

# Understanding Trauma through the River of Cruelty Model



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**Family Peace Initiative**

# Family Peace Initiative

- **Batterer Intervention Program (BIP)** - trauma-focused, community-based BIP serving Topeka, Kansas, and online
- **Peaceful Families Program** - trauma-healing and healthy relationship program for women and gender-diverse people
- **Youth Initiative** - serving justice-involved youth in correctional and school settings
- **Facilitator Training Series** - for trauma-focused facilitation group



# OUR PHILOSOPHY:

- Create a culture of safety, emotional health and cruelty-free accountability through the use of **compassion, integrity, and expertise.**
- Ask participants to take responsibility for:  
    The trauma they have caused others  
    And  
    Healing from the trauma they've experienced
- Lead by example. We can only take others as far as we are willing to go ourselves.



# PEACEFUL FAMILIES PROGRAM at TCF:

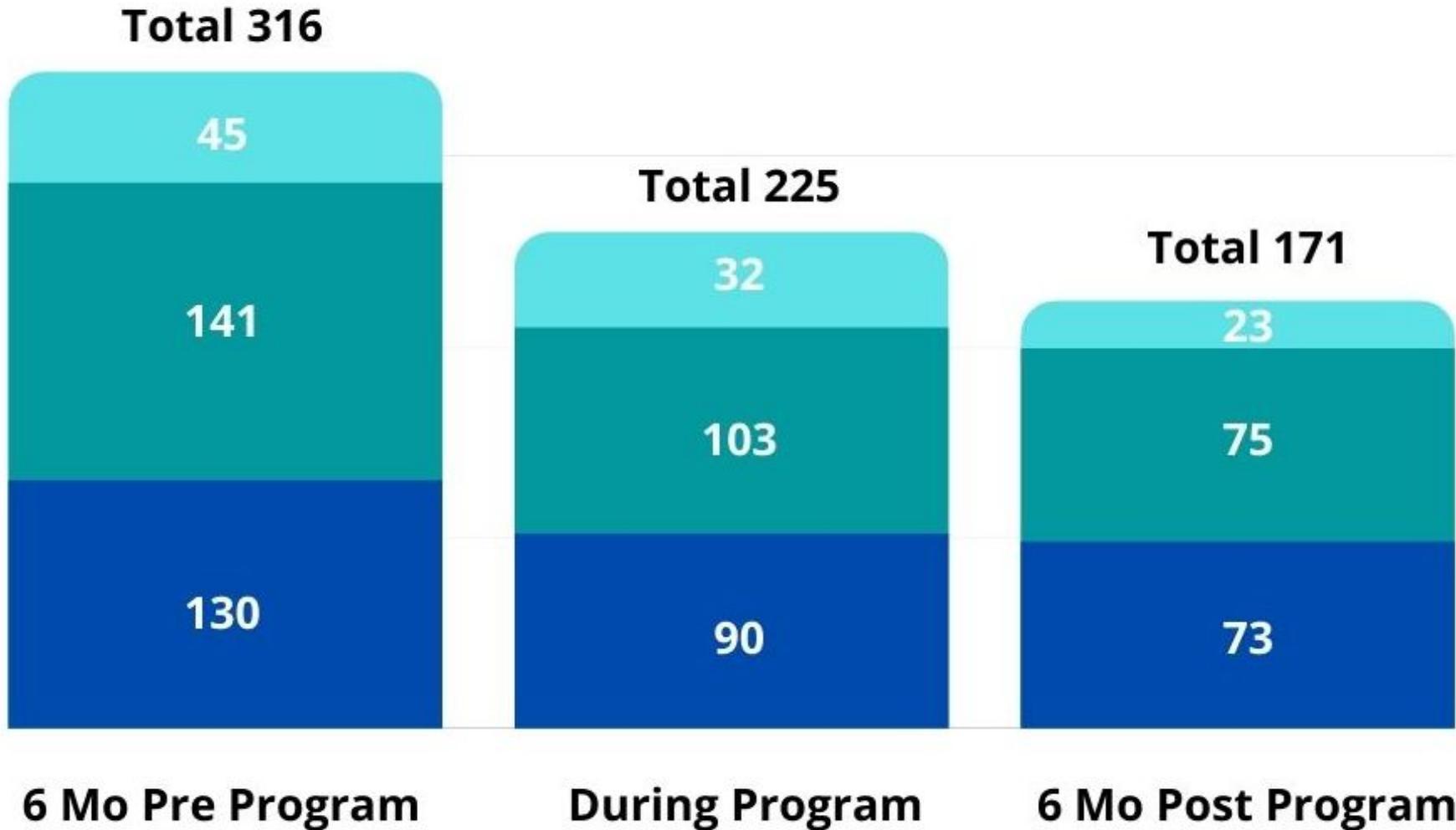
- Completed 10 Sessions, starting in 2015
  - Each session is approximately 6 months in duration
- Expanded to offer 4 sections each round
- Classes meet for 90-120 minutes, twice each week
- Class offered in minimum and maximum security units
- 182 graduates
- 32 returned to serve as Peer Leaders
- Added an Alumni Group for graduates



# FINDINGS

*Quantitative*

# # of Misconduct Reports by type



# IMPACT ON THE FACILITY

DECREASE IN INCIDENTS BY 44%

# APPLICATION

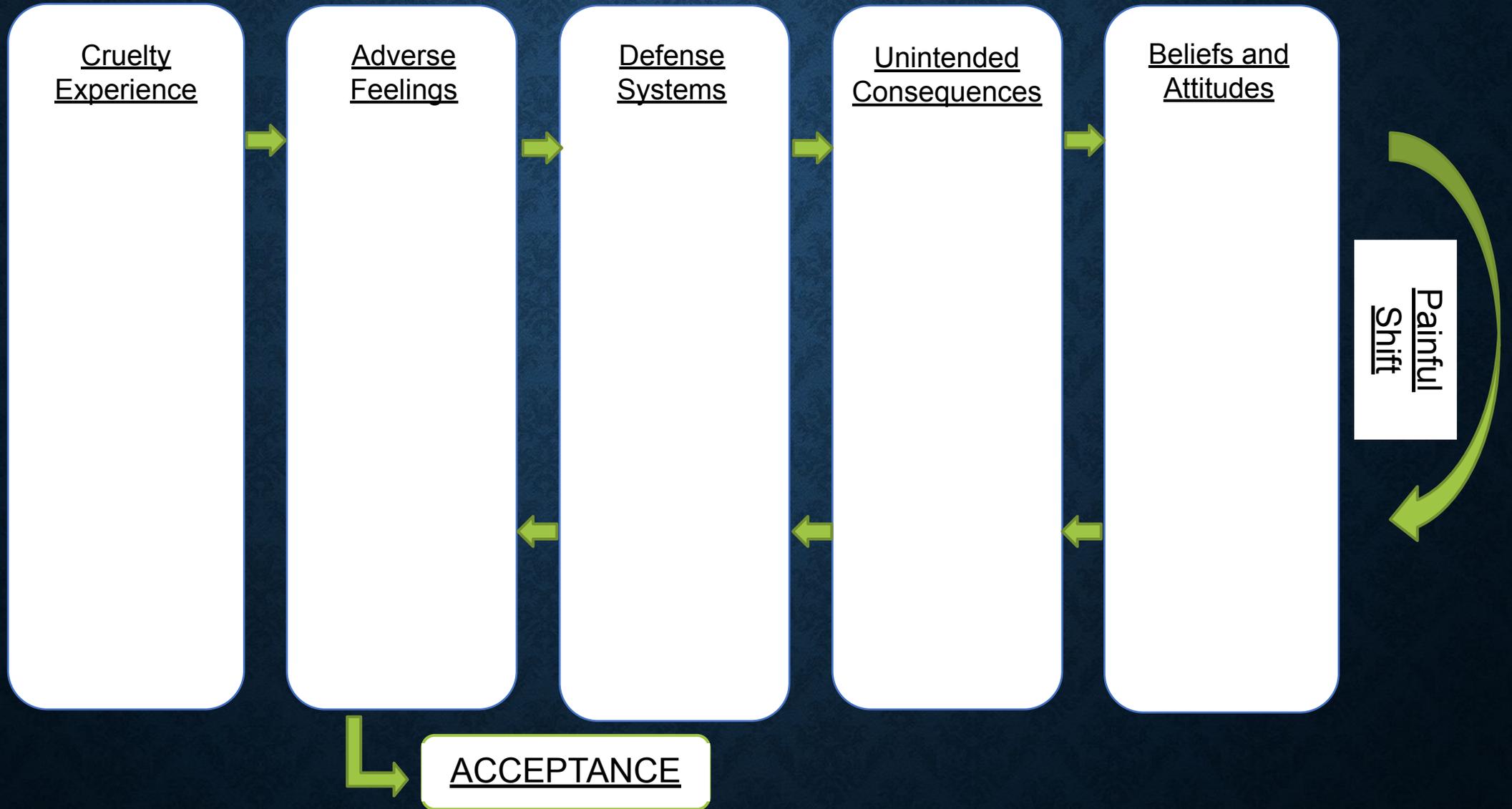
*The remainder of this presentation can be emotionally activating. Please participate as much as you are comfortable in doing so.*

# WHAT IS THE DEFINITION OF “CRUELTY”?

- 1) The intentional infliction of pain and suffering
- 2) The blatant disregard for another



# THE RIVER OF CRUELTY MAP



*Instead of living our lives in fear of our adverse feelings,  
we can simply live our lives.*

# WHAT MAKES THE PEACEFUL FAMILIES PROGRAM EFFECTIVE?

- Curriculum
  - Designed as a strong mix of cognitive-behavioral and affective components
  - 8 sections; generally 3 weeks per section
  - Focus on the River of Cruelty
- Facilitation Style and Skill
  - Emotionally capable to lead by example
  - Trauma-informed
  - Understand Gender-Responsivity
- Philosophical Approach
  - Compassion, Integrity, and Expertise

# FINDINGS

*Qualitative*

# WHAT GRADUATES ARE SAYING:

**“I feel relief, deep healing, love, trust, I am good enough, and not angry...This groups has been the best thing that has happened for me.” —A Graduate**

**“This class has taught me to see how the action or words of others can trigger the shadows that drag me into that “River of Cruelty”. Instead of acting in a negative way...I know I can deal with those people and things they say or do to me in a positive way.” -A Graduate**

# WHAT GRADUATES ARE SAYING

*“It was a lesson in life for me. My inner self was the focus not just my mind, but my heart, my spirit, my self-worth.”*

*“This class has taught me to have boundaries in every kind of relationship. I have become a better person.”*

# WHAT FACILITY VOLUNTEERS ARE SAYING:

*“For the past 10 years, I have helped facilitate a self-help group at the women’s prison in Topeka, Kansas...All but a few of its members have experienced debilitating levels of emotional, physical, and sexual trauma.*

*Some of the members have taken the Peaceful Families class. I don’t know what goes on over there, but I do know that the program’s graduates come back different. They are calm, thoughtful, ready to rebuild, and anxious to do something positive with their lives.”*

*--Dave Ranney, volunteer,*

*Reaching Out From Within Program*

## WHAT FACILITY STAFF ARE SAYING:

*“Every person on my caseload who has ever been involved with Peaceful Families has commented on how much they have had to “dig deep” inside themselves. This not only serves as a vehicle for introspection and self-exploration but has had the effect of making them more willing and open to further self-exploration.*

*In my opinion, this curriculum gives a multi-layered gift to the individual and in turn the facility by giving them the opportunity to begin to learn and secondarily, whetting their appetites for more growth.”*

*Deb Alexander, KDÖC*

## WHAT FACILITY STAFF ARE SAYING:

*“Rarely does a week go by in which an offender does not tout something they have learned in FPI and how it continues to resonate with them individually. The work they do with the River of Cruelty appears to be especially impactful.*

*I think FPI is one of the most important programs offered at TCF.”*

*Lisa Hecht, KDOC*

Questions?





**FPI**

Family Peace  
Initiative

**Thank you!!**

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