Adverse Childhood Experiences

The long-term effects of childhood adversity and how we can respond

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A story.
Vincent Felitti, MD
Preventive Medicine Physician
Kaiser Permanente

- 1985 - Kaiser Permanente in San Diego
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- Weight loss clinic

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- 50% dropout rate over 5 years - why?
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- 50% dropout rate over 5 years - why?
- 286 “dropouts” interviewed
>400 lbs
Most patients had been abused in their childhood.
Most patients had been abused in their childhood. Sexual abuse was unexpectedly common.

What was seen as the **PROBLEM**
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was, in fact, the **SOLUTION**
ADVERSE CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES STUDY

“The ACEs Study”
ABUSE

Physical abuse

Emotional abuse

Sexual abuse

NEGLECT

HOUSUELD STRESS
ABUSE
- Physical abuse
- Emotional abuse
- Sexual abuse

NEGLECT
- Physical neglect
- Emotional neglect

HOUSEHOLD STRESS
17,000 adults

White

College educated

Insured
17,000 ADULTS

75% WHITE

75% COLLEGE EDUCATED

100% INSURED
#1. ACES ARE COMMON
NUMBER OF ACES among ACE Study participants

- Zero: 36%
- One: 26%
- Two: 16%
- Three: 9.5%
- Four or more: 12.5%
Zero 36%
One 26%
Two 16%
Three 9.5%
Four or more 12.5%

64% ≥1 ACE

#2. ACES negatively affect health
MORE ACES

INCREASED RISK OF:
MORE ACES

INCREASED RISK OF:

Health risk behaviors
MORE ACES

INCREASED RISK OF:

Health risk behaviors

Mental health problems
MORE ACES

INCREASED RISK OF:

Health risk behaviors

Mental health problems

Chronic disease
MORE ACES

INCREASED RISK OF:

Health risk behaviors
Mental health problems
Chronic disease
Job challenges
MORE ACES

INCREASED RISK OF:

Health risk behaviors
Mental health problems
Chronic disease
Job challenges
School problems
ALCOHOLISM
ALCOHOLISM
SUBSTANCE USE DISORDER

7X
4.7X
ALCOHOLISM
SUBSTANCE USE DISORDER
LUNG DISEASE (COPD)
ALCOHOLISM
SUBSTANCE USE DISORDER
LUNG DISEASE (COPD)
CARDIOVASCULAR DISEASE
ALCOHOLISM
SUBSTANCE USE DISORDER
LUNG DISEASE (COPD)
CARDIOVASCULAR DISEASE
CANCER
LEARNING OR BEHAVIORAL PROBLEMS

DEVELOPMENTAL DELAY AND ACES

Children with Developmental Delays

Number of ACEs

1-2  3  4  5  6  7

Center on the Developing Child (2007).
The Impact of Early Adversity on Child Development.
The Impact of Early Adversity on Child Development.

Children with Developmental Delays

Number of ACEs

#1. ACES ARE COMMON
#1. ACES ARE **COMMON**

#2. ACES **NEGATIVELY** AFFECT HEALTH
#3. ACES ARE ASSOCIATED WITH EARLY MORTALITY
**ABUSE**
- Physical abuse
- Emotional abuse
- Sexual abuse

**NEGLECT**
- Physical neglect
- Emotional neglect

**HOUSEHOLD STRESS**
- Mental illness
- Substance abuse
- Domestic violence
- Incarceration
- Parental separation / Divorce
AREN'T THERE MORE THAN 10 ACES?
Adverse Childhood Experiences

- Mental illness
- Incarceration
- Parental separation
- Substance abuse
- Abuse
- Neglect
ADVERSE CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES

- Mental illness
- Incarceration
- Parental separation
- Substance abuse
- Abuse
- Neglect

ADVERSE COMMUNITY ENVIRONMENTS

- Holocaust
- Slavery
- Genocide
- Unaffordable housing
- Community violence
- Racism
- Poverty
- Joblessness
- Forced incarceration
- Forced displacement

ADVERSE COLLECTIVE HISTORICAL EVENTS

Slide design by Irene Jang (irenejang.com)
HOW IS THIS HAPPENING?
TOXIC STRESS
TOXIC STRESS CAN DISRUPT:
- Brain development
- Brain function
- Brain growth
**Prefrontal Cortex**
- Planning for future
- Empathy
- Reasoning
- Self-control (impulsivity)

**Amygdala**
- Fight or flight
PERSISTENT TOXIC STRESS

RESILIENCE

The ability to adapt in the face of significant adversity
MOST IMPORTANT FACTOR FOR CULTIVATING RESILIENCE
Most important factor for cultivating resilience:

A loving, committed relationship with an adult caregiver.
TRAUMA-INFORMED CARE
WHAT'S WRONG WITH YOU?
WHAT'S WRONG WITH YOU?

WHAT'S HAPPENED TO YOU?
EMPATHY

The willingness (or ability) to understand the experience or perspective of another
WHAT CAN WE DO?
Collecting BRFSS ACE Data by Year, 2009-2018

STATE OF THE EVIDENCE

What works to improve outcomes in children?

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Positive parenting counseling

STATE OF THE EVIDENCE
What works to improve outcomes in children?

- Positive parenting counseling
- Behavioral/Mental health counseling

STATE OF THE EVIDENCE
What works to improve outcomes in children?

Positive parenting counseling
Behavioral/Mental health counseling
Nurse home visits

THE FOUR Rs OF TRAUMA-INFORMED CARE
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REALIZE

...and understand the widespread impact of trauma

Adapted from: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration
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RECOGNIZE
...signs and symptoms of trauma

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RESPOND
...interpersonally and through policies, procedures, and practices

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THE FOUR Rs OF TRAUMA-INFORMED CARE

**REALIZE**
...and understand the widespread impact of trauma

**RECOGNIZE**
...signs and symptoms of trauma

**RESPOND**
...interpersonally and through policies, procedures, and practices

**AVOID RE-TRAUMATIZATION**
...actively, through universal and targeted actions

Adapted from: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration
Lincoln high school
Walla Walla, Washington

- Alternative school
- Avg ACE score = 4.5
  - 25% homeless
  - 80% serious depression
  - 65% with family member incarcerated
- Implemented trauma-informed practices in 2011
Lincoln High School in Walla Walla, WA, tries new approach to school discipline — suspensions drop 85%. Retrieved from acestoohigh.com, 04.2019
Lincoln High School, Walla Walla, WA, tries new approach to school discipline — suspensions drop 85%. Retrieved from acesouthhigh.com, 04.2019
Can we prevent ACEs?

- Strengthen economic support to families
- Change social norms to support parents and positive parenting
- Provide quality care and education in early life
- Intervene to lessen harms and prevent future risk

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It is easier to build strong children than to repair broken men.

- Frederick Douglass