Hard Conversations: Acing Child Wellbeing to Prevent Homelessness
Trauma is perhaps the most avoided, ignored, belittled, denied, misunderstood, and untreated cause of human suffering.

– Peter Levine
Trauma is psychological distress that occurs because of an event that exceeds a child’s ability to cope.
THE TRUTH ABOUT ACES

WHAT ARE THEY?

ACEs are ADVERSE CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES

The three types of ACES include

- **ABUSE**
  - Physical
  - Emotional
  - Sexual

- **NEGLECT**
  - Physical
  - Emotional

- **HOUSEHOLD DYSFUNCTION**
  - Mental Illness
  - Incarcerated Relative
  - Mother treated violently
  - Substance Abuse
  - Divorce
HOW PREVALENT ARE ACES?

The ACE study revealed the following estimates:

**ABUSE**
- Physical Abuse: 20.4%
- Sexual Abuse: 20.1%
- Emotional Abuse: 31.4%

**NEGLECT**
- Emotional Neglect: 74.9%
- Physical Neglect: 8.8%

**HOUSEHOLD DYSFUNCTION**
- Household Substance Abuse: 25.0%
- Parental Illness: 22.5%
- Parental Mental Illness: 10.9%
- Mother Treated for Mental Illness: 10.7%
- Documented Violence in Household: 4.7%

OF 17,600 ACE study participants:

- 32% experienced 0 ACEs
- 4% have at least 4 ACEs
- 64% have at least 1 ACE

WHAT IMPACT DO ACES HAVE?

As the number of ACES increases, so does the risk for negative health outcomes.

Possible Risk Outcomes:

**BEHAVIOR**
- Unemployment
- Smoking
- Alcoholism
- Drug use
- Prison

**PHYSICAL & MENTAL HEALTH**
- Heart disease
- Cancer
- Stroke
- COPD
- Suicide

rwjf.org/aces
How do Children React to Trauma?
Positive Stress

brief increase in heart rate, mild elevations in stress hormones
Tolerable Stress

Serious, temporary stress responses buffered by supportive relationships
Toxic Stress

strong, frequent or prolonged adversity without a buffering, supportive relationship
Three Core Concepts in Early Development

Toxic Stress Derails Healthy Development

NATIONAL SCIENTIFIC COUNCIL ON THE DEVELOPING CHILD
Center on the Developing Child HARVARD UNIVERSITY
Healthy Brain
This PET scan of the brain of a normal child shows regions of high (red) and low (blue and black) activity. At birth, only primitive structures such as the brain stem (center) are fully functional; in regions like the temporal lobes (top), early childhood experiences wire the circuits.

An Abused Brain
This PET scan of the brain of a Romanian Orphan, who was institutionalized shortly after birth, shows the effect of extreme deprivation in infancy. The temporal lobes (top), which regulate emotions and receive input from the senses, are nearly quiescent. Such children suffer emotional and cognitive problems.
THE SPECTRUM OF PREVENTION

- Influencing Policy and Legislation
- Changing Organizational Practices
- Fostering Coalitions and Networks
- Educating Providers
- Promoting Community Education
- Strengthening Individual Knowledge and Skills
SEEKING HUMAN KINDNESS
QUESTIONS?

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