A Trauma-Informed Approach to Adverse Childhood Experiences: Promoting Resiliency and Prevention

January 14, 2014
Welcome to the ACEs Webinar!

Facilitator: Linda Chamberlain PhD MPH

State of Alaska
Family Violence Prevention Project
Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion

As a courtesy to others:
✓ Please put phones on mute
✓ Please do not put us on hold!
What We’re Talking About

• Resiliency trumps ACEs!
• The Brain Explains
• The effects of ACEs start early
• Resources for universal education and assessment
• Building resilient communities
Before We Start…

Healing starts by understanding how early trauma affects our health and behavior.

ADVERSE CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES (ACEs)

ACEs MAY BE PART OF OUR PAST, BUT THEY ARE NOT OUR DESTINY
Resiliency = positive adaptation despite adversities

- Healthy relationships
- Social and emotional skills
- Mastery of school
- Special skill
- It's never too late

ACEs Can Be Overcome
7 Crucial Cs of Resiliency

• Competence
• Confidence
• Connection
• Character
• Contribution
• Coping
• Control

• We are born with resilience and need to nurture it
• We all have different strengths that we need to pay attention to and build on
• “High Capacity” schools and communities are increasing resilience

www.fosteringresilience.com
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Positive Stress</th>
<th>Tolerable Stress</th>
<th>Toxic Stress</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Normal and essential part of healthy development</td>
<td>• Body's alert systems activated to a greater degree</td>
<td>• Occurs with strong, frequent or prolonged adversity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Brief increases in heart rate and blood pressure</td>
<td>• Activation is time-limited and buffered by caring adult relationships</td>
<td>• Disrupts brain architecture and other organ systems.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Mild elevations in hormonal levels</td>
<td>• Brain and organs recover</td>
<td>• Increased risk of stress-related disease and cognitive impairment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Example: tough test at school. Playoff game.</td>
<td>• Example: death of a loved one, divorce, natural disaster</td>
<td>• Example: abuse, neglect, caregiver substance abuse</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Intense, prolong, repeated, unaddressed

Social-Emotional buffering, Parental Resilience, Early Detection, Effective Intervention
Persistent Stress Changes Brain Architecture

Normal

Typical neuron—many connections

Toxic stress

Damaged neuron—fewer connections

Prefrontal Cortex and Hippocampus

Sources: Radley et al. (2004)
Bock et al. (2005)
Toxic Stress Interferes with Ability to Learn

- Exaggerated and prolonged response to stressors
- Affects ability to regulate emotions and behavior

“Youth struggling with self-regulation may not communicate needs in clear, direct manner → look past behavior to find hidden need”
Insights about Trauma

“Not realizing that children exposed to inescapable, over-whelming stress may act out their pain, that they may misbehave, not listen to us, or seek our attention in all the wrong ways, can lead us to punish these children for their misbehavior. The behavior is so willful, so intentional. She controlled herself yesterday, she can control herself today. If we only knew what happened last night, or this morning before she got to school, we would be shielding the same child we’re reprimanding.”
ACEs through a Different Lens

Self-understanding is a key step in healing

It’s not about what’s wrong with you, it’s about understanding what happened to you.
Physical health problems → ACEs → TOXIC STRESS → BRAIN

Toxic Stress Response

- Depressed immune system
- Chronic inflammation
- Physical health problems
- Mental health problems

Self-medicate to cope
Adopt risky behaviors

RESILIENCY

STOP
Linking Childhood Experiences and Adult Outcomes

Toxic Stress
- Epigenetic Modifications
- Disruptions in Brain Architecture
- Behavioral Allostasis

Childhood Adversity \rightarrow \text{Toxic Stress} \rightarrow \text{Poor Adult Outcomes}
It’s Never Too Late

Our brains have the capacity to change. We can help our brains by:

• Not abusing alcohol or drugs
• Learning new things
• Positive self-talk
• Healthy relationships→resiliency grows by connecting with others who support us
• Seeking help when needed
The “ACE” Study

The largest study of its kind ever to examine the medical, social, and economic consequences of adverse childhood experiences over the lifespan.
How the ACE Study Started

A physician working with Kaiser Permanente (HMO) in California was working with a very effective weight loss program to help obese patients lose weight….he was surprised to find that the patients most likely to drop out of the program were those who were most successful at losing weight. He learned that many of these patients had been sexually abused as children. They felt safer when they were overweight and used food as a coping mechanism.
What Are Adverse Childhood Experiences?

Child Abuse
• Sexual
• Physical
• Psychological/emotional

Childhood Neglect
• Physical
• Emotional

Growing up with:
• Mental illness
• Substance abuse (alcohol or drugs)
• Domestic violence
• Family member in prison
• Loss of parent due to death, abandonment, separation or divorce

HANDOUT: ACEs questionnaire and Case Scenario
ACE Study Design

Survey Wave 1
71% response (9,508/13,454)
n=13,000
All medical evaluations abstracted

Survey Wave II
n=13,000
All medical evaluations abstracted

Present Health Status

17,337 adults

Mortality
National Death Index

Morbidity
Hospitalization
Doctor Office Visits
Emergency Room Visits
Pharmacy Utilization
# Prevalence of Adverse Childhood Experiences

## Abuse, by Category

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Prevalence (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Psychological (by parents)</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical (by parents)</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual (anyone)</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Neglect, by Category

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Prevalence (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Emotional</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Household Dysfunction, by Category

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Prevalence (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alcoholism or drug use in home</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loss of biological parent &lt; age 18</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Depression or mental illness in home</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother treated violently</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imprisoned household member</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ACEs are Good Buddies…

**ACE Score**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Prevalence</th>
<th>Prevalence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 or more</td>
<td>11%*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- If any one ACE is present, there is an 87% chance at least one other category of ACE is present, and 50% chance of 3 or >.
The greater the number of ACEs, the greater the risk for:

- Heart disease
- Cancer
- Obesity
- Liver disease
- Lung disease
- HIV
- Depression
- Drug use
- Alcoholism
- Suicide

Felitti et al, 1998
ACEs and Suicide Attempts

![Bar chart showing the relationship between ACE score and suicide attempts.](chart.png)
ACEs and Chronic Depression

% With a Lifetime History of Depression

ACE Score

Women
Men

0 1 2 3  >=4

ACE Score

% With a Lifetime History of Depression

0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80

Women
Men

0
1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10

ACE Score
ACEs and Adult Alcoholism

![Bar Chart]

- **ACE Score**: 0, 1, 2, 3, 4+
- **% Alcoholic**: 0, 1, 2, 3, 4+

The chart shows the relationship between ACE score and the percentage of alcoholics.
“Our findings indicate that the major factor underlying addiction is adverse childhood experiences that have not healed with time and are overwhelming concealed by shame, secrecy, and social taboo.”

Dr. Vincent Felitti, Origins of Addictions, 2003
The Impact of ACEs Start Early

ACEs increase the risk of:

- Childhood obesity
- Early age at first intercourse
- Teen pregnancy
- Bullying
- Dating violence
- Fighting and carrying a weapon to school
- Early initiation of tobacco use
- Early initiation of drug abuse
- Early initiation of alcohol use
- Self-mutilation and suicide

What ACEs Can Look Like in the Classroom

• Children with 3 or more ACEs are nearly 4 times (OR=3.66) more likely to have developmental delays (Marie-Mitchell et al, 2013)

• Children with 4 or more ACEs are 32 times more likely to have behavioral problems in school (Burke et al, 2011)
ACE Score and Teen Sexual Risk Behaviors

Looking for love

ACE Score

- 0
- 1
- 2
- 3
- or more 4

Percent With Health Problem (%)

- 0
- 1
- 2
- 3 or more
- 4

Intercourse by Age 15

Teen Pregnancy

Teen Paternity

Percent With Health Problem (%)
ACEs and Teen Alcohol Use

Teens exposed to ACEs are more likely to:

- start drinking alcohol by age 14
- say that they drank to cope during their first year of drinking

Dube et al, 2006
An ACE score of 7 or more increases the likelihood of attempted suicide:

- **51 times** greater among children/adolescents
- **30 times** greater among adults

Ace Reporter, winter 2006, Vol 1, Issue 3
Collecting ACE Data in Alaska

• Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance Survey (BRFSS)

• National Survey on Children’s Health (NSCH)

• Other options—pediatric practices, Head Start, Behavioral Health, primary care
### National Survey of Children’s Health, 2010-2012

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ace Question</th>
<th>U.S.</th>
<th>Alaska</th>
<th>Statistically Significant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Family’s income hard to cover the basics like food or housing? Very often or Somewhat often.</td>
<td>25.7%</td>
<td>25.0%</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did child ever live with a parent or guardian who got divorced or separated after he or she was born? Yes</td>
<td>20.1%</td>
<td>23.8%</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did the child ever live with a parent or guardian who died? Yes</td>
<td>3.1%</td>
<td>3.1%</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did ever live with a parent or guardian who served time in jail or prison after he/she was born? Yes</td>
<td>6.9%</td>
<td>9.6%</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did the child ever see or hear any parents, guardians, or any other adults in his/her home slap, hit, kick, punch, or beat each other up? Yes</td>
<td>7.3%</td>
<td>8.6%</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Was the child ever the victim of violence or witness any violence in his/her neighborhood? Yes</td>
<td>8.6%</td>
<td>10.5%</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did the child ever live with anyone who was mentally ill or suicidal, or severely depressed for more than a couple of weeks? Yes</td>
<td>8.6%</td>
<td>11.0%</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did the child ever live with anyone who had a problem with alcohol or drugs? Yes</td>
<td>10.7%</td>
<td>14.5%</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Was the child ever treated or judged unfairly because of his/her race or ethnic group? Yes</td>
<td>4.1%</td>
<td>4.9%</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: [http://childhealthdata.org/browse/survey?q=2456&r=1](http://childhealthdata.org/browse/survey?q=2456&r=1)

Table compiled by provided by Patrick Sidmore, Alaska Mental Health Board, Juneau, Alaska
Two or More Adverse Childhood Experiences

*Does not include physical or sexual abuse.
Trauma-Informed Prevention

• Children with ACEs may abuse substances for different reasons compared to children without these experiences

• Different prevention strategies may be needed for children with ACEs

Rothman et al, 2008
What is Trauma-Informed?

• Every part of the organization, management and service delivery system is assessed and modified to include a basic understanding of how trauma affects the lives of clients seeking services

• System based on understanding of the vulnerabilities/triggers of trauma survivors that traditional service delivery approaches may exacerbate to ensure services are more supportive and avoid re-traumatization

www.samhsa.gov/nctic.traum.asp
ACE Risk Pyramid and Change

Mechanisms by Which Adverse Childhood Experiences Influence Health and Well-being Throughout the Lifespan

Dr. Vincent Felitti and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
Effective Parenting Skills Can Reduce Effects of Trauma on Children

• Effective parenting skills and parental warmth promote resiliency among children exposed to domestic violence (Graham-Bermann et al, 2009)

• Parents’ ability to parent under stressful circumstances is a protective factor that buffers the effect of family violence on child adjustment (Davies et al, 2004; Margolin et al, 2004)
Universal Education with Parents

• Many parents may not recognize how early trauma can affect their parenting and children

• Increasing parents’ awareness about the effects of ACEs can help them to understand their own lives and make healthier choices to protect their own children from ACEs

• ACE Study has helped to shift thinking from “It’s not what’s wrong with me” to “it’s about understanding what happened to me.”
ACEs Resource

- Designed to look like “App”-uses QR codes
- Positive, supportive approach for parents
- Universal education with self-assessment
- Simple language and avoid use of stigmatizing words
- Practical strategies to reduce stress and promote resiliency

Contact to request free copies:
Jo Gottschalk 907 269-3454
Jo.gottschalk@alaska.gov
We all want to be the best parents we can be. This booklet helps you to recognize how things in your past, such as how you were raised, can help you parent or can get in the way and make it hard for you to be the kind of parent you want to be. Some adults have pasts that can haunt them. Parents need care and support too. In this booklet, you will also find strategies for both you and your children to be stronger, happier and healthier.

This resource has phone numbers, cell phone Apps, ideas and websites that may be helpful to you or someone else you know who is a caregiver for children including step-parents, teenage parents, grandparents, relatives and other caring adults.
When stress is severe, goes on for a long time, or if several bad things happen close together in time, it can be harder for children to get through the bad times. Signs that children are having trouble coping include:

- Acting out, being aggressive or fighting with other children
- Difficulty paying attention
- Problems with calming down
- Being hyperactive and impulsive

Children who are over-stressed are more likely to have physical health problems, such as headaches, stomach problems and asthma. The good news is that everyday things that parents do with their children such as reading stories, singing songs, and giving lots of hugs can help children get through tough times.

fosteringresilience.com
Parenting tips to foster strengths in children, recognize signs of trouble in children, and a special section for teens on how to manage stress.

nctsn.org
Understanding children and stress

Download a QR code reader app to access resources on your smartphone!

SCAN ME!
SIMPLE STEPS FOR PARENTS TO REDUCE STRESS

STOP WHAT YOU’RE DOING FOR A FEW MINUTES and take some deep breaths until you feel calmer. It can be hard to remember what helps when things are really stressful. Check out “Tactical Breather Trainer,” a free cell phone App that uses pictures and talks you through deep breathing or go to www.childdevelopmentinfo.com and search for “52 proven ways to reduce stress”.

TRY TO IDENTIFY THINGS THAT ARE ESPECIALLY STRESSFUL (for example, toilet training or talking with your teen about dating and sex) and see if someone else can help with or do that task.

TALK WITH A TRUSTED FRIEND, neighbor or family member about what’s going on.

FIND A PARENTING SUPPORT GROUP to connect with other parents. Connect with other parents online at www.nationalparenthelpline.org/articlesblogs/nph-blog or ask an expert online at www.parenting.org.
All forms of child abuse (physical, sexual and emotional) and neglect are very stressful for children. Living in homes where adults are hurting or threatening one another is also harmful for children. Information about helping families when there has been abuse, neglect or other trauma can be found at [www.nctsn.org/resources/audiences/parents-caregivers](http://www.nctsn.org/resources/audiences/parents-caregivers). For information about how to recognize child maltreatment and prevention tips for parents go to [www.preventchildabuse.org](http://www.preventchildabuse.org). You can call these help lines 24 hours a day:

**Child Help:** 1-800-4A-CHILD (422-4453)

**Domestic Violence Hotline:** 1-800-799-SAFE (7233)

**Treatment Referral:** 1-800-662-HELP (4357)

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[www.nsvrc.org](http://www.nsvrc.org)  
Sexual abuse prevention resource for parents.

[preventchildabuse.org](http://preventchildabuse.org)  
Information on healthy development of children and how to prevent abuse before it ever happens.
Self-Assessment

Did you (before you were 18 years old) or your child live with someone who:

• Was depressed, mentally ill or suicidal? (ACE Study)
• Served time in jail or prison? (ACE Study)
• Was a problem drinker or an alcoholic? (ACE Study)
• Used illegal street drugs or abused prescription medications? (ACE Study)

Did you (before you were 18 years old) or has your child had any of these things happen:

• Had a parent or guardian who died? (ACE Study; WHO-ACE IQ)
• Heard or saw someone being stabbed or shot? (WHO ACE-IQ; Philadelphia Urban ACEs)
• Placed in foster care? (Philadelphia Urban ACEs)
• Bullied by other children? (WHO ACE-IQ)
• Were you treated badly or unfairly because of something about you such as your race, sexual orientation, place of birth, disability, etc.? (NSCH; Philadelphia Urban ACEs)
• Punished or disciplined by being slapped, hit or spanked? (PWP)
• Punished or disciplined by being hit with a belt, paddle, brush or other object? (PWP)
Building Blocks for Resiliency

• Questions about protective factors that parents may have experienced as children

• Incorporates content about resiliency and hope for adult survivors

• Focus on essential skills to promote resiliency with concrete examples for younger children and teens
There are messages and skills that you can share with your children that can strengthen them and help them do better in good times and bad times. When children learn these, they build connections in their brains that help them to succeed in school, to behave in the ways you would expect, and to become happier and healthier. When parents manage stress in positive ways, parents’ brains can change in ways that will help them to be healthier and happier too! These strengths build on one another like building blocks that can help children of all ages and their adults to better deal with stress.

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The questions below ask about positive things that help children when times are tough. Take a minute to think back to your childhood and answer these questions about yourself.

**As a child (before I was 18 years old):**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Not Sure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I had someone I could talk to when I was upset or scared.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I knew that my parent(s)/caregiver(s) loved me.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There was someone in my life who helped me feel important or special.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I was able to ask for help when I needed it.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
• Connections=Healthy Relationships
• Self-Regulation=I am in control!
• Self-Esteem/Confidence=I can do it!
• Empathy=I understand how you feel!

It’s Not Just for Kids!
I AM CONNECTED
[HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS]

- Warm, loving relationships with your children build a foundation that will stay with them forever. Be firm and consistent, but not scary, when you discipline them, and give them lots of praise when they do what you want them to do—"You did a good job being quiet like I asked you to. Good listening!" "I appreciate that you came home on time tonight. I know I can trust you."

- Tell your children how important they are—"I’ll always love you" and "I love you for who you are."

- Have fun together—play, laugh, and do things with your children that they enjoy. "Jake, why don’t we walk over to the park together so you can show me the skateboarding jump you were talking about?"

- Taking time for yourself and seeing friends without your kids can help parents to be less stressed. You are not being a "bad" parent when you take time for yourself. It might even make you more patient with your children to be with friends and other people who care about you.
High Community Capacity: Best Practices

Local community public health and safety networks:

• Collaborative leadership

• Community education on ACEs & innovations

• System-based strategies to reduce ACEs & increase resiliency based on community strengths
  • Trauma-informed schools***

• Outcome-based decision-making and flexibility to adjust practices based on what is and isn’t working
Effects of Higher Community Capacity Among Younger Adults

Higher Community Capacity → Lower ACE Score → Higher Social/Emotional Support → Lower Rates of Mental, Behavioral and Physical Disorders
What Happened in Washington State

• Rates of mental, behavioral and physical disorders are lower among young adults, ages 18-34, in higher capacity communities
  - Significantly lower rates of severe depression, binge drinking, smoking, obesity & diabetes

• Lower rates of disorders are partly due to ↓ ACEs and increases in social and emotional support among young adults, ages 18-34

What could this look like in your community?

• Walla Walla, WA – Children’s Resilience Initiative

• Tarpon Springs, FL – Peace4Tarpon initiative to create a trauma-informed community

• State of Maine – statewide initiative; Head Start Screening

• Go to www.ACEsconnection.com for more information
Upcoming Training Opportunities

• Next Tuesday, January 21\textsuperscript{st} from 1-3 p.m. Karen Benning, Agnew::Beck Consulting & Sylvan Robb, Information Insights will present the next webinar in the sustainability series \textit{Determining What to Sustain: Part 1}.

• Tuesday, February 4\textsuperscript{th} from 1-3 p.m. Thea Agnew Bemben, Agnew::Beck Consulting will present on \textit{The Basics of Effective Facilitation for Coalitions}. 