



USI | URBAN STRATEGIES, INC.

# Youth Mental Health

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Urban Strategies, Inc. (USI)

# WHO IS USI?

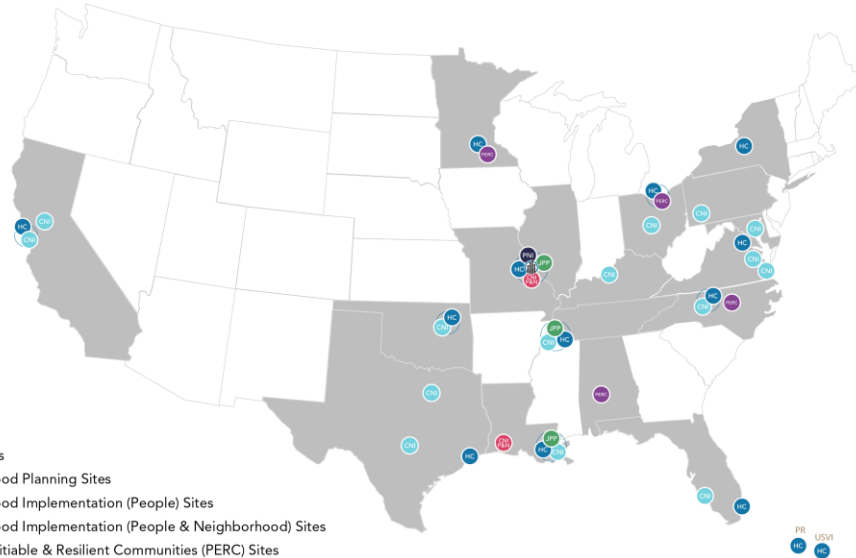
Urban Strategies, Inc. (USI) is a national intermediary in its field, a not-for-profit organization that specializes in results-informed human services development, planning, community and economic development, financial strategies, and strategy implementation as part of comprehensive neighborhood revitalization.

*OUR MISSION...*

**All children and families will be STABLE and THRIVING.**



# A map of USI communities



- LEGEND**
- USI Headquarters
  - Human Capital Sites
  - Choice Neighborhood Planning Sites
  - Choice Neighborhood Implementation (People) Sites
  - Choice Neighborhood Implementation (People & Neighborhood) Sites
  - Partnership for Equitable & Resilient Communities (PERC) Sites
  - Jobs Plus Program Sites
  - Promise Neighborhood Initiative Sites
  - Indicates Types of Sites in Same Greater Metro Area

- Comprehensive Human Capital Planning and implementation in **25 major cities** (including **2 territories**)
- **20** Choice Neighborhoods- Lead Implementation Partner
- **12** HOPE VI communities

# WHO DO WE SERVE?

- **42** Communities
- **11,974** Families
- **28,545** Participants
- **63.9%** Female
- **3,860** Single Female Headed Households

Race	# of Participants	% of Participants
<b>African American</b>	22,514	78.9%
<b>Caucasian or White</b>	1,749	6.1%
<b>Asian</b>	79	0.3%
<b>American Indian or Alaska Native</b>	222	0.8%
<b>Hawaiian or Pacific Islander</b>	71	0.2%
<b>Other</b>	2,119	7.4%
<b>More than one Race</b>	1,791	6.3%





WEALTH  
CREATION &  
ECONOMIC  
MOBILITY



FAMILY  
COHESION  
& SUPPORT



HOUSING  
STABILITY &  
HOME-  
OWNERSHIP



CDFI  
ENTREPRE-  
NEURSHIP



POLICY &  
INFLUENCE



CIVIC  
ENGAGEMENT

# USI TACKLES THESE PRIORITIES FROM THREE VANTAGE POINTS:



PROGRAMMATIC  
SUPPORT



USI CDFI



POLICY AND INFLUENCE  
DEPARTMENT



# World Health Organization

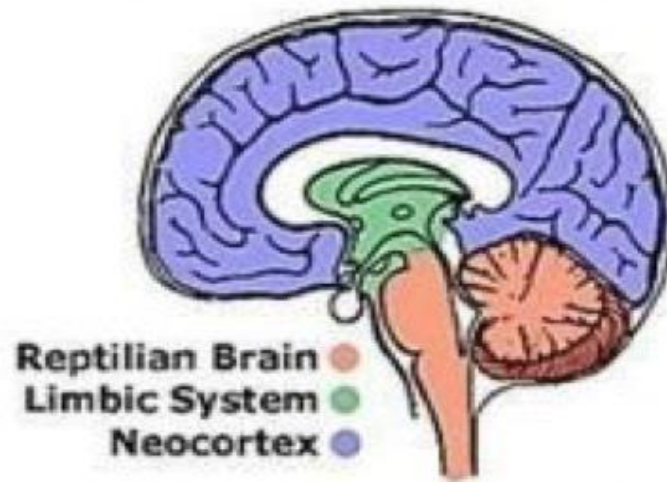
- Depression, anxiety and behavioral disorders are among the leading causes of illness and disability among adolescents.
- Suicide is the fourth leading cause of death among 15-29 year-olds.



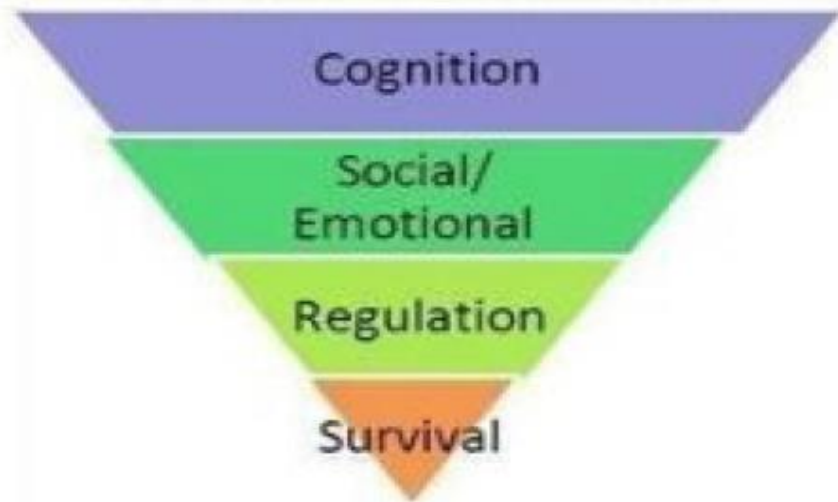


OWN

# Trauma & Brain Development



## Typical Development



## Developmental Trauma

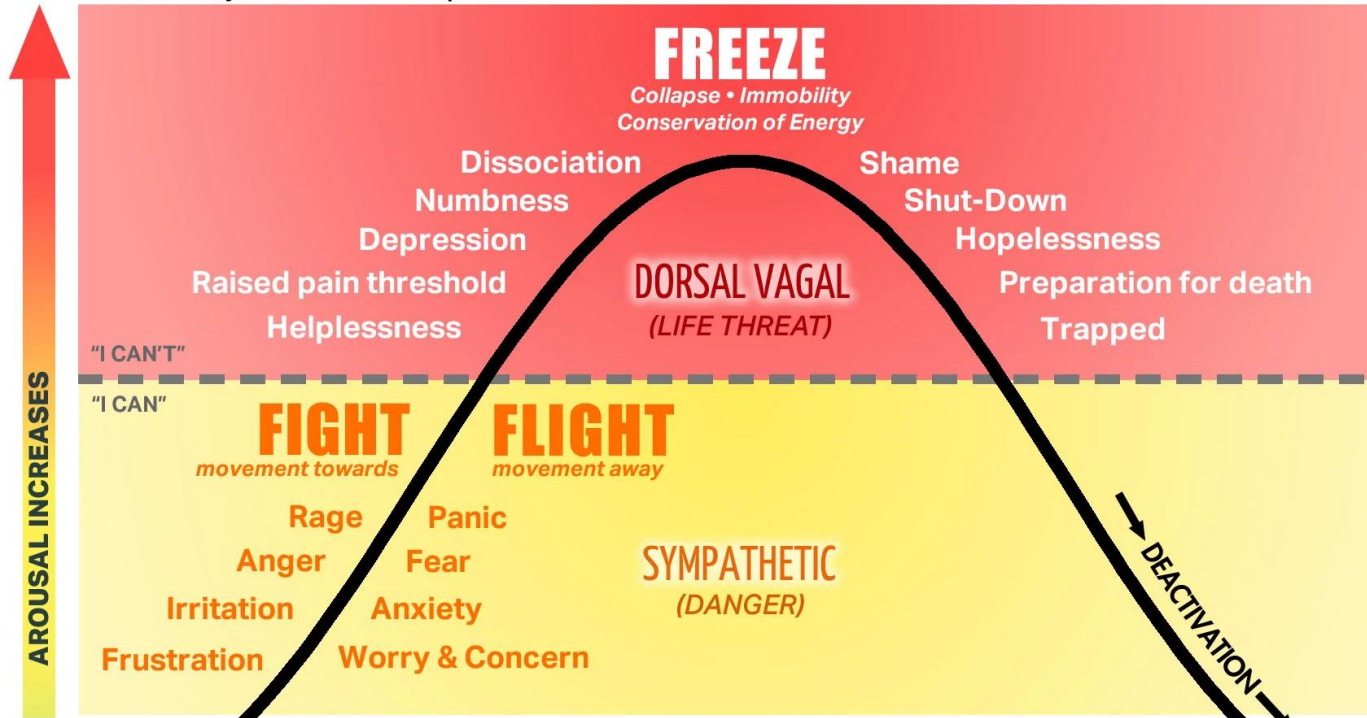


Adapted from Holt & Jordan, Ohio Dept. of Education



# POLYVAGAL CHART

The nervous system with a neuroception of threat:



**PARASYMPATHETIC NERVOUS SYSTEM**  
DORSAL VAGAL COMPLEX

**Increases**

- Fuel storage & insulin activity • Immobilization behavior (with fear)
- Endorphins that help numb and raise the pain threshold
- Conservation of metabolic resources

**Decreases**

- Heart Rate • Blood Pressure • Temperature • Muscle Tone
- Facial Expressions & Eye Contact • Depth of Breath • Social Behavior
- Attunement to Human Voice • Sexual Responses • Immune Response

**SYMPATHETIC NERVOUS SYSTEM**

**Increases**

- Blood Pressure • Heart Rate • Fuel Availability • Adrenaline
- Oxygen Circulation to Vital Organs • Blood Clotting • Pupil Size
- Dilation of Bronchi • Defensive Responses

**Decreases**

- Fuel Storage • Insulin Activity • Digestion • Salivation
- Relational Ability • Immune Response

The nervous system with a neuroception of safety:



**PARASYMPATHETIC NERVOUS SYSTEM**  
VENTRAL VAGAL COMPLEX

**Increases**

- Digestion • Intestinal Motility • Resistance to Infection
- Immune Response • Rest and Recuperation • Health & Vitality
- Circulation to non-vital organs (skin, extremities)
- Oxytocin (neuromodulator involved in social bonds that allows immobility without fear) • Ability to Relate and Connect
- Movement in eyes and head turning • Prosody in voice • Breath

**Decreases**

- Defensive Responses



“In order to change, people need to become aware of their sensations and the way that their bodies interact with the world around them. Physical self-awareness is the first step in releasing the tyranny of the past.”

Dr. Bessel Van Der Kolk

*What Does it Mean that the Body Keeps the Score?*

**Lesson:** There's a need for a multi-faced approach to healing which includes medical, psychological, psychosocial, behavioral and spiritual interventions



# How Does USI Approach This?

**With Families:** At the center of our work with our families and young people, is this critical understanding that everything we do must be rooted opportunities for **safety, mastery, connection,** and **joy.**

Stressing:

- Holistic healing
- Cultural competence
- Building Protective Factors



# How Does USI Approach This?

## Systemically:

Our work in primarily African American and Latino communities in disinvested areas across this country reinforces the inherent need to operationalize an equity agenda and liberate people from systems of oppression.

Policy and System change work is critical to healing at a collective level. The ability to heal (or not) is directly impacted to **repeated exposure to ongoing stress** created by inequitable system structures that perpetuate harm.



# We Must Collectively Ask Ourselves:

- How are we contributing to or disrupting the racial differences in which youth get labeled as in need of treatment/resources versus in need of punishment?
- How are we attending to the generational nature of trauma responses that might be impacting young people?
- What is an Evidenced Based Practice and who has benefitted from it?
- Is our response contributing to connection or disconnection?



# Suggested Reading

- Dr. Mariel Buque: *Break the Cycle: A Guide to Healing Intergenerational Trauma*
- Dr. Bessel Van Der Kolk: *The Body Keeps the Score*
- Stanley Rosenberg: *Accessing the Healing Power of the Vagus Nerve*
- Anodea Judith: *Eastern Body Western Mind: Psychology and the Chakra System as a Path to the Self*

