

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)

What are they and why everyone should know about them!

And how healthy relationships counteract them.

The Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) Study is based on ongoing research about the effects of abuse, neglect, and family dysfunction in early childhood.

The CDC and Kaiser Permanente, an American health maintenance organization, conducted a study of 17,332 people from 1995-1997. The CDC continues ongoing surveillance of ACEs by assessing the medical status of the study participants via periodic updates. According to the study, two-thirds of the U.S. population has experienced at least one of the ten childhood traumas and more than one in five reported three or more ACEs. Based on these results, the CDC is calling the ACEs the nation's worst health crisis and its least known.

Awareness of this study and its epidemic proportions gives insight into the challenges countless children face and how it impacts academic performance. This is a wake-up call that fosters an understanding that for many young people, their behavior is out of their control, as they are often in a state of fight, flight, or freeze, especially as a result of their disruptive home lives.

Due to the widespread impact of the ACEs, awareness of them is essential for anyone working to improve the well-being of school-aged children.

Details on the ACEs and trauma-informed approach can be found in our curriculum and book, both titled *Healthy Relationships 101*.

Both our *Healthy Relationships 101* curriculum and book are being used in schools and organizations nationwide, which offer effective communication skills that help develop strategies to enhance and increase resiliency.

***Healthy Relationships 101 for Facilitators and Teachers* has been endorsed by:**

Jim Sporleder, Former Principal of Lincoln High, "The power of a healthy relationship is a game changer. *Healthy Relationships 101* is an easy read on how we can change our society, one positive relationship at a time."

Jim Sporleder implemented the ACEs awareness in his high school and developed a trauma-informed staff. The results: over a two-year period, suspension days dropped 85% from 796 to 135 and graduation rates rose five times. His work at Lincoln is documented in the film *Paper Tigers*.

Anthony Hopkins, Writing Curriculum Coordinator at Harlem Children's Zone, "I used The Relationship Foundation's *Healthy Relationships 101* program with my students and when I saw how well it worked, I brought TRF into the Harlem Children's Zone to conduct a staff workshop. It was an overwhelming success, improving the entire site culture."



For more information, please visit www.therelationshipfoundation.org

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) Questionnaire

<http://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/acestudy/>

Prior to your 18th birthday did you experience:

- 1. Emotional Abuse** - Did a parent or other adult in the household often or very often... Swear at you, insult you, put you down, or humiliate you? or Act in a way that made you afraid that you might be physically hurt?
- 2. Physical Abuse** - Did a parent or other adult in the household often or very often... Push, grab, slap, or throw something at you? or Ever hit you so hard that you had marks or were injured?
- 3. Sexual Abuse** - Did an adult or person at least 5 years older than you ever... Touch or fondle you or have you touch their body in a sexual way? or Attempt or actually have oral, anal, or vaginal intercourse with you?
- 4. Emotional Neglect** - Did you often or very often feel that ... No one in your family loved you or thought you were important or special? or Your family didn't look out for each other, feel close to each other, or support each other?
- 5. Physical Neglect** - Did you often or very often feel that ... You didn't have enough to eat, had to wear dirty clothes, and had no one to protect you? or Did it seem as though your parents or guardians didn't take care of you, ie. take you to the doctor if you needed it etc.?
- 6. Loss of Parent** - Was a biological parent ever lost to you through divorce, abandonment, or other reason?
- 7. Domestic Violence** - Was your parent or guardian: Often or very often pushed, grabbed, slapped, or had something thrown at them? or Sometimes, often, or very often kicked, bitten, hit with a fist, or hit with something hard? or Repeatedly hit for at least a few minutes or threatened with a gun / knife?
- 8. Family Member with Addiction** - Did you live with anyone who was a problem drinker or alcoholic, or who used street drugs?
- 9. Family Member with Depression or Mental Illness** - Was a household member depressed or mentally ill, or did they attempt suicide?
- 10. Family Member Incarcerated** - Did a household member go to prison?



Visit trf.net for courses and further information on the ACEs.