



## Adverse Childhood Experiences – Summary

### What are Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)?

In the mid 1990's, Drs' Vincent Felitti and Robert Anda studied over 17,000 adults in an effort to understand more about stressful or traumatic childhood experiences such as neglect, abuse and family turmoil. They called these types of events "Adverse Childhood Experiences" or "ACEs".

There are three major categories of ACEs, and they include ten different kinds of adversity -

- **Abuse**
  - Physical Abuse
  - Emotional Abuse
  - Sexual Abuse
- **Neglect**
  - Physical Neglect
  - Emotional Neglect
- **Household Dysfunction**
  - Family mental illness
  - Incarcerated household member
  - Witnessing domestic violence
  - Parental separation/divorce
  - Substance abuse in household

### ACEs are Extremely Common

Original and follow-up studies show that ACEs are extremely common and tend to occur in clusters (most people don't experience just one).

### ACEs have an enormous impact

The number of ACEs a person experiences in childhood increases the risk for numerous health, social, and behavior problems throughout their life span, such as -

- **Mental Health**
  - Depression
  - Alcohol and Substance abuse
  - Social skills
  - Emotional regulation and behavior control
  - Self-concept
- **Physical Health & Development**
  - Physical health & diseases
  - Developmental delays
  - Physical and sensorimotor delays
  - Cognitive and thinking skills
- **Increased Risk for**
  - Suicide
  - Poor academic & work performance
  - Domestic violence
  - Attendance problems
  - Substance abuse



## ACEs Disrupt Neurodevelopment

ACEs can lead to a wide range of impairments and the adoption of unhealthy behaviors that increase people's risk for disease, disability, social problems and even premature death.

- **The Impact of ACEs depends on -**
  - The point in their life a person has adverse experiences
  - The nature of the adverse experiences
  - The relational and environmental supports that are present
  - The person's strengths and weaknesses

## How do ACEs affect school aged children?

ACEs can have a significant effect on a student's functioning at school -

- Harvard University's Center on the Developing Child has noted a strong relationship between ACEs and developmental delays.
- Dr. Christopher Blodgett of Washington State University found that when compared to children with zero ACEs, children with 3 or more ACEs are -
  - 3 times more likely to experience academic failure
  - 4 times more likely to have reported poor health

- 5 times more likely to have severe attendance problems
- 6 times more likely to display school behavior and/or attendance problems

## Why is it important for educators to know about ACEs?

1. ACEs are more common than you might think. The Washington State Family Policy Council noted that, in a typical high school classroom of 30 students, nearly 45% of the students will have 3 or more ACEs.
2. Stress resulting from ACEs is often unpredictable, severe, prolonged, and can result in skill deficits in specific areas, including -
  - Relationships
  - Physical Development
  - Emotional Awareness and Regulation
  - Behavior Control
  - Thinking
  - Self-Concept

These skill deficits can be an important source of difficulty for a student in terms of social, emotional, and academic development.



A TYPICAL CLASSROOM OF 30 STUDENTS



> 6 students with no ACE

> 5 students with 1 ACE

> 6 students with 2 ACEs

And importantly -

> 3 students with 3 ACEs

> 7 students with 4-5 ACEs

> 3 students with 6+ ACEs

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