



SACRAMENTO  
STATE



## SPOTLIGHT ON MENTAL WELLNESS

*The Art and Application of  
Resilience and Growth*

**Harper Alumni Center at  
Sacramento State**  
**Saturday, April 20, 2024**  
**8:30 AM – 4:30 PM**

**Register and/or Sponsor:**

[www.csus.edu/hhs/mental-wellness-conference](http://www.csus.edu/hhs/mental-wellness-conference)



**dr. jmf**  
metahab™



# Center for Health Practice, Policy & Research (CHPPR) Conference

## Learning Outcomes



Join keynote speaker Chris Singleton and a panel of experts to recognize risks, identify resources, and acquire knowledge to enhance your skills, build resilience, and promote mental fitness in the aftermath of adversity, challenges, and trauma.

Students, academic & nonacademic staff & faculty, community professional & nonprofessional attendees are welcome and encouraged to participate. As a result of this conference, participants will be able to:

- Recognize mental health and wellness risk factors
- Identify & analyze the mental and psychological aspects associated with risk assessment, resilience building, and mental fitness
- Discuss & address trauma-related issues faced by a variety of individuals in their professional & personal lives, including students, health care professionals, athletes, and secondary and vicarious trauma survivors
- Identify personal goals & enhance your skills to encourage mental fitness, build resilience, and ultimately thrive in the aftermath of adversity, challenges, and trauma
- Identify and utilize professional and community mental health and wellness resources

*A certificate of attendance will be provided. CHPPR does not seek pre-approval for continuing professional development. Keep certificate as proof of attendance. Check the conference webpage for a list of eligible CEUs or contact your professional organization about eligibility for CEUs. Instructional level is intermediate.*



**Chris Singleton**

**Speaker Bio:** Chris Singleton is a former minor league baseball player drafted by the Chicago Cubs. He became a nationally-renowned speaker with a message of resilience, forgiveness and unity following the loss of his mother in the 2015 Mother Emanuel Church Tragedy in Charleston, SC. Chris now shares his message with over 80 organizations annually and his clients include: Boeing, The Houston Texans, Microsoft, Biogen, Volvo,

The Washington Wizards and over 100,000 students and educators across the world. One of his children's books, *Different – A Story About Loving Your Neighbor*, was a best seller in its category and has been featured by numerous outlets, including The Obama Foundation. **Talk Title:** *Overcoming the Unthinkable Adversity*



**Joyce Mikal-Flynn Ed.D. FNP, MSN**

**Speaker Bio:** Dr. Joyce Mikal-Flynn received a Bachelor of Science in Nursing from University of San Francisco, her Nurse Practitioner Degree from University of California, Davis, and her Masters of Science in Nursing at CSUS. Completing her Doctor of Education from St. Mary's College she focused on trauma - informed care studying how individual survivors build

resilience and experience posttraumatic growth (PTG). She created the word and system, Metahabilitation, describing a more optimistic approach and productive outcome in the aftermath of trauma. Ongoing Metahabilitation research clarified a strength – based clinical pathway guiding individuals toward PTG. Her post-doctoral research focused on how vicarious and secondary trauma survivors as well as communities grow in the aftermath of trauma. Along with a course she developed at CSUS; *Traumatology: An Introduction to Posttraumatic Growth*, she continues to research, lecture and directly apply Metahabilitation in a variety of rehabilitation and recovery settings.

Her publications include: *Turing Tragedy Into Triumph; Metahabilitation, A Contemporary Model of Rehabilitation* (2012) and her second book: *Anatomy of a Survivor; Building Resilience, Grit and Growth After Trauma* (2021).

**Talk Title:** *You Got This! Recognizing Your Capacity and Strengths*

**Abstract:** Individuals experience crisis when their estimation of resources and support needed to successfully manage challenging situations is greater than their perception of resources available. Recovery models tend to be limited in their perspective, all too often failing to regularly include the survivor's potential for posttraumatic growth (PTG) and failing to place the individual in a position of strength and consistently on the path to a positive, more meaningful future. However, once survivors of adversity and trauma recognize, focus and build on their resilience, capacity and strengths, overtime they find meaning in their pain, creatively restructure themselves and experience growth.

**Financial/Nonfinancial Disclosures:** Joyce Mikal – Flynn is a Professor at Sacramento State and the creator of Metahab. She has multiple publications as well as two books on the subject of Metahabilitation, a system promoting resilience and posttraumatic growth. She has an ongoing and dedicated interest in these topics as they relate to individual, secondary and vicarious survivors.



**Dr. Robert Pieretti**

**Associate Dean, College of Health and Human Services  
California State University, Sacramento**

Robert Pieretti, Associate Dean in the College of health and Human Services at California State University, Sacramento (Sacramento State), is also a professor in the Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders at the University. Dr.

Pieretti served as Chair of the Department for seven years and was the founder and Director of the Sacramento State Literacy Connection. He was employed for twenty-one years as a speech-language pathologist in the Sacramento City Unified School District, formerly serving as the Head Language, Speech, and Hearing Specialist for the District. Dr. Pieretti's scholarly interests include language disorders, language-based reading disorders, Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS), and English Learners. He has made over 100 presentations at the local, state, and national levels, co-authored literacy skill development materials, and published several co-authored peer-reviewed journal and periodical articles regarding his research and work supporting the language and literacy skills of both monolingual and bilingual students. He is a California Speech-Language Hearing Association (CSHA) Fellow and a co-author of CSHA's position paper/resource guide: Roles and Responsibilities of Speech-Language Pathologists with Respect to Literacy in Children and Adolescents in California.

**Financial/Nonfinancial Disclosures:** Robert Pieretti has no financial disclosures related to the content of his presentation or this topic. He is the Associate Dean for Students and Personnel in the College of Health and Human Services, serving as the Director of the Center for Health Practice, Policy, and Research (CHPPR). He has a dedicated interest in topics related to health and wellness across the lifespan.



**Sharon Furtak, Ph.D.**

**Speaker Bio:** Dr. Furtak earned her B.A. in Psychology from the University of Massachusetts Amherst in 1999 and a Ph.D. in Behavioral Neuroscience from Yale University in 2006. Subsequently, Dr. Furtak held postdoctoral positions at Brown University and Harvard Medical School. In 2012, Dr. Furtak joined Sacramento State faculty and currently is the Interim Chair of, and

a Professor in, the Psychology Department. Dr. Furtak's research focuses on the biological routes of emotional learning and memory with a cross-species approach.

**Talk Title:** *Knowledge is power: Strategies for regulating your fear response*

**Abstract:** Five decades of research has shed light on the brain networks that support how we learn to fear stimuli in our environment and how we learn no longer to fear those stimuli when they no longer are a threat to us. In this presentation, Dr. Furtak defines innate fear compared to learned fear, reviews evidence for how fear learning occurs both behaviorally and neurobiologically across our lifetime, and discusses strategies and tools that can guide you to regulate learned emotional responses.

**Financial/Nonfinancial Disclosures:** Sharon Furtak is receiving an honorarium for this presentation. She is a Professor of Psychology at Sacramento State. She has an interest in topics related to the neurobiology of emotional learning and memory. Currently, she is the principal investigator of a National Science Foundation grant that supports these research endeavors. She is also Consultant for Metahab



**Bita Rivas, Ph.D.**

**Speaker Bio:** Dr. Rivas is an Associate Professor in the Counselor Education program, specializing in marriage, couple, and family counseling; clinical mental health counseling, and addiction counseling. She joined the Sacramento State Counselor Education program in 2018. She is currently serving as the Program Coordinator for Counselor Education.

Dr. Rivas has been a Counselor Educator since 2013. Prior to joining CSUS, Dr. Rivas held faculty positions at Western Connecticut State University and University of Colorado, Colorado Springs. Having worked in mental health since 2008, she has experience with inpatient residential treatment working with adolescents providing individual, family, and group counseling; as well as community mental health providing group counseling for court mandated clients.

**Talk Title:** *An existential crisis: Meaning making in post-traumatic growth*

**Abstract:** This presentation examines the phenomenon of meaning making both in post- traumatic growth and following an existential crisis. Major life upheavals and significant stressors can lead to a deep questioning of beliefs and values. This ambiguity can lead to distress and may be viewed as an existential crisis. However, a crisis can lead to introspection about life's purpose and meaning and often, past experiences can provide insight into both strengths and tools used to cope and survive. Using a meaning-making framework, with both a narrative and existential lens, individuals can reconstructed narratives to find new purpose, gain wisdom, and transform worldviews after stress and trauma. Insights are provided into the complex process of growth during and after existential crises.

**Financial Disclosures/Nonfinancial Disclosures:** Financial/Nonfinancial Disclosures: Bita Rivas is receiving an honorarium for this presentation. She is the Counselor Education Program Coordinator and an Associate Professor of Marriage, Couple, & Family Counseling in the Counseling program at Sacramento State. She has an interest in topics related to wellness, stress, anxiety, and trauma.



**Peter Katz, Ph.D**

**Speaker Bio:** Dr. Katz is a bioethicist who studies disability and chronic pain in biomedicine. He is particularly interested in empathy, hermeneutic justice, and what we can know about others' thoughts and feelings. Dr. Katz earned a Ph.D. in Literature from Syracuse University in 2015, and was Associate Professor of English and Director of Honors at Pacific Union College until 2020. In part inspired by the pandemic, he focused his research more specifically on bioethics including earning an MA in bioethics from the Ohio State University

(Summer 2024), and becoming Assistant Professor of Bioethics and Philosophy at California Northstate University. His book, *Reading Bodies* (Edinburgh University Press, 2022), brings literary criticism together with bioethics through the philosophies of science and mind. His new research projects explore what it means to hear that others are in pain, and how we come to understand—or fail to understand—what others' pain means for them. In addition to his interdisciplinary research, he has been recognized for his teaching as Educator of the Year at Pacific Union College, and is a Fellow of the Higher Education Academy. Outside of his work as a bioethicist, Dr. Katz is a lifelong student of multiplemartial arts styles—most recently at Urijah Faber's gym.



**Talk Title:** *“The influence of character on circumstances”: Growth, narrative, and what we know about our own moral character”*

**Abstract:** This talk explores our dual role as narrator and character in the stories we tell about ourselves. Through Stanley Cavell’s theory of knowledge, Alasdair MacIntyre’s virtue ethics, and Joyce Mikal-Flynn’s work on trauma, we will explore a “plastic self”— a sense of character both stable and malleable, bound up in its biology but able to gradually alter those limitations. Thinking of our lives as narratives integrates circumstances and character, and fosters growth through both self-knowledge and self-skepticism.

**Financial Disclosures/Nonfinancial Disclosures:** Peter Katz is receiving an honorarium for this presentation. He is Assistant Professor of Bioethics and Philosophy and California Northstate University.

## Panelists



**Hassan Sabbagh:** Founder of Nature of Sound and a dedicated community leader, channels his experience as a survivor and his passion for video games into fighting human trafficking. From establishing impactful esports events to leading the Solano Anti-Trafficking Coalition, Hassan's work at the intersection of advocacy, creativity, and social entrepreneurship empowers communities and drives change. His vision transforms adversity into action, making a harmonious impact through the power of the arts.



**Starla Cuyler:** a Senior at CSUS graduating with her B.S. in Criminal Justice. She is a proud single mom of her 14-year-old son who is the joy in her life.

Starla and her siblings were adopted as young children, however, due to child abuse and mis-informed effects of childhood trauma the adoption failed at twelve years old, and she was sent to an in-home therapist where abuse escalated. She ran away from home at 17, with no more than a 7th grade education and began life as a young adult

navigating her way through the trials and triumphs of life alone. Starla is an example of resilience, grit, and strength. Her goal from achieving her education later in life is to help encourage adoptive and foster children to believe in themselves and to never give up on their goals. Starla has worked diligently to break the cycle of trauma in her own life for a prosperous future of the generations to come.



**Matt Burrue:** a dedicated Emergency Medical Services (EMS) professional with extensive experience in providing high-quality patient care and systems activation. With over 20 years of emergency medicine experience, Matt demonstrated exceptional skills in assessing, treating, and stabilizing patients in various critical situations. He possesses strong clinical knowledge and proficiency in utilizing advanced medical equipment and techniques to deliver optimal care. Matt is known for his calm demeanor under pressure, effective communication skills, and ability to collaborate efficiently within multidisciplinary

healthcare teams. He consistently prioritizes patient safety and comfort while advocating for the wellbeing of those under his leadership. Matt's commitment to ongoing learning and professional development ensures that he stays current with the latest advancements in EMS practices, enabling him to deliver the best possible outcomes for patients in the community.