Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs): What are they, and how can we prevent them?

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ADVERSE CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES

DRUG OVERDOSE

SUICIDE
Poll: Are you familiar with the concept of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)?

A. Not at all
B. A little
C. Somewhat
D. I know a good bit
E. I’m an expert
Adverse Childhood Experiences

ACEs are potentially traumatic experiences that occur in childhood (age < 18 years) that can have lifelong impacts on health, experience of violence, and economic opportunity. The “traditional” ACEs include experiencing forms of abuse, neglect, and certain challenges in a child’s household, like parent mental illness or substance abuse.

Expanded ACEs

• Experiencing discrimination
• Experiencing bullying or peer violence
• Experiencing teen dating violence
• Housing insecurity or homelessness
• Food insecurity
• Living in extreme poverty
• Witnessing violence in your community
The Pair of ACEs

Adverse Childhood Experiences

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

Adverse Community Environments

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

An ACEs Conceptual Framework
ACEs are Common

61% of surveyed adults reported experiencing at least one ACE

1 in 6 people reported experiencing 4+ ACEs

Females, LGBTQ+ individuals, and most racial/ethnic minority groups are at higher risk of experiencing 4+ ACEs

ACEs have a lasting impact across the lifespan
ACEs are Preventable

We can prevent ACEs before they happen, AND we can reduce the negative impact of ACEs after they occur, by helping those who have experienced ACEs become more resilient
Potential reduction of negative outcomes in adulthood

**Health Conditions**
- Depressive Disorder: -44%
- Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease: -27%
- Asthma: -24%
- Kidney Disease: -16%
- Stroke: -15%
- Coronary Heart Disease: -13%
- Cancer: -6%
- Diabetes: -6%
- Overweight/Obesity: -2%

**Health Risk Behaviors**
- Current Smoking: -33%
- Heavy Drinking: -24%

**Socioeconomic Challenges**
- Unemployment: -15%
- Less than a High School Education: -5%
- No Health Insurance: -4%

ACEs and Substance Use

Number of Categories of ACEs

Compared to NO ACE Exposure

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<th>Alcohol Use Disorder</th>
<th>Ever Used Illicit Drugs</th>
<th>Ever Injected Drugs</th>
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</table>

Poll: Have you been engaged with crafting, creating, or changing policies related to ACEs?

A. Yes
B. No
6 Strategies to Prevent ACEs

- **Strengthen** family economic stability
- **Promote** positive social norms against violence
- **Connect** youth to caring adults
- **Ensure** a strong start for children
- **Enhance** parenting skills
- **Intervene** to lessen immediate & long-term harms

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**Preventing ACEs: Leveraging the Best Available Evidence**
Strengthen Family Economic Stability

Child Care Subsidies

Earned Income Tax Credits (EITC)
Child Tax Credits (CTC)

Family-Friendly Policies

Flexible and Consistent Work Schedules
Promote Social Norms That Protect Against Violence and Adversity

▪ Public education campaigns
▪ Legislative approaches to reducing corporal punishment
▪ Bystander approaches
▪ Men and boys as allies in prevention
Ensure a Strong Start for Children

- Early childhood home visitation
- High-quality childcare
- Preschool enrichment programs with family engagement
Teach Skills

Social emotional learning programs
- Life Skills Training
- The Good Behavior Game
- Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies

INCREASE school readiness and social success

DECREASE problem behaviors

PROMOTE self-regulation skills and social emotional competence
Teach Skills

Parenting and Family Relationship Approaches
• The Incredible Years
• Strengthening Families 10-14
Connect Youth to Caring Adults and Activities

Mentoring
After-school programs
Intervene to Lessen Immediate and Long-term Harms

- Enhanced primary care
- Victim-centered services
- Treatment to lessen harms of ACEs
- Treatment to prevent problem behavior and future involvement in violence
- Family-centered treatment approaches for substance use disorders
VetoViolence ACEs Online Trainings

Introductory Training Modules

Training for Specific Professions
The findings and conclusions in this presentation are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official position of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Thank you!