

ACEs and Child Trauma Leave Lasting Scars

CDC statistics and narrative adapted from Rawhide.org

What are ACEs?

- Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs):
 - Events that occur during a person's formative years that influence physical and mental health into adulthood.
- There are three types of ACEs:
 - Abuse
 - Neglect
 - Household dysfunction

The ACE test

What does an ACE look like?

- The CDC gave a questionnaire with 10 types of childhood trauma and assigned a score of 1 for each trauma experienced and asked questions about adult experiences.

Types of ACEs

- Household substance abuse
- Parental separation/abuse
- Family member with mental illness
- Violence between parents/abuse of mother
- Incarcerated household member
- Psychological/emotional abuse
- Physical abuse
- Sexual abuse
- Emotional neglect
- Physical neglect

In this survey:

- 64% had at least 1 ACE
- 22% had 3 or more
- 12.5% had 4 or more

The most common ACEs

- 28% experience household abuse
- 27% saw household substance abuse
- 26% experienced economic hardship (neglect)
- 21% experienced sexual abuse
- 15% were emotionally neglected
- 10% were physically neglected

Why do ACEs matter?

- When an ACE occurs, the child's brain is flooded with adrenaline in what is often called "fight or flight."
- While this reaction helps the child react to immediate dangers, it becomes toxic if the child cannot escape the abuse or neglect, or if it is repeated over a long period.

Why do ACEs matter?

- Children who experience 4 or more aces are 32x more likely to have learning or behavior problems
 - Brain development is paused to deal with threats to safety
 - Thus stunted growth can lead to a snowball effect of poor decision making and an inability to process fear appropriately
 - They also respond to daily stresses with higher anxiety than those who experience 1 or no ACEs

Impact of ACEs

- Those with an ACE score of 2:
 - are 3x more likely to attempt suicide
 - 4x more likely to consider themselves an alcoholic
 - Nearly 3x more likely to use illicit drugs

Impact of ACEs

- Those with an ACE score of 4:
 - 2x more likely to use tobacco
 - 4x higher risk for Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD)
 - 5x more likely to suffer from depression
 - 7x more likely to consider themselves an alcoholic
 - 10x more likely to use illicit drugs
 - 12x more likely to attempt suicide

Impact of ACEs

- Those with an ACE score of 6:
 - Died 20 years earlier than those without ACEs
- ACEs cost the economy \$124 billion over the lifetime of all those affected by ACEs
 - \$83.5 billion in productivity lost
 - \$25 billion spent on health care to combat the effects of ACEs

Signs of a child impacted by ACEs

- Anger management problems
- Manipulative
- Lack of motivation
- View humans as threats, not friends
- Believe bad things happen on purpose
- Avoid risks at all costs

How we can prevent ACEs from damaging lives.

- Give children positive life experiences and work with them to develop healthy self-regulation:
 - Understanding what is in their control
 - Working toward goals
 - Creating effective problem solving skills
 - Empathizing with others
- Parenting classes

How we can prevent ACEs from damaging lives.

- Read to young children, talk with teens
- Create a community of loving people for children to interact with
- Provide good nutrition and the right amount of sleep
- Listen to childrens' needs and fears
- Discuss collaboration and compromising
- Direct them away from yelling and aggressive behavior
- Avoid exposure to violence in the media, community, and home