Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)

- Adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) are potentially traumatic events that can have negative, lasting effects on health and well-being. These experiences range from physical, emotional, or sexual abuse to parental divorce or the incarceration of a parent or guardian.

  - from Childtrends.org ChildTrends Research Brief July 2014
Measuring ACEs

• MEASUREMENT OF ADVERSE CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES

• Has the child ever:
  • 1. Lived with a parent or guardian who got divorced or separated;
  • 2. Lived with a parent or guardian who died;
  • 3. Lived with a parent or guardian who served time in jail or prison;
  • 4. Lived with anyone who was mentally ill or suicidal, or severely depressed for more than a couple of weeks;
  • 5. Lived with anyone who had a problem with alcohol or drugs;
  • 6. Witnessed a parent, guardian, or other adult in the household behaving violently toward another (e.g., slapping, hitting, kicking, punching, or beating each other up);
  • 7. Was ever the victim of violence or witnessed any violence in his or her neighborhood; and
  • 8. Experienced economic hardship “somewhat often” or “very often”
Trauma

• experiences or situations that are emotionally painful and distressing, and that overwhelm an individual’s ability to cope

• experiences of chronic adversity (e.g., discrimination, racism, oppression, poverty)

Although there has been some debate about how to define a traumatic event, most definitions agree that when internal and external resources are inadequate to cope with external threat, the experience is one of trauma. The powerlessness that a person experiences is a primary trait of traumatization. (Van der Kolk 2005)
Resilience

• Resilience is that ineffable quality that allows some people to be knocked down by life and come back stronger than ever. Rather than letting failure overcome them and drain their resolve, they find a way to rise from the ashes.

• Psychologists have identified some of the factors that make someone resilient, among them a positive attitude, optimism, the ability to regulate emotions, and the ability to see failure as a form of helpful feedback. Even after misfortune, resilient people are blessed with such an outlook that they are able to change course and soldier on.
  
  • *Psychology Today*
Examples of work at OU-Tulsa
ECEI: ACEs among Educare Children

ASSOCIATIONS OF ADVERSITY TO CHILD WELL-BEING
IN A HIGH QUALITY EARLY EDUCATION CONTEXT

49% of children experienced at least one
of these adversities

21% of children experienced multiple adversities

16% had a family member who was incarcerated in the last year
7% had been homeless at some point in the last year
23% ran out of food at least once in the last year
6% witnessed domestic violence
5% had a family member who struggled with substance abuse
7% had a family member who was a victim of violent crime
18% had a parent/guardian who screened positive for depression

Each additional adversity was related to worse ratings of children’s
health, initiative, behavior problems, & self-regulation
& lower scores on assessments of school readiness

Time in high quality ECE was associated with better receptive vocabulary, language skills, and school readiness scores for children at all levels of risk, but did alter the association to negative outcomes.

Sample: 3,208 children enrolled in high quality early education programs serving children from low-income families.

Shannon Guss, MA
Other work at OU-Tulsa
Life expectancy disparity closes
The disparity between life expectancies in north Tulsa ZIP code 74126 and south Tulsa ZIP code 74137 has narrowed from 13.8 to 10.7 years since 2002, according to the “Narrowing the Gap” report.
HOPE

• Investigating hope as the mechanism of change for human service orgs:
  • 2. Hope buffers the negative effects of stress and adversity.
  • 3. Program services can improve and sustain hope.

• Camp HOPE is a nationwide program for children exposed to domestic violence (funded by Verizon) and connected to the Family Justice Center (137 centers across the US). We found that Camp HOPE improves hope, resilience, and strength of character among children (Average ACE Score = 5.5).

• Training US Army Chaplains on hope interventions to reduce critical incidents (e.g., suicide, DUI, domestic violence, child abuse) among service members.

  • College of Arts & Sciences, Human Relations, Center of Appl Res for Non-Profit Organizations
MEASURING STRESS

• Integrative Immunology Center
  • Biomarker Core for the OSU CoBRE
    • OSU-Stillwater (several), OSU-CHS, OSU-Tulsa

• Research collaborations with
  • Laurate Inst for Brain Research
  • University of Tulsa
  • Oklahoma Medical Research Foundation
  • University of Kentucky
  • University of Wisconsin
Veterans Day
World War I
Treaty of Versailles
Veterans Day