



WATAUGA COMPASSIONATE COMMUNITY INITIATIVE

# APRIL NEWSLETTER

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**Preventing trauma.  
Building resiliency.**

*What's strong in you?*

**For more information, visit  
[www.wataugacci.org](http://www.wataugacci.org).**



# WCCI 2020-2021

## Upcoming Meetings

### Meeting Dates for 2020-2021 year:

Until further notice, WCCI meetings are by Zoom beginning at 8:30 am on the second Thursday of each month. Meeting dates are below. The Zoom link and password are as follows:

<https://zoom.us/j/92959886225pwd=TkJaUGFMTUY2aG13K2ZQMmdmNjIFUT09>

Meeting ID: 929 5988 6225

Passcode: 262131

WCCI meeting will be held from 8:30-10:30 am.

March 11

April 15 (April 8 is WCS spring break)

May 13



*Our community is always in dire need of foster care parents and mentors. To be a foster parent or to learn more, contact Jessica Winebarger at the Department of Social Services (265-8100). To be a mentor or to learn more, contact Angela McMann or Charlene Grasinger at Western Youth Network (264-5174)*

## Social Media! FOLLOW US!

WCCI - Watauga  
Compassionate  
Community  
Initiative

Watauga County  
North Carolina  
Aces Connection

@wcci\_2020





# WCCI WEDNESDAYS

## Upcoming Schedule

WCCI will be hosting monthly conversations by Zoom about trauma and resiliency. These conversations will be with people impacted by ACEs, as well as agency staff and providers. They will be held every Wednesday on Zoom until further notice. They will begin at 12:00 noon.

Zoom Link: <https://zoom.us/j/93894662207?pwd=Wjc3eU9SL3JMOXJpQSs5UkxYaUd3UT09>

Meeting ID: 938 9466 2207

Passcode: 440689

Date	Who is Joining	Topic
March 31	Brett Loftis	Organizational Chronic Stress and Organizational Resilience
April 7	Amber Dixon	Faces of ACES, Thriving Lives series: Fierce Kindness & Found Joy
April 14	Tiffany Christian.	Intersectionality & Social Justice
April 21	CONFERENCE	CONFERENCE
April 28	CDSA	Trauma and Resilience in Young Children



# MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

## Suzi Woodard

Suzi's early challenges were from parents whose own upbringings were quite traumatic, which was minimized and mostly unspoken. It was an undertow, flowing beneath the surface of family interactions, making them unpredictable and emotionally dangerous for no apparent reason. A low ACE score doesn't necessarily mean a stable, happy, healthy childhood! Growing up overseas with several moves insulated the family but connected Suzi to people of different cultures, economic conditions, religions and nationalities, for which she is grateful.

During and after college, her own therapy and her work in reproductive health and relationships, in racial/ cultural diversity, in women's health activism , and in substance abuse prevention- education, emphasized evidence-based strategies for change and self-care. She developed a multi-faceted holistic foundation for her life and career at that time.

She moved to the High Country in 1980 to continue her community mental health education work for New River Mental Health Center, then followed an interest in psychotherapy, attending graduate school at AppState. Her health psychology MA degree strengthened her holistic/body-mind concepts, and later her MA in marriage and family therapy brought together "relational" therapies with the bigger-picture contexts of communities and systems that are an important part of WCCI's work today.

As a new counselor in the mid-1980s, Suzi specialized in the then- new field of work with trauma survivors and adult children of dysfunctional families. She and her husband, Tom Woodard, started a private practice, Heartwood, continuing a focus on those populations. As part of Blue Mountain Center for Integrative Health since 2003, she currently enjoys an eclectic counseling practice with individuals and couples addressing a wide range of issues.

Even when it was a radical idea, Suzi has been known for incorporating into her psychotherapy the evolving research on brain functioning, along with research-based complementary modalities such as mindfulness, breathwork, expressive arts, yoga, herbal medicines, body awareness, nutrition, physical activity, and nature. In addition to offering community education and consulting, Suzi has volunteered with many local non-profit boards and community coalitions over the years. With Graham Aitken, she now co-chairs WCCI's Awareness Committee, helping WCCI to expand into more parts of our county with hopeful, healing conversations about ACES and effective resiliency strategies and skills.

Suzi and her husband live in an old farmhouse in western Watauga County, where she enjoys gardening, long walks, nature photography, and cooking. Her self care also includes yoga and mindfulness practices, canoeing and hiking with good friends, and treasuring time with family and animals.





# COMMUNITY SPOTLIGHT



educate



support



inspire

## The Children's Council

The Children's Council of Watauga County is a local nonprofit that works to build a strong foundation for children's learning and development by strengthening families, the early childhood system, and the wider community. We carry out this mission by working with early educators, supporting families through a Diaper Bank, Resource Library, Teen Parenting Program, numerous support groups and behavioral support resources, convening community stakeholders, serving as a voice for the early childhood community and educating the community on the critical needs of young children and helps develop solutions.



## Education for Girls Empowerment (EDGE)

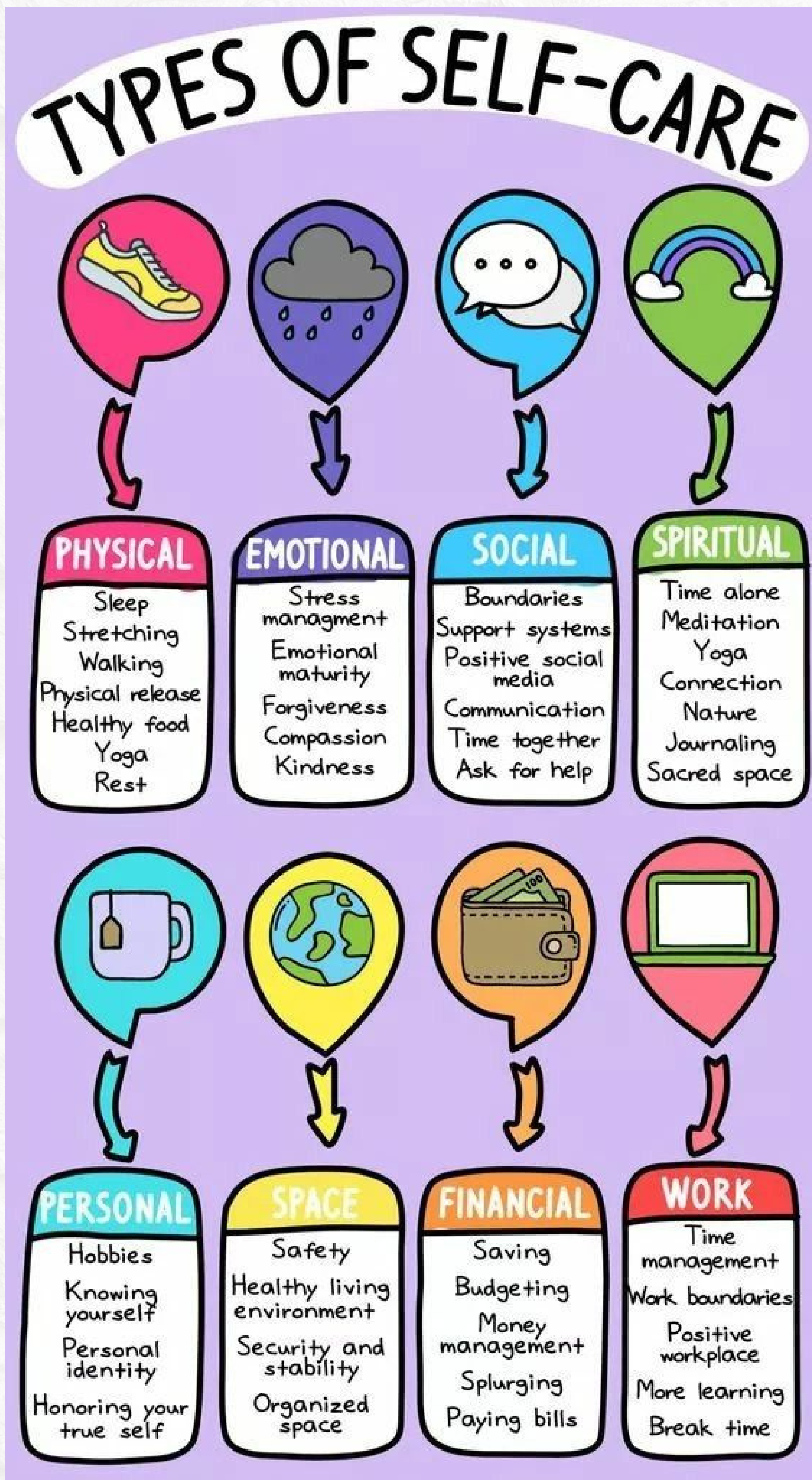
EDGE wants to provide a safe and sustainable environment where each girl from Nuapali, Odisha school will be educated, equipped and empowered. They believe the education of rural village females is vital to creating a community of educated women who will be positive role models and leaders in their villages and surrounding communities. They collaborate with the schools founders, staff and teachers to determine funding priorities that will best serve the education and development of female students. They are also assessing the needs of students so that we can support their educational pursuits and determination to become educated women of their society. It's their goal to help fund the school, so that these girls can help change the trajectory of their communities.



<https://www.educationforgirlsempowerment.org/>



# RESILIENCY SKILL



In times of stress, it is important to recognize ways that you can promote wellness within yourself.

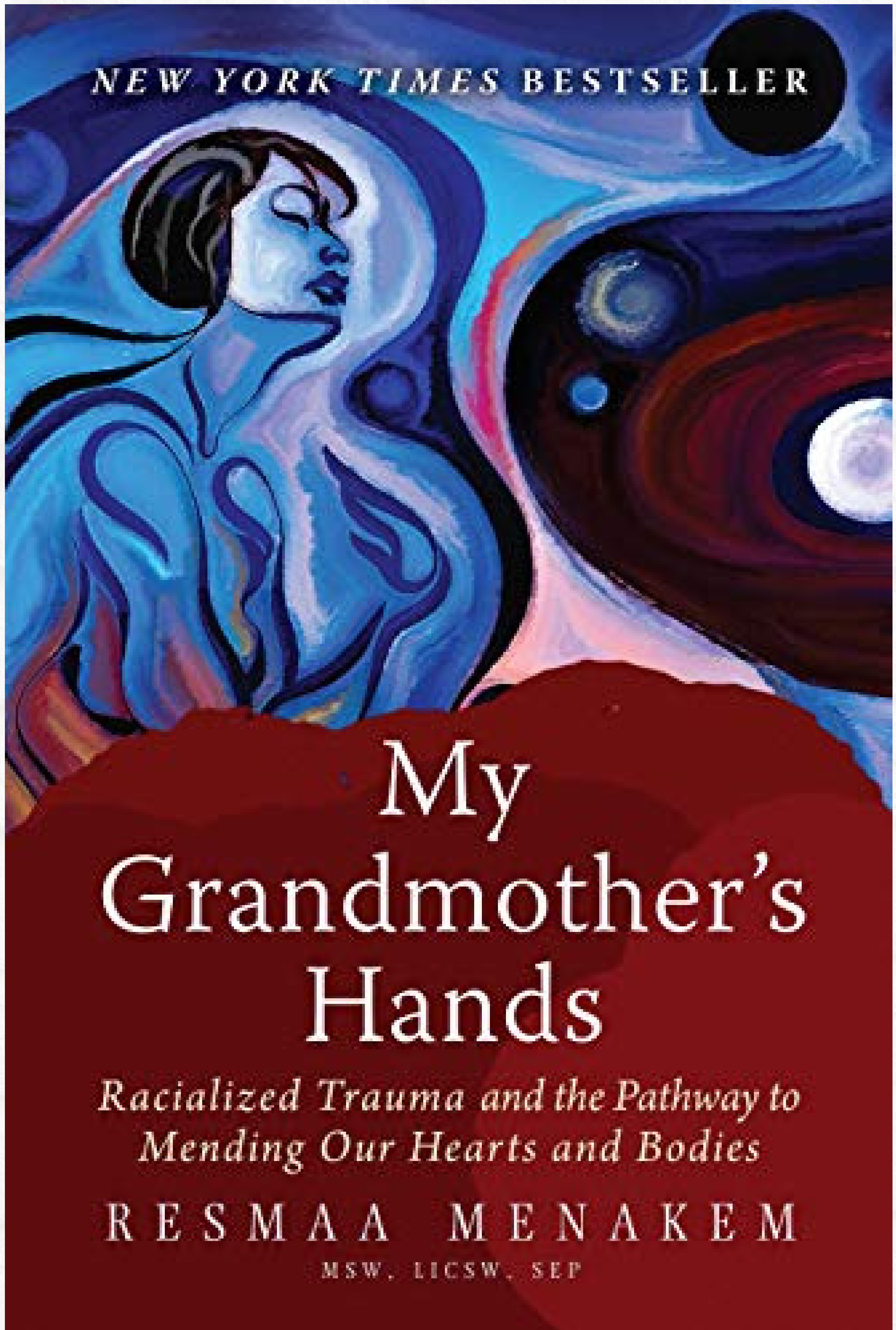
"Self Care" is more than massages, pedicures and things you have to spend money to do, it can be incorporated to promote wellness in all aspects of your life.

Download the last two pages of this newsletter for an interactive self-care worksheet!



# BOOK OF THE MONTH

My Grandmother's Hands



NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER

## My Grandmother's Hands

*Racialized Trauma and the Pathway to  
Mending Our Hearts and Bodies*

RESMAA MENAKEM

MSW, LICSW, SEP



# INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT

**In October, a WCCI intern, Brittney Craven, sat down (virtually) with Candis Walker. She spoke with us on the value of finding and using resiliency skills that work for each of us. Below is the transcript of the conversation:**

**Brittney:** Would you share with us a bit about your background in trauma work?

**Candis:** Sure, I'm glad to be with you today. I'm Candis Walker. I am a school counselor in Watauga County Schools and I currently serve as the prevention counselor for the school system. I got involved in trauma work when the Watauga Compassionate Community Initiative (WCCI) began several years ago. We started as just a conference. At the time, we called it The State of the Child Conference and we started learning about the impacts of trauma on children and families, and since then it's expanded to the initiative that it is today, which is doing much broader work.

**Brittney:** Can you explain a little bit more about what you do within trauma care currently?

**Candis:** I work with the WCCI and also in the school system. In WCCI, I serve on the events committee as one of the co-chairs of that committee. We work to create events that help our community, and even more broadly, understand the impacts of trauma, adversity, and resilience. As part of that events committee, we create and put on a conference each year, (except this year due to COVID) and that conference serves up to 600 people. We're looking forward to doing the conference through virtual means next year and that's going to be really exciting. In the school system, I work with the Compassionate Schools team. We have a Compassionate Schools team in each one of our schools, and we also have a district-wide team. I serve on the district-wide team. Our goal there is to help teachers and school staff understand adversity, trauma, and how that impacts student learning and what we can do as a school staff to help build resilience in our students, ourselves, and our families.

**Brittney:** What kind of impact have you seen since implementing the compassionate classrooms?



# INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT

**Candis:** I was just thinking about this last night. I was going through and cleaning out a file at my house and came across some paperwork from when my current seventh grader was in kindergarten or first grade. All of the information had to do with what to do when you got in trouble. It was from the open house for the school year and it told about the discipline system, the structure that was being used in the classroom, which at that time was "if you do this then you move your clip to yellow and then if you get in trouble again you move your clip to red" and that sort of thing. That's what most of our teachers and classrooms were using, some sort of system like that, focusing on when you do the wrong thing, these are the consequences that happen to you. That sort of system has been used for a long time in schools and we've seen that fall by the wayside. Now we're seeing classrooms and teachers focusing more on teaching kids how to use skills so that the things that we think of as misbehaviors don't escalate. Instead of a kid losing his cool because somebody sat in his space or because somebody took her pencil, we're seeing students being taught how to take a deep breath and use appropriate phrases like, "I don't like it when you take my pencil, give it back to me please". So I'm seeing it come through in the way our students are being taught how to manage the stuff that might typically cause upset.

**Brittney:** I remember when I was in elementary school we had the, you know, green, yellow, red system but there was no way to get back to green once you made it to yellow or red. It caused me to feel quite defeated. What is your favorite aspect of trauma work?

**Candis:** Teaching resiliency skills, for sure. I love helping kids and grown-ups find out how those resiliency skills can be incorporated into their day, in a really easy way. And how resiliency skills can help us all maintain an even balance in our lives so that we don't have such big highs and lows.

**Brittney:** Moving into resilience, what does resilience mean to you?

**Candis:** To me, it means bouncing back whenever something hard happens, to be able to come back from that and not dwell in it for a long time. It takes skills to be able to manage that.



# INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT

**Brittney:** You mentioned that you like teaching about resiliency skills. What are some ways that people can build resilience?

**Candis:** I think one of the most important things is knowing that what works for me as a resilience skill may not work for you. We have to find different things that work for us, so I see it sort of as a buffet. We can teach folks about good nutrition and we can teach them about exercise. This is where I kind of feel like I'm in the medical profession but it's not. It's just good, common sense; if we take care of our bodies then our emotions stay more even. There are lots of things about taking care of our physical selves that enables us to be more balanced emotionally; those resiliency skills like take a walk, run, do some jumping jacks, get your heartbeat moving, and have a sip of water. These are resiliency skills just like doing progressive muscle relaxation or deep breathing strategies. Sometimes those things may sound like "oh, that seems sort of flaky or sort of weird" but whenever we explain what that means, people realize that these are just common sense things that they can fit into their day. Taking a few minutes to tense up one's muscles, to squeeze one's muscles really tightly, and then to take a deep breath and let those muscles loosen; anybody who tries that for the first time automatically sees how their body does feel more relaxed. Teaching resiliency skills is something I love to do.

**Brittney:** I like that you mentioned that some of them are very simple. We just don't think to do them sometimes.

**Candis:** And I love that we do things all the time that we don't necessarily consider as resiliency skills but they are. I like to bring that to people's attention. For instance, you probably already have something that you do first thing in the morning that is your routine. Well, having a routine is a resiliency skill. Having certain things that you do at certain times of the day, that's a resiliency skill. People who exercise on a regular basis, even if that's just a good stretch whenever you first get up in the morning or after you've been sitting for a long time staring at a zoom call, you wiggle around and give your body some movement, is a resiliency skill. To get up and take a walk or go see the sunshine after being trapped inside all day, drinking water throughout the day, having a conversation with a friend or a colleague, those are all resiliency skills.



# INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT

**Brittney:** Thank you for sharing those. Kind of jumping a little bit back into the trauma topic, what do you want others to know about trauma or trauma work?

**Candis:** I prefer to use the word adversity instead of trauma. I think sometimes we think "oh, well, trauma's a big deal and people will say, "that's never happened to me". They may say, "I grew up with both my parents in my household and there was no alcoholism or drugs. We weren't in poverty. There were no deaths". All these things that we think about as traumatic experiences that kids deal with as they're growing up, people think "well, none of that happened to me, so trauma is not an issue for me. I don't need to worry about this". But we've all had adversity. We've all had seasons in our lives where things were hard, where things were difficult, where it was hard to get up and keep putting one foot in front of the other. That might not qualify as childhood trauma and it might not qualify as a huge traumatic experience but adversity, a hard time, difficult situation in life, happens to everybody. It can be small things or large things and we can react to those in different ways. What might feel like a huge adversity to me might not feel like such a huge adversity to you because of the way you deal with things and the way that I deal with things. I think that's the most important part, to realize that we all deal with adversity in some way, shape, or form, and of course, COVID has been that for us all. We've all had to deal with things differently as we've been in this season of crazy, weird, uncertainty. I think that's the most important aspect of trauma work. Understanding how adversity impacts our bodies and our brains is really important. It's important for me to understand and for our community to understand, that whenever we have these adverse times, it can impact us if we aren't doing some of those resilience skills. If we're not taking time to step away, de-stress, let some of our nervous energy out, and to form good, solid, healthy relationships, then adversity can have an impact and create stress levels that are unhealthy for us.

**Brittney:** That's why I love having these conversations. I had never thought about changing that word trauma to adversity. Thank you so much for sharing that. I know that I definitely learned from it. How can we learn more about the work that you do or the resources that you're connected with?



# INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT

**Candis:** Most of my work is in the school system. We have a new website this year called Watauga Compassionate Schools website. It's available through Watauga County Schools, under Student Services. We have lots of resources there that we provide to our staff, students and families. That would be one way to find out more about what we're doing in the schools. There's also been an article in the local newspapers about one of our programs: "Calm corners help Watauga students manage big emotions"

**Candis:** One of the things that I usually say, especially when I'm training teachers, if a kid comes to us and has not had the things that they need to be ready to learn, it makes it harder for them to learn. We know that if a kid's not had food, a good night rest, or had to listen to parents arguing that morning, lost their dog that morning, had a car wreck on the way to school, or whatever the thing is, it's going to make it harder for that child to learn. We've known this. Educators have known this forever. The general public understands that if we have hard stuff that we go through, it makes it harder for us to do the jobs that we need to do, whether that's learning or working in a business or whatever it is.

It's easy to understand how trauma and adversity impacts us. It's also easy to understand that when we acknowledge that all these little resiliency skills that we can build into our day, such as slowing down and taking a deep breath, having somebody that we can vent to, taking a sip of water, can be so very helpful, even if we don't think of ourselves as people who have dealt with trauma or adversity very much. We teach skills that help universally across the board and are going to help kids who really don't deal much with adversity. I like to think that my own kids would never consider that they've grown up in trauma. They've got both parents in their households and all of the things that we think about, such as drug use, poverty, or things that make it really hard, my kids don't have to deal with that kind of stuff. But the skills that we teach—breathing strategies, taking care of our bodies, and all of those resiliency skills are good for my kids and are good for every kid and every adult. This is easy to understand, we get it, and resilience skills are helpful for everybody no matter what.

**Brittney:** I would definitely agree with that. Thank you for sharing.



# TYPES OF SELF-CARE



**PHYSICAL**

- Sleep
- Stretching
- Walking
- Physical release
- Healthy food
- Yoga
- Rest



**EMOTIONAL**

- Stress management
- Emotional maturity
- Forgiveness
- Compassion
- Kindness



**SOCIAL**

- Boundaries
- Support systems
- Positive social media
- Communication
- Time together
- Ask for help



**SPIRITUAL**

- Time alone
- Meditation
- Yoga
- Connection
- Nature
- Journaling
- Sacred space



**PERSONAL**

- Hobbies
- Knowing yourself
- Personal identity
- Honoring your true self



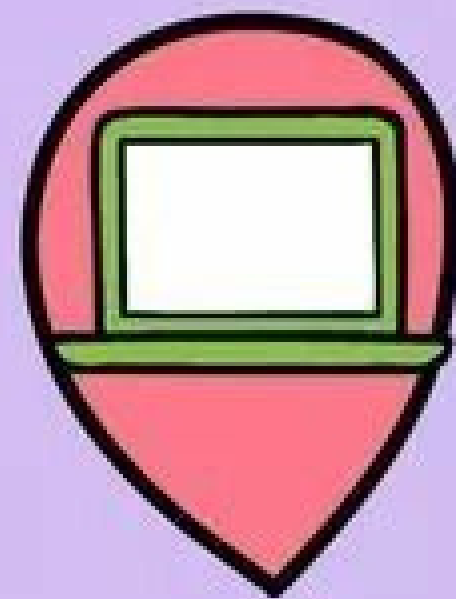
**SPACE**

- Safety
- Healthy living environment
- Security and stability
- Organized space



**FINANCIAL**

- Saving
- Budgeting
- Money management
- Splurging
- Paying bills



**WORK**

- Time management
- Work boundaries
- Positive workplace
- More learning
- Break time

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# TYPES OF SELF-CARE



**PHYSICAL**



**EMOTIONAL**



**SOCIAL**



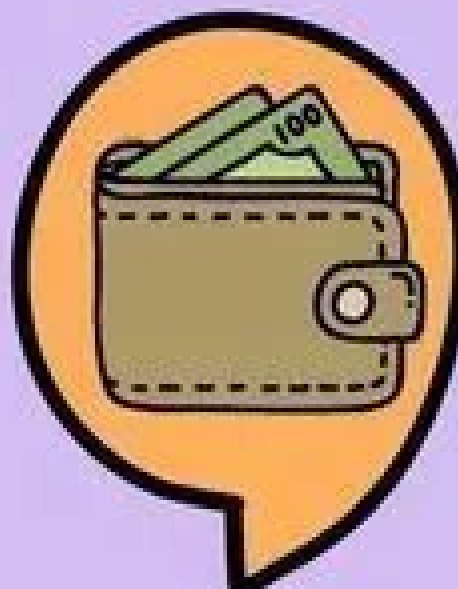
**SPIRITUAL**



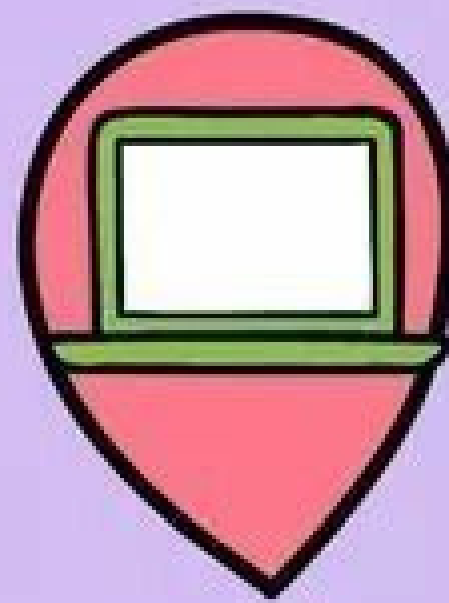
**PERSONAL**



**SPACE**



**FINANCIAL**



**WORK**

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