



# The Indelible Effects of Poverty & Its Relationship to Trauma

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## Defining Poverty

- Lack of resources to meet basic needs
- Loss of a safety net
- Loss of access
- Loss of hope

• ***“Anyone who has ever struggled with poverty knows how extremely expensive it is to be poor.”*** James A Baldwin

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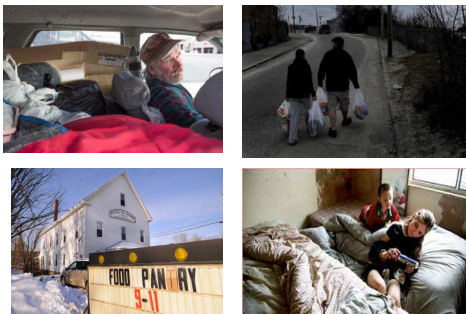
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**Types of poverty and their implications**

- Immigrant
- Situational
- Working poverty
- Generational Poverty

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**Generational Poverty**

- Legacy of loss and poverty
- Impacts language (1/2 the vocabulary in kindergarten)
- Changes relationships to people in authority
- Increased cortisol levels
- Legacy of constant stress on brain development
- Lower life expectancy

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**Impact of Poverty in Maine**

- 20% of Maine's children are living below the federal poverty rate (31% in WC)
- 40% of families will experience food insecurity
- The single greatest cause of adult ill health is living in poverty as a young child
- Maine has the most food insecurity of any new England state

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### Impact of poverty on people

- Toxic stress
- Increase in anxiety & depression
- Greater exposure to violence
- Increase in losses
- Impact on executive functioning
- Impact on health
- Impact on education
- Increase in trauma

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### Impact on individual

- Loss of hope
- Loss of aspirations
- Feelings of powerlessness
- Shame/guilt
- Lowered self esteem
- Loss of planning skills
- Loss of traction

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### Stigma of Poverty

- Extreme disparities /equity issues in the US
- Blame the victims
- Exposure to biases and blame
- *Those people....look at her tattoos...*
- Assumptions...*They don't care, They don't try*

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**Talk to your neighbor**

- Discuss biases you see affecting people living in poverty.....

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**Stigma affects all ages...**



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**Biases and assumptions are often wrong**

- Biases ...those people...they always
- If she cared she would show up....
- If she cannot come she should call...
- She has money for cigarettes /drugs
- He should just get a job and buckle down...
- They should not have kids....

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### Poverty creates Barriers

- Transportation
- Language
- Lack of choice
- Lack of continuity
- Lack of opportunities (youth and sports)
- Lack of access
- Lack of a safety net

***Barriers are often confused with lack of caring***

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### Trauma

- ACES (more than 4)
- Exposure to Violence
- Increased anxiety and depression
- Impacts self medication
- Greater amount of losses from death, homelessness, separation from family

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### Impact of Trauma

- Historical trauma
- Fear
- Anxiety
- Lack of trust
- Difficulty focusing and functioning
- Assumption that it will keep happening
- Hopelessness
- Self medication/mental health issues

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### Washington County One day at a time

- Find a person and talk about what you saw that surprised you...

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### What would hope look like?

- Concept of creating opportunity
- Role of Mentors
- Relational Health
- Barrier understanding and exploration
- Trauma informed
- Meaningful relationships
- Becoming a miracle....

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### Increasing hope

- Being strength based
- Recognizing improvements
- Coaching
- Creating time
- Showing not just telling
- Creating choice
- Helping the people see a future with potential
- Real plan/real barrier removal

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**Poverty is not a person's problem  
It is our problem**

- Society problem/war on poverty
- Systems issues/trauma and barrier informed
- Being the difference in someone's life
- Understanding the impact of poverty and helping people rebuild.
- *Family Futures Downeast*
- *Hope Fund*
- *Mentoring program*
- *Becoming someone's Hero*

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**Resiliency**

- Children who make it
- Mothers who stop using
- Breaking the cycle
- Father who wants a different life for his kids
- Mastery
- Mentorship
- Noticing little successes
- **Someone saw me and cared**

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