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ACE Studies: The Next 30 Years

STARs Day, Friday, May 22, 2026

**The global gathering advancing trauma recovery,
prevention and survivor leadership - Honoring the science
elevating the story - protecting the next generation**

Hosted by Star Network Foundation® - In partnership with
survivor-led, prevention and recovery organizations worldwide

**“No survivor
should have to
walk the path
to healing alone.”**



Program Notice

The Scars to STARs Summit® 2026 agenda is designed as a dynamic, global experience. Session timing, speakers, and program elements are subject to change without notice to accommodate live program delivery, speaker availability, and ongoing enhancements.

STARs Day

Held annually on the fourth Friday of May in honor of Mental Health Awareness Month.

A survivor-centered, globally accessible experience designed to move from awareness to action.

Scars to STARs Day® brings together survivors, scientists, clinicians, policymakers, educators, and community leaders to accelerate trauma-informed recovery and prevention worldwide.

Almost thirty years after the discovery of the Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) Study, this gathering will explore how science, lived experience, and systems innovation can break cycles of trauma and shape the next era of prevention and healing.

For millions, the journey through trauma can feel isolating. No survivor should have to walk the path to healing alone.

Chapter I – The science, the stories, and the foundation for everything that follows

8:30 – 9:00 AM EDT

Registration & Global Prevention and Recovery Innovation Marketplace

Connect with organizations advancing:

- Trauma-informed care
- Youth resilience initiatives
- Addiction recovery programs
- Survivor support communities
- Trauma-informed education
- Prevention innovation

Meet the people doing this work, find resources, and start partnerships in real time.

9:00 – 9:15 AM EDT

The Legacy of the ACE Study, and the Future It Made Possible and our Trauma-Informed Opening & Survivor-Centered Welcome

A short film honoring the discovery that gave the world a language for what childhood trauma actually does to a life, and the science it set in motion.

Featuring Vincent J. Felitti, MD, FACP and Robert F. Anda, MD, MS

Co-Principal Investigators, Adverse Childhood Experiences Study

Recipients of the 2026 STAR NeuroLeadership Award (honored in a filmed presentation).

A welcome into a space built around dignity, safety, and personal choice. You are free to step away at any time, take breaks when you need them, and listen only to what feels helpful today.

Presented by Jamie Huysman, PsyD, LCSW

Founder & Executive Director, STAR Network Foundation®

Global Participation Day

Today, participants are joining from across the United States and around the world.

Trauma may be universal, but so is the capacity to heal. Throughout the day, you will hear from experts, and from people who have turned lived experience into leadership.

9:15 – 10:00 AM EDT

From ACEs to PACEs: Defining the Next Era of Prevention

What helps people not just survive adversity, but truly heal and thrive?

In this Wholehearted Conversation, AJ Foxx, founder of Wholehearted.org and creator of its educational video programs, sits down with renowned resilience researchers Jennifer Hays-Grudo, PhD, and Amanda Sheffield Morris, PhD, to explore the science of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), Protective and Compensatory Experiences (PACEs), and resilience. Together, they unpack how early life experiences shape emotional health, relationships, stress responses, and resilience, while highlighting the protective experiences that help people heal, grow, and thrive.

Moderator:

AJ Foxx

Director, Producer & Founder, Wholehearted.org

Presented by:


Jennifer Hays-Grudo, PhD

Emeritus Regents Professor of Psychiatry and Behavioral Science

OSU Center for Health Sciences

Amanda Sheffield Morris, PhD

George Kaiser Family Foundation Chair and Regents Professor, Department of Psychology, Oklahoma State University



10:00 - 10:15 AM EDT

Regulate & Reset: Guided Pause for Integration

10:15 - 10:30 AM EDT

Greater than Gravity: From Personal Tragedy to Global Movement

How do we transform personal tragedy into a movement that protects future generations?

How do you take the worst thing that ever happened to you and turn it into protection for someone else's child? A reflection on grief, purpose, and the long work of building a movement.

Presented by Michael J. Menard

Founder, United Against Childhood Trauma (UACT)

10:30- 11:00 AM EDT

Leading the Next 30 Years of Change

What will it take to make mental health care a right, not a privilege?

A national voice for mental health parity reflects on the law we fought for, the work still ahead, and the human connection that remains the oldest medicine we have.

Presented by The Honorable Patrick J. Kennedy Co-Founder, The Kennedy Forum | Former U.S. Representative (D-RI) Recipient of the 2025 STAR NeuroLeadership Award

Recognition of the 2026 STAR NeuroLeadership Awards

Honoring the two scientists whose work moved childhood adversity from private pain into global public-health priority.

**Robert F. Anda, MD, MS — Co-Principal Investigator, ACE Study | Founder, ACE Interface
Vincent J. Felitti, MD, FACP — Co-Principal Investigator, Adverse Childhood Experiences Study**

11:00 - 11:45 AM EDT

What We Learned And What Comes Next

What has ACEs science revealed, and what does that ask of us now?

Thirty years on, the ACE Study reshaped how we think about trauma. Dr. Fishbein traces what the science has taught us since, what we now know about identifying risk earlier and building resilience, and what that knowledge asks of all of us as parents, leaders, and citizens.

Presented by Diana H. Fishbein, PhD

**Senior Scientist, Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute, UNC Chapel Hill
Co-Founder & Co-Director, National Prevention Science Coalition to Improve Lives**

11:45 – 12:15 PM EDT

From Awareness to Prevention: Rewriting the Conditions for Childhood in America

What would it take to build a society where childhood adversity is not just treated, but prevented?

Childhood adversity is not a private failure. It is shaped by policy, neighborhood, and the systems families are handed. This session lays out what changes when we stop treating prevention as an individual responsibility and start treating it as a shared one.

Presented by Dr. Bart Klika

**Chief Research and Strategy Officer
Prevent Child Abuse America**

12:15– 1:00 PM EDT

Lunch & Global Prevention and Recovery Innovation Marketplace

Continue meeting partners, exploring resources, and building connections.

Chapter II- Voices of Recovery The brain, the body, and the long work of coming home to yourself.

1:00 – 1:45 PM EDT

Your Brain on ACEs: Why the Past Lives in the Present, and How to Change It

If ACEs shape the brain's response to stress and relationships, how do we interrupt those patterns and reclaim agency in our lives?

Childhood adversity does not stay in the past. It rewires how the brain reads stress, threat, and connection well into adulthood. Dr. DiGangi explains what is happening underneath, why it is not your fault, and what the science says about taking your nervous system back.

Presented by Mercie Josina DiGangi, DO

Regional Chair, Child Abuse Prevention Program, Kaiser Permanente Southern California

1:45 – 2:30 PM EDT

Survivor Leadership Reflection: Psychological Freedom And Breaking Cycles of Coercive Control

What does psychological freedom look like, and how do we reclaim it?

Coercive control leaves marks you can't always see. This session is about naming what happened, understanding why it worked, and reclaiming the part of yourself that was taken.

Presented by Richard Grannon

International Ambassador, STAR Network Foundation®

Educator on Narcissistic Abuse & Psychological Freedom

2:30 – 2:45 PM EDT

Regulate & Reset: Guided Pause for Integration

2:45 – 3:30 PM EDT

The Wholehearted Global Forum: Beyond Awareness

What does healing require beyond awareness, and how do we create spaces where it can happen?

Awareness is the start. This curated hour brings together voices from around the world on what healing actually requires once you know what is wrong, and how to build the spaces where it can happen.

Curated by AJ Foxx

Director, Producer & Founder, Wholehearted.org

3:30 – 4:15 PM EDT

Addiction, ACEs & the Brain: From Trauma to Recovery

How does trauma shape addiction, and what does real recovery require?

Addiction rarely starts with the substance. It starts in childhood. Five clinical leaders from across the recovery field talk plainly about the link between childhood trauma and addiction, and what real, lasting recovery actually requires.

Moderated by Doug Tieman

Behavioral Health Executive | Chairman of the Board of Directors, STAR Network Foundation®

Panelists

John Curtiss, CEO, The Retreat

Doug Leech, Founder and CEO, Ascension Recovery Services

Dr. Aaron Ramirez, Clinical Psychologist, Ashley Addiction Treatment

Jack Britton, LPC, LADC, Vice President of Clinical Services, Turnbridge

Dr. Maggie Tipton, PsyD, Senior Director of Psychological Services, Caron Treatment Centers

Chapter III – Building the Next 30 Years The voices, the systems, and the promise we make to the next generation.

4:15 – 4:45 PM EDT

From Lived Experience to Lasting Change: Survivor and Youth Voices Reshaping Mental Health

When those closest to the pain become the architects of change, mental health transforms from the inside out. This panel brings together survivor leaders and next-generation voices to explore how personal story becomes collective movement, how data gains dignity through lived experience, and how youth-driven resilience is rewriting the conversation around mental health and systemic reform.

Moderator: Dr. Jamie Huysman

Panelists:

Omer Golan – Founder & CEO, MyWhatIf Foundation and STAR Network Foundation Partnership

Jennifer Libby, MSW, LCSW – Psychotherapist, Founder, Speaker of PROMLY

Shelby Edwards, PROMLY Youth Ambassador

Ryan-Elizabeth Foreman, PROMLY Youth Ambassador

4:45– 5:00 PM EDT

Regulate & Reset: Afternoon Break

5:00 – 5:40 PM EDT

When Systems Work: Building Care Survivors Can Trust

What must change for systems to truly earn the trust of survivors?

Most survivors have a story about the system that was supposed to help them and didn't. This panel asks what care actually looks like when it is built around the people it serves, and what it will take to get there.

Moderator:

Thomas G. Bognanno, Founder, Alliance Practice LLC

Panelists

Dr. Mya O. Price, Executive Vice President & Chief Social Impact Officer, Creating Healthier Communities

George Rapiet III, MD, Chairman & CEO, WellMed Medical Management

Jesse Kohler, Founder and President, The Change Campaign

5:40 – 5:45 PM EDT

The Empty Chair for the Children We Lost, And The Children We Can Still Protect
While we honor those we have lost, we also recognize the millions of children whose futures are still unwritten, and who are within our power to protect.
Participants observe a brief moment of silence.

5:45 – 6:15 PM EDT

The ACEs Next 30 Declaration: A Global Commitment to the Next Generation

What commitments must we make today to protect the next generation?

Thirty years after the ACE Study changed our understanding of trauma, this declaration marks a shared commitment, across sectors and borders, to the next generation of prevention, recovery, and resilience. Participants are invited to affirm their commitment in real time.

Introduced by Jamie Huysman, PsyD, LCSW

Founder & Executive Director, STAR Network Foundation®

Global Initiatives Launch Announcements: Advancing the Next 30 Years of Trauma Recovery and Prevention

The first wave of coordinated global action:

- ACEs and PACEs Connection – a revitalized global community platform emerging from the PACEs Connection network
- Global Trauma Consortium – first convening announced for October 2026, World Mental Health Day

The Call Forward

How can each of us contribute to building a world where healing is accessible to all?

Participants are invited to expand trauma-informed recovery and prevention through STAR Network Foundation and the PACEs Connection Community Chapters: a global community initiative advancing survivor leadership, strengthening families, and protecting the next generation.

Take an immediate next step: join fellowship, launch a community initiative, or partner in the global effort.



6:15 – 7:00 PM EDT

Optional Global Networking & Partnership Marketplace

Immediately following the program.

A Note on Engagement

This is a survivor-centered experience. Participants are encouraged to engage in ways that support their wellbeing, including taking breaks or stepping away at any time.

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STAR NeuroLeadership Award Recipients



Robert F. Anda, MD, MS
ACE Interface
2026 STAR NeuroLeadership Award



Vincent J. Felitti, MD, FACP
ACE Study
2026 STAR NeuroLeadership Award



The Hon. Patrick J. Kennedy
The Kennedy Forum
2025 STAR NeuroLeadership Award

Speakers



Mercie Josina DiGangi, DO
Kaiser Permanente So. California
Regional Chair



Diana H. Fishbein, PhD
National Prevention Science
Coalition to Improve Lives & UNC
Sr. Scientist & Coalition Director



Richard Grannon
STAR Network Foundation®
International Ambassador



Jennifer Hays-Grudo, PhD
OSU Center for Health Sciences
Emeritus Regents Professor



Jamie Huysman, PsyD, LCSW
STAR Network Foundation®
Founder & Executive Director



Michael J. Menard
United Against Childhood Trauma
Founder

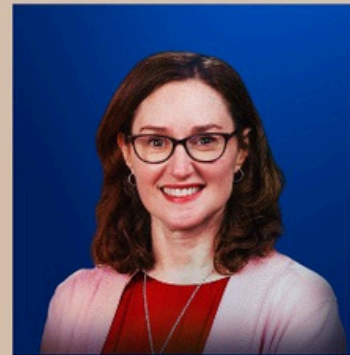
Speakers



AJ Foxx
Wholehearted.org
Producer, Director and Founder



Dr. Bart Klika
Prevent Child Abuse America
Chief Research and Strategy Officer



Amanda Sheffield Morris, PhD
Oklahoma State University
George Kaiser Family Foundation Chair

Panelists



Thomas G. Bognanno
Alliance Practice LLC
Founder



Jack Britton, LPC, LADC
Turnbridge
Vice President of Clinical Services



John Curtiss
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MyWhatIf Foundation
Founder & CEO



Jennifer Libby, MSW, LCSW
Promly
Psychotherapist and Founder



Jesse Kohler
The Change Campaign
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Panelists



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Ascension Recovery Services
Executive Leader



Aaron Ramirez, PsyD
Ashley Addiction Treatment
Clinical Psychologist



Dr. Myra Price
Creating Healthier Communities
EVP & Chief Social Impact Officer



George Rapier III, MD
WellMed Medical Management
Chairman & CEO



Maggie Tipton, PsyD
Caron Treatment Centers
Senior Director of Psychological
Services



Doug Tieman
STAR Network Foundation®
Chairman of the Board of Directors

Promly Youth Ambassadors



Ryan Foreman
Promly
Student Youth Ambassador



Shelby Edwards
Promly
Student Youth Ambassador

THE STAR DECLARATION

The Next 30 Years of ACEs & Resilience

We gather at a defining moment.

Thirty years ago, the ACEs research led by Vincent J. Felitti and Robert Anda changed how the world understands childhood adversity.

Today, we commit to what comes next.

We recognize that trauma impacts lives across generations and that healing is possible through connection, science, and community.

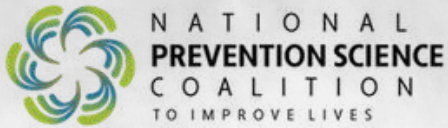
We believe:

- Prevention must become a global priority
- Trauma recovery must be accessible to all
- Lived experience must be elevated alongside science
- Children's wellbeing must be the foundation of our future

Together, we commit to advancing systems, policies, and communities that ensure every child has the opportunity to grow, heal, and thrive.

This declaration stands in alignment with the movement to establish a Decade of the Child — placing children at the center of our shared future.

The next 30 years begin today.



The Decade of the Child is led by Diana Fishbein, PhD (National Prevention Science Coalition to Improve Lives, the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill, and Penn State University) and Christina Bethell, PhD (Child and Adolescent Health Measurement Initiative, Johns Hopkins University)

Our core team includes: Anthony Biglan, PhD (Values to Action and Oregon Research Institute); Charles Bruner (Integrated Care for Kids/ InCK Marks Initiative and the Child Health Equity Leadership Team); Jesse Kohler (Change Campaign); Margaret Kuklinski, PhD (Social Development Research Group, University of Washington); Ronald Prinz, PhD (Research Center for Child Well-Being, University of South Carolina); John Roman, PhD (NORC University of Chicago); Zili Sloboda, ScD Applied Prevention Science International); Jessica Stavig, Executive Director (National Prevention Science Coalition to Improve Lives); Leslie Walker, MD (Department of Pediatrics, Seattle Children's Hospital); William Wieczorek, PhD (Pacific Institute for Research and Evaluation).

For more information, contact us at:
decadeofthechild@gmail.com

Funding for this effort is provided by the NOVA Institute for Health



Organizational Endorsements (updated January 2026)

1. Pacific Institute for Research and Evaluation (PIRE)
2. Applied Prevention Science International
3. Integrated Care for Kids/InCK Marks Network
4. HEDCO Institute for Evidence-Based Educational Practice
5. Association for Positive Behavior Support (APBS)
6. itotheN | Intergenerational Impact
7. Positive Childhood Alliance North Carolina
8. Institute for Research and Development "Utrip"
9. Partnership to End Addiction
10. Blueprints for Healthy Youth Development
11. Campaign for Trauma-Informed Policy & Practice
12. Center for Whole Health Learning in K-12
13. Association For Behavior Analysis International
14. Nova Institute for Health
15. Global Alliance for Behavioral Health & Social Justice
16. PACEs Connection
17. Society of Behavioral Medicine
18. Advancing Parenting
19. The Larry A. Green Center for the Advancement of Primary Health Care for the Public Good
20. Brain Insights
21. Educate Tomorrow's Parents
22. Achieve Greatness
23. Safe Kids Now National Network
24. Kros Learning Group
25. Research Institute for Key Indicators Data Lab
26. Communities for Youth
27. The Multidisciplinary Center on Childhood, Public Policy & Sustainable Society
28. Just Learning Systems
29. Association of Children's Museums
30. Wellbeing Action for Youth
31. RISE Institute
32. Prevention Research Center, Penn State University
33. Early Emotional Development Program Washington University School of Medicine
34. Social Development Research Group, School of Social Work, University of Washington
35. Center for MH in Schools & Student/Learning Supports
36. Society for Prevention Research
37. Family Centered Treatment Foundation
38. The Robin Foundation
39. Growth UP Education, LLC
40. The Faithful City
41. National Parenting Education Network
42. Southern Christian Services for Children and Youth, Inc.
43. Anago Consulting Inc
44. Trauma Informed Oregon
45. InsightFormation, Inc.
46. National Parenting Education Network (NPEN)
47. CHC: Creating Healthier Communities
48. Substance Abuse Prevention Team of Essex County, Inc NYS
49. Kindheart Center
50. New Hanover County Resiliency Task Force