



The WOUNDED child The WONDER child

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	ADVERSE CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES ACE's	
1	CHRONIC HUMILIATION Did a parent or another adult in the household often swear at you, insult you, put you down, humiliate you or act in a way that made you afraid that you might be physically hurt?	
2	PHYSICAL ABUSE Did a parent or another adult in the household often push, grab, slap or throw something at you or even 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 or ask you to touch their body in a sexual way or try to or actually have oral, anal or vaginal sex with you?	
4.	EMOTIONAL NEGLECT Did you often feel that 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 feel that you didn't have enough to eat, had to wear dirty clothes and had no one to protect you or your parents were too drunk, high or busy to take care of you or take you to the doctor if needed?	
6.	LOSS OF A PARENT Were your parents ever separated or divorced or did a parent die before you were 18 years of age?	
7.	WATCHING MOTHER BE ABUSED Was your mother or stepmother often or sometimes pushed, grabbed, slapped or had something thrown at her, or often kicked, bitten, hit with a fist or something hard, or ever repeatedly hit for over a few minutes or threatened with a gun or knife?	
8.	PARENT WITH ADDICTION IN HOME Did you live with anyone who was a problem drinker, alcoholic or drug user?	
9.	PARENT WITH MENTAL ILLNESS Was a household member depressed or mentally ill or did a household member ever attempt suicide?	
10	INCARCERATED FAMILY MEMBER Did a household member ever go to prison?	
	TOTAL	

THE RESEARCH COHORT

17 000 middle class adults.

Compared **Adverse Childhood Experiences** (ACEs) with **ADULT health records** later in their life.

THE RESULTS

64% (20 in a class of 32) had encounter ONE or more of the ACEs

40% (13 in a class of 32) had faced TWO or more of the ACEs

12,5% (4 in a class of 32) experienced FOUR or more (critical trauma category)

TWO ACEs: IF EXPOSED to at least TWO ACEs (40% of students)

2.5 times more likely to repeat a grade or be disengaged in classwork.

5 times more likely to have some type of emotional, behavioural or developmental problem such as ADHD, anxiety or depression.(Bethell 2014)

FOUR ACEs: IF EXPOSED to at least FOUR ACEs (12,5% of students at our school - Critical trauma)

Twice as likely to be diagnosed with cancer

Four and a half times more likely to face depression

More than twice as likely to develop chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (OPD)

Twelve more times likely to attempt suicide

SIX ACEs: IF EXPOSED to at least SIX ACEs

Shortens an individual's lifespan by 20 years.

GIRLS

Are 50% more likely to have experienced 5 or more.

For each category of ACEs a girl experiences, her chance of being hospitalised in adulthood with an autoimmune disease increases by 20% (Fairweather, 2009).

SEVEN +: IF EXPOSED to SEVEN or more ACEs

People with an ACEs score of 7 or more who didn't drink or smoke, weren't overweight or diabetic, and didn't have high cholesterol still had a 360% higher risk of heart disease.

Recent Neuroscience findings.

1. The brain does not distinguish between SEVERE trauma (violence, sexual abuse) and MILDER trauma like humiliation. (ADHD students are often humiliated in school, students present to the naughty chair, Detention attendees are announced and humiliated).
2. Common forms of childhood stress can cause just as much damage as a parent/teacher who lashes out with angry, physical beatings.
3. Community violence, poverty, bullying, bickering parents or medical trauma are regarded as CHILDHOOD ADVERSITY.
4. STRESS impacts the structure and architecture of the BRAIN forms.
5. C.U.T.S = Chronic Unpredictable Toxic Stress.
6. Schools must reduce ALL forms of STRESS creators.
7. School must focus specifically on the emotional well-being of all children, especially girls.

CUTS Chronic Unpredictable Toxic Stress (CUTS) + inflammatory hormones and chemicals = epigenetic (non-genetic influences on gene expression) changes. Yale research indicates changes to the stress-response genes on all 23 chromosomes in children who suffer trauma (Weder 2014).

21st century children are experiencing epigenetic shifts. The “lion in the woods” can now be compared to the “lion in the living room/classroom”.

More tests at school, an overloaded curriculum, longer periods of focused attention, less sleep and higher expectations to get into good schools, all result in more **CUTS**.

EFFECTS OF TRAUMA on the BRAIN

1. Smaller hippocampus (the gateway between the emotional (limbic) and the pre-frontal cortex (CEO - Thinking brain). Long term memory and retrieval damage.
2. Persistent stress changes the brains architecture.
3. Neural connections are weakened.
4. Higher levels of anxiety and depression in girls.
5. Girls show weakened connections between the amygdala and the pre-frontal cortex (fear and emotional response).
6. Boys show decrease in grey matter in *caudate region* of the brain responsible for **impulse control** and **behaviour** (Herringa 2013, Edmonton 2011)
7. What doesn't kill you **DOES NOT** make you stronger. It leads to life-long immune dysfunction.

GOOD NEWS from NEUROSCIENCE

The brain is malleable - it is plastic (brain plasticity) and able to change in the right environment.

Teachers and Parents can turn bad epigenetics into good epigenetics by getting the environment right.

By focusing on Empathy, Gratitude, Acts of Kindness, Values, Respect, Caring for others - teachers can re-wire and re-boot the brain to create new pathways that promote healing and assist in returning students to whom they were MEANT to be.

THE No. ONE ESSENTIAL PROTECTIVE FACTOR

Consistent, protective, reliable, supportive relationship with a caring adult.

Students with ACEs discover resiliency and GRIT only because an adult provides a safe environment in which they are:

- SAFE (no fear)
- SEEN (connected)
- SOOTHED (calmed)
- SALUTED (recognised)
- SECURE (Feel “Enough!”)

Often this person is a teacher, coach, learning specialist, mentor teacher, counsellor or grandparent.

The SHIFT

Understanding that childhood trauma allows us to shift from JUDGMENT and BLAME to UNDERSTANDING and COMPASSION.

It has been said that if child abuse and neglect were to disappear today, the DSM (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual) would shrink to the size of a pamphlet in two generations, and our prisons would be empty.

(Tina Bryson PhD)

Attachment Theory

