

# Triggers, Trauma, and Telecommunicators

Brandi Powell  
PSAP Ambassador



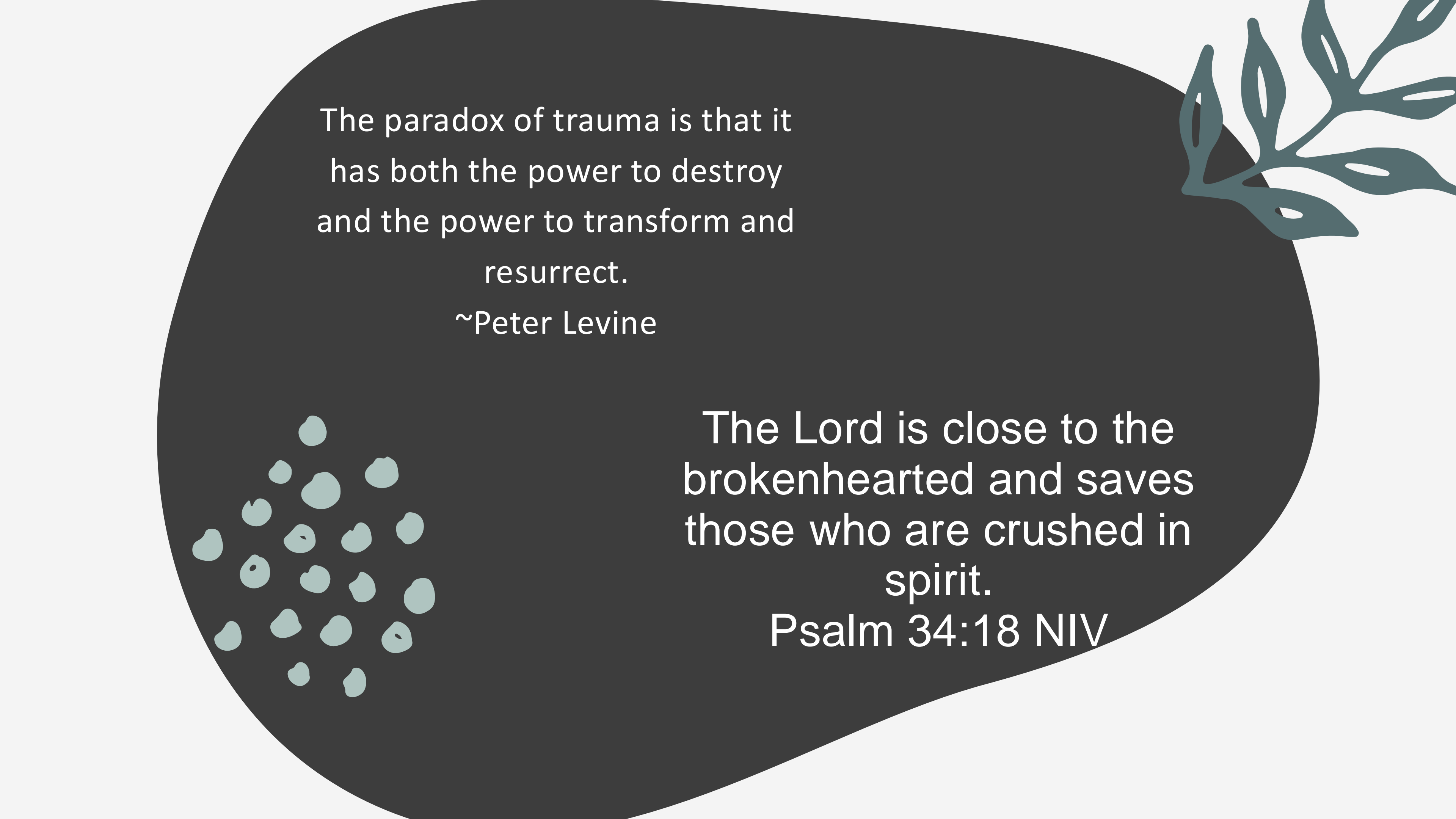
PREPARED

# Who Am I?

## Brandi Powell

- 911 Professional with over 15 years in dispatch, training, quality assurance, and system administration experience.
- Ordained minister with over 12 years of pastoral and teaching experience.
- Certified Christian Grief Coach
- Certified Law Enforcement Chaplain
- Published Author
- Executive Director and Founder of Emerge 911 Training and Consulting Inc. A non-profit that serves 911 dispatch.
- PSAP Ambassador for Prepared 911.





The paradox of trauma is that it  
has both the power to destroy  
and the power to transform and  
resurrect.

~Peter Levine

The Lord is close to the  
brokenhearted and saves  
those who are crushed in  
spirit.

Psalm 34:18 NIV



BREAK THE ICE!

FIND SOMEONE WHO....

# The Role of Leadership



- Leaders Influence Culture
- Preventing Burnout
- Early Intervention
- Building Resilience
- Creating Safe Places
- Role Modeling
- Long Term Impact

# What is Trauma?

Trauma is emotional distress caused by the recurrent tormenting memory of a horrific event witnessed or experienced.

01

## ACUTE

Acute trauma results from a single incident.

02

## CHRONIC

Chronic trauma is repeated and prolonged such as domestic violence or abuse.

03

## COMPLEX

Complex trauma is exposure to varied and multiple traumatic events, often of an invasive, interpersonal nature.

# What is Secondary Trauma?

- Also known as Compassion Fatigue or Vicarious Trauma
- Emotional and Psychological distress that can result from hearing about the traumatic experiences of others.
- Symptoms can include feelings of helplessness, sadness, anxiety, or intrusive thoughts.

QUESTION: IN WHAT WAYS DO YOU THINK REPEATED EXPOSURE TO TRAUMATIC CALLS AFFECTS DISPATCHERS BOTH PERSONALLY AND PROFESSIONALLY?



# Let's Talk About Triggers



1



What is a Trigger?

2

Do You Know  
What Triggers  
You?

3

How Do You  
Respond when  
You Are  
Triggered?





# Common Stress Responses to Triggers



Fight



Flight




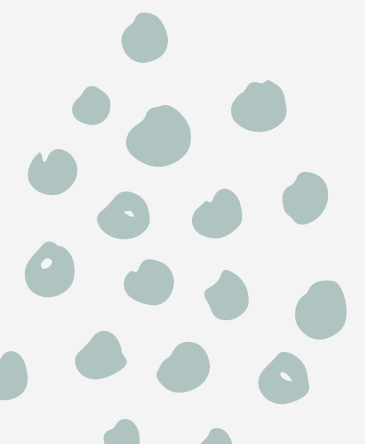
Freeze



Fawn



"Trauma responses often involve a range of reactions, from aggression and defiance (fight) to avoidance and withdrawal (flight), to feeling paralyzed or numb (freeze), and sometimes even attempting to please or appease the source of threat (fawn). Understanding these responses can help us make sense of our experiences and find pathways to healing." - Babette Rothschild, "The Body Remembers: The Psychophysiology of Trauma and Trauma Treatment"



# Common Stress Responses to Triggers

Fight

Flight

Freeze

Fawn

1. What are some subtle behavioral changes you've noticed in dispatchers after a particularly difficult call, and how did you approach the situation?
2. How do you balance the need to address performance issues with compassion when you suspect a dispatcher is struggling with secondary trauma or a triggering event?
3. Can you recall a time when you successfully recognized that a dispatcher was triggered and intervened? What steps did you take to support them, and what was the outcome?



Are You Prepared to  
SHIFT?

# S.H.I.F.T

S

Spot Signs and Triggers

H

Harbor a Culture of Support

I

Initiate Conversations and Interventions

F

Focus on Solutions

T

Train and Empower Continuously

# Spot Signs & Triggers

Stay Observant



Know Your Team



Encourage Open Communication



# Harbor a Culture of Support

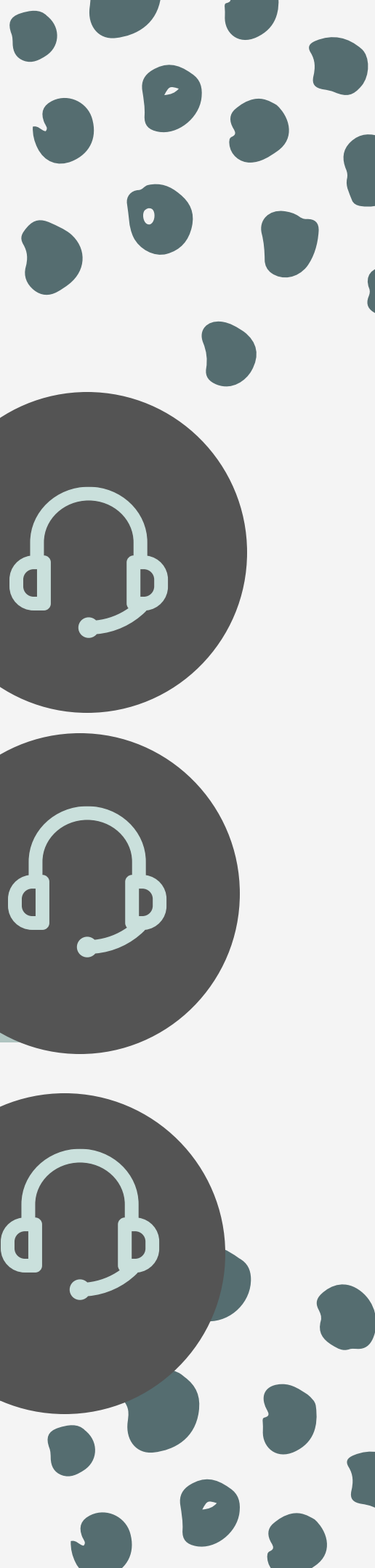
Create a Safe Space



Encourage Wellness Practices



Foster Peer Support



# Initiate Conversations and Interventions

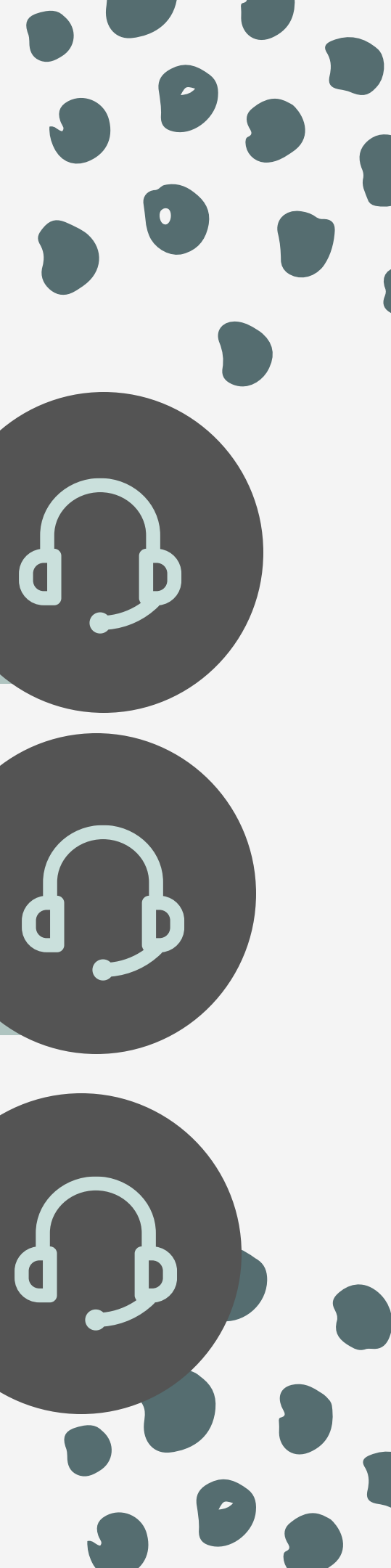
Check-in Regularly



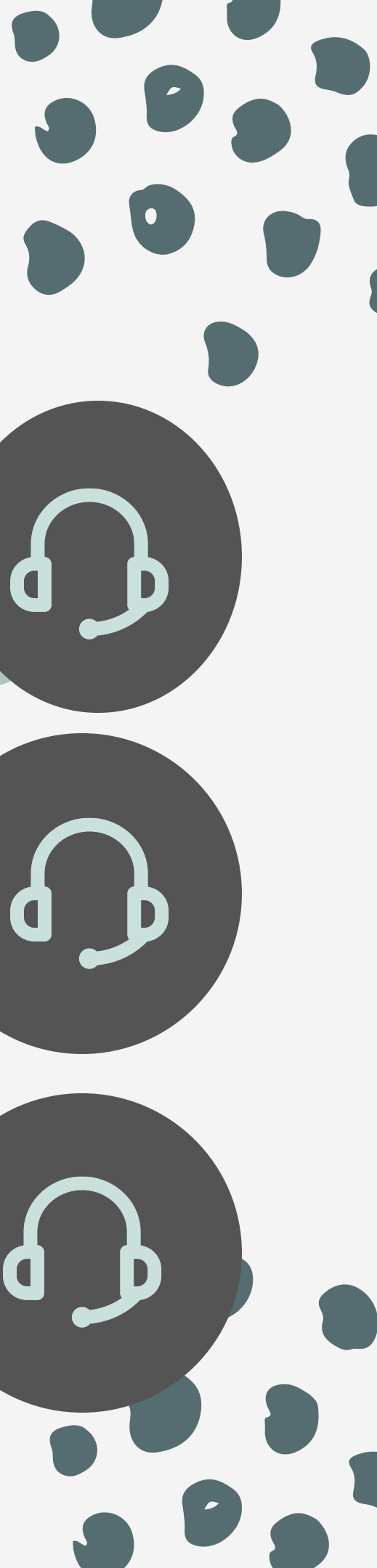
Address Issues Early



Promote Resources



# Focus on Solutions



Problem Solving Together



Reframe Challenges



Celebrate Small Wins





# Train and Empower Continuously



Ongoing Education



Empower Peer Support



Lead By Example



Professional Development







# Discussion Questions

How can you incorporate wellness check-ins into your teams routine?

What are some ways you've successfully created a culture of support in your center?

How can you empower your team to manage stress and trauma more effectively?



# Final Thoughts



Prioritize Wellness



Recognize the Signs



Foster a Culture of Support



Lead By Example



Empower Your Team





# Thank You for All You Do!

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