



# An Innovative Approach to Working with Youth with Sexual Behavior Problems



**Stevens Treatment Programs  
Swansea, MA**

# Jumping In...



**How do you define safety  
in the context of  
residential treatment?**

# OBJECTIVES



Share relevant background regarding Stevens

Describe the nature of problematic sexual behaviors in adolescents

Provide education regarding residential practice with youth with sexual behavior problems

Share how Stevens maximizes safety

Teach about how Stevens' evolved philosophy and practice to become trauma-informed, reduce stigma and create a more inclusive environment



**STEVENS**  
TREATMENT PROGRAMS

# A LOOK BACK

Founded in 1939 as orphanage

1980's – Special Education School,  
Residential Treatment

Youth with Sexual Behaviors & Fire Setting

Day School

2006 - Intensive Group Home





# THE STEVENS JOURNEY...

Where  
were we?

Where are  
we now?

Where do  
we want  
to be?



<i>As of 2/25/22</i>	RESIDENTIAL EDUCATION (22 total)	DAY SCHOOL (5 total)	TOTAL
Sexual Behavior Problems	16	5	21
Fire Setting Behaviors	15	2	17
Substance Use Behaviors	11	2	13
Criminal Involvement / Charges	10	1	11

# Sexually Reactive Behavior

Range of sexual behaviors;  
Participation by others is NOT voluntary

## **Behavior:**

May not be in child's full conscious control  
May appear robotic and compulsive  
Not typically secretive  
Child usually stops once discovered

**MOTIVATION FOR  
THE BEHAVIOR**



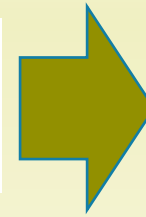
Represents repetition  
of abusive experiences

# Mutual Sexual Behavior

Same-age or near same-age children who have histories of sexual abuse; Participation is voluntary

## **STONE OF THE BEHAVIOR**

## **MOTIVATION FOR THE BEHAVIORS**



Focused on engaging in sexual behaviors  
Shows little emotion re: the sexual behaviors  
Conspire together to keep the behavior a secret  
Behavior is usually planned  
If discovered, become more adept at hiding the behavior

May have been a sexually reactive child who did not get help needed  
Uses sexual behaviors to cope with feelings of abandonment, anxiety, sadness, and despair and the lack of adult attachment figures  
Connects to other children to meet his/her emotional needs



# Sexually Abusive Behavior

**NOT voluntary**

Younger children or anyone vulnerable, such as someone who is mentally, challenged, a person who is alone, an animal, etc.

**MOTIVATION FOR THE BEHAVIOR**

Experience of sexual abuse

Sexual abuse to combat feelings of powerlessness & get needs met

Sexuality and aggression may have become closely linked in the child's mind

Sexualize relationships and situations

Thinks about sexual behaviors much of the time

Often a compulsive quality to the behavior

May experience intense confusion regarding sexual issues

Frequently uses coercion, manipulation, threat

May increase in frequency and intensity

May include physical and sexual violence

**STONE OF THE BEHAVIOR**

# A LOOK BACK

## LANGUAGE

Sexual Offender  
Emotional Disturbance  
Safety  
Consequence  
Structure / Routine

## THE WAY THINGS WERE

## IMPACT

Youth Good at Stevens  
Not prepared for Future  
Very mixed experience at Stevens

## PROGRAM

Focus on Consequences for Behavior  
Focus on Reduction of Negative Behavior  
Focus on Physical Safety  
Limited Community Access  
Cognitive-behavioral Model  
Privilege System

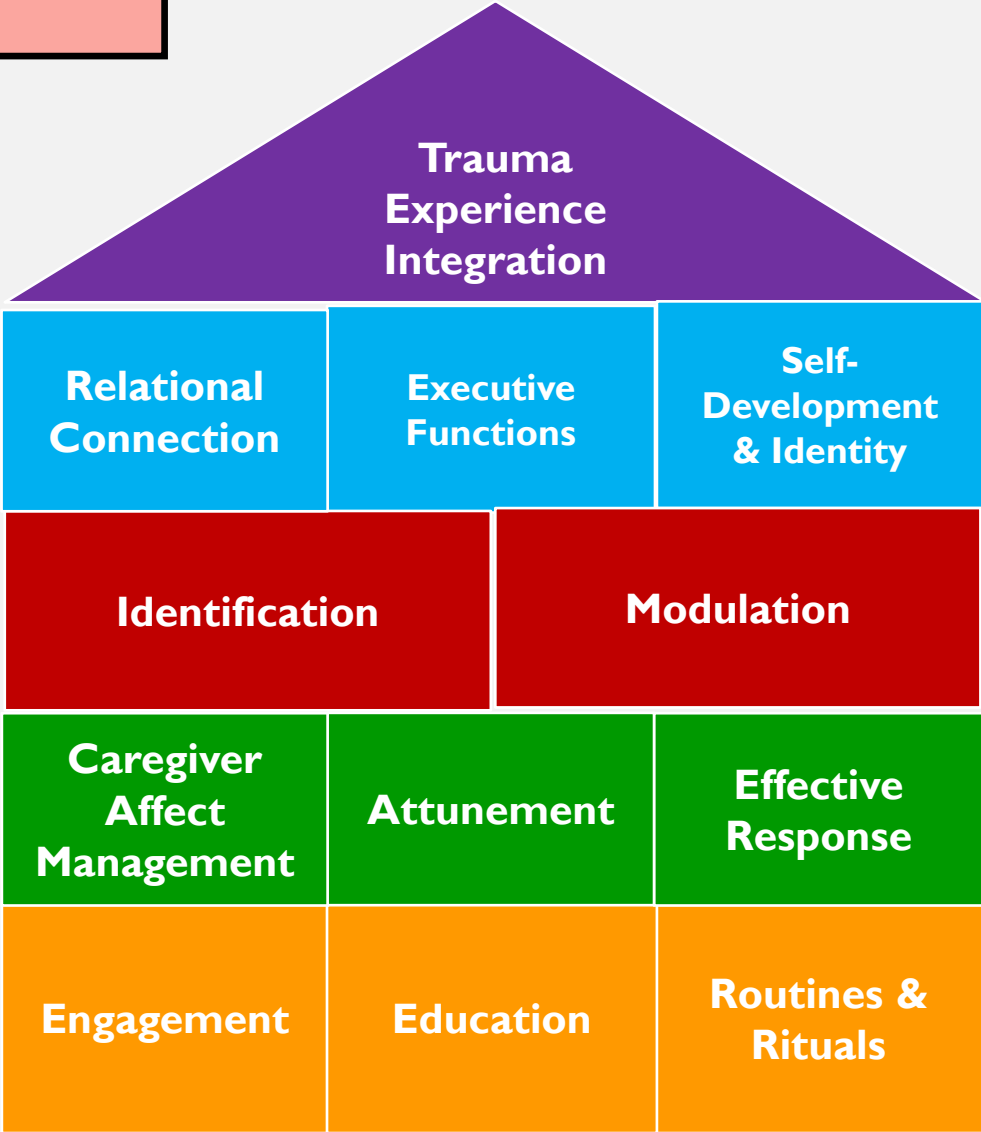


# ARC FRAMEWORK

# 8 PRIMARY SKILLS

Primary Domains

- Competency
- Regulation
- Attachment



Cross Cutting Strategies

# AGENCY EVOLUTION

**Trauma-informed Care**

**Commitment to Inclusivity**

**Strategic Planning**

**Community Collaboration**

**National Accreditation**

**Organizational Culture**

**Board of Directors Transitions**

**Program & Financial Diversification**



# PROGRAM EVOLUTION

**Shift in Program Philosophy and Behavioral Support Model**

**Family Involvement**

**Permanency Focus**

**....And much more!**

**Youth Voice**





# Uninformed View



# Uninformed Response

Anger management problems; May have ADHD (or other dx); *Choosing* to act out & disrupt classroom / cottage (e.g., disrespectful or manipulative); Uncontrollable, destructive  
Non-responsive

Youth needs consequences to correct behavior or maybe an ADHD (or other) evaluation; Youth needs discipline or consequences only to correct behavior

# Trauma-informed View



# Trauma-informed Response

Maladaptive responses;  
Seeking to meet needs met;  
Difficulty regulating emotions;  
Lacking necessary skills;  
Negative view of world  
(e.g. adults cannot be trusted);  
Trauma response was triggered

Youth needs to learn skills to regulate emotions & we need to provide support

# PROGRAM DESIGN

Monitoring &  
Supervision

Facility &  
Program  
Structure

Behavioral  
Response

Safety  
Restrictions

Individual &  
Group  
Therapy

Trauma-  
informed  
Care

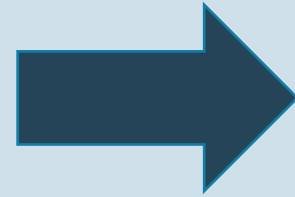
Team-based &  
Collaborative

Clear  
Expectations

Be Proactive

Educate &  
Learn

# SUPERVISION



**CONSTANT OBSERVATION AND MONITORING IS KEY**

*What do you think staff are looking for??*

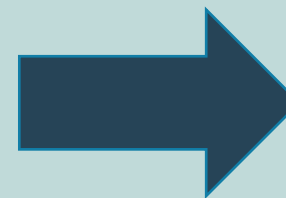
Observe and remain attuned to ALL other youth... when engaging with youth, during activity, during transition, etc.

Attention to other staff for real-time communication

Supervision at night



# FACILITY / SPACE



Camera Placement

Seating

Facility Layout

Alarms

Privacy Considerations



# NATURAL POINTS OF WEAKNESS

**The view from above...**

**...is not the same from below**

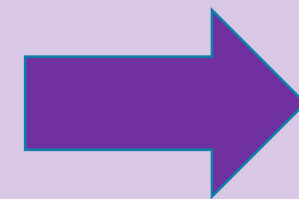


# NATURAL POINTS OF WEAKNESS – SCHOOL

The view from above...

...is not the same from below

# PROGRAM STRUCTURE



Camera Use

Daily Routine

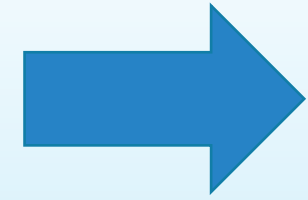
Safety  
Restrictions

Purposeful Rules

Touch Policy;  
alternatives for touch



# STAFF PRO-ACTIVITY



- Policies and procedures ~ Read, understand agency, review, clarify
- Be familiar with youth' histories
- Notice patterns of behaviors
- Mind personal space
- Speak your voice ~ Bring observations up in meetings, write them in logs, speak to supervisor
- Observe ~ What are their peer interactions like? Other social interactions?
- Reflect ~ What NEED is the behavior meeting?
- Watch hands!

# BEHAVIORAL RESPONSE

## LOW RISK / NON-SAFETY BEHAVIOR

Sexualized language or gestures,  
Inappropriate conversations or  
writings,  
Clothing manipulated for  
exposure,  
Items discovered during  
room/locker searches

## RESPONSE

- Ask youth to step aside to a discreet, public location
- Speak to the youth about the behavior
- Inform residential director and clinician
  - Document
  - Possibly consequence
- Make change to individual safety plan, if needed

# BEHAVIORAL RESPONSE

## RESPONSE

### HIGH RISK / SAFETY BEHAVIORS

Exposure,  
Frottage,  
Inappropriate  
Touching

Quickly approach the youth and ask them to step into a timeout room or other private area (on camera)

If youth stops, proceed...

If youth does not stop, minimize exposure and risk to others by removing youth or others; Notify others & make changes to individual safety plan

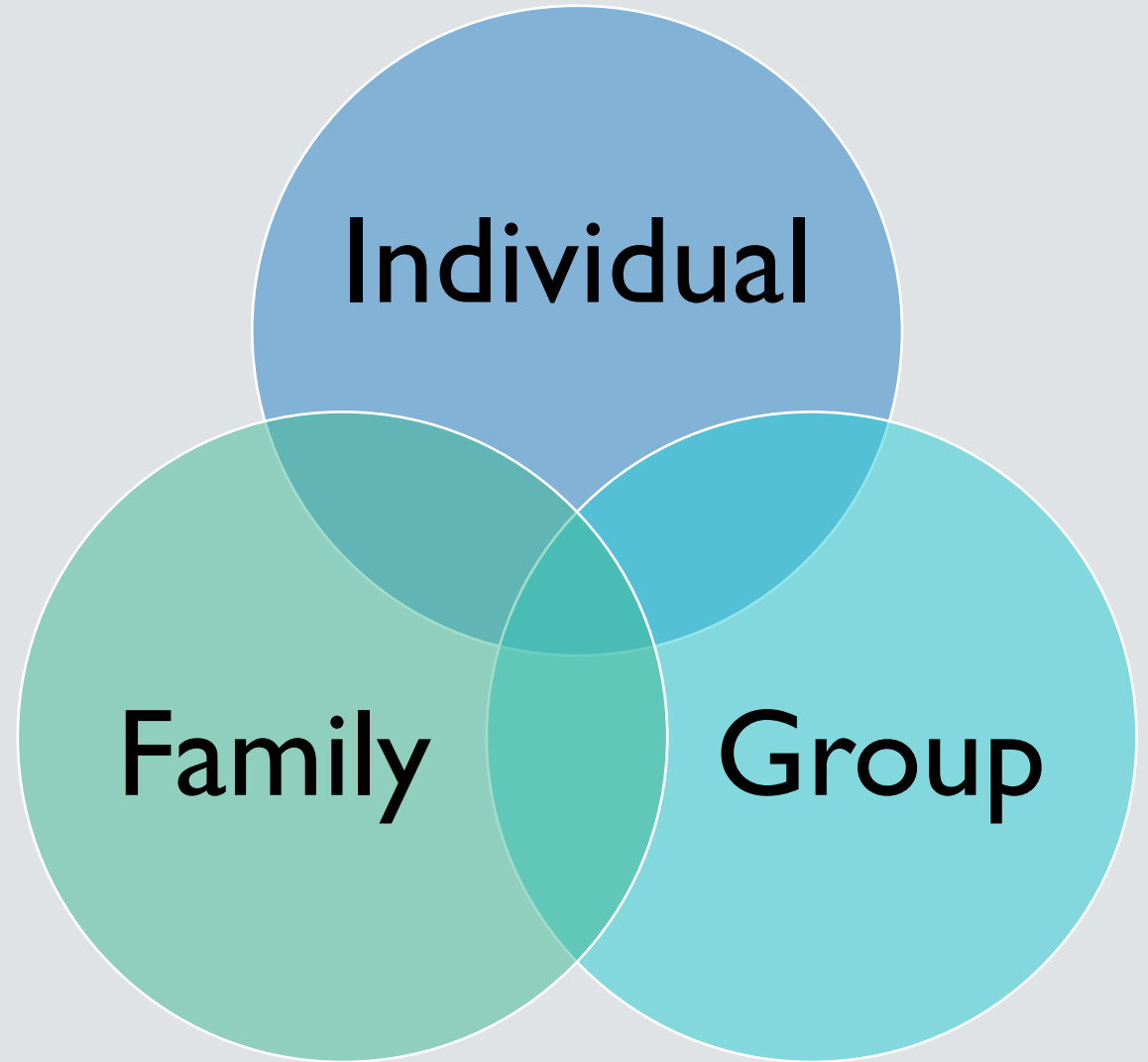


# CLINICAL TREATMENT

TASBI – Treatment for Adolescents with Sexual Behavior Issues

**Major components:**

- Address own trauma
- Acknowledge behavior
  - Learn new coping
    - Apology





# EDUCATION

## Staff

- Training
- Supervision
- Youth Roundtable
- Treatment Teams

## Youth

- Human Sexuality
- Consent
- Rules & expectations
- Bias

## Families

- Family Therapy
- Visit Plans
- Family Workshops



# PROGRAMMATIC CONSIDERATIONS

ADDRESSING BIAS - INTERNAL AND COMMUNITY

ONGOING QUALITY IMPROVEMENT - ALWAYS ASK WHY

COMMUNITY RISK - MANAGING OFF-GROUNDS ACCESS

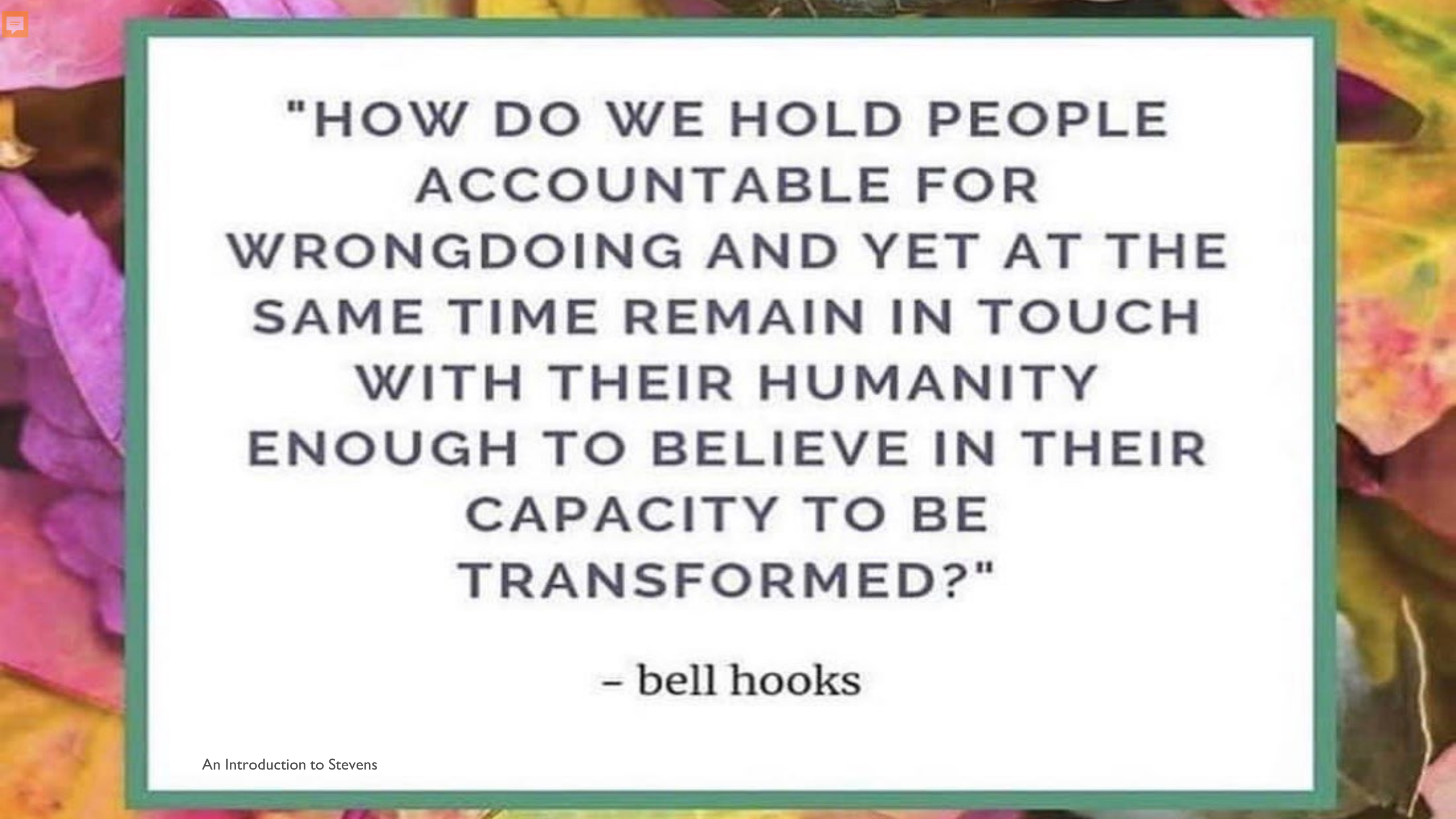
NORMALIZED ACTIVITIES - INDEPENDANCE VS. RISK  
MANAGEMENT



# **Stevens Commitment to Inclusivity & Social Justice**

**Inclusivity Committee**  
**Training Series on Racial**  
**Injustice, Privilege, Bias**  
**Gender Affirmation PQI**  
**Personal Care PQI**  
**Training on Gangs**  
**Training on Working with**  
**LGBTQ Youth**

**Staff Recruitment**  
**Board Recruitment**  
**Policy & Practice Changes**  
**Community Access**  
**Social Justice Club**  
**Pride Club**  
**Cultural Presentations**  
**Diversity & Inclusivity**  
**Celebrations**



"HOW DO WE HOLD PEOPLE  
ACCOUNTABLE FOR  
WRONGDOING AND YET AT THE  
SAME TIME REMAIN IN TOUCH  
WITH THEIR HUMANITY  
ENOUGH TO BELIEVE IN THEIR  
CAPACITY TO BE  
TRANSFORMED?"

- bell hooks