



Trauma-Informed Schools Resource Guide

“Stressed brains can’t learn”





Cause I Ain't Got a Pencil

by Joshua T. Dickerson

I woke myself up
Because we ain't got an alarm clock
Dug in the dirty clothes basket,
Cause ain't nobody washed my uniform
Brushed my hair and teeth in the dark,
Cause the lights ain't on
Even got my baby sister ready,
Cause my mama wasn't home.
Got us both to school on time,
To eat us a good breakfast.
Then when I got to class the teacher fussed
Cause I ain't got a pencil.

STRESS & EARLY BRAIN GROWTH

Understanding Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)

What are ACEs?

ACEs are serious childhood traumas -- a list is shown below -- that result in toxic stress that can harm a child's brain. This toxic stress may prevent a child from learning, from playing in a healthy way with other children, and can result in long-term health problems.

Adverse Childhood Experiences can include:

1. Emotional abuse
2. Physical abuse
3. Sexual abuse
4. Emotional neglect
5. Physical neglect
6. Mother treated violently
7. Household substance abuse
8. Household mental illness
9. Parental separation or divorce
10. Incarcerated household member
11. Bullying (by another child or adult)
12. Witnessing violence outside the home
13. Witness a brother or sister being abused
14. Racism, sexism, or any other form of discrimination
15. Being homeless
16. Natural disasters and war

Exposure to childhood ACEs can increase the risk of:

- Adolescent pregnancy
- Alcoholism and alcohol abuse
- Depression
- Illicit drug use
- Heart disease
- Liver disease
- Multiple sexual partners
- Intimate partner violence
- Sexually transmitted diseases (STDs)
- Smoking
- Suicide attempts
- Unintended pregnancies

How do ACEs affect health?

Through stress. Frequent or prolonged exposure to ACEs can create toxic stress which can damage the developing brain of a child and affect overall health.

Reduces the ability to respond, learn, or figure things out, which can result in problems in school.

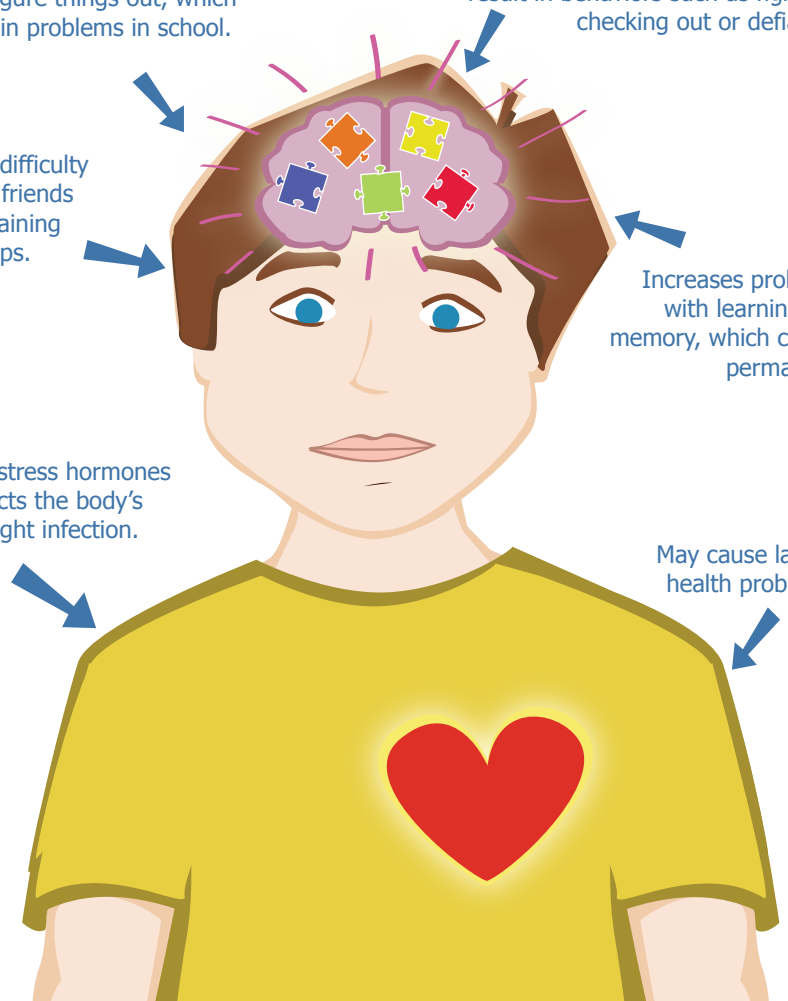
Lowers tolerance for stress, which can result in behaviors such as fighting, checking out or defiance.

Increases difficulty in making friends and maintaining relationships.

Increases problems with learning and memory, which can be permanent.

Increases stress hormones which affects the body's ability to fight infection.

May cause lasting health problems.



A Survival Mode Response to toxic stress increases a child's heart rate, blood pressure, breathing and muscle tension. Their thinking brain is knocked off-line. Self-protection is their priority. In other words:
"I can't hear you! I can't respond to you! I am just trying to be safe!"

The good news is resilience can bring back health and hope!

What is Resilience?

Resilience is the ability to return to being healthy and hopeful after bad things happen. Research shows that if parents provide a safe environment for their children and teach them how to be resilient, that helps reduce the effects of ACEs.

Resilience trumps ACEs!

Parents, teachers and caregivers can help children by:

- Gaining an understanding of ACEs
- Helping children identify feelings and manage emotions
- Creating safe physical and emotional environments at home, in school, and in neighborhoods

What does resilience look like?

1. Having resilient parents

Parents who know how to solve problems, who have healthy relationships with other adults, and who build healthy relationships with their children.

2. Building attachment and nurturing relationships

Adults who listen and respond patiently to a child in a supportive way, and pay attention to a child's physical and emotional needs.

3. Building social connections

Having family, friends and/or neighbors who support, help and listen to children.

4. Meeting basic needs

Providing children with safe housing, nutritious food, appropriate clothing, and access to health care and good education.

5. Learning about parenting and how children grow

Understanding how parents can help their children grow in a healthy way, and what to expect from children as they grow.

6. Building social and emotional skills

Helping children interact in a healthy way with others, manage their emotions and communicate their feelings and needs.



Resources:

ACES 101

<http://acestoohigh.com/aces-101/>

Triple-P Parenting

www.triplep-parenting.net/glo-en/home/

Resilience Trumps ACEs

www.resiliencetrumpsACEs.org

CDC-Kaiser Adverse Childhood Experiences Study

www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/acestudy/

Zero to Three Guides for Parents

<http://www.zerotothree.org/about-us/areas-of-expertise/free-parent-brochures-and-guides/>

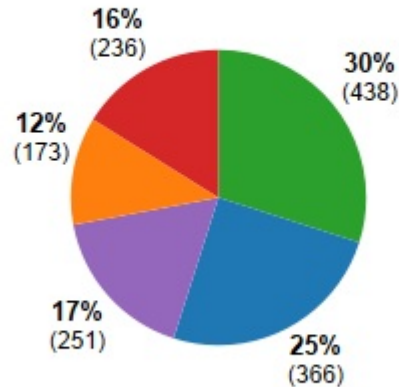
Monroe County ACEs & Risk Behaviors

Distribution by ACES Total Score Category

The Monroe County ACEs sample included 1464 respondents randomly selected from the 16 participating districts. Only respondents who answered all 11 ACE questions are included

ACES Total Score Category

- No ACES Flags
- 1 ACES Flag
- 2 ACES Flags
- 3 ACES Flags
- 4 or More ACES Flags



Compared to youth with no ACEs, In Monroe County a youth with four or more ACEs is...

- At over **4 times the risk of experiencing mental health difficulties** from emotional problems
- **6 times more likely to have considered suicide & 20 times more likely to have attempted suicide** in the past 12 months
- Nearly **4 times more likely to have gotten into a fight** within the last year & **3 ½ times more likely to have carried a weapon** in the past month
- **1 ½ times more likely to be currently using alcohol**
- At nearly **3 times the risk of currently using marijuana & at 25 times greater risk of using Marijuana before age 13**
- **18 times more likely to use cocaine and drugs** other than marijuana

ACEs assessed through the Monroe County YRBS:

- | | | |
|------------------------------------|--|---------------------------------------|
| • Physical Abuse | • Sexual Abuse | • Emotional Abuse |
| • Incarcerated household member | • Household member with chronic mental illness | • Violence between adults in the home |
| • Parental separation or divorce | • Not having enough money for food or housing | • Witnessing community violence |
| • Alcohol/Drug abuser in household | • Lack of family support | |

PAPER TIGERS



LOGLINE

Paper Tigers follows a year in the life of an alternative high school that has radically changed its approach to disciplining its students, becoming a promising model for how to break the cycles of poverty, violence and disease that affect families.

SYNOPSIS

"Stressed brains can't learn."

That was the nugget of neuroscience that Jim Sporleder, principal of a high school riddled with violence, drugs and truancy, took away from an educational conference in 2010. Three years later, the number of fights at Lincoln Alternative High School had gone down by 75% and the graduation rate had increased five-fold. *Paper Tigers* is the story of how one school made such dramatic progress.

Following six students over the course of a school year, we see Lincoln's staff try a new approach to discipline: one based on understanding and treatment rather than judgment and suspension. Using a combination of verite and revealing diary cam footage, *Paper Tigers* is a testament to what the latest developmental science is showing: that just one caring adult can help break the cycle of adversity in a young person's life.

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about the film



“That’s where the bad kids went.”

Paper Tigers follows six troubled teens over the course of a year at Lincoln Alternative High School in rural Walla Walla, Washington. Considered a last chance before dropping out, many students come to Lincoln with a history of behavioral problems, truancy, and substance abuse. Then, in 2010, Principal Jim Sporleder learned about the science of what a rough childhood does to a developing brain. “Stressed brains can’t learn” was what he took away from an educational conference. He returned to his school convinced that traditional punishments like suspension were only exacerbating the problems of the students there. Sporleder says:

“I was hunting everywhere for the curriculum. It’s not a curriculum. So it was trying to figure out, how do you take this theory and put it into practice?”

Sporleder invited the staff, as well as the students, to learn about the landmark Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) Study, which shows that stressful events during childhood – like divorce, domestic violence, or living with someone with a mental illness – massively increases the risk of problems in adulthood. Problems like addiction, suicide and even heart disease have their roots in childhood experience. Suspension became a last resort as the school formed an in-school suspension program, keeping the kids in contact with the staff and caught up with their homework. They also established a health center on campus so the students would have ready access to pediatricians and mental health counselors. The biggest challenge for the teachers was to consider the source of the kids’ behavior. Science teacher Erik Gordon realizes:

“The behavior isn’t the kid. The behavior is a symptom of what’s going on in their life.”

Told with intimate verite and diary cam footage, *Paper Tigers* is a testament to what the latest developmental science is proving: that one caring adult can help break the cycle of adversity in a young person’s life. We follow students like Aron, a senior who avoids eye contact and barely speaks in class; freshman Kelsey, who struggles with meth addiction and abusive relationships; and Steven, a senior who has been in and out of juvenile hall since junior high for fights and threatening teachers. As the teachers slowly gain their students’ trust, they hear harrowing tales of physically abusive and negligent parents, homelessness, sexual abuse... The list goes on.

Despite the upheaval in their home lives, the students find the support they need at Lincoln to make academic progress, and find less destructive ways of coping. They also find hope for becoming healthy and productive adults as they go out into the world.

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I want to know more...

About **School-Based Approaches**:

Additional resources, information and examples of trauma-sensitive school approaches:

Reaching and Teaching Children Who Hurt by Susan Craig

- Comprehensive overview of the effects of trauma and violence on the brain and their impact on cognitive, social, and emotional development, especially in school settings. While the strategies provided in the book are geared primarily towards elementary-age youth, all school-based staff will find worthwhile information in this short book.

The Heart of Learning and Teaching

- Compassionate/trauma-informed schools initiative developed in Washington State
- <http://www.k12.wa.us/compassionateschools>

Trauma-Informed Care and Positive Behavioral Intervention & Supports

- Crosswalk between PBSI and TIC developed by the Wisconsin Dept. of Public Instruction
- <http://dpi.wi.gov/sspw/mental-health/trauma/pbis>

Helping Traumatized Children Learn

- Creating and advocating for trauma-sensitive schools developed by Massachusetts Advocates for Children
- <http://traumasensitive schools.org>

Online Trauma Training for Educators

- <http://www.ciscentraltexas.org/resources/traumatraining>

More information on Lincoln High School

- <http://communityresiliencycookbook.org/tastes-of-success/the-walla-walla-washington-story/>
- <http://acestoohigh.com/2012/04/23/lincoln-high-school-in-walla-walla-wa-tries-new-approach-to-school-discipline-expulsions-drop-85/>

I want to know more...

About **Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)**:

The following links provide brief overviews of the history and background of the ACE study:

ACES Too High

- A website devoted to ongoing research and capacity building for working with and through trauma.
- <http://acestoohigh.com/>

Center for Disease Control

- The Center for Disease Control's overview of the ACE Study
- <http://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/acestudy/>

The Philadelphia ACE Project

- The Philadelphia ACE Project was created in 2012 by the Health Federation of Philadelphia to further research and prevention of childhood traumas. The group produced another version of the ACE study that captures adverse events not listed in the original ACE study.
- <http://www.healthfederation.org/portfolio/philadelphia-ace-project/>

I want to know more...

About fostering **Resiliency**:

The statistics around the ACE study can be overwhelming; however, we know that resiliency “trumps ACEs”. Below are several resources with additional information on resiliency:

Resiliency Trumps ACEs

- <http://www.resiliencetrumpsaces.org/>

Community Resilience Cookbook

- <http://communityresiliencecookbook.org/>

Road to Resilience

- <http://www.rand.org/pubs/infographics/IG114.html>

Asset Development

- <http://www.search-institute.org/research/developmental-assets>

I want to know more...

About **Local Resources** for More Information and Training:

Interested in more education on trauma and trauma-informed care? Below are several local organizations committed to providing trauma-informed services and training to the Rochester area:

Coordinated Care Services, Inc.

- Trauma-Informed Care training and consultation services
- <http://www.ccsi.org/TraumaInformedCareTraining.aspx>

The Consortium on Trauma, Illness, and Grief in Schools

- School-based training, consultation & support related to trauma, illness, grief & more
- amyscheel-jones@monroecounty.gov

State University at Buffalo

- The Institute on Trauma and Trauma Informed Care
- <https://socialwork.buffalo.edu/social-research/institutes-centers/institute-on-trauma-and-trauma-informed-care.html>

Mt. Hope Family Center

- <http://www.psych.rochester.edu/MHFC/>

The Monroe County Youth Risk Behavior Survey Report

- www2.monroecounty.gov/files/health/DataReports/2014-2015%20MC%20YRBS%20.pdf

Trauma-Informed Care Network

- <http://wilsonfdn.org/tic/>

Rochester-Monroe Anti-Poverty Initiative

- <https://www.uwrochester.org/Our-Work-Results/Rochester-Monroe-Anti-Poverty-Initiative>

What can I do today?

I'm a school professional and want to make difference.
These no-cost tips can apply to any role in a school system:

Practice curiosity in the face of challenging situations. Our immediate response to a challenging behavior is frequently anger that includes reprimanding or correcting. Practicing curiosity and exploring what is leading to the behavior more likely leads to solutions that work for everyone.	Reinforce the importance of safety as much as possible. Creating a sense of physical and emotional safety for yourself and others will increase success not only in helping children learn, but building the relationships that will lead to increased resilience.	Offer and name choices for students. Offering choice helps build trusting relationships, reinforces the student's capability, and strengthens autonomy.	Cultivate trustworthiness. Do what you say you will do and when you can't, model honesty and transparency.
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Today, I can...

- Greet all of my students by name
- Call parents/caregivers to share good news
- Visit my students' homes, neighborhoods and communities
- Understand there may be underlying causes to what is showing up as "big behaviors" and begin to ask questions that matter
- Make sure that the youth I work with know I care about them "No Matter What"
- Be one positive, caring, consistent adult in the life of even one youth

Notes & Questions