Adverse Childhood Experiences Study

(ACES)

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:

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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?

0 ACEs 1 ACE 2 ACEs 3 ACEs 4+ ACEs
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

The ACE Score and the Prevalence Ischemic Heart Disease
Finding Your ACE Score

Let’s look at our handout.
ACEs & Trauma
The Pair of ACEs

Adverse Childhood Experiences

- Maternal Depression
- Physical & Emotional Neglect
- Emotional & Sexual Abuse
- Divorce
- Substance Abuse
- Mental Illness
- Domestic Violence
- Incarceration
- Homelessness
- Violence

Adverse Community Environments

- Poverty
- Discrimination
-Community Disruption
- Lack of Opportunity, Economic Mobility & Social Capital
- Poor Housing Quality & Affordability

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
References


• SAMHSA 5600 Fishers Ln Rockville, MD 20857 1-877-SAMHSA-7 (1-877-726-4727) Kristin Moore, Ph.D., Vanessa Sacks, M.P.P., Tawana Bandy, B.S., and David Murphey, Ph.D. Fact sheet: ACE’s and the well-being of Adolescents

• Sparrow Consulting, LLC Carol Redding, ACE Study consultant, lecturer, and trainer.


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Thank you!