

Trauma 101



Melea T. Bullock, MA, MS, LLPC
Certified Prevention Specialist

What is trauma?

- Trauma is defined by the American Psychological Association (APA) as the emotional response someone has to an extremely negative event.
- While trauma is a normal reaction to a horrible event or extreme stress, the effects can be so severe that they interfere with an individual's ability to live a "normal" life.



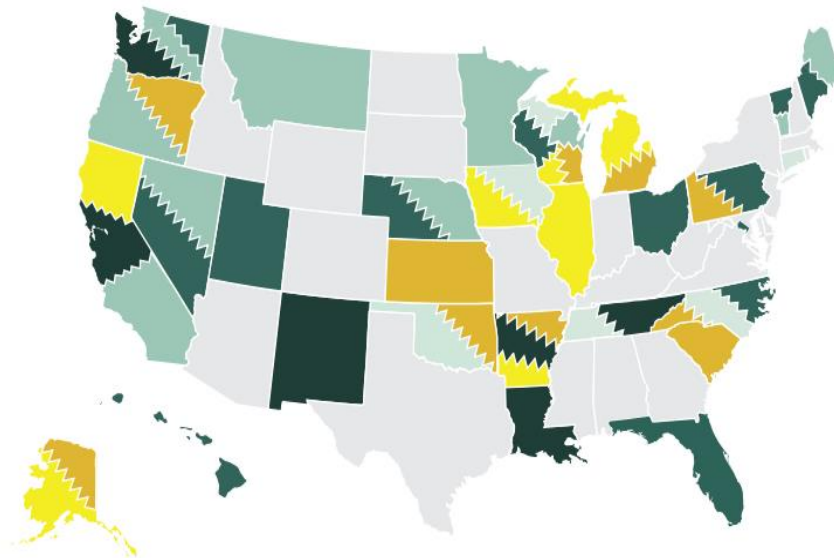
Trauma is Subjective

- Trauma is defined by the experience of the survivor.
- What is traumatic to one person may or may not be traumatic to another.
- Trauma can affect anyone, during any stage of life.

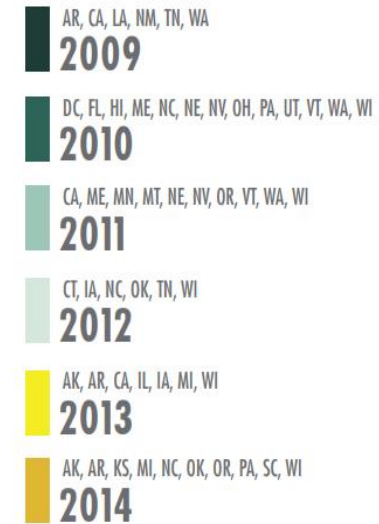


CDC-Kaiser ACE Study

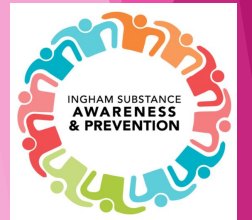
- One of the largest investigations of childhood abuse and neglect and later-life health and well-being.
- Originally from 1995 to 1997 in Southern California
- Since 2009 other states throughout the country have continued to gather data, with Michigan gathering its data in 2013 and 2014.



Although the study ended in 1997, some states are collecting information about ACEs in their population through the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS).

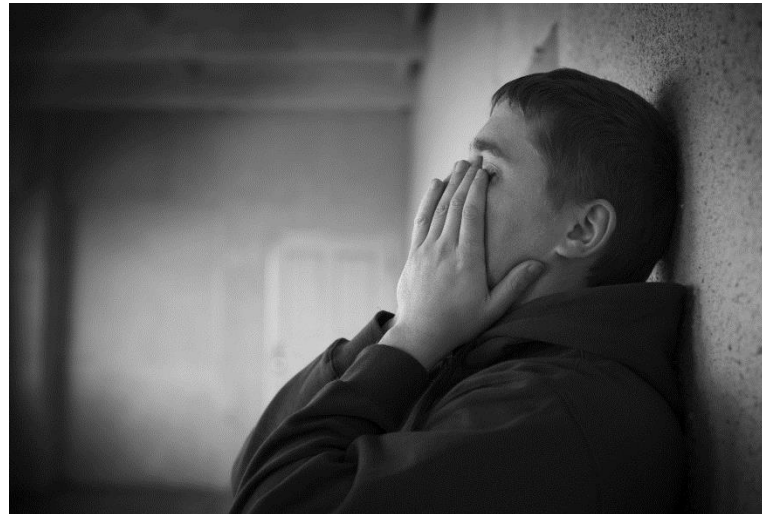


- ▶ **ACEs (adverse childhood experiences) have a powerful correlation to adult health outcomes later in life.** As the number of traumatic experiences increases, so does the risk of an array of social and health problems experienced in adulthood, such as:
- ▶ social, emotional and cognitive impairment;
- ▶ adoption of health-risk behaviors;
- ▶ Disease
- ▶ Disability
- ▶ Social problems;
- ▶ and early death



ACE's-Adverse Childhood Experiences

Adverse childhood experiences are *potentially* traumatic experiences or events that can have a negative, lasting affect on the child health, well-being or behaviors.



Common Types of ACE's

- ▶ **Abuse**
 - ▶ Physical
 - ▶ Psychological
 - ▶ Sexual
- ▶ **Neglect**
 - ▶ Emotional
 - ▶ Physical



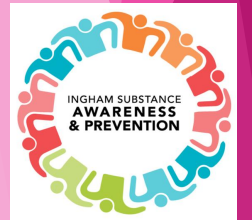
Common Types of ACE's

- ▶ **Household dysfunction**
 - ▶ Substance use disorder
 - ▶ Parental separation/divorce
 - ▶ Mental Disorder
 - ▶ Economic Hardship
 - ▶ Battered parent/
domestic violence
 - ▶ Criminal
behaviors/activities



ACE's Data

- ▶ 46% of all children in the United States have experienced at least one ACE.
 - 35% of children in Michigan have experienced 1- 2 ACE's.
 - ▶ 14% of children in Michigan have experienced 3 or more.
- ▶ The most common ACE in the country is economic hardship.



Most common ACEs in Michigan?



ACE's Data (continued)

- ▶ Most common ACE's in Michigan(in order)
 - ▶ Divorce/Separation
 - ▶ Economic Hardship
 - ▶ Alcohol Use Disorder
 - ▶ Mental Health Disorder



Trauma Classifications

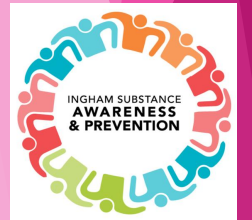
Overt - large, perceivable events. Often recognized by others.

- Violence
- Assault
- Natural Disasters
- Combat/ Wars



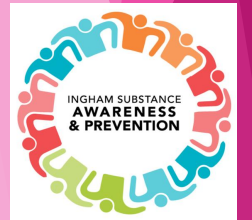
Covert – more subtle situations that don't appear dangerous to the casual observer

- Discrimination
- Racism
- Oppression
- Poverty
- Neglect
- Passive but chronic negative messages.



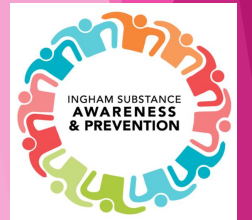
Trauma By The Numbers

- ▶ Approximately 7.7 million American adults age 18 and older have PTSD
- ▶ 98% of people served by behavioral health have experienced trauma
- ▶ 51% of the general population have experienced trauma in childhood



Types of Trauma

- **Acute Trauma** - A single traumatic event that is limited in time.
- **Chronic Trauma** - the experience of multiple traumatic events, which are repeated or prolonged. There may be multiple and varied events or long standing trauma. The effects of chronic trauma are often cumulative.
- **Complex Trauma**- Describes the exposure to chronic trauma, usually by trusted individuals. Often occurring at an early age. It is the experience of multiple or chronic and prolonged, developmentally adverse traumatic events, most often of a personal nature (sexual or physical abuse, family violence, community violence).
- **Historical/Racial Trauma** - Collective and cumulative trauma experienced by a group, with effects that can still be seen today. This personal or past event continues to have an impact over several generations.



Behavioral and Developmental Effects of Trauma

- ▶ **Biologically based challenges:**
 - ▶ Problems with movement and sensation
 - ▶ Hypersensitivity to physical contact
 - ▶ Insensitivity to pain.
 - ▶ Problems with coordination and balance
 - ▶ Unexplained physical symptoms
 - ▶ Increased medical problems (asthma, skins problems, autoimmune disorders)
 - ▶ Body reactions such as racing hearts, churning stomach or sweatiness.



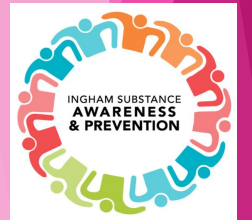
Behavioral and Developmental Effects of Trauma

People may have difficulties with mood regulations as demonstrated by difficulty:

- ▶ Knowing/identifying their feelings
- ▶ Describing feelings and internal states
- ▶ Describing their wishing and desires to others
- ▶ Utilizing coping skills.

Some individuals may develop attachment difficulties characterized by:

- ▶ Difficulties with boundaries.
- ▶ Feeling distrustful and suspicions of others.
- ▶ Becoming socially isolated and having difficulty relating to and empathizing with others.



Behavioral and Developmental Effects of Trauma

Cognition and Self- Concept challenges include:

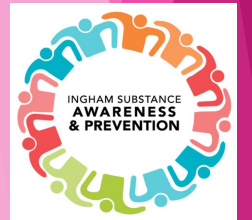
- ▶ Difficulties focusing and completing tasks.
- ▶ Problems planning and anticipating the future.
- ▶ Understanding their own role in their own life.
- ▶ Disturbed/distorted body image.
- ▶ Low self esteem
- ▶ Shame
- ▶ Guilt
- ▶ Dissociation



Behavioral and Developmental Effects of Trauma

Individuals may demonstrate:

- ▶ Poor impulse control
- ▶ Self-destructive behaviors
- ▶ Verbal and physical aggression towards others.
- ▶ Excessive amounts of energy.
- ▶ Incongruent emotions (crying, laughing, etc.)
- ▶ Yelling
- ▶ Name calling
- ▶ Provocative behaviors



Significance of the ACE score

- ▶ Compared to a child with no ACEs:
- ▶ A child with six or more ACEs is more is almost 3x more likely to be a smoker as an adult.
- ▶ A child with four or more is 5x more likely to develop alcohol use disorder and 60% more likely to become obese.
- ▶ A male with four or more ACEs is 46x more likely to become an IV drug user later in life than one who has had no severe adverse childhood experiences.

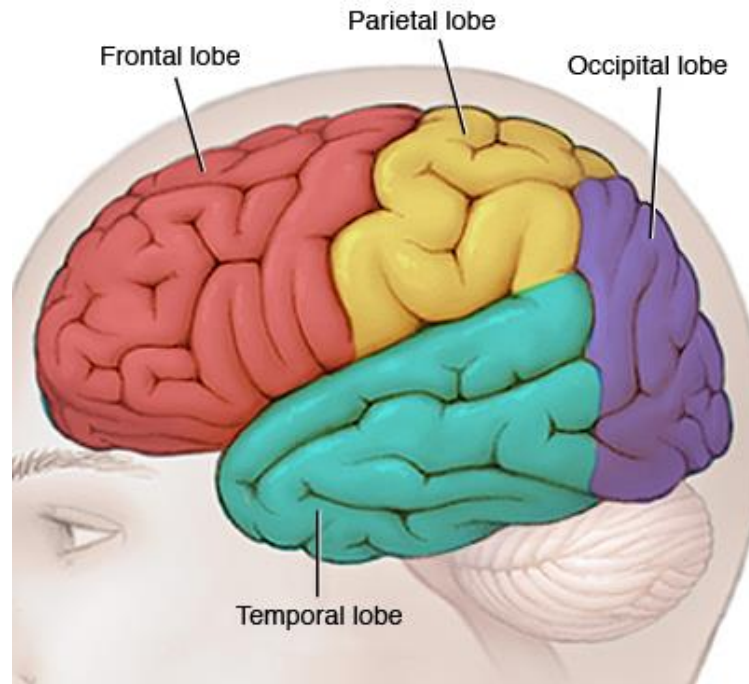


ACEs impact on learning

- ▶ 51% of children with 4+ ACE scores had learning and behavior problems in school
- ▶ Only 3% of children with an ACE score of zero were deemed to have learning or behavioral problems in school.
- ▶ A child with 4 or more ACEs are 32x more likely to be labeled with a learning disability or behavioral problem compared to a child with 0 ACEs.



The Brain



© MAYO FOUNDATION FOR MEDICAL EDUCATION AND RESEARCH. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

Frontal Lobe - Concerned with decision making, problem solving and planning.

Parietal Lobe - Concerned with reception and processing sensory information from the body.

Occipital Lobe - Primarily important for vision.

Temporal Lobe - Having to do with memory, emotion, hearing, and language.



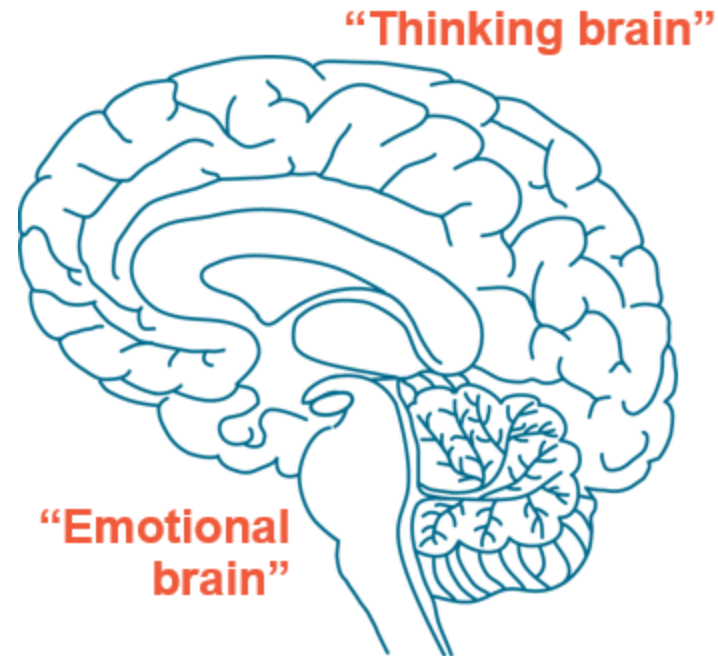
Not All Stress is Harmful

- ▶ Learning requires some stress, and coping with intermittent and mild doses that eventually builds the system up.
- ▶ Stress crosses into the hazard zone of trauma only when it comes in "doses" that are too large or too unpredictable or too sustained over which the person has little or no control.



The Stress Response System

1. The amygdala senses threat and sets off the alarm.
2. Thinking brain assesses the situation.
3. Thinking brain goes off-line. Emotional brain activates fight, flight or freeze response.
4. Thinking brain helps shut off the alarm and helps us to calm down.



Learning Brain vs Survival Brain

- ▶ During trauma the survival/emotional brain is activated.
- ▶ Brain becomes conditioned to view all stimuli as threats.
- ▶ Leads to a constant state of fear-related activation (survival brain).
- ▶ The learning brain is then secondary and used much less, resulting in learning delays and delayed motor skills.
- ▶ The survival brain essentially takes over the thinking/ learning brain.

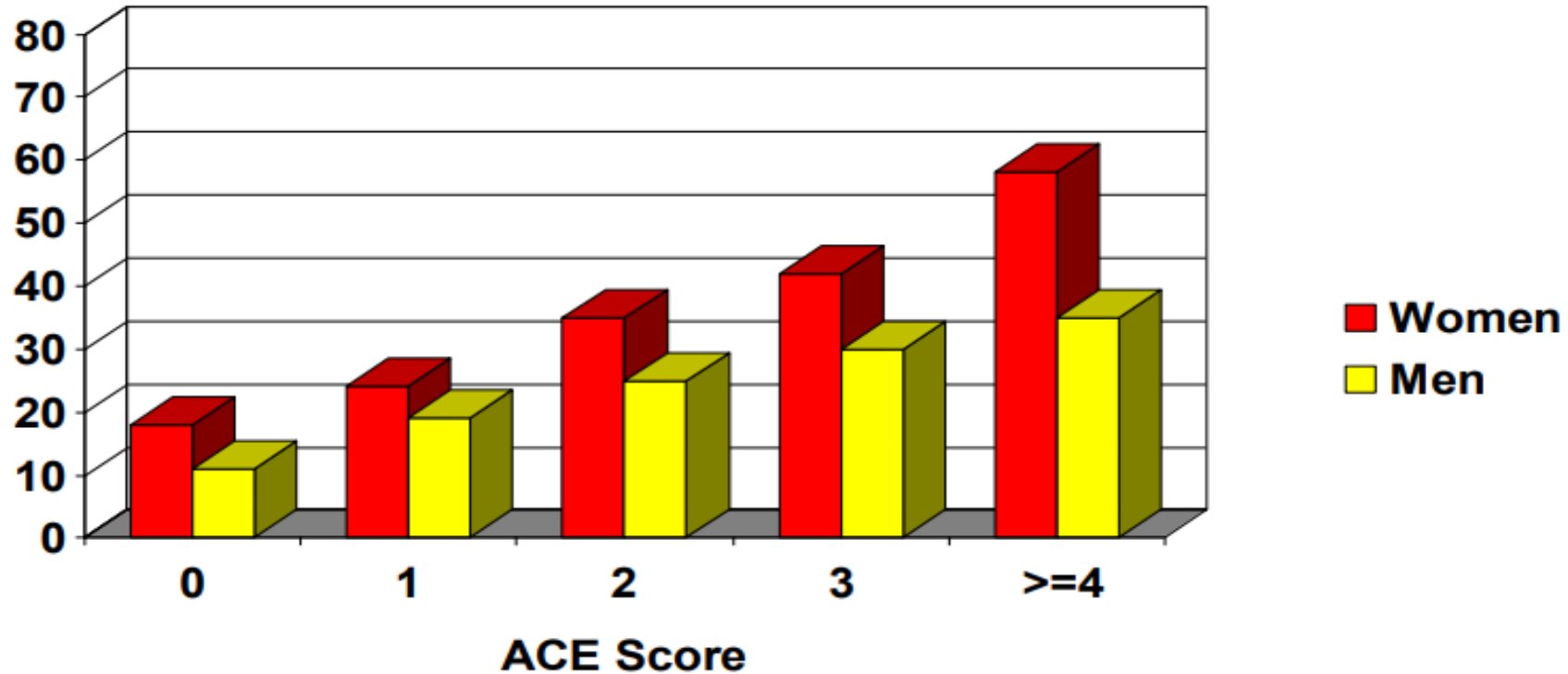


Trauma and the Brain

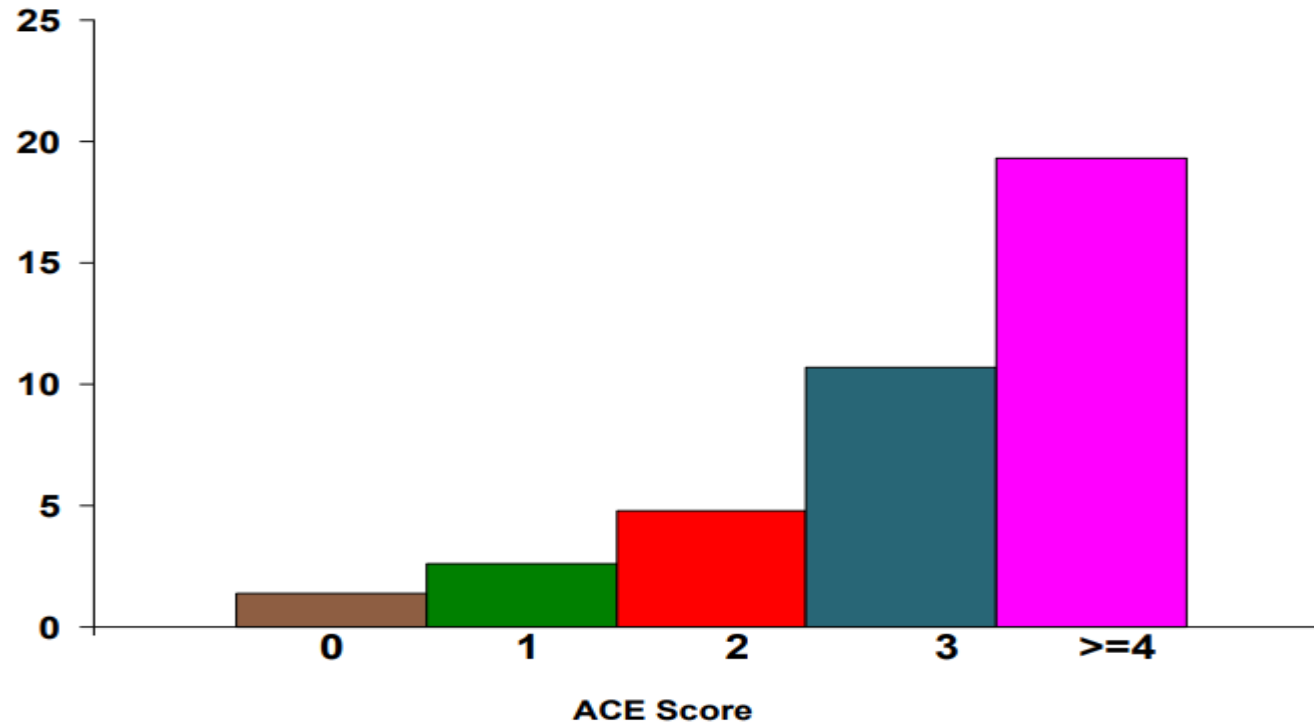
- ▶ **Hippocampus**: reduced volume in the hippocampus, which is central to learning and memory. Toxic stress also can reduce the hippocampus's capacity to bring cortisol levels back to normal after a stressful event has occurred.
- ▶ **Corpus callosum**: decreased volume in the corpus callosum, which is the largest white matter structure in the brain and is responsible for arousal, emotion, higher cognitive abilities
- ▶ **Cerebellum**: decreased volume in the cerebellum, which helps coordinate motor behavior and executive functioning
- ▶ **Prefrontal cortex**: smaller prefrontal cortex, which is critical to behavior, cognition, and emotion regulation
 - ▶ Physically abused children also may have reduced volume in the orbitofrontal cortex, a part of the prefrontal cortex that is central to emotion and social regulation
- ▶ **Amygdala**: abuse and neglect can cause over-activity in that area of the brain, which helps determine whether a stimulus is threatening and trigger emotional responses
- ▶ **Cortisol levels**: tend to have lower than normal morning cortisol levels coupled with flatter release levels throughout the day
 - ▶ Typically, children have a sharp increase in cortisol in the morning followed by a steady decrease throughout the day. On the other hand, children in foster care who experienced severe emotional maltreatment had higher than normal morning cortisol levels. These results may be due to the body reacting differently to different stressors. Abnormal cortisol levels can have many negative effects. Lower cortisol levels can lead to decreased energy resources, which could affect learning and socialization; externalizing disorders; and increased vulnerability to autoimmune disorders Higher cortisol levels could harm cognitive processes, subdue immune and inflammatory reactions, or heighten the risk for affective disorders.



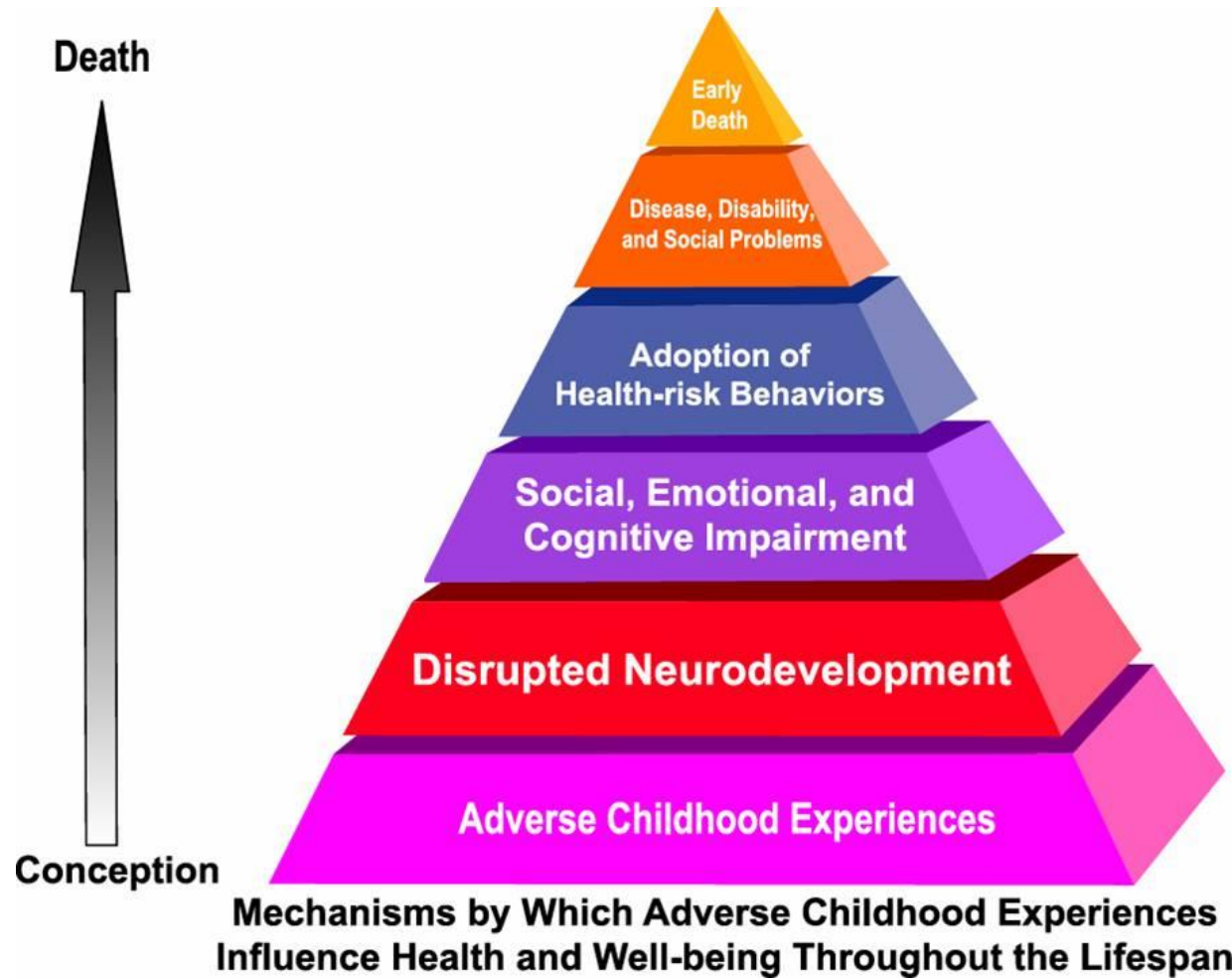
Trauma and Depression



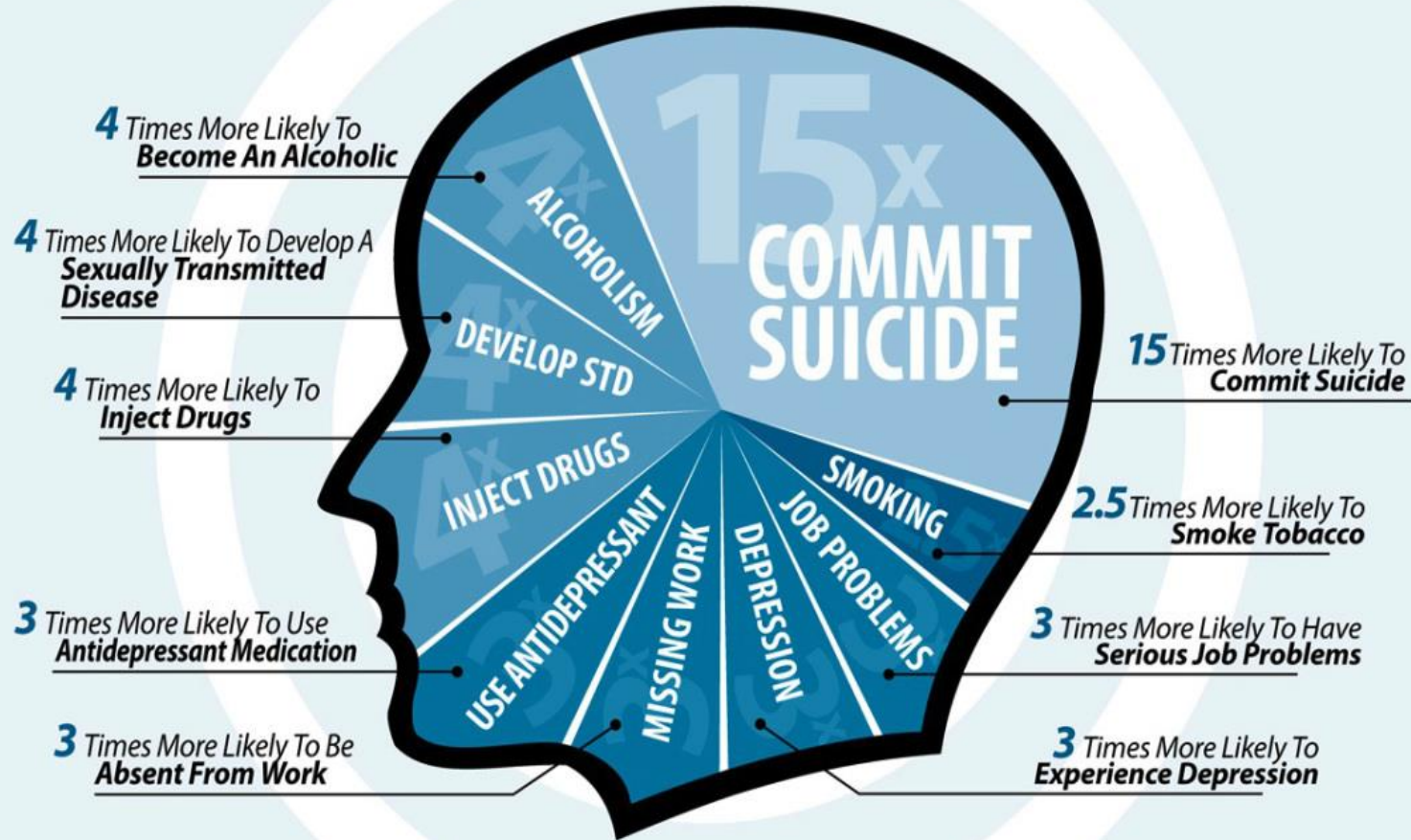
Trauma and Suicide



Untreated Trauma Over A Lifespan



PEOPLE WHO HAVE EXPERIENCED TRAUMA ARE:



Which type of childhood trauma has the most extensive long term effect?



Humiliation / Emotional abuse

- ▶ 15% above other types of trauma - chronic recurrent humiliation.
 - ▶ Includes name calling (stupid, ugly, lazy, etc.)



Trauma Identification-

The 3 “E’s” of Trauma

- **Event** - Exposure to a traumatic or stressful event
- **Experience** - The individual’s experience of these events or circumstances helps to determine whether it is a traumatic event.
- **Effect** - Referring to the effect that experience of the event has caused.



Impact of Trauma on Families

Secondary traumatic stress: The presence of PTSD symptoms caused by indirect exposure to other people's traumatic experiences.

Vicarious trauma: The cumulative effect of working people who have experienced trauma that leads to negative changes in how ones view themselves, others, and the world.



Signs of Compassion Fatigue

- ▶ Hypervigilance
- ▶ Suspicion about people's motives or behaviors
- ▶ Difficulty sleeping, nightmares
- ▶ Intrusive images
- ▶ Anxiety
- ▶ Numbness
- ▶ Inability to experience pleasure
- ▶ Cynicism
- ▶ Depression
- ▶ Exhaustion
- ▶ Increased self criticism
- ▶ Feeling estranged from others
- ▶ Feelings of shame about no longer feeling warm, compassionate , or optimistic
- ▶ Anger or irritability often due to fatigue
- ▶ Reactivation of personal experiences



The ABC's Of Secondary Trauma

- ▶ **Awareness** - of own needs, limits, emotions and resources
- ▶ **Balance** -of work and play; taking care of others and taking care of yourself
- ▶ **Connection** - to oneself, others and to something larger



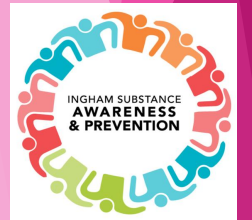
What to do if you or someone you know has experienced trauma?

- ▶ Pharmacotherapy
- ▶ Behavior Therapy/Cognitive Behavioral Therapy
- ▶ Talk about it.
- ▶ Educate yourself.
- ▶ Join a support group
- ▶ Practice self-care



Finding help

- ▶ **Therapists/Counselors (Graduate Degree)** - mainly work in private practice or mental health clinics.
 - ▶ Therapists help people manage mental health disorders, such as depression or anxiety; help couples resolve relationship difficulties; assist families with interpersonal conflicts; or work with groups on specific topics, such as anger management or bereavement and loss issues
 - ▶ Cannot prescribe medication
- ▶ **Psychologists (Advanced Degree)** - research and philosophically trained
 - ▶ Cannot prescribe medication.
 - ▶ focus extensively on psychotherapy and treating emotional and mental suffering in patients with behavioral intervention.
 - ▶ Studies reasons and causes of behaviors.
- ▶ **Psychiatrists (Medical Degree)** - are trained medical doctors.
 - ▶ They can prescribe medications.
 - ▶ Primarily focused on medication management.



The Truth About Trauma

Based on our personal interpretation of the experience and our levels of resilience, we integrate stressful/traumatic experiences into who we are and how we respond to the world around us.

A basic but essential component of trauma informed care is that the interventions that are provided and the services from which they are delivered do not inflict any additional trauma on the person, or reactivate their (or our own) past traumatic experiences.

Consideration of trauma needs to occur across all the systems and services involved, **not just mental health settings.**



References

For full list of references please contact Melea T. Bullock - Eaton RESA

Mbullock@eatonresa.org

517-231-1305



*Thank
you*

