ACEs in Action:
Becoming a Trauma Informed Treatment Community

ACE Response: A Multidisciplinary Approach to Addressing Adverse Childhood Experiences
University at Albany, Albany NY
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Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)

Kaiser Permanente Study

- Started from 1995-1997 with more than 17,000 patients who were members of the HMO

- Asked a set of questions about events during childhood

- Efforts to replicate the findings are underway in six countries

www.cdc.gov/ace/about.htm
ACEs Major Findings

Exposure to adverse childhood experiences are common.

2/3 of study participants reported at least one ACE

over 1/5 reported three or more ACEs

The short- and long-term outcomes of these childhood exposures include a multitude of health and social problems:

- Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD)
- Depression
- Fetal death
- Health-related quality of life
- Illicit drug use
- Ischemic heart disease (IHD)
- Liver disease
- Risk for intimate partner violence
- Multiple sexual partners
- Sexually transmitted diseases (STDs)
- Smoking
- Suicide attempts
- Unintended pregnancies
- Early initiation of smoking
- Early initiation of sexual activity
- Adolescent pregnancy
- Alcoholism and alcohol abuse

Evidence is building and has demonstrated that as the number of ACEs increase, the risk for the above health problems increases in a strong and graded fashion.
Effects of ACEs

When compared with people who had no ACEs, people who had 4+ ACEs had:

- a 4-12 fold increase in alcoholism, drug abuse, depression, and suicide attempts
- a 2-4 fold increase in smoking and poor self-rated health
- Increased physical inactivity and obesity
- Greater sexual risk taking and sexually transmitted diseases
- Higher risk for premature death

Felitti et al. (1998), Brown et al. (2009)
What’s My ACE Score?

Prior to your 18th birthday:

1. Did a parent or other adult in the household often or very often…
   Swear at you, insult you, put you down, or humiliate you?
   or
   Act in a way that made you afraid that you might be physically hurt?

2. Did a parent or other adult in the household often or very often…
   Push, grab, slap, or throw something at you?
   or
   Ever hit you so hard that you had marks or were injured?

3. Did an adult or person at least 5 years older than you ever…
   Touch or fondle you or have you touch their body in a sexual way?
   or
   Attempt or actually have oral, anal, or vaginal intercourse with you?

4. Did you often or very often feel that …
   No one in your family loved you or thought you were important or special?
   or
   Your family didn’t look out for each other, feel close to each other, or support each other?

5. Did you often or very often feel that …
   You didn’t have enough to eat, had to wear dirty clothes, and had no one to protect you?
   or
   Your parents were too drunk or high to take care of you or take you to the doctor if you needed it?

6. Was a biological parent ever lost to you through divorce, abandonment, or other reason?

7. Was your mother or stepmother:
   Often or very often pushed, grabbed, slapped, or had something thrown at her?
   or
   Sometimes, often, or very often kicked, bitten, hit with a fist, or hit with something hard?
   or
   Ever repeatedly hit over at least a few minutes or threatened with a gun or knife?

8. Did you live with anyone who was a problem drinker or alcoholic or who used street drugs?

9. Was a household member depressed or mentally ill or did a household member attempt suicide?

10. Did a household member go to prison?

Now add up your “Yes” answers: _______ This is your ACE Score
Nearly 35 Million U.S. Children Have Experienced One or More ACE

The National Survey of Children’s Health (CDC), 2012

N= approx. 100k, ages: b-17yo,

Stevens, J., ACEs Too High, 2014
13 of 30 students in a classroom will have 3+ ACEs. Those children are likely to be more “unruly”, more “unmotivated” or more absent than the others.
National Survey of Child & Adolescent Well-Being (Stambaugh et al., 2013)

A national study of 5,873 children, ages 2 mo. - 17.5, who had contact with the child welfare system between 2008 and 2009.
ACEs and Court Involved Youth

Washington State
Pierce County Juvenile Court system
- of 2,000 juveniles surveyed:

  83% had an ACE score of 2 or more
  34% had an ACE score of 4 or more

Stevens, J., ACEs Too High, 2014
National Residential Trends

Adolescent Subjective Experience of Treatment Study (Foltz, et al., 2008)
Survey of 50 (86) youth in residential care, ages 13-18
mean number of ACEs endorsed: 4.62
56% of youth with 4+ ACEs

National Child Traumatic Stress Network Survey (Briggs, et al., 2012)
Survey of 11,076 youth (Res: 525, Non-Res: 9,942)
UCLA PTSD Reaction Index (20 question screen, similar to ACE domains)
mean number of trauma events endorsed: 5.8 res youth, 3.6, non-res
92% of res youth reported multiple trauma events, 77% non-res
Children & Youth With 2+ ACEs

- National: 22.6%
  - N=73,708,179
- New York: 17.7%
  - N=4,271,049
- Albany City: 25.8%
  - N=16,715

www.childhealthdata.org
LaSalle School
Youth ACE Scores

n= 178 youth, 2013- present
Effects of Violence on Children

- Impulsive behavior
- Apathy and desensitization
- Less able to sequence events in time
- Increased fragmentation of memory
- Anxious anticipation of future violence
- Higher levels of generalized anxiety
- Pervasive pessimism
- Distorted self appraisal
- Sense of foreshortened future
ADHD, PTSD Symptom Overlap (DSM IV criteria)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Symptom Overlap</th>
<th>ADHD</th>
<th>PTSD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hyper-vigilance</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inattention</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Detachment</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irritability</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anger Outbursts</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>Distracted</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restless</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impatient</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impulsive</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limited sense of future</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficulty Concentrating</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Weinstein et al, 2000
MH Diagnoses Among Court Involved Youth

- 43% 1 Dx
- 21% 2 Dx
- 19% 3 Dx
- 17% 4+ Dx

Shufelt & Cocozza, 2006
ACEs and Criminality

Youth with high ACE scores

- Demonstrate higher levels of interpersonal violence including delinquency, bullying, physical fighting
- Engage in more self-directed violence such as self-injury, suicidal ideation and attempts
- Have an increased likelihood of criminal charges, arrest, and adjudication
- Are at greater risk of chemical dependency

Anda et al. (1999), Dube (2002)
Youth enter the JJS for externalizing problems (i.e., acting out) or criminal behavioral problems.

Our real task is to identify and resolve the underlying causes
- Mental health and substance use disorders,
- behavior disorders,
- psychiatric impairment
- family dysfunction,
- and other deficits (e.g., social, vocational, educational)
Neurobiology of Trauma

“...when people relive their traumatic experiences, the frontal lobes become impaired and, as a result, they have trouble thinking and speaking.”

- B. van der Kolk
Brain Chemistry

**Cortisol, “UH-OH”**
- stress hormone (steroid)
- Aids in glucose metabolism

**Adrenaline, “Yikes!”**
- Stress hormone
- CNS excitement
- Fright/flight

**Serotonin, “Ahhh”**
- Derived from Tryptophan
- Regulates mood, sleep, appetite

**Dopamine, “YAHOO”**
- Neurotransmitter
- Drugs, sex, food
- Antidote to cortisol
- Role in addiction

Kros, F. 2014
Juvenile Brain Development

Impact of Neglect

Bruce Perry, MD
Learning About Trauma, Experientially

Brief clip: Antwone Fisher “Losing Jesse”

- What happened?
- How did you feel?
- Who is the victim? Why?
- Implications for JJS, treatment, and policy
Response to Trauma

Three primal responses to any traumatic event:

- **Fight**
  - Positive: Jenna’s Law
  - Negative: Antwone Fisher

- **Flight**
  - Positive: running/ moving away
  - Negative: running away/ substance abuse

- **Freeze**
  - Positive: the rabbit in my backyard
  - Negative: the same rabbit...
LSS Staff ACE Scores

![Bar chart showing ACE scores for LSS Staff and CDC Sample](chart.png)
LSS Staff ACE Scores, 4+

- Admin: 5.56%
- Clinic: 30.44%
- Education: 40.91%
- Residential: 31.25%
- Other: 19.76%

n=133
Child Welfare Agency Structure

- **Admin.**
- **Professional:** Clinical, Faculty, Medical, etc.
- **Paraprofessional:** Direct Care, Child Care, Case Managers, Aids, etc.

Time Spent with Youth:
- Less
- More

Training, Preparedness, $:
- Less
- More
Promoting Neurogenesis

What can we do to:
encourage brain maturation,
promote neurogenesis,
and develop positive coping skills,
in our youth?
Neurogenesis is...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STIMULATED BY:</th>
<th>INHIBITED BY:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vigorous Physical Play</td>
<td>Distress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meaningful New Learning</td>
<td>Physical Inactivity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exposure to Enriched Environments/Experiences</td>
<td>Boredom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Managed Stress Levels</td>
<td>Depression</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive Nutrition</td>
<td>Poor Nutrition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Support</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Protective Factors...

- Gender identity/ role development
- Individualism
- Self confidence
- Assertiveness skills (vs. aggressiveness)
- Healthy relationships with good boundaries
- Physical safety
- Empathy
- Coping skills/ emotional regulation
- Educational success
- Resolution of trauma
- Safety to explore healthy sexuality
- Positive role models/ mentors
So What?
(Implications for Us All)

Can shed light on “problem behaviors”
○ Hyperactivity, agitation, aggressive and oppositional behaviors

Common Language to communicate with
○ Staff, families, schools, counselors, caseworkers

Can help pace and inform
○ Trust, safety, relationships, educational interventions

Illustrates individual needs
○ what were they coping with?
○ what happens if you take it away?

Help the client understand their world

Funding, policy, and practice...
Contact me:

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Recommended Reading


More ACEs / Trauma Information & Resources

LaSalle School: www.lasalle-school.org/videos/aces-trauma-and-response
Alliance: www.alliance1.org/change-in-mind/brain-science-resources
Centers for Disease Control: www.cdc.gov/ace/index.htm
Ace Response: www.aceresponse.org
Aces Too High: ACEStoohigh.com
Center on the Developing Child, Harvard University: developingchild.harvard.edu