

Understanding Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)

Childhood experiences can greatly impact individuals in adulthood. Negative or positive experiences in childhood play a role in shaping how individuals respond to situations as they age. Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) are serious childhood traumas that result in stress, which can harm the developing brain. ACEs can lead to chronic health conditions and early death in adulthood.

What are ACEs?

The original ACE Study was conducted in Southern California in 1995-1997. Over 17,000 Health Maintenance Organization members participated in the study, which included a physical examination and surveys about childhood trauma and current health status. All of the ACE questions refer the first 18 years of life. Two-thirds of the participants had at least one adverse childhood experience and 1 in 5 had three or more ACEs.

Since 2009, the ACE study has been conducted in several states, including Nebraska in 2010-2011. Of all of the states collecting data, the research showed a much high prevalence rate than researchers first anticipated. In Nebraska, over 50% or an estimated 1.37 million people report having at least one ACE. The highest individual ACEs were in household substance abuse and verbal abuse.

Nationally, common adverse childhood experiences include household substance abuse, parental separation or divorce, household mental illness, mother treated violently, incarcerated household member, emotional abuse or neglect, physical abuse or neglect, sexual abuse, and natural disasters.

There is a strong association between ACEs and some of the nation's worst health and social concerns. Individuals with 1 or more ACEs are at a greater risk for developing negative chronic health conditions or negative well-being outcomes. The more ACEs an individual has, the greater the risk. Exposure to ACEs increases the risk of:

- Substance Abuse
- Smoking
- COPD
- Heart disease
- Depression
- Suicidal ideation and/or attempts
- STDs
- Intimate partner violence
- Low academic achievement
- Teen Pregnancy



Prolonged exposure to stress can damage the developing brain and affect overall health and well-being. Stress can affect children in the following ways:

- Reduced ability to learn and problem solve
- Difficulty making friends and maintaining relationships
- Increase stress hormones, which can reduce the body's ability to fight infections

- Increased risk of developing aggressive behavior or anxiety
- Increases problems with memory

The ACEs study provides insight on the significant impact adverse childhood experiences have on the lifespan. The ACEs study can also help us begin to understand how to prevent these health and social problems that are linked to adverse childhood experiences.

Prevention strategies:

- Community education on ACEs
- Parenting classes for any new or expecting parents
- Supports for parents
- Therapeutic interventions for
 - Adults
 - Children
 - Children-Parent interaction
 - Family
- Positive youth development programs, like Teammates, Professional Partners Program etc.
- Assist youth in developing coping skills and stress reduction strategies
- Create environments that make children feel safe

ACEs are traumas that occur in childhood that can have lasting effects throughout the life span. ACEs are linked to several serious health and social concerns, like substance abuse, depression, intimate partner violence and more. They can also affect children's ability to learn and develop relationships early on in life. There are ways to prevent ACEs and help children cope through education and community support systems.

Resources:

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/jane-ellen-stevens/the-adverse-childhood-exp_7_b_1944199.html

https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/acestudy/about_ace.html

<http://www.unmc.edu/bhecn/documents/ace-handout-ne-specific.pdf>

<http://scchildren.org/>

Underage Drinking: The Importance of Parents in Prevention Efforts

According to the CDC, alcohol is the most commonly used substance of abuse among America's youth. In 2014 Nebraska youth reported the following (2014 NE Youth Risk Behavior Survey):

- 51.7% had at least one drink of alcohol on one or more days during their life
- 13.7% had their first drink, other than a few sips, before age 13
- 22.7% had at least one drink of alcohol on one or more occasions in the past 30 days
- 14.3% had five or more drinks of alcohol in a row (binge drinking) in the past 30 days
- Liquor (rum, vodka, whiskey) is the most commonly consumed type of alcohol consumed by NE youth- 42.1%
- The most common place alcohol is consumed is within a home, where 3 in 5 students report that they usually drink at another person's home and almost 1 in 4 report that they usually drink within their own home

Excessive drinking is responsible for more than 4,300 deaths among underage youth each year. This alone should drive communities to instill practices and policies that reduce youth access to alcohol. While losing a youth to an alcohol related death is the most costly consequence to underage drinking, youth who drink alcohol are more likely to experience:

- School problems, such as higher absences and lower grades
- Social problems, such as lack of participation in youth activities
- Legal problems
- Unwanted, unplanned and unprotected sexual activity
- Higher risk for suicide and homicide
- Alcohol-related car crashes and other unintentional injuries.

Despite the use of alcohol amongst youth and the risks associated with such use, there is hope. Everyone can play a role in preventing underage drinking but parents are pivotal players in reducing alcohol consumption amongst youth.

83% of teens say their parents are the leading influence in their decision to not use. The power of parents is something that families should not take for granted in efforts to prevent underage drinking. It is critical for parents to have discussions with their children on alcohol use and the risks of underage drinking. By talking with children early and often, parents can play a role in their child's choice to not drink. MADD (Mothers Against Drunk Driving), offers the following tips to parents:

- Begin talking together specifically about alcohol
- Listen to your child's concerns respectfully, and use positive parenting techniques



- Set clear no-alcohol use rules, and agree on appropriate consequences for breaking those rules
- Discuss short-term and long-term risks of underage alcohol use
- Help your child plan how to deal with social pressure to drink alcohol
- Keep track of where your child is, and with whom, on a regular basis.
- Make sure your child is in a monitored, alcohol-free environment
- Support school and community policies that keep alcohol away from underage youth

Many communities likewise have prevention coalitions in which parents can become involved. Advocating for public laws and institutional policies can lead to larger community level change in efforts to reduce youth access to alcohol. Stricter penalties for fake i.d.'s, social host laws (hosting drinking parties for people underage) and zero tolerance policies for underage drinking and driving are examples of environmental level initiatives that can help prevent underage drinking.

For additional information on preventing underage drinking, visit <http://www.talkaboutalcohol.org>.

References: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; <http://www.madd.org>; National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism; Nebraska Youth Risk Behavior Survey, 2014

“When Doves Cry”

Fentanyl and the Opiate Epidemic

Prince died of an accidental overdose of fentanyl. Fentanyl was also one of the painkillers found at the house where Michael Jackson died, of an overdose of Propofol, a powerful sedative often used in combination with an opiate/opioid painkiller like fentanyl.

Opiate/opioid drugs are wreaking havoc in communities all across America. Deaths from heroin have risen by almost 250% between 2010 and 2014. More Americans die from drug overdoses than in car crashes, and this increasing trend is fueled by the opiate/opioid prescription epidemic.

Opiates are developed from the opium poppy plant. Opioids are synthetic opiates (man-made drugs created to imitate opium). Opium, heroin, morphine, fentanyl, prescription pain medications such as Demerol, Dilaudid, OxyContin, Percocet, Percodan and Vicodin are all opiate/opioid narcotic drugs used for treating pain.

When injected, swallowed, snorted or smoked, these drugs act on the brain's opioid receptors to produce feelings of euphoria and drowsiness, in addition to treating pain.

For medical purposes, fentanyl is used to ease extreme pain for patients in the final stages of diseases such as bone cancer and/or severe chronic pain. It is up to 100 times more powerful than morphine and 50 times more powerful than heroin. It is the most potent opioid available for medical use.

Doctors prescribe fentanyl in micrograms rather than larger milligrams due to its potency, yet the use to get high from fentanyl continues to rise.

On the streets, fentanyl is often mixed with heroin, and many users are unaware they are inhaling or injecting the dangerous drug.

Fentanyl can be lethal, even at very, very low levels, according to the DEA.

A drastic rise in overdose deaths around the country from heroin laced with fentanyl led to the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) to issue a nationwide alert.

"Drug incidents and overdoses related to fentanyl are occurring at an alarming rate," DEA Administrator Michele Leonhart said. She called it a "significant threat to public health and safety."

Law enforcement seizures of illegal drugs containing fentanyl more than tripled between 2013 and 2014 and those numbers continue to climb.

Fentanyl is so potent and potentially deadly, that the DEA has warned law enforcement to handle seizures very carefully because fentanyl can be absorbed through the skin or inadvertently inhaled which could cause an accidental death.

It should be noted, the fentanyl and fentanyl equivalents connected with recent overdoses are most generally produced in clandestine laboratories. The non-pharmaceutical fentanyl can be found in the following forms: as a powder; spiked on blotter paper; mixed with or substituted for heroin; or as tablets that mimic other, less potent opioids. Fentanyl can be ingested, snorted, injected or absorbed through the skin.

For more information about fentanyl or opiate/opioid abuse please visit www.drugabuse.gov/drugs-abuse/fentanyl or the SCIP web page www.SCIPnebraska.com

www.narconon.org/drug-abuse/fentanyl-signs-symptoms.html

www.nteractive.fusion.net/death-by-fentanyl/intro.html

<https://www.drugabuse.gov/drugs-abuse/fentanyl>

www.nytimes.com/2016/03/26/us/heroin-fentanyl.html

<http://www.drugfree.org/news-service/dea-issues-alert-fentanyl-laced-heroin-overdose-deaths-surge-nationwide/>