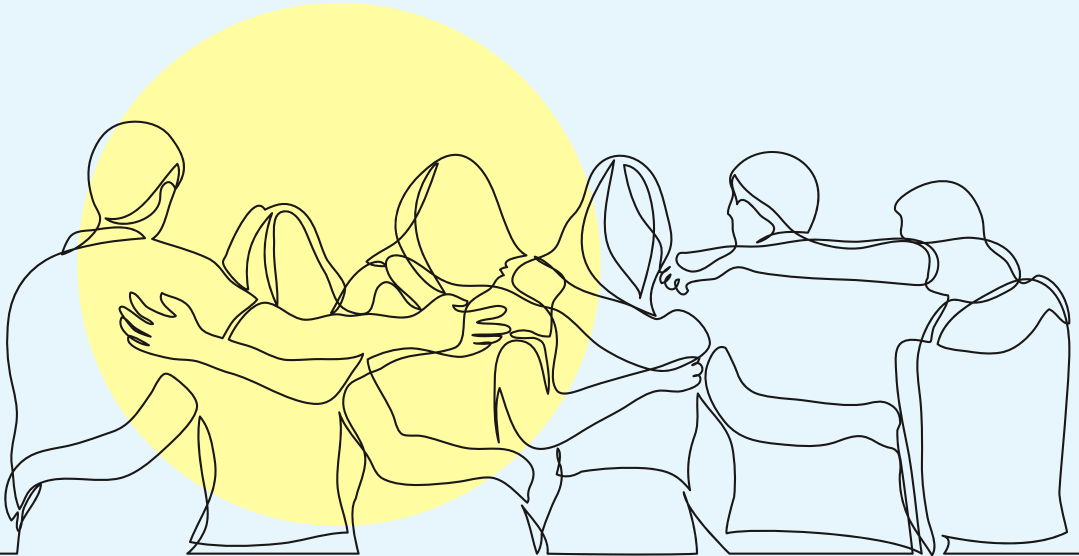


Never Alone: **Finding Hope After Trauma**



A resource created by families and young adults in Allegheny County.

There are moments in life that test us, that challenge our sense of safety and security. These moments can change the way we think about the world, affect our health, and even make it difficult to feel like ourselves. They come in many forms and happen *every day* – they may include abuse, neglect, violence, racism, sexism, natural disasters, or countless others.



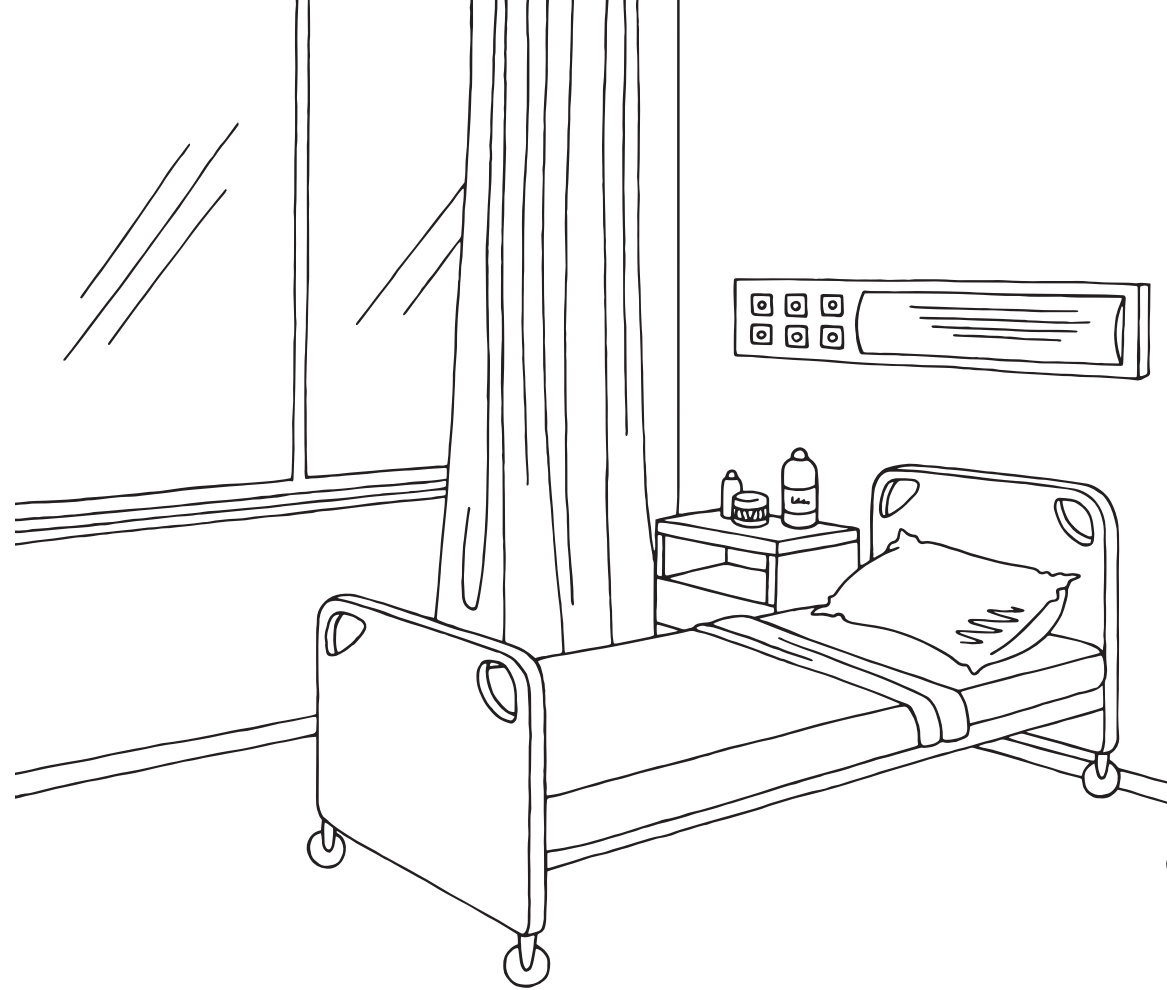
"I know my parents think I don't know what's happening, but I can hear them fighting almost every day- usually about money. My mom yells. A lot. Sometimes my dad throws things and even punches the wall!"

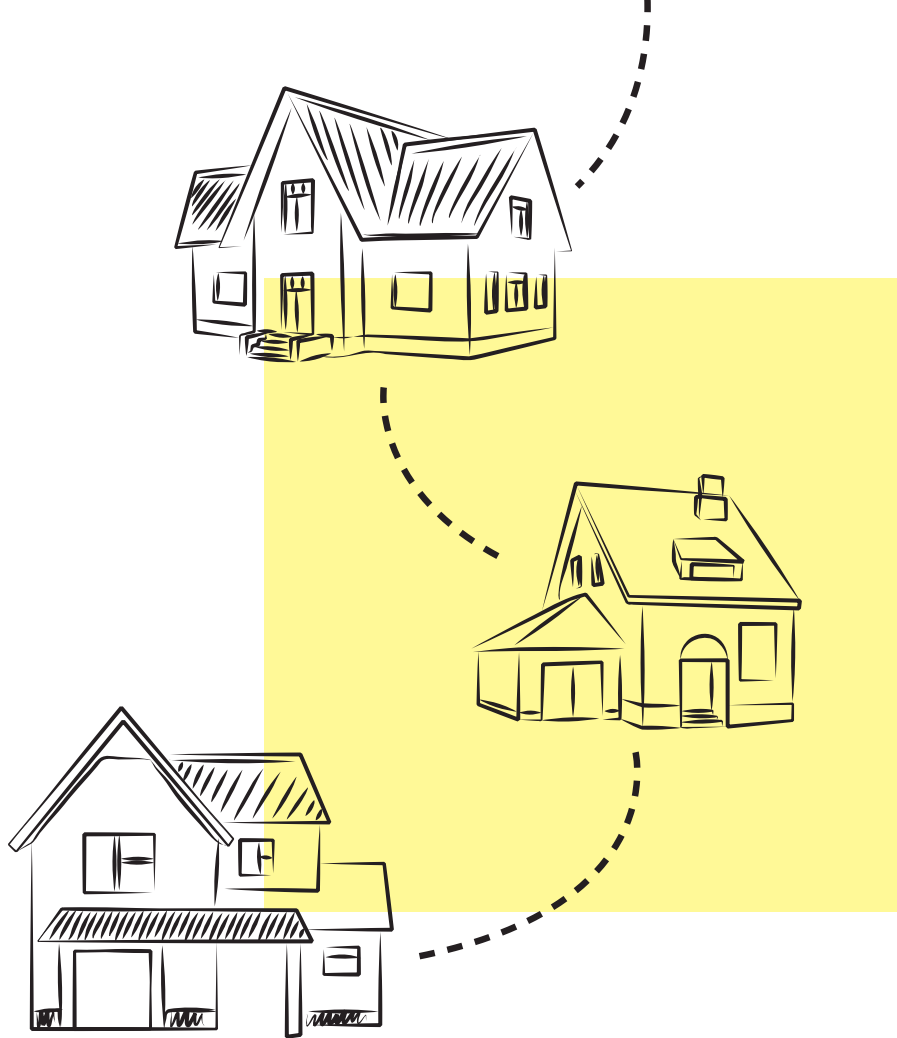
Candace, age 11



“Last year, my friend and I were walking home from school and a group of guys attacked us. My friend got away, but they beat me really bad and took all my stuff – My mom had to take me to the hospital that night to get stitches... I wouldn’t tell her what happened. I found out later that night that the same group of guys found my friend again – he wasn’t so lucky.”

Kevin, age 15

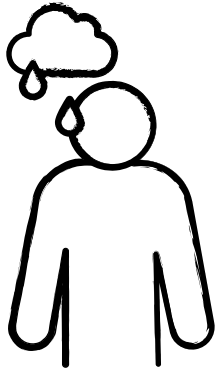
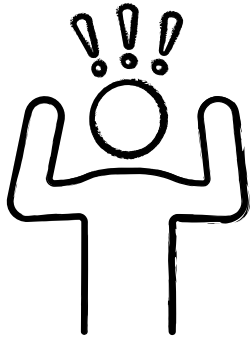
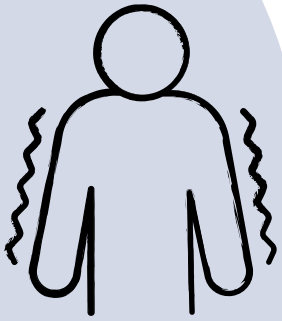




“When I was six, social services removed me from my Mom’s home. I remember arriving at a foster family’s home and being so scared. I cried and cried, just wanting so badly for my mom to take me home... but I never did get to go back home with her. In fact, I lived with three other families before I turned 18 and could live on my own. Each move felt as scary as first – when I lost my mom.”

Maria, age 34





Experiences like these can change us. Sometimes we are left feeling scared, sad, angry, guilty, alone – they might even affect our health. For some, like Candace and Kevin, reactions like this might take place soon after an experience. For others, like Maria, the impact of an experience is lasting, and may not be noticed until years later.



“My teachers used to tell me what a good student I was, and I always got A’s on my report card. But this year things are different. I’ve been getting into trouble for fighting. One teacher asked me if something is going on with me, but I just said ‘no’. Why would I want to talk about stuff that I can’t change with someone who wouldn’t understand?”



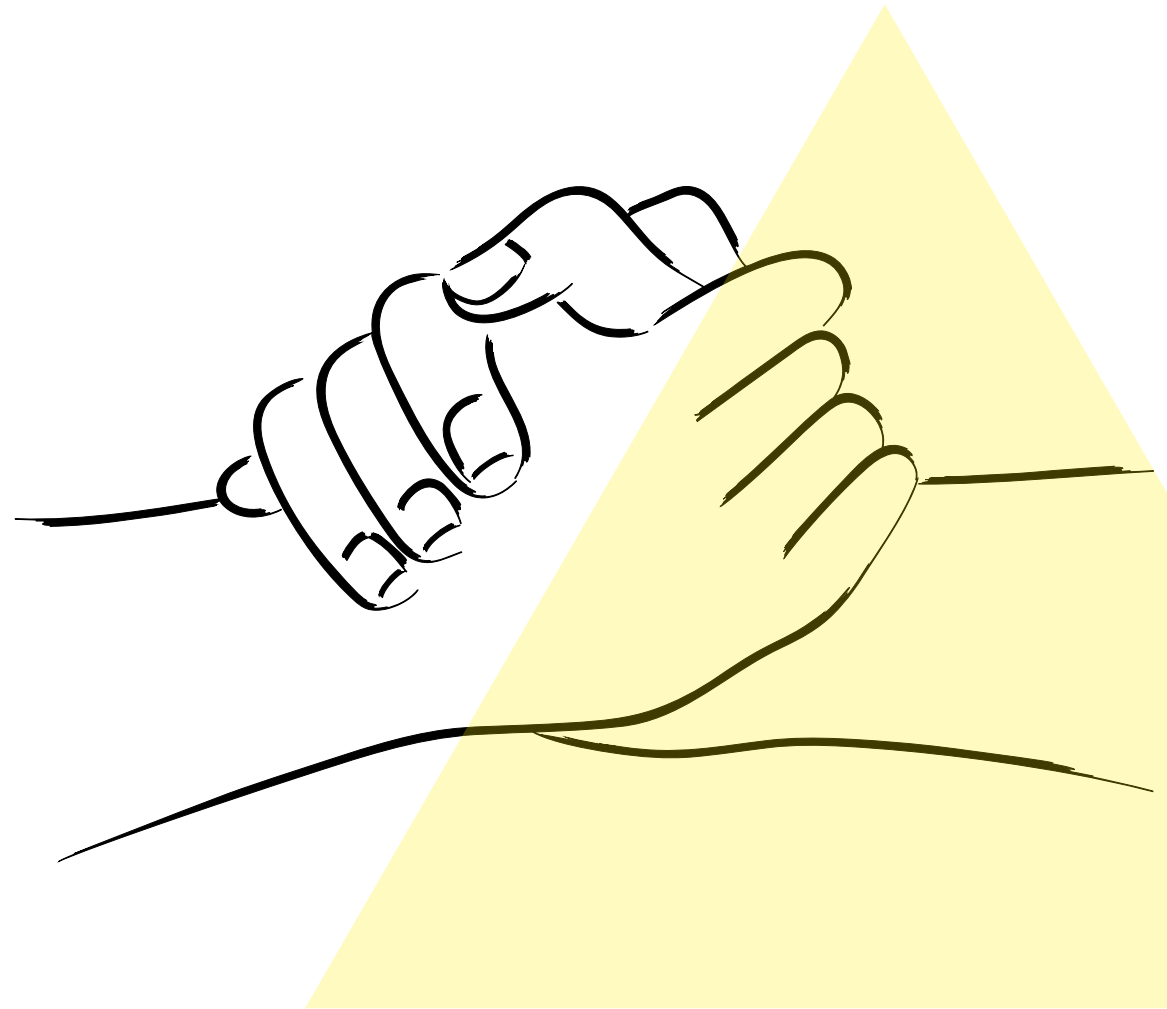
“Lately, I just want to stay in my house and not go outside. I feel like I always need to be ready to fight to prove that people shouldn’t mess with me. If I go out, I go with a group of friends – I won’t let something like that happen again. A few days ago, my friend was running to catch up with me after school... All I heard were feet charging at me, and I turned, ready to fight. I wasn’t going to let myself be attacked again.”

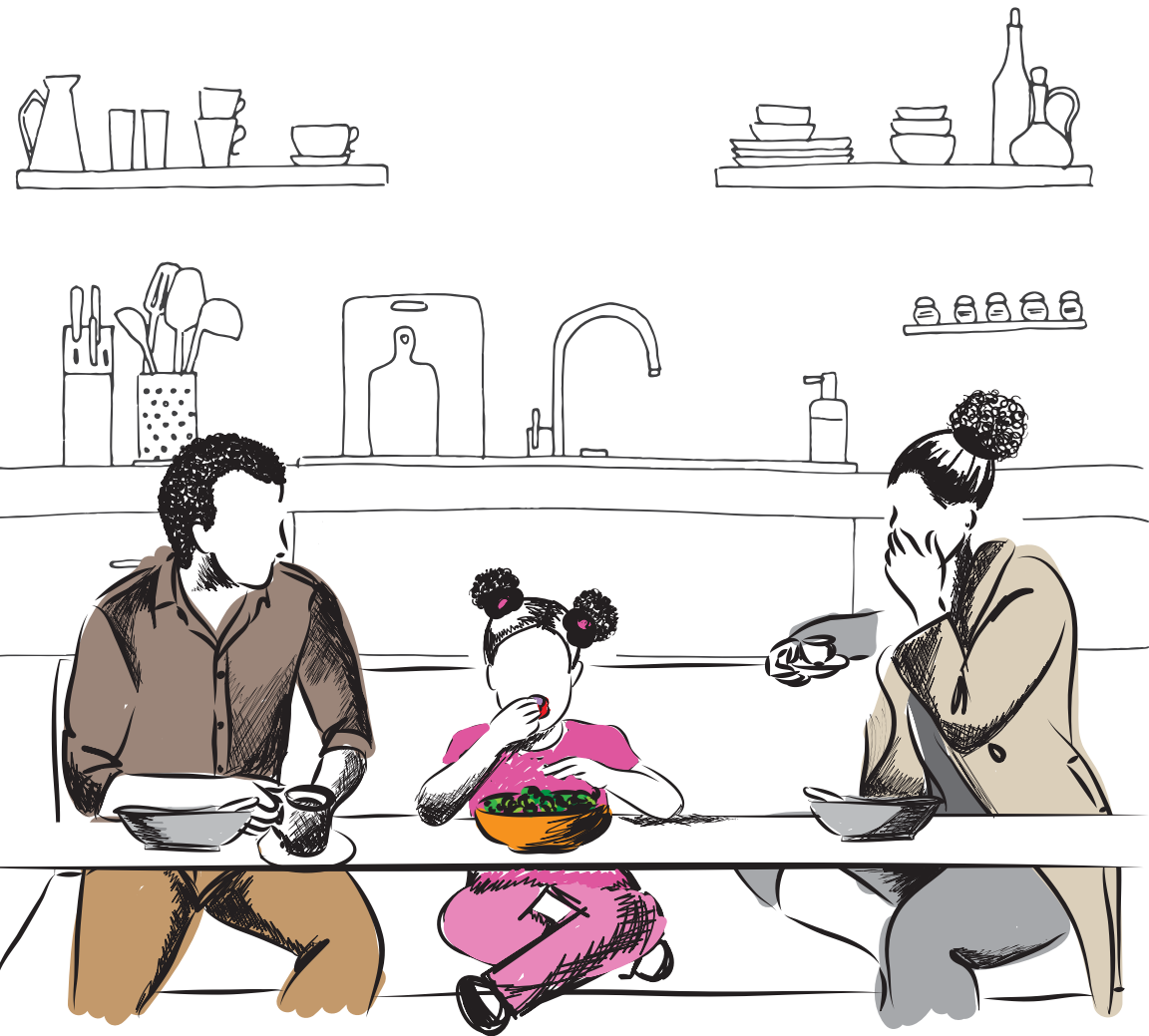




“I’m actually getting ready to have a baby of my own. Everyone keeps telling me how happy I should be, but lately, that couldn’t feel further from the truth. I feel anxious most of the time - I’m having trouble sleeping. I find myself lying awake at night worrying that what happened to me could happen to my daughter.”

We may not always recognize when an experience affects the way we feel or act – we may not even consider what happened to be out of the ordinary. After all, aren't tough times just the way it is? But no matter how we think of it: trauma, or just *life* - it helps to remember that it is *normal* and *common* for scary, intense or overwhelming experiences to impact us. The good news is, every person can be resilient - and can bounce back in extraordinary ways!





“My teacher talked to my parents about what’s happening at school and said she has been worried about me. She told my parents about an after-school program she thought would be good for me. At first, I was mad that my teacher called, but my parents told me they aren’t mad at me. Things still aren’t perfect at home, but I’ve been feeling a little better. Last night, we ate dinner together and I told my parents about a couple of new friends in my after-school club who make me laugh. I’m not mad at my teacher anymore, I know she was just looking out for me.”

“I finally told my mom about what happened, and some of the stuff that’s been running through my head ever since that night. After we talked, she set me up with a counselor. I didn’t want to go at first but talking about it is helping me deal with it better. I’m less on edge than I was.”



“Lately I’ve been going on long walks with my neighbor. She has children of her own and is a great listener. She reminds me how strong I am and tells me she believes I’ll be a great mother. Even though I can’t erase what happened to me in the past, I’m feeling less anxious and more hopeful that things will be different for my daughter.”



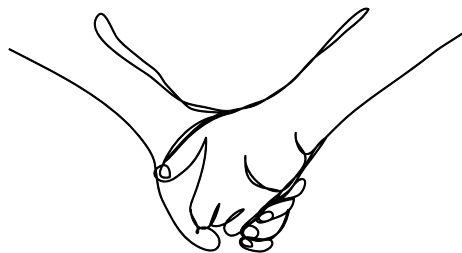
As you can see from Candace, Kevin, and Maria, there are many ways we might react to difficult experiences - and many ways we can be resilient.

Activities we enjoy, healthy routines, and building connections with others can help us heal and feel like ourselves again.

Many people find it helpful to talk about their difficult experiences - to feel supported and know that we are not alone. For some, it helps to work with a professional like a therapist, counselor, or psychiatrist.

Think about what makes you feel like your best self and try to engage in these actions regularly.

And remember, reaching out for support is brave – and you are never alone!



Finding Support in Allegheny County

Resolve: 1-888-796-8226

A free 24-hour mental health crisis service, including a 24-hour hotline, mobile crisis team, walk-in center, and services for children and teens. Call anytime to speak with a trained clinician.

Allegheny Link: 1-866-730-2368 or AlleghenyLink@AlleghenyCounty.US

If you or someone you know are looking for information to connect with community resources focused on supports for caregivers of children 0-5, people with any disability, older adults, or anyone experiencing a housing crisis, contact the Allegheny Link.

Allegheny Family Network (AFN): 1-888-273-2361

Through peer to peer Support, AFN helps parents raising children with mental health and behavioral concerns navigate the child serving systems. Call our CHATLINE for support and information about our free programs.

NAMI Keystone Pennsylvania: 1-888-264-7972

NAMI is dedicated to improving the lives of individuals and families affected by mental illness. For information on support groups, educational programs, and mental health resources, call NAMI Keystone Pennsylvania's HelpLine.

Sources: Allegheny County DHS Family Member Trauma Resource Workgroup; Allegheny Family Network: 'Ready, Set, Use Your Voice' Workgroup; Allegheny County DHS Youth Support Partner Unit, Allegheny County DHS Trauma Think Tank; Child Welfare Trauma Training Toolkit, 2nd Edition, 2014; phoenixaustralia.org/recovery/helping-children-and-teens/; Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, www.samhsa.gov; NCTSN.org, 2014.



Allegheny County DHS wants your feedback! Use the QR code or text NeverAlone to 412-324-3388.



SAMHSA

Substance Abuse and Mental Health
Services Administration