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# Adverse Childhood Experiences Study

(ACES)

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5/29/2018

# Goals for today:

- Awareness of ACEs
- What is the ACE study?
- Identifying all 10 ACEs
- Understanding ACE scores
- Health Risks and ACEs
- Trauma Informed Care and ACEs

# Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) Study



- The largest study of its kind ever done, to examine the health and social effects of adverse childhood experiences over a lifespan (17,000 participants)
- Data resulting from their participation continues to be analyzed; it reveals staggering proof of health, social, and economic risks that result from childhood trauma.

# The Co-Principal Investigators of the Study:



**Vincent J. Felitti, MD- Kaiser  
Permanente**



**Robert F. Anda, MD, MS-  
Center for Disease Control**



# Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) Study



## Summary for Findings:

- ACEs are very common
- ACEs are strong predictors of later health risks and disease
- This combination makes ACEs the ***leading determinant*** of health and social well-being outcomes in the United States

# Health risks associated with high ACE scores



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

# What do we mean by Adverse Childhood Experiences?



- Childhood abuse and neglect
- Growing up with domestic violence
- Substance abuse or mental illness in the home
- Parental loss
- Crime
- Experiences that represent medical and social problems

# What's an ACE Score?





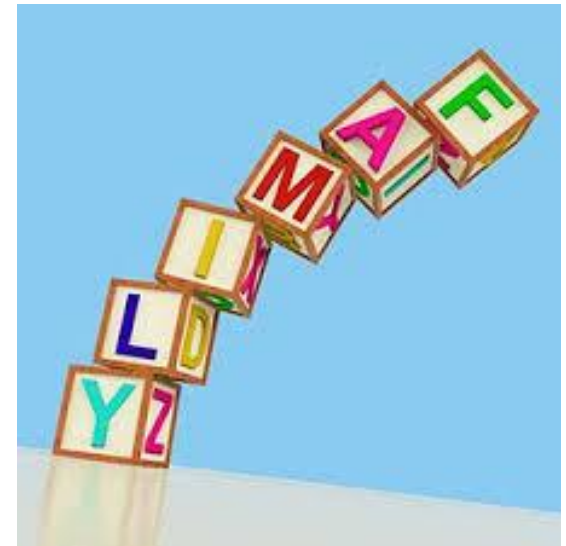
# Abuse

- Emotional
- Physical
- Sexual
- Emotional Neglect
- Physical Neglect



# Household Dysfunction

- Mother treated violently
- Household substance abuse
- Household mental health issues
- Parents separate or divorce
- Incarcerated household member



# ACE # 1: Recurrent Emotional Abuse

Excessive verbal abuse such as:

- Yelling,
- Swearing,
- Insults, put downs or humiliations

...rising to the level of fear of physical harm.



# ACE #2: Recurrent Physical Abuse



- Someone whose parent/caregiver pushes, grabs, slaps or throws something at him/her
- Someone who is hit hard enough for bruises to show or bones to be broken
- After abuse they have to lie about their physical marks

# ACE #3: Sexual Abuse



Children who are touched and exploited sexually.

# ACE #4: Domestic Violence in the Home

- A child that witnesses a male slap, grab, push or throw something at their mother
- If they see someone being kicked, bitten, or hit with a fist
- Perhaps being threatened with a gun or knife



# ACE #5: Alcohol or Drug Abuse in the Household

A child living with someone who abuses alcohol or drugs.



# ACE #6: Mental Illness in the Home

- Being raised by someone who has/had an untreated mental health condition
- As a child, being pushed and pulled emotionally due to the untreated mental illness
- Inconsistent and unrealistic beliefs





# ACE #7: Divorce and Separation

- Experience of parents going through separation and divorce
- The circumstances of divorce can be devastating
- Children blame themselves or believe they are not lovable



# ACE #8: Incarcerated Parent



- Experiencing a parent or family member in jail or prison
- Feelings of abandonment, anger, loss and embarrassment

# ACE #9 and #10: Emotional and Physical Neglect

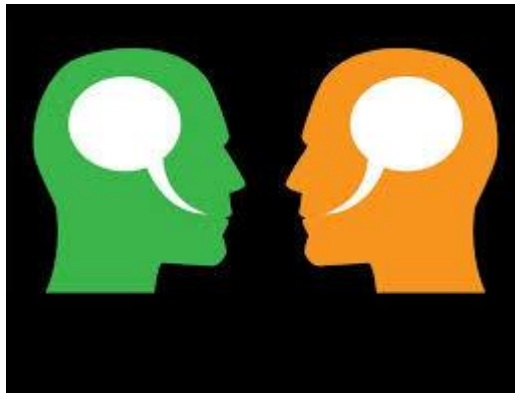


- These two ACEs are similar
  - Going hungry or having to search for food
  - Left alone for hours, days or even weeks
  - Clothing that is never cleaned, too small
  - Babies staying in soiled diapers for far too long
  - A home that is filthy, filled with trash, rodents/bugs or feces

# Let's Talk

Let's take a few minutes to talk about ACEs

Why are some resilient and others are not able to come to terms with their ACEs?



# Attachment and ACEs

- Our relationship with our first primary caregiver lays the foundation for how we, as humans, build and approach relationships throughout the entirety of our lives.
- The lack of a competent and caring adult in the early years of a child's life, can often lead to attachment issues.



# ACEs and Depression



- Genetics
- Biology
- Nature AND Nurture?
  - Could depression be a normal response to abnormal life experiences?

# Possible outcomes for Adults with ACEs

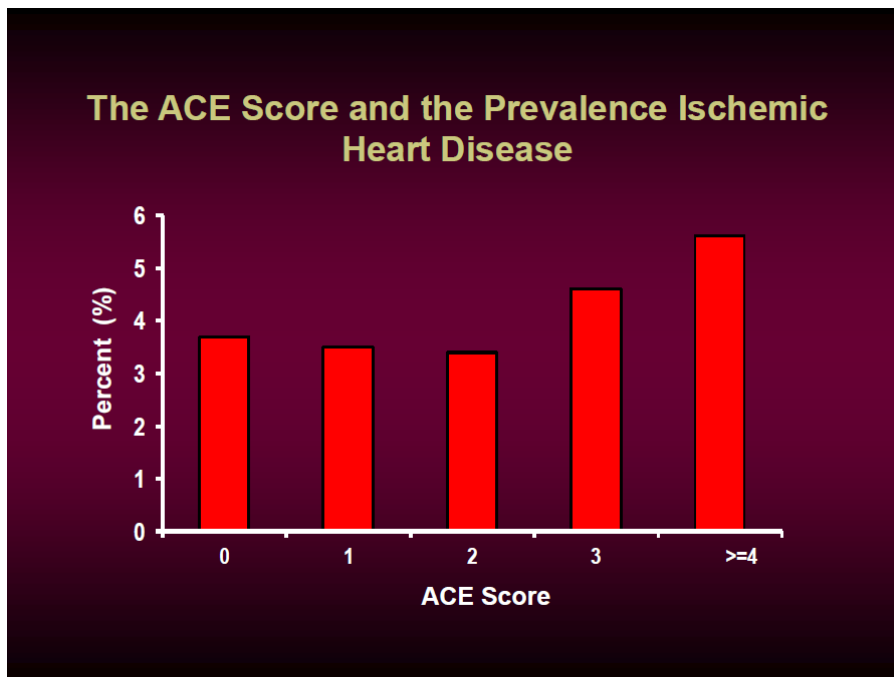


- Mental Illness
- Addiction(s)
- Divorce, multiple sex partners, unplanned pregnancy
- Incarceration
- Serious job problems
- Health concerns that are hard to diagnose
- Suicidal ideation and/or attempts

# ACE Scores and Heart Disease

## Ischemic heart disease

## Dr. Nadine Burke Harris





# Dr. Nadine Burke Harris



# Finding Your ACE Score



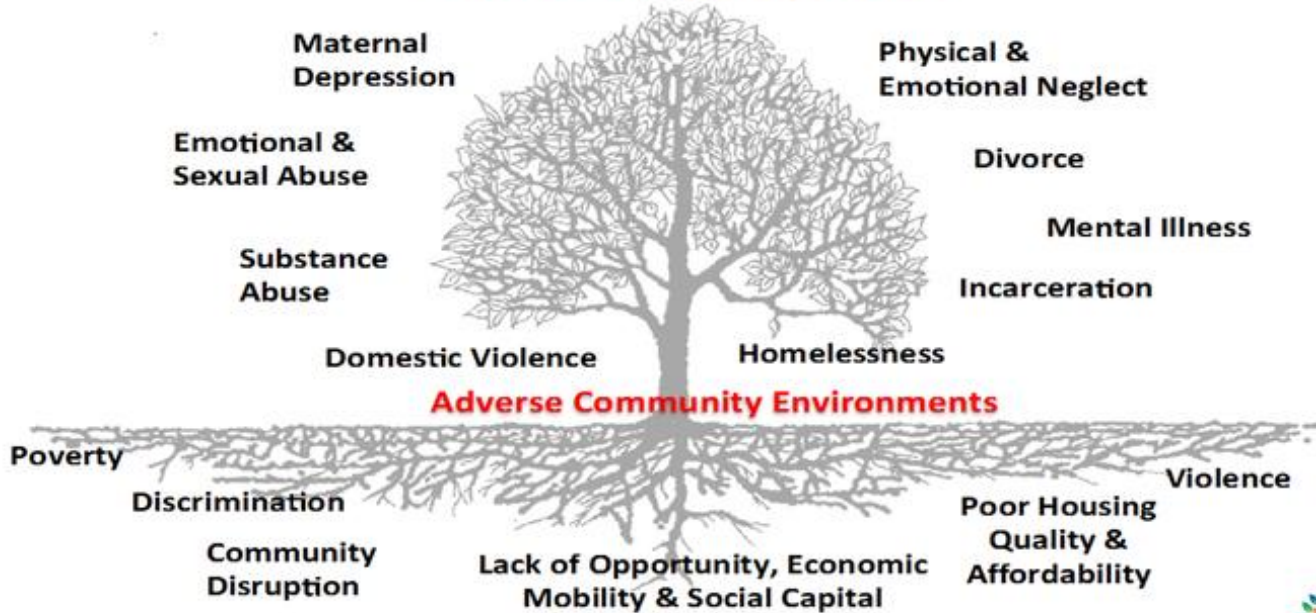
Let's look at our handout.



# ACEs & Trauma

The Pair of ACEs

**Adverse Childhood Experiences**



# Trauma

Trauma effects these seven domains”:

- Attachment
- Emotion regulation
- Behavior control
- Biological regulation
- Cognition
- Self-concept
- Dissociation

# What it means to be Trauma-Informed



- Build trust
- Understand the impact trauma has on behavior, development, attachment and survival strategies
- Understanding your role in responding to someone else's traumatic stress or their ACEs
- Don't take reactions or non-reactions personally
- Be aware of trauma triggers
- Support and promote positive and stable relationships

# What can we do now?



- Ask questions of social workers so that you understand the child's parenting history to better assist them in their journey.
- Arrange therapy appointments as appropriate.

# Resiliency in ACEs

- The capacity to recover quickly from difficulties
- The ability of a substance or object to spring back into shape; elasticity
- Is manifested when a person feels
  - Safe
  - Capable
  - Lovable

(Gonzalez, 2012)





# Children and ACEs



Caring for children that have experienced extensive amounts of trauma often lead caregivers to feel...

- Frustrated
- Angry
- Helpless
- Burnt-out
- Triggered

# Compassion Fatigue: Warning Signs



- Mental and physical exhaustion
- Using alcohol, food, or other substances to combat stress and comfort yourself
- Disturbed sleep
- Feeling numb and distanced from life
- Feeling less satisfied by work
- Moodiness, irritability
- Physical complaints—headaches, stomachaches

# Secondary Traumatic Stress



- Trauma experienced as a result of exposure to a child's trauma and trauma reactions
- Stress and exposure to trauma
- Exposure can be through:
  - What a child tells you or says in your presence
  - The child's play, drawings, written stories
  - The child's reactions to trauma reminders
  - Media coverage, case reports, or other documents about the trauma

# Self-Care Basics



- Get enough sleep
- Eat well
- Be physically active
- Moderate alcohol use, or not at all
- Take regular breaks from stressful activities
- Find humor and laugh
- Express yourself
- Seek out professional help when needed

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# Thank you!