The Effects of Domestic Violence on Children: Picking Up The Pieces

Kristy Nelson & Andrea Link
Legacy House
Adoption of Health-risk Behaviors
Social, Emotional, & Cognitive Impairment
Disease, Disability and Social Problems
Adverse Childhood Experiences

Death
Conception

Scientific gaps
The Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) Study

Examines the health and social effects of ACEs throughout the lifespan among 17,421 members of the Kaiser Health Plan in San Diego County

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 discord, crime
ACE Study Design

Survey Wave I (N = 9,508)
Index

Follow-up
(N = 17,421)

Mortality
National Death

Morbidity
Hospital Discharge
Outpatient Visits

Survey Wave II (N = 8,667)

Utilization

All medical evaluations
abstracted from both waves

Emergency room visits
Pharmacy
Adverse Childhood Experiences Are Common

**Household dysfunction:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Experience</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Substance abuse</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parental sep/divorce</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental illness</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Battered mother</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Criminal behavior</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Abuse:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Psychological</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Neglect:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Emotional</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Adverse Childhood Experiences Rarely Occur in Isolation…

They come in groups.
Domestic Violence and the Risk of Other ACEs...
Prevalence of Childhood Abuse by Frequency of Witnessing Domestic Violence

Frequency of witnessing domestic violence:
- Never
- Once, Twice
- Sometimes
- Often
- Very often

Percentage (%)

Childhood Abuse:
- Emotional
- Physical
- Sexual
ACEs tend to come in groups…

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Additional ACEs (%)</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>≥5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>If you had:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A battered mother</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If you had a battered mother, the percentages of additional ACEs were 95%, 82%, 64%, 48%, and 52% for 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 or more additional ACEs, respectively.
ACE Score and Teen Sexual Behaviors

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

Percent With Health Problem (%)

Intercourse by Age 15
Teen Pregnancy
Teen Paternity

Legend:
- 0
- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4 or more
The ACE Score and the Prevalence of Severe Obesity (BMI ≥35)
PTSD vs ADHD

- **PTSD**
  - Difficulty concentrating
  - Inability to remember
  - Feeling “jumpy”
  - Loss of interest
  - Compulsive play

- **ADHD**
  - Difficulty paying attention to details
  - Forgetfulness
  - Fidgeting/Squirming
  - Not finishing projects
  - Difficulty playing quietly
ACEs and Mental Health...
The ACE Score and the Prevalence of Attempted Suicide

ACE Score

Percent attempted (%)
The ACE Score and a Lifetime History of Depression

![Bar graph showing the percentage of individuals depressed by ACE Score for men and women.](image)

- **Women**: The percentage of women increases with higher ACE scores, reaching a peak for those with a score of 3.
- **Men**: The percentage of men is generally lower than women across all ACE score categories.

---

**Legend**
- **Pink**: Women
- **Light Blue**: Men

**X-axis**: ACE Score
- 0
- 1
- 2
- 3
- >=4

**Y-axis**: Percent depressed (%)
ACEs and Violent Victimization as an Adult…
ACE Score and the Risk of Being a Victim of Domestic Violence

The chart shows the relationship between ACE Score and the risk of being a victim of domestic violence for both women and men. The x-axis represents the ACE Score, ranging from 0 to >5, and the y-axis represents the risk of victimization (%). The chart indicates that higher ACE Scores are associated with a higher risk of victimization, particularly for women.
ACE Score and Drug Abuse

Ever addicted to drugs

Ever injected drugs

Ever had a drug problem

ACE Score

- 0
- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- >=5
ACE Score and HIV Risks

![Graph showing the relationship between ACE Score and HIV risks for different behaviors: Ever Injected Drugs, Had 50 or More Intercourse Partners, Ever Had an STD. The graph uses colored bars to represent the percentage of individuals with health problems across different ACE scores.]
ACEs, Smoking, and Lung Disease

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

Percent With Health Problem (%)

Early smoking initiation
Current smoking
COPD
The ACE Score and the Prevalence Ischemic Heart Disease

The graph shows the percent prevalence of ischemic heart disease for different ACE scores.

- **ACE Score 0** has a percent prevalence of around 0.5%.
- **ACE Score 1** has a percent prevalence of around 3.0%.
- **ACE Score 2** has a percent prevalence of around 2.5%.
- **ACE Score 3** has a percent prevalence of around 5.0%.
- **ACE Score 4 or more** has a percent prevalence of around 4.5%.

The graph indicates that higher ACE scores are associated with higher percent prevalence of ischemic heart disease.
One Perspective on the Direct Health Care Costs of ACEs:

The Burden of Prescription Drug Use
Prescription Drugs in the United States (2003)

- nearly $180 billion spent
- 11% of total national health expenditures
- more than four times the amount spent in 1990
ACE Score and Rates of Antidepressant Prescriptions

![Bar chart showing the relationship between ACE Score and prescription rates. The x-axis represents ACE Score (0-5) and the y-axis represents prescription rate per 100 person-years. The bars indicate an increasing trend in prescription rates as the ACE Score increases.]
ACE Score and Rates of Prescribed Antidepressant Medications by Age, 1997-2004

Relative rates are adjusted for age, sex, race/ethnicity, and education. Adults with an ACE Score of 0 are the referent.
Adverse Childhood Experiences as a Clinical and Public Health Issue

ACEs:
- are endemic
- highly interrelated
- have a cumulative stressor effect
- effects are biologically plausible
Adverse Childhood Experiences
As a National Health Issue

ACEs have a strong influence on:
- adolescent health
- reproductive health
- smoking
- alcohol abuse
- illicit drug abuse
- sexual behavior
- mental health
- risk of revictimization
- stability of relationships, homelessness
- performance in the workforce
Adverse Childhood Experiences
As a National Health Issue

ACEs increase the risk of:
- Heart disease
- Chronic Lung disease
- Liver disease
  - Suicide
  - Injuries
- HIV and STDs
- and other risks for the leading causes of death
The Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) Study

Summary of Findings:

- Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) are very common

- ACEs are strong predictors of health risks and disease from adolescence to adulthood

- This combination of findings makes ACEs one of the leading, if not the leading determinant of the health and social well-being of our nation
Bridging The Chasm

**Child health as it stands today**

- Breakthroughs in molecular genetics and biology:
  - Mental illness
  - Substance abuse
  - Violence
- Improved recognition and treatment of:
  - Mental illness
  - Substance abuse
  - Domestic violence
  - Child abuse

**Mass education about child development and parenting:**
- Media
- Schools

**Documenting the societal burden of child health as it stands today**

**New directions in prevention and treatment**
What do we do with this information?

• Consider basic & cultural needs of children
  – Safety, food, shelter, love, clothing, education, encouragement, structure, etc.
  – What are the things they’ve done to cover up or hide the truth (lie, secrets, control who people have access to friends, family)
  – Examine the relationship between family members and the parent(s) or caregivers.
Act

- Determine reporting requirements (CPS)
- Intervene by teaching healthier coping skills
- Positive, healthy relationships
- Identifying emotions
- How to manage emotions
- Bullying behaviors (evaluate & address it)
- Working with the parent(s)/caregivers to provide positive role models
- Provide Support to all family members
• Determine how Adverse Childhood Events (ACE) may impact each family member
• Discuss these risk factors with family members and refer for medical evaluation.
• This can empower your clients to take control over their lives and change their lives.
• It means you’re at risk—but you can take control, make life changes to manage future risk
Questions & Discussion

Pick one to answer:

• One thing I learned…
• One thing that surprised me was…
• The first thing I’m going to try…
Contact info

Legacy House
2505 N. Arlington Ave.-Lower Level
Indianapolis, IN 46218
Phone: (317) 554-5272
www.legacy-house.org

Kristy Nelson  (knelson@hhcorp.org)
Andrea Link  (alink@hhcorp.org)
What works? Evidence-based practices

- Trauma Focused CBT (TF-CBT)
- Play therapy techniques
- Safety Planning with the non-abusive parent as well as one with the child (code words)
- Assertiveness vs. Aggressiveness
- Advocacy (case management, calling the school, court attendance, support)
Bridging The Chasm

Involving those who don’t yet realize that they are working on issues that represent the “downstream” wreckage of child abuse and neglect--and other adverse childhood experiences--in the effort to bridge the chasm.

Routine screening for trauma is needed