



26TH MAKING HEALTHFUL DECISIONS CONFERENCE

Building Connection, Community and Belonging

Learn about stress-reducing, regenerative, and practical tools that support the well-being of children, youth, and adults.

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 1, 2024

Registration Opens: 8:15 A.M.

Program Time: 9:00 A.M. - 4:30 P.M.

Dutchess Community College
53 Pendell Road
Poughkeepsie, NY 12601

Scan or [Click Here](#) to Register



For more information, contact: Carol McLaughlin
cm798@cornell.edu or 845.344.1234

Overcoming loneliness, isolation, and hopelessness happens in community! Immerse yourself in community-building strategies, making connections, and experiencing belonging. The conference will provide experiential learning, research-based information, and opportunities to engage in healing-centered dialogues.

Presenters will share current research, insights, practices, and steps to creating a culture of community that supports the varying range of everyone's needs, including their identities, abilities, and economic power.

WHO SHOULD ATTEND?

Educators, Human Service Professionals, Administrators, Mental Health and Health Care Providers, Special Education Professionals, Childcare Professionals, Seniors, Students, Parents and anyone who is interested and supports youth and families.

PRICING:

\$80/person

\$60/Seniors Age 65+ or Students

CTLEs are available! For more information, contact Carol McLaughlin cm798@cornell.edu or 845.344.1234

ORGANIZED BY:

Cornell Cooperative Extension
Orange County

Cornell Cooperative Extension
Sullivan County

Cornell Cooperative Extension
Dutchess County



Steven M. Neuhaus
County Executive



CO-SPONSORED BY:



Garnet Health

DUTCHESS
COMMUNITY COLLEGE

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PROGRAM AGENDA

Morning

8:15 A.M.

Registration and Light Breakfast

9:00 A.M.

Welcome, Reflection & Land Acknowledgement

Julika von Stackelberg

9:30 A.M.

Update on the State of Families

Dr. Ebony Green

9:50 A.M.

Keynote Address: Transforming Stigma into Strength

Mike Veny

11:05 A.M. - Morning Workshops

Black/BIPOC Maternal Health in the Hudson Valley: Building a Community Begins at Birth

Denise Bolds

Soulful Connections: Harnessing Empathy to Power

Leah Gooch

The Art of Co-regulations and Connections: From a Polyvagal Perspective

Melissa O'Connor and Jennifer Simpkins

12:05 P.M.

Lunch

Want to learn more about today's speakers?

Visit our website at:

<https://cceorangecounty.org/community-resilience/making-healthy-decisions-conference>

OR Scan the QR Code!



Afternoon

12:45 P.M.

Parent Panel: A Glimpse into the Daily Stressors Faced by Families of Children with Special Needs

Adhara Jimenez-Banse,
Stacey Orzell, and
Yaa Yaa Whaley-Williams

1:30 P.M.

Mindfulness and Movement Moment

Malinda Ware

1:50 P.M. - Afternoon Workshops

The Choosing Love Mindset: Thriving not just Surviving Post Traumatic Growth

Scarlett Lewis

A Trauma-informed Approach to Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

Jaye Holly

Handle with Care Program

Marla Behler, Frank Guglieri, and
Matthew Kraisky

Connection: Collaborating with Community Resources for Youth Ages 0-21

Michelle Varvaro

3:00 P.M.

In here/Out there: Integrating Contemplative Practices in Our Life and Our Work

Anthony Dandridge,
Terry Murray and Chris Whitaker

4:30 P.M.

Conclusion and Wrap-Up



PROGRAM DESCRIPTIONS

All of the following speakers are in order of the agenda



Update on the State of Families

Dr. Ebony Green, CEO of Cornerstone Equity Consultants

In this inspiring 20-minute keynote session, we will explore the profound impact of working together as a community and the essential role of collective care in building stronger, more resilient societies. By embracing the values of empathy and cooperation, we can create environments where everyone feels valued and supported.



Keynote: Transforming Stigma into Strength

Mike Veny, CEO & Certified Corporate Wellness Specialist

During the next year, one in five people will experience a mental health challenge, and 1.5 million people will attempt to die by suicide. The stigma surrounding mental health is an enormous barrier to people seeking treatment and getting the help they need. And here's a proven solution: Transforming Stigma®. This high-energy keynote presentation performs double duty as an important educational experience and as entertainment for your audience. You've got an important decision to make.

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PROGRAM DESCRIPTIONS

Morning Breakout Sessions



Black/BIPOC Maternal Health in the Hudson Valley: Building a Community Begins at Birth

Denise Bolds, MSW, CD (DONA), CLC, CBE Doctoral Student
<http://www.bolddoula.com/> and www.BlackWomenDoVBAC.com

This session addresses critical issues related to isolation, loneliness and disconnection in the context of helpful decision making, maternal health and doula support in the Hudson Valley. Attendees will acquire the knowledge and skills to foster community, connection, and inclusivity, both personally and professionally, despite external factors. They will engage in thoughtful discussions and explore actionable practices to implement in their day-to-day lives.



Soulful Connections: Harnessing Empathy to Power

Leah Gooch, M.Ed., 500RYT
www.fourminutesaday.org

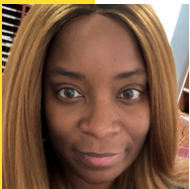
Leah will provide a unique workshop that combines various artistic and contemplative practices to cultivate creativity and empathy. Incorporating music, poetry, movement, and meditations can be powerful tools for self-expression and connecting with others on a deeper level. By engaging in these exercises, participants explore their own creative potential while also developing empathy and understanding for others. By incorporating these practices into their lives, participants may enhance their ability to connect with and understand the needs of others, ultimately improving their service and impact.



The Art of Co-Regulation and Connection: From a Polyvagal Perspective

Melissa O'Connor and Jennifer Simpkins

A sense of safety, and connection are key factors in our ability to interact with others, to learn, to grow, and thrive. However, there are various factors that can and have impeded upon our connection and sense of safety with others, from our own personal traumas or collective traumas such as, a global pandemic. This workshop explores the role of the vagus nerve and how it contributes to our emotion regulation, social connection, and fear response. Participants will have the opportunity to increase knowledge of and actively apply skills and techniques that promote co-regulation, a key factor in calming our nervous system, which can be used within therapy sessions, the classroom, or when interacting with our own children and loved ones.



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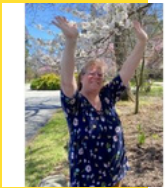
PROGRAM DESCRIPTIONS

After Lunch



Parent Panel: A Glimpse into the Daily Stressors Faced by Families of Children with Special Needs

Adhara Jimenez-Banse, Stacey Orzell and Yaa Yaa Whaley-Williams



Panelists will share stories, experiences, and strategies they learned from raising children with diverse and special needs to inspire communities in their efforts to build inclusive environments where children and their caregivers can thrive.

Topics such as behavioral issues versus sensory overload and how to increase advocacy and education improvements will be addressed, providing perspectives on including the needs of children with sensitivities and their families holistically in day-to-day interactions.



Mindfulness Moment: The Power of Music and Movement for Creating Connection, Community, and Inclusivity.

Presented by Malinda Ware, MBA



The Soul Stretching mindfulness exercise will create an opportunity to develop a culture of community and connection. Soul stretching is a gentle exercise that uses elements of Call and Response to enhance our ability to listen to our favorite music, breathe and ground ourselves, strengthen the body, and let ourselves just be in the moment as we reflect. This is a beautiful display that combines movement, music, and mindfulness to encourage a collective experience of inclusivity.

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PROGRAM DESCRIPTIONS

Afternoon Workshops



The Choosing Love Mindset: Thriving Not Just for Surviving Post Traumatic Growth

Presented by Scarlett Lewis, Founder of The Jesse Lewis Choose Love Movement

Scarlett's story opens hearts with an inspiring message her 6 year-old son left on their kitchen chalkboard, 'Nurturing Healing Love' days before his murder at Sandy Hook Elementary School. Realizing this was a solution, she decided to provide solutions that address the root cause of the suffering that leads to diseases of despair. Follow Scarlett's journey of turning pain into passion with a powerful formula enabling them to thoughtfully respond in their full power with love in any situation. Dive into the Choose Love Mindset and discover the neuroscience of overcoming fear that limits us.



A Trauma-Informed Approach to Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

Presented by Jaye Holly

We know that traumatic stress can have significant impact on the developing brains and bodies of children. There is a growing body of knowledge around the impact of the toxic stress brought on by racism and other kinds of oppression. Being marginalized based on your skin color, your gender, your faith, your physical ability, your family heritage, or any other demographic characteristic can have devastating impact. Of course, this doesn't just impact children; systemic oppression and unconscious bias have psychological and physiological impacts on adults as well. In this workshop, we will look at a trauma-informed approach to understanding and addressing racism and other kinds of oppression. We will look at practical approaches that can be applied in day-to-day interactions – from adult to child, as well as between adults.



Handle with Care - Promoting Partnerships to Help Traumatized Children Heal!

Presented by Marla Behler, MSW, Frank Guglieri, M.ED. and Matthew J. Kraisky, Sergeant

The **Handle With Care (HWC) program** aims to ensure that children who are exposed to crime, violence, or abuse receive appropriate interventions so they can succeed in school to the best of their ability. Research now shows that trauma can undermine children's ability to learn, form relationships, and function appropriately in the classroom. HWC programs support children exposed to trauma and violence through improved communication and collaboration between first responders, school agencies and community agencies, and connects families, schools and communities to community services. The presentation will share how Putnam County developed and implemented their program, lessons learned and the importance of community collaboration to protect children.



The **Handle With Care program** aims to educate teachers, staff, and students on trauma and its impacts. This program promotes awareness and understanding of trauma, reducing stigmatization, and fostering empathy and compassion within the school community. It also equips students and faculty with the knowledge and skills to recognize and address trauma in themselves and others, contributing to a more supportive and healing environment.



PROGRAM DESCRIPTIONS



Connection: Collaborating with Community Resources for Youth Ages 0-21

Presented by Michelle Varvaro

Michelle created a Community Youth Collaborative in the Capital Region. This collaborative is a networking and resource sharing group for anyone working with youth ages 0-21. In 18 months, she now has over 170 members. This workshop will provide ways on how to begin a community initiative, discussion on finding appropriate resources, ways to share information and current marketing methods.

Closing

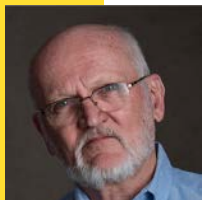


Closing: In Here/Out There: Integrating Contemplative Practices in Our Life and Our Work

**Presenters: Anthony Dandridge PhD, Terry Murray PhD and
Chris Whitaker MS Ed Multicultural Counseling**

A growing body of work documents the power of integrating contemplative practices as we work to foster connection, community and inclusion through our individual and collective efforts. In this closing session, participants will be introduced to and practice some of the inner skills and attitudes needed to nurture and strengthen these three critical social dynamics in their lives and in their work. Contemplative practice is a holistic, experiential, and interactive approach to teaching/learning/helping/leading that fosters attention, focus, awareness, understanding, compassion, and the ability to listen and communicate across differences.

Contemplative practices also promote creative problem-solving and a consideration of our individual and collective impact on the world we live in. In this experiential, interactive and reflective closing session, participants will learn and experience the following: How contemplative and mindfulness theory/practice can be used as an approach to fostering connection, community and inclusion in their lives and work - Several contemplative skills will be practiced, including grounding and centering, mindful movement, contemplative writing, mindful communication, and movement from thought and intention to action; An overview and sharing of resources that describe and support this inner/outer work



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