



THE MELISSA INSTITUTE
PREVENTING VIOLENCE THROUGH EDUCATION

30th Annual Conference

From Prevention to Healing:
Research-Based Solutions to Address the
Youth Mental Health Crisis in America

FEATURED SPEAKERS

Wendy K. Silverman, Ph.D., ABPP

Annette M. La Greca, Ph.D., ABPP

Mitch Prinstein, Ph.D., ABPP

Sherry Hamby, Ph.D.

DISCUSSANTS

Donald Meichenbaum, Ph.D.

Etiony Aldarondo, Ph.D.

DATE & FORMAT

Friday, May 1, 2026

8:30 AM – 4:00 PM Eastern • Live Virtual (Zoom)

Free General Registration • 6 CE Credits Available (\$60) • [melissainstitute.org](https://www.melissainstitute.org)

CE Broker Course #: 20-1365909

The Melissa Institute's 30th Annual Conference

From Prevention to Healing: Research-Based Solutions to Address the Youth Mental Health Crisis in America

Friday, May 1, 2026

8:30 AM – 4:00 PM EST

Live Virtual Conference · Zoom Webinar

6 CE Credits Available · \$60

Free General Registration

ABOUT THE CONFERENCE

As The Melissa Institute for Violence Prevention and Treatment marks its 30th Anniversary, this milestone conference brings together leading scholars and practitioners to address one of the most pressing public health challenges of our time, the mental health crisis affecting children and adolescents.

With a focus on the prevention and treatment of emotional disorders, including anxiety, depression, trauma-related distress, and suicide risk, the conference will highlight research-based strategies that promote healing, resilience, and well-being.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Upon completion of this conference, participants will be able to:

1. Identify core evidence-based strategies for the prevention and treatment of anxiety, depression, trauma-related distress, and suicide risk among children and adolescents.
2. Describe the impact of peer relationships and digital media on youth mental health, including risk and protective factors associated with social connectedness and belonging.
3. Apply trauma-informed, developmentally appropriate approaches to support coping and recovery following exposure to stress, adversity, and community-level events.
4. Explain key principles of resilience science, including the role of protective factors and strength-based interventions in promoting long-term well-being.
5. Integrate research-based knowledge into practical strategies that can be implemented in clinical, educational, and community settings to improve youth mental health outcomes.

Agenda

All times Eastern Standard

Morning Session

8:30 – 9:00 AM - Welcome and Opening Remarks

Etiony Aldarondo, Ph.D. | Executive Director, The Melissa Institute

- Overview of conference goals and 30-year milestone reflection

9:00 – 10:00 AM - Parental Strategies to Help Prevent and Treat Childhood Anxiety Disorders

Wendy K. Silverman, Ph.D., ABPP | Alfred A. Messer Professor of Child Psychiatry and Professor of Psychology; Director, Yale Child Study Center Anxiety and Mood Disorders Program, Yale University School of Medicine

10:00 – 10:20 AM - Discussion Panel #1

Wendy K. Silverman, Ph.D., ABPP · Donald Meichenbaum, Ph.D. · Etiony Aldarondo, Ph.D.

10:20 – 10:30 AM - Wellness Break

10:30 – 11:30 AM - Belonging and Social Connectedness and the Impact of Digital Culture on Youth Mental Health

Mitch Prinstein, Ph.D., ABPP | John Van Seters Distinguished Professor of Psychology and Neuroscience, UNC Chapel Hill; Senior Science Advisor, APA

11:30 AM – 12:00 PM - Discussion Panel #2

Mitch Prinstein, Ph.D., ABPP · Donald Meichenbaum, Ph.D. · Etiony Aldarondo, Ph.D.

12:00 – 1:00 PM - Lunch Break

Afternoon Session

1:00 – 2:00 PM - Coping and Adjustment Following Stress and Trauma

Annette M. La Greca, Ph.D., ABPP | Distinguished Professor of Psychology and Pediatrics, University of Miami

2:00 – 2:20 PM - Discussion Panel #3

Annette M. La Greca, Ph.D., ABPP · Donald Meichenbaum, Ph.D. · Etiony Aldarondo, Ph.D.

2:20 – 2:30 PM - Wellness Break

2:30 – 3:30 PM - Stronger Than You Think: Building Lifelong Resilience

Sherry Hamby, Ph.D. | Distinguished Research Professor of Psychology, University of the South; Founder & Director, Life Paths Research Center

3:30 – 3:50 PM - Discussion Panel #4

Sherry Hamby, Ph.D. · Donald Meichenbaum, Ph.D. · Etiony Aldarondo, Ph.D.

3:50 – 4:00 PM - Closing Reflections

Etiony Aldarondo, Ph.D.

FEATURED SPEAKERS



Wendy K. Silverman, Ph.D., ABPP

*Alfred A. Messer Professor of Child Psychiatry and Professor of Psychology
Director, Yale Child Study Center Anxiety and Mood Disorders Program
Yale University School of Medicine*

<http://childstudycenter.yale.edu/clinics/anxiety/index.aspx>

Dr. Silverman was a professor at the University at Albany and then Florida International University in Miami prior to joining the faculty at Yale University in 2013. Wendy's research focuses on factors that contribute to the development and maintenance of anxiety and related disorders in children and in developing and testing assessment measures and treatments. She has published widely in major scientific journals including several books. Her research has been funded by the National Institute of Mental Health for over the past 4 decades. She also has contributed to the profession by serving as Chairperson and member of federal grant review panels, as

Editor and Associate Editor of major journals in clinical psychology, and Past President of the American Psychological Association's Division of Clinical Child and Adolescent Psychology. Dr. Silverman has been recognized for her mentoring including a NIH mid career research-mentoring award. She continues to help children and families with problematic anxiety and to supervise the next generation of mental health professionals.

Learning objectives for presentation:

1. Become familiar with the comparative effectiveness of cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) with and without parental involvement
2. Advance understanding of certain parent behaviors that research shows as being most helpful to mitigate child anxiety.
3. Understand broad and convergent issues relating to prevention and treatment of childhood problems emphasized across the conference presentations.



Mitch Prinstein, Ph.D., ABPP

John Van Seters Distinguished Professor of Psychology and Neuroscience

Co-Director of the Winston Center for Technology and Brain Development at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Senior Science Advisor of the American Psychological Association

www.linkedin.com/in/mitchprinstein

For over 25 years, and with continuous funding from the National Institutes of Health, Mitch's research has examined interpersonal models of internalizing symptoms and health risk behaviors among adolescents, with a specific focus on the unique role of off- and on-line peer relationships in the developmental psychopathology of depression and self-injury. He is a board-certified clinical psychologist and has published over 250 scientific manuscripts and 12 books. Mitch has advised/consulted with the numerous government agencies (e.g., White

House Office of Science and Technology Policy, Centers for Disease Control, Federal Trade Commission, US Surgeon General's Office, US Supreme Court), international agencies (e.g., Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, World Economic Forum, World Health Organization, nonprofits (e.g., Common Sense Media, The National PTA), Institutes (e.g., National Institute of Mental Health, National Academies of Science), as well as for-profit industries (e.g., Google, Apple, Johnson & Johnson), and the entertainment industry (e.g., David E. Kelley Productions, Impact Guild). At APA, Mitch served as the Chief Science Officer and then the Chief of Psychology. As Chief Science Officer, Mitch was responsible for leading the association's science agenda and advocating for the application of psychological research and knowledge in settings including academia, government, industry, and the law. As Chief of Psychology, Mitch led the integration of APA's work in science, practice, education, and applied psychology. Prior to APA, Mitch served as the Director of Clinical Psychology at UNC and Yale University, the Director of Graduate Studies in the Department of Psychology and Neuroscience, and the Assistant Dean for Honors Carolina.

Mitch is regularly featured as an expert in psychological science as a repeat witness testifying before the US Senate, in two TedX talks, and within hundreds of media appearances around the world in outlets such as The New York Times, NPR, 60 Minutes, the Times (UK), and CNN, ABC, CBS, and NBC.

Learning objectives for presentation:

1. Participants will be able to articulate the potential effects of digital media use on neural development
2. Participants will be able to list up to 10 different ways that technology use may influence psychological adaptation
3. Participants will learn concrete strategies to enhance development with social media, and protect children from its risks

FEATURED SPEAKERS



Annette La Greca Ph.D., ABPP

Distinguished Professor of Psychology and Pediatrics, University of Miami

<https://www.psy.miami.edu/faculty/alagreca/>

<https://www.facebook.com/peerslab/#>

https://www.instagram.com/um_youthriskandres/

<https://x.com/YouthRiskandRes>

<https://linktr.ee/alagrecaum>

Dr. La Greca is a Distinguished Professor of Psychology at the University of Miami who studies the impact of peer victimization on social anxiety and depression, and the impact of natural disasters on youths' psychological and physical health. She identifies risk-and-resilience factors and translates findings into resilience-building

interventions. Overall, La Greca has published over 300 peer-reviewed articles and chapters and written or edited 20 books. She served as Editor-in-Chief of key journals, including the *Journal of Pediatric Psychology* and the *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*. Currently, she is an Associate Editor for the *American Psychologist*.

In the trauma area, La Greca studied youth risk and resilience following extreme weather-related disasters, including Hurricanes Andrew (1992), Charley (2004), Ike (2008), and Irma (2017). She is the author of several evidence-informed interactive adult-child manuals to help youth recover and build resilience after disasters, including *After the Storm: A Guide to Help Children Cope in the Aftermath of Hurricanes* and *Youth Strong* to promote youth mental health after disasters and other traumatic events. These materials are available for free download on her lab's website (<https://www.psy.miami.edu/faculty/alagreca/>); over 40 million copies of the manuals have been distributed worldwide.



Sherry Hamby, Ph.D.

Distinguished Research Professor of Psychology at the University of the South

Director of the Life Paths Research Center

Sherry Hamby | Substack

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/sherry-hamby/>

Sherry Hamby, Ph.D. is known for her work on violence and resilience, which has been recognized with awards including Outstanding Contributions to the Science of Trauma Psychology from the Trauma Psychology division of the American Psychological Association (APA) and the Christine Blasey Ford Woman of Courage Award from the Association of Women in Psychology. Dr. Hamby's work has appeared in the *New York Times*, *USA Today*, *HuffPost*, *CBS News*, and numerous other media outlets.

Her newest book is *Stronger Than You Think: Building Lifelong Resilience* (Penguin Life, 2026).

Learning objectives for presentation:

1. Based on the content of the session, participants will be able to identify evidence-based assets and resources that are associated with better outcomes after trauma.
2. Based on the content of the session, participants will be able to identify evidence-based interventions that promote key resilience strengths. promote both individual and collective healing from trauma.
3. Based on the content of the session, participants will be able to explain the difference between personality-based approaches to resilience and multidimensional models such as the resilience portfolio model.

FEATURED SPEAKERS



Annette La Greca Ph.D., ABPP

Distinguished Professor of Psychology and Pediatrics, University of Miami

<https://www.psy.miami.edu/faculty/alagreca/>

<https://www.facebook.com/peerslab/#>

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<https://linktr.ee/alagrecaum>

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Learning objectives for presentation:

1. Participants will be able to identify 3 – 5 common mental or physical health reactions to major stressors or disasters (e.g., hurricanes).
2. Participants will be able to describe 3 ways that youth who show chronic patterns of distress after a disaster differ from youth who have a pattern of recovery.
3. Participants will be able to identify at least 5 strategies to help youth manage stress in the aftermath of disasters or other significant stressors.



Sherry Hamby, Ph.D.

Distinguished Research Professor of Psychology at the University of the South

Director of the Life Paths Research Center

Sherry Hamby | Substack

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/sherry-hamby/>

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DISCUSSANTS



Etiony Aldarondo Ph.D.

Executive Director, The Melissa Institute

A distinguished clinical psychologist, researcher, and advocate, Dr. Aldarondo leads local and national efforts to prevent violence and promote resilience through research-based education and training. He has collaborated extensively with schools, justice systems, community organizations, and federal agencies to advance trauma-informed and prevention-focused approaches.



Donald Meichenbaum, Ph.D.

*Founding Scientific Director, The Melissa Institute
Distinguished Professor Emeritus, University of Waterloo*

One of the most cited psychologists in the world, Dr. Meichenbaum is a co-founder of modern Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) and developer of Stress Inoculation Training (SIT). His work has shaped trauma recovery and resilience programs used globally. For six decades, his scholarship and mentorship have guided the field in building safety, coping, and growth across the lifespan.

COLLECTIVE VISION

Together, these scholars represent The Melissa Institute's 30-year commitment to translating rigorous science into practical tools that strengthen families, schools, and communities. This landmark conference will unite thought leaders, practitioners, and community stakeholders in reimagining how we prevent emotional disorders, promote well-being, and build safer, healthier, and more compassionate societies.

CE CREDITS

PSYCHOLOGISTS: The Melissa Institute for Violence Prevention & Treatment is approved by the Florida Board of Psychology and by the American Psychological Association to sponsor 6 continuing education credits for Psychologists. The Melissa Institute for Violence Prevention & Treatment maintains responsibility for this program and its content.

SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGISTS: The Melissa Institute has been approved by the Florida Board of School Psychology and approved by (NASP), the National Association of School Psychologists to sponsor 6 continuing education credits for School Psychologists.

FLORIDA BOARD OF CLINICAL SOCIAL WORK, MARRIAGE AND FAMILY THERAPY AND MENTAL HEALTH COUNSELING: The Melissa Institute has been approved by the Florida Board of Psychology and the Florida Board of Clinical Social Work, Marriage and Family Therapy and Mental Health Counseling to sponsor 6 continuing education credits for mental health professionals including LCSW, LMHC, and LMFT.

EDUCATORS:

Conference registration must be completed before registering for Miami-Dade County Public Schools professional development credit online at <http://calendar.dadeschools.net>. Seven (7) master plan points will be awarded to participants who have completed the follow-up survey and have preregistered online with M-DCPS. Contact: alindsay-marshall@dadeschools.net for more information.

IMPORTANT DISCLOSURE: None of the planners and presenters for this educational activity have relevant financial relationships to disclose with ineligible companies whose primary business is producing, marketing, selling, reselling, or distributing healthcare products used by or on patients. Financial relationships are relevant if the educational content an individual can control is related to the business lines or products of the ineligible company. .

Continuing Education (CE) Information:

All credits require additional steps during registration and after the course, including a pre-training survey, a \$60 fee, and a post-evaluation form.

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DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

All presenters, planners, and staff involved in this program have disclosed any relevant financial relationships. Any potential conflicts of interest have been reviewed and mitigated to ensure the integrity and educational value of the program.

ATTENDANCE REQUIREMENTS

To receive CE credit, participants must:

- Attend the full conference
- Complete all required evaluation forms
- Provide accurate registration and attendance verification information

****Upon request The Melissa Institute will provide a Certificate of Completion that can be self-reported to other state boards. We cannot guarantee that it will be accepted by other boards for approval. Participants may request Certificates via email at info@melissainstitute.org.***



Ensuring High Quality
Professional Development



FLORIDA

Board of Clinical Social Work,
Marriage & Family Therapy
and Mental Health Counseling

The Melissa Institute is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization whose mission is preventing violence and promoting safer communities through research-based solutions.

On May 5, 1995, Melissa Aptman was murdered in St. Louis. A Miami native, she was just two weeks away from graduating with her bachelor's degree from Washington University. One year after her death, Melissa's family, friends, and leading violence-prevention experts established The Melissa Institute for Violence Prevention to honor her memory and make a lasting difference by working to prevent violence and support victims.



The Institute's work would not be possible without the participation, expertise, leadership, and generosity of our Board of Directors, Scientific Board, Honorary Board.

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