondary trauma.



# Historical Challenges Facing People with IDD

# Institutionalization

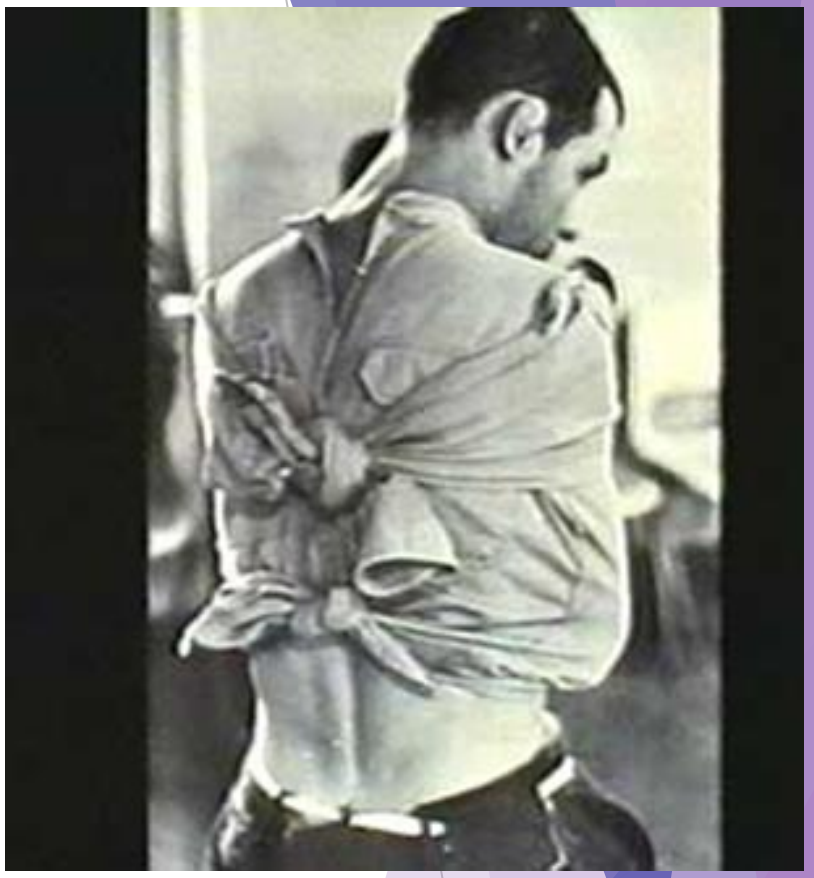
- First institution for people with IDD was in 1848. Founded by Samuel Gridley Howe in Boston, Massachusetts.
- Many states had institutions by 1900s. Peak of institutions was in the 1950s.
- Parents were encouraged to put their children with IDD into institutions
- Conditions were often deplorable.













# Living in an Institution







# Dawn’s Story






# Trauma in the World of IDD

- People with IDD are more vulnerable to physical and psychological trauma. (McNally, et al., 2021)
- Trauma and PTSD are underdiagnosed and undertreated in adults with IDD. (Houck & Dracobly, 2022)
- People with IDD are not often diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder when it is their most dominant condition. (Gentile, n.d.)
- There is lack of person-centered trauma-informed care for older adults with IDD. (Harvey, 2023)

# Sources of Trauma for People with IDD

- Physical abuse
- Sexual abuse
- Emotional abuse
- Bullying
- Exclusion
- Institutionalization

# “Big T” versus “Little t” Trauma

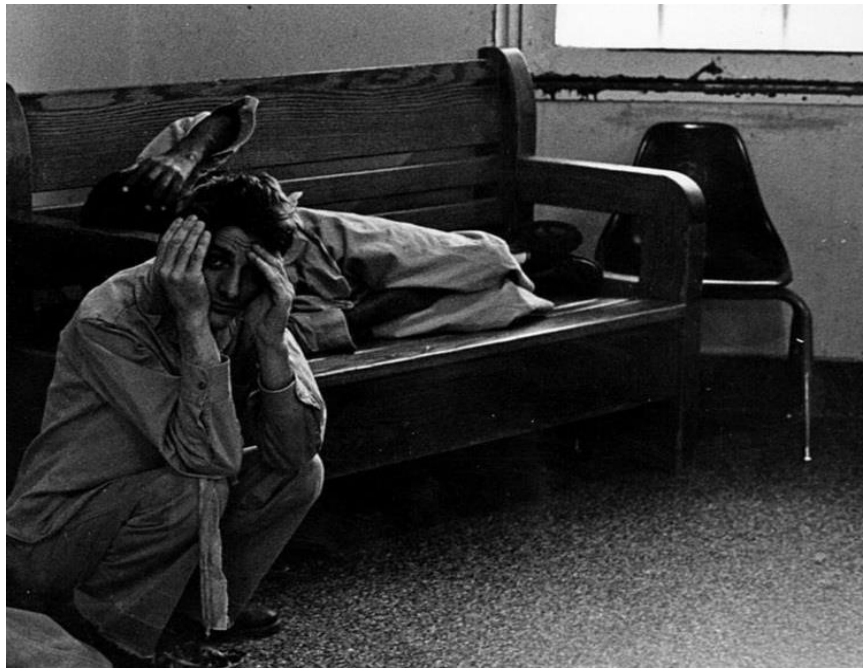
“Big T” Trauma

- Sexual Abuse
- Physical Abuse
- Neglect
- Negative Events
- Grief and Loss

“Little t” Trauma

- Discrimination
- Neighborhood Violence
- Social Exclusion
- Exclusion from Family
- Frequent foster care or group home placements and lack of stability





# Effects of Trauma

- Cognitive Effects
- Physical Effects
- Emotional Effects
- Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)



Sometimes the “behaviors” we see are really symptoms of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder.

# Four Areas of PTSD Symptoms

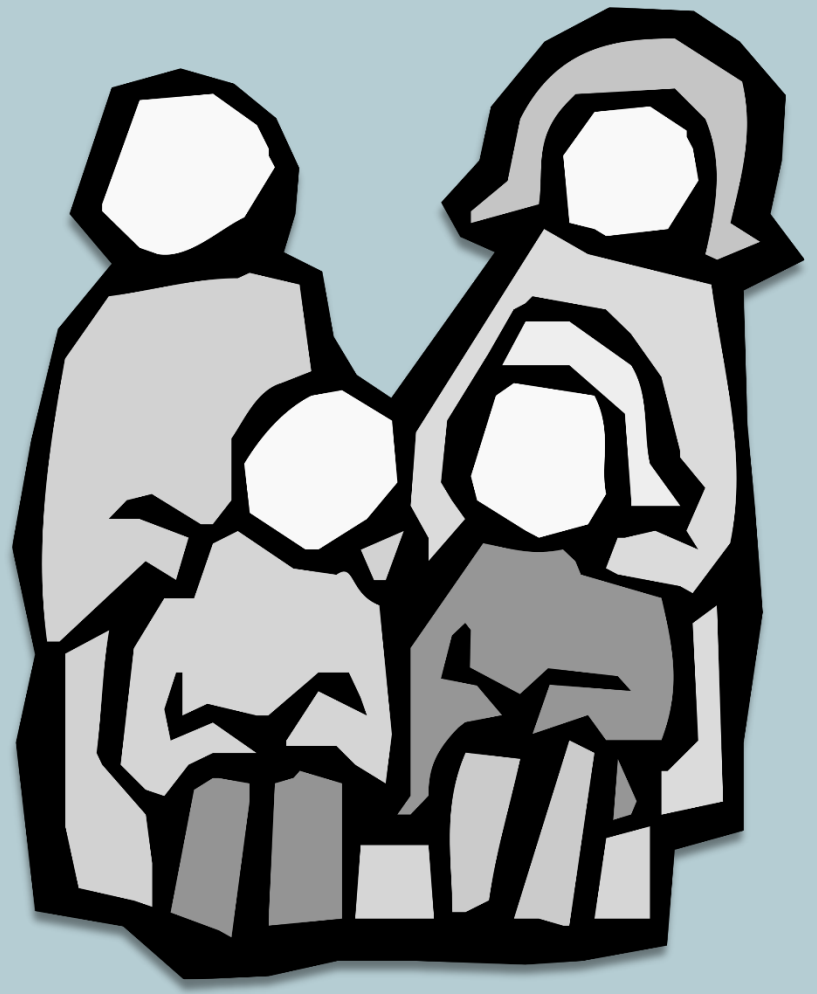
1. Re-experiencing (interferes with the present to different degrees)
   - Intrusive Memories
   - Nightmares
   - Flashbacks- Person can disconnect from reality and be convinced he or she is being attacked, hurt, or threatened due to a memory that becomes present

2. Avoidance
   - Blunted emotions
   - Shut down responses
   - Obsessive about self and safety
   - Disconnection and withdrawal

# Four Areas of PTSD Symptoms (continued)

3. Negative Alterations in Cognition and Mood
   - Persistent negative-trauma related emotions such as fear, horror, anger, guilt, and shame
   - Constricted emotion – inability to express positive emotion
   - Alienation and withdrawal from others
   - Shame

4. Arousal
   - Easily startled
   - Agitated – can lead to property destruction
   - Periodically Combative
   - Impulsive
   - Reckless or self-destructive behavior

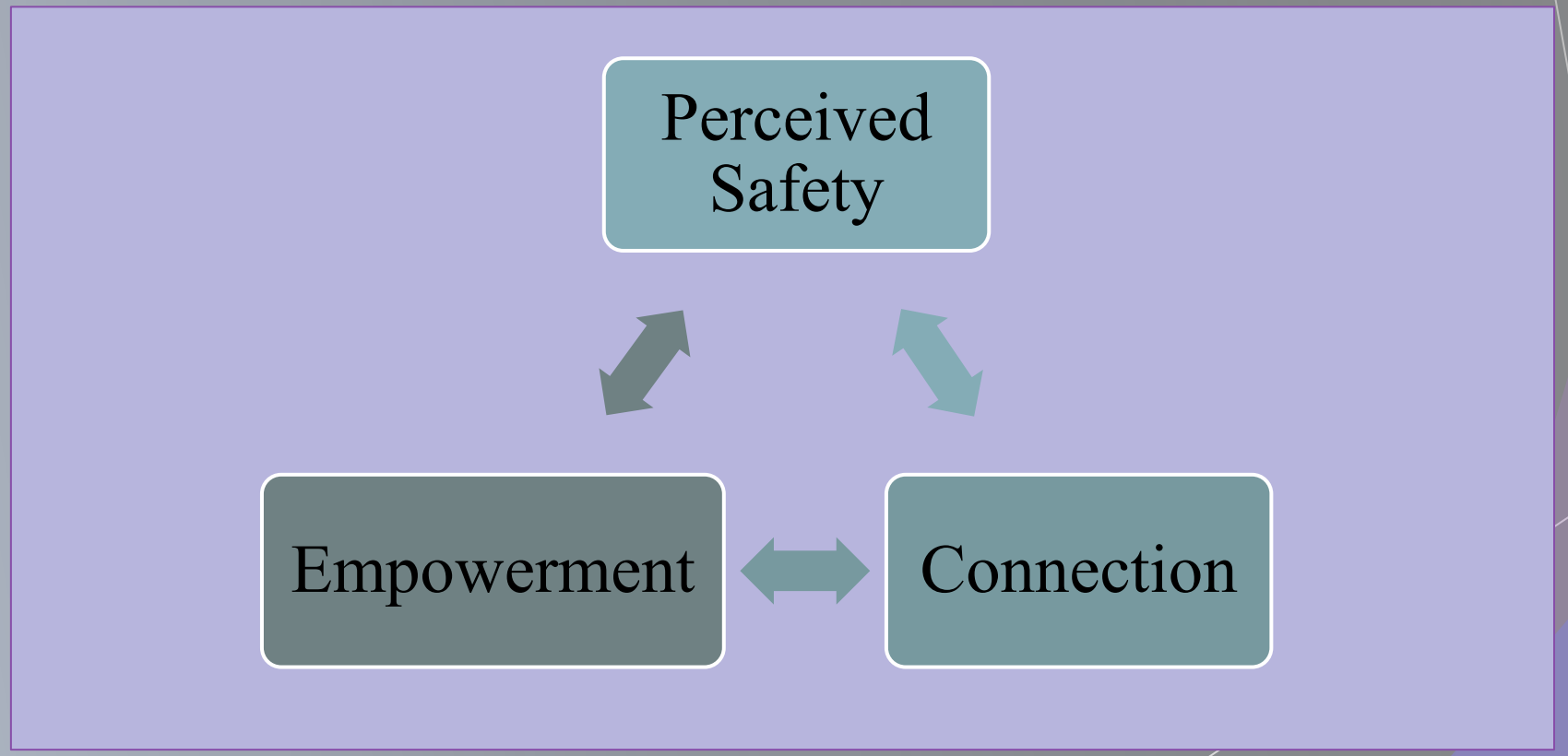


# Family Caregiver Trauma



# Professional Trauma

# Ingredients for Post-Traumatic Recovery



# Positive Identity Development

## Negative Identity

- NOT the person who gets married
- NOT the person who drives
- NOT the person who plays on a high school sport team
- NOT the person who is popular or liked
- NOT the cool one

## Positive Identity

- Who I am
- What I do well
- Who my friends are
- What my preferences are
- Where I make a difference
- What I am proud of

# Innovations Program Through JFNA

NDCPD
North Dakota Center for Persons with Disabilities
at Minot State University




MINOT STATE UNIVERSITY

# Trauma-Informed Approaches for Adults with Disabilities (TRIAD) Project

- Funded by the Jewish Federations of North America, Center on Aging, Trauma, and Holocaust Survivor Care.
- Implemented by the ND Center for Persons with Disabilities at Minot State University.

TRIAD
Trauma-Informed Approaches for Adults with Disabilities

Jewish Federations of North America | Center on Aging, Trauma, and Holocaust Survivor Care

# Participant Recruitment and Screening

Project 1

- Five older adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities
- Age 60 and over
- Have a history of trauma from living in an institution or other facility away from their family

Project 2

- Four family caregivers
- Age 60 and over
- Have experienced secondary trauma and compassion fatigue from caring for a family member with IDD who has a history of trauma

Project 3

- Five professionals
- Have experienced secondary trauma and compassion fatigue from supporting individuals with IDD who have a history of trauma

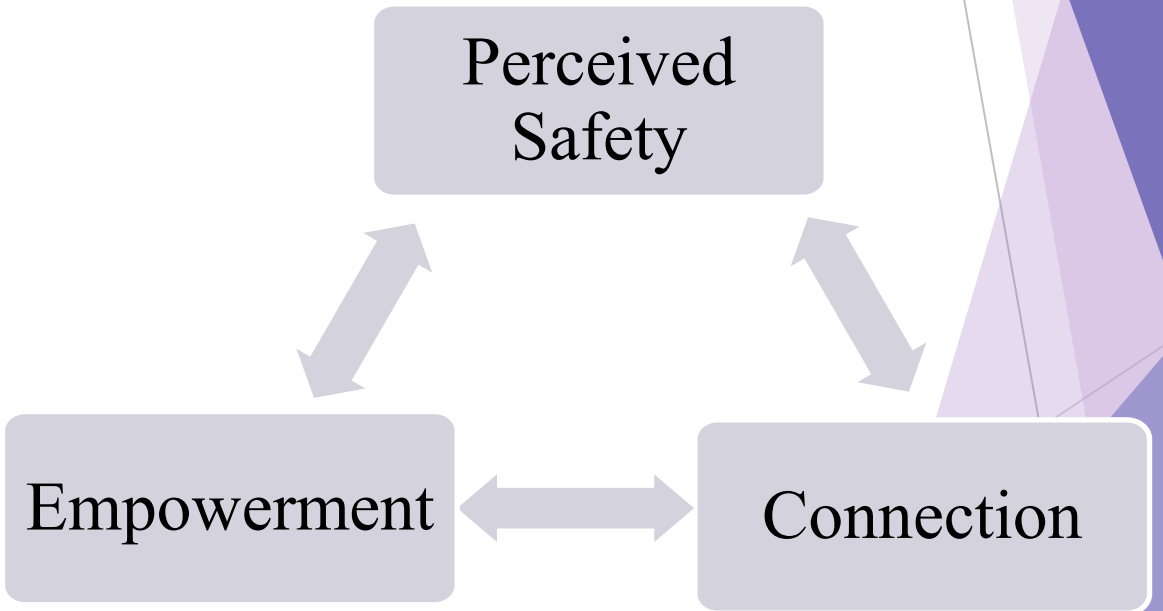
# TRIAD Framework for PCTI Care Activities

Group Work: Individualized, person-centered healing plan; Direct trauma work

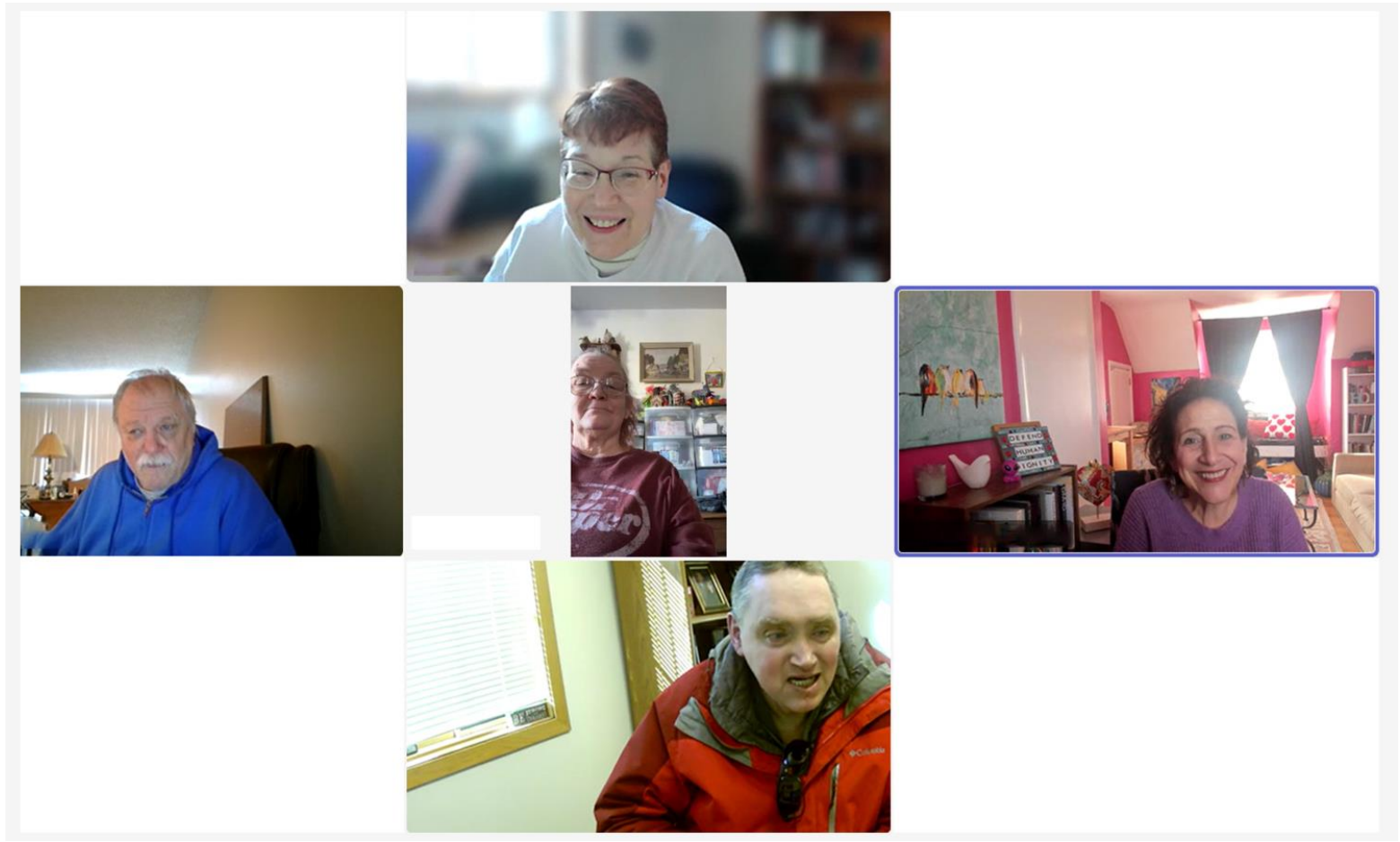
PCTI Care Workshops: Positive self-identity development; Self-care activities

Social Connections: Ohio Developmental Disabilities Council Virtual App

Artifacts: Trauma stories; Memory boxes, Legacy messages



# Group Work with Older Adults



# TRIAD Evaluation

- Clinical Observations
- Focus Group Feedback
- JFNA Survey Data

# Evaluation Measures - Outputs

Person-centered healing plans

Individualized futures plans

Artifacts and Legacies

# Evaluation Measures: Outcomes

- Validation of trauma experiences
- Positive identity development
- Connections and networks
- Resources
- Healing
- Lasting legacies

# PCTI Care and Systems Change

**Older Adults** - Validation of Trauma

**Family Caregivers** – Connections for support and resource sharing (based on mutual experiences)

**Professionals** – Trauma-responsive vs. behavioral supports

# Impact Stories

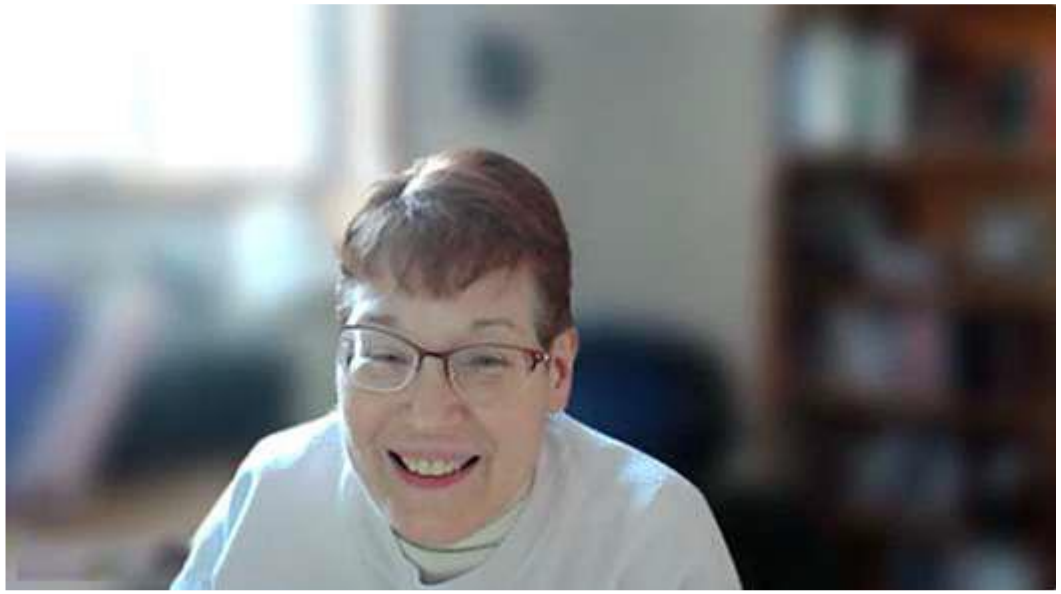


- Darrell
- Cathy
- Janelle





# Dawn Today





# Questions?

# Resources

Person-Centered, Trauma-Informed Essentials for Aging Services Online Course

Join JFNA's mailing list for future educational opportunities: Aging@JewishFederations.org

Willowbrook Institution Documentary

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# Thank You!



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