

Adverse Experiences and Child Development: Overcoming the Toxic Effects and Developing Trauma-Sensitive Schools

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Presented by:

Mark A. Sander

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Adverse Experiences and
Child Development: Overcoming
the Toxic Effects and Developing
Trauma-Sensitive Schools

Mark A. Sander, Psy.D., L.P.

Senior Clinical Psychologist

Director of School Mental Health

Hennepin County and Minneapolis Public Schools

Pause, listen, breathe.

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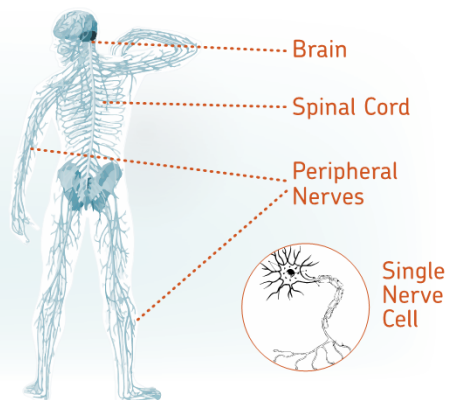
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HUMAN NERVOUS SYSTEM

Nervous system
ORCHESTRATES BODY
FUNCTIONS & PERCEPTIONS

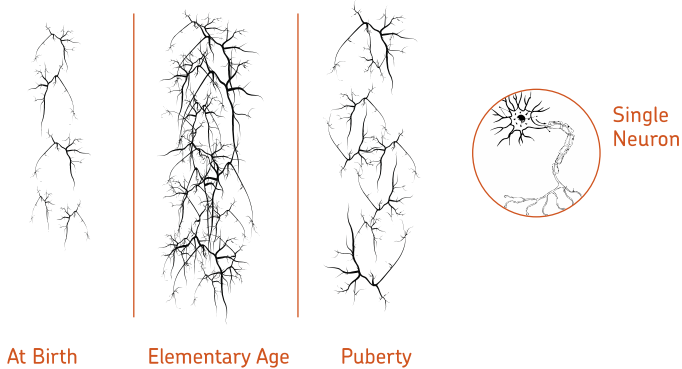
Neuroscience
HELPS US UNDERSTAND WHY
ACEs
ARE SO POWERFUL



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SYNAPTIC DENSITY



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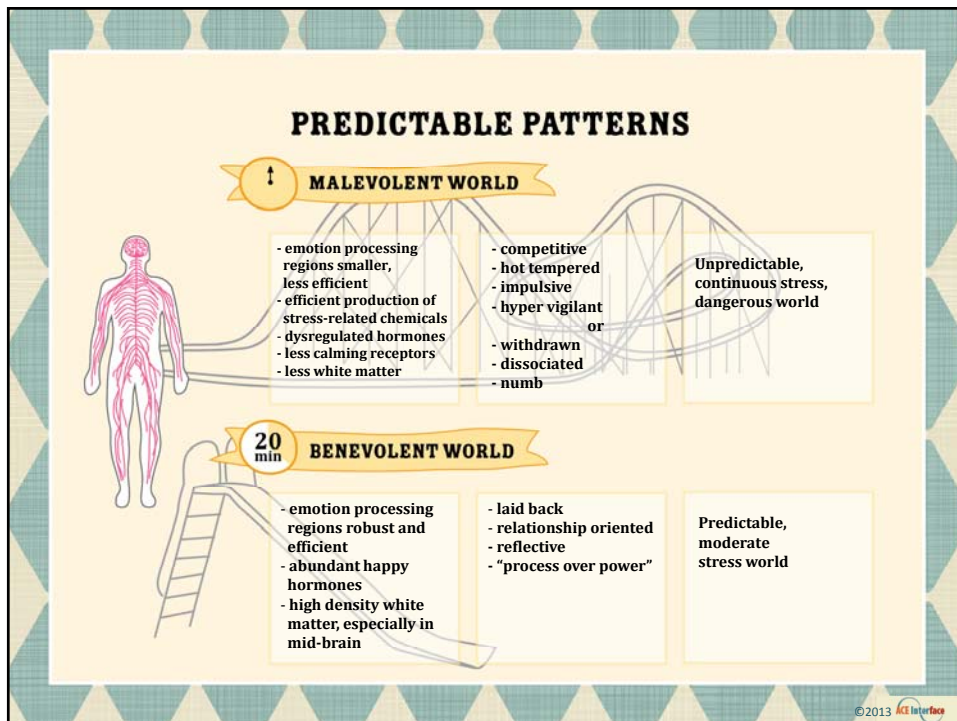
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Different Stress Responses

- ▶ Positive stress response
 - Normal and essential part of health development
 - Brief increases in heart rate and mild elevations in hormone levels
- ▶ Tolerable stress response
 - Activates body's alert system to greater degree
 - If activation is time-limited and buffered by relationships with adults who can help child adapt, this can be ok
- ▶ Toxic stress response
 - Strong, frequent, and/or prolonged adversity
 - This type of response can disrupt typical brain and neural development

Impact of Toxic Stress

- Video on how “Toxic Stress Derails Healthy Development” from the Center for the Developing Child at Harvard University
- Being continuously exposed to toxic stress can put the central nervous system into a permanent state of high alert
- A child or young person can feel under threat even when there is no current threat in their environment
- We can mediate these effects by creating environments that are safe, predictable, nurturing, and engaging



We adapt to our
environment

Experience gets wired
into our biology

Adaptation VS Expectations

When biology collides with social
expectations — we run into trouble

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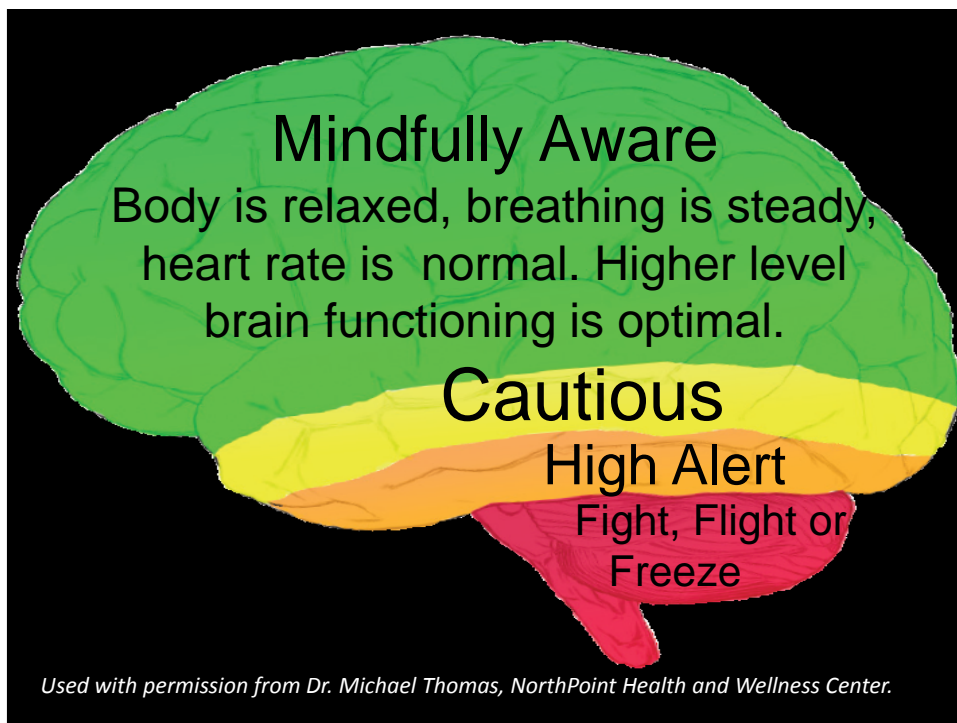
What kinds of situations might be a good match for a person who is edgy, hyper-vigilant, emotionally detached, and quick to act?

Adversity Gets Wired into Our Central Nervous System and our Physiology

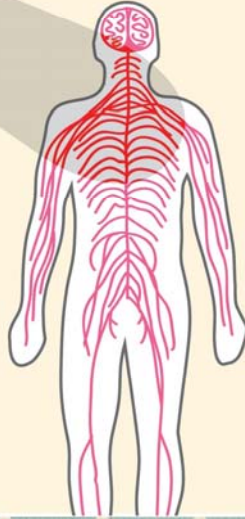
- Research has found a change in RESTING heart rates
- Some of these students are "**wired**" to be on HIGH ALERT!!
- They don't understand that their "set point" is almost more than twice as high as what is typical
- Their bodies "learn to" go into "fight/flight/freeze" very quickly

Toxic Stress and Adversity: Affects Perception

- Constantly on “threat assessment” — impact on social awareness
- Example — Faces study
- Understanding that what they might be perceiving is real even if different than your “reality”



BIOLOGICAL RESPONSES



Behavior, affect, attitude,
and capacities
may not be “choices”-

They may be **normal
biological adaptations**
to toxic stress and
adversity during
development.

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Not: *What's wrong with you?*

But: ***What happened to you?***

Key Messages: Toxic Stress and Adaptation

- Anxiety and stress are normal aspects of life
- Stress can become toxic and damaging when:
 - Severe, prolonged, and/or occurs repeatedly and is not buffered by caring adults
 - These adverse experiences can have significant affects on brain development and the development of the nervous system
- Children “adapt” to these adverse experiences to “survive” – this is the normal biological response to traumatic events
- Repeated experience gets wired into our biology/brain

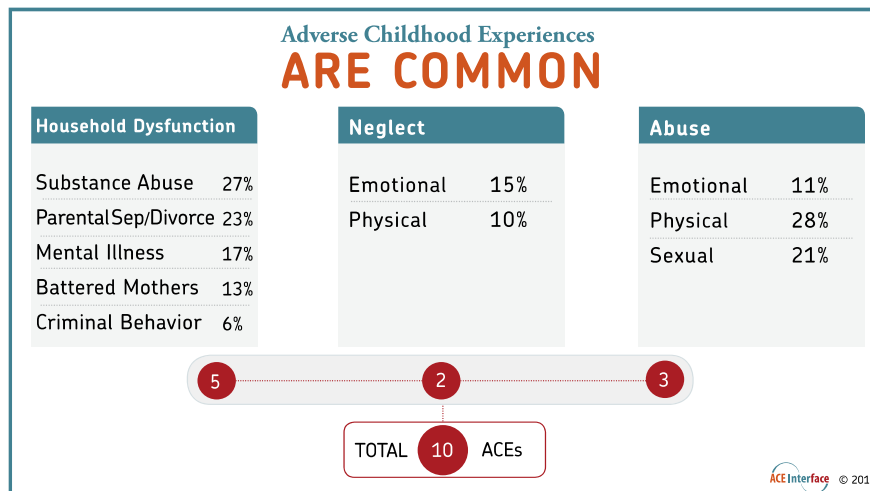
Discussion Break

What is one thing you would share with a friend or colleague about what you have learned thus far and why?

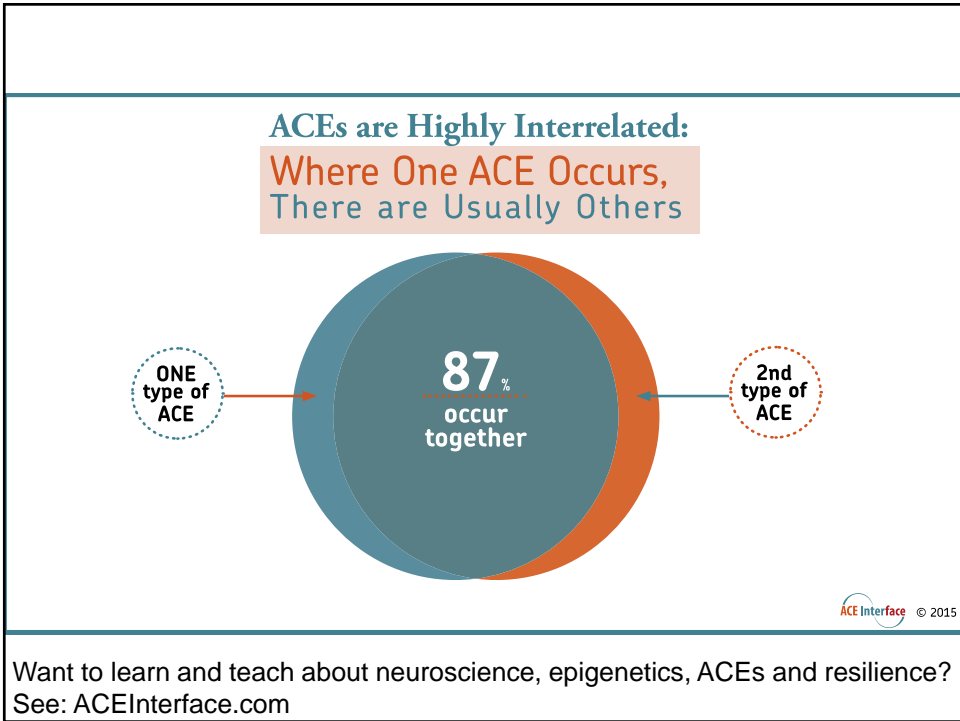
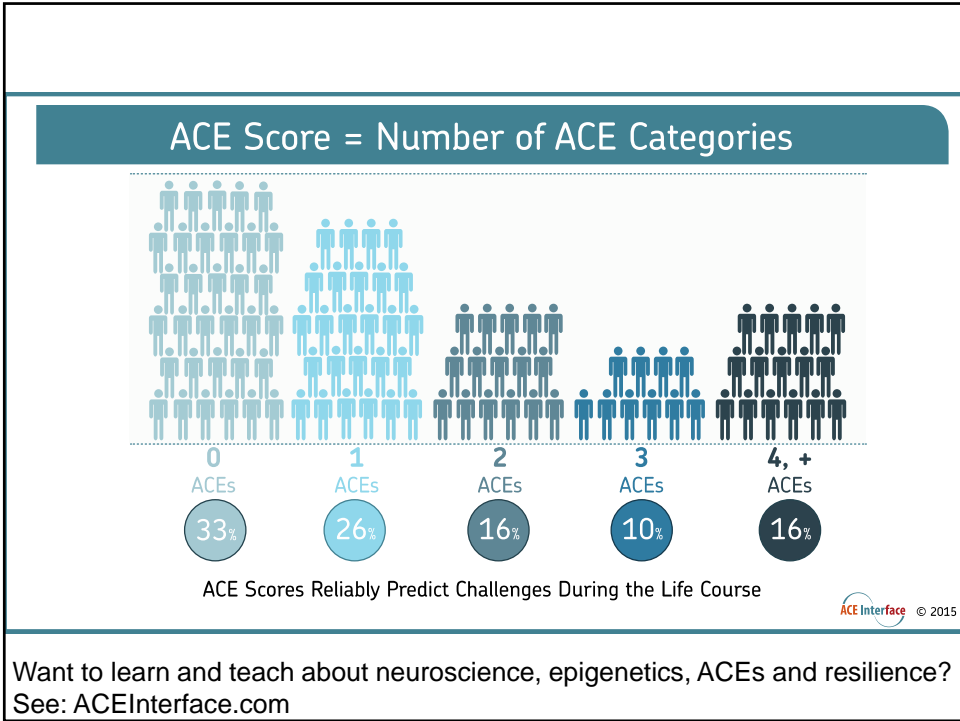
Is there a student(s) that you started thinking about differently after hearing this information?

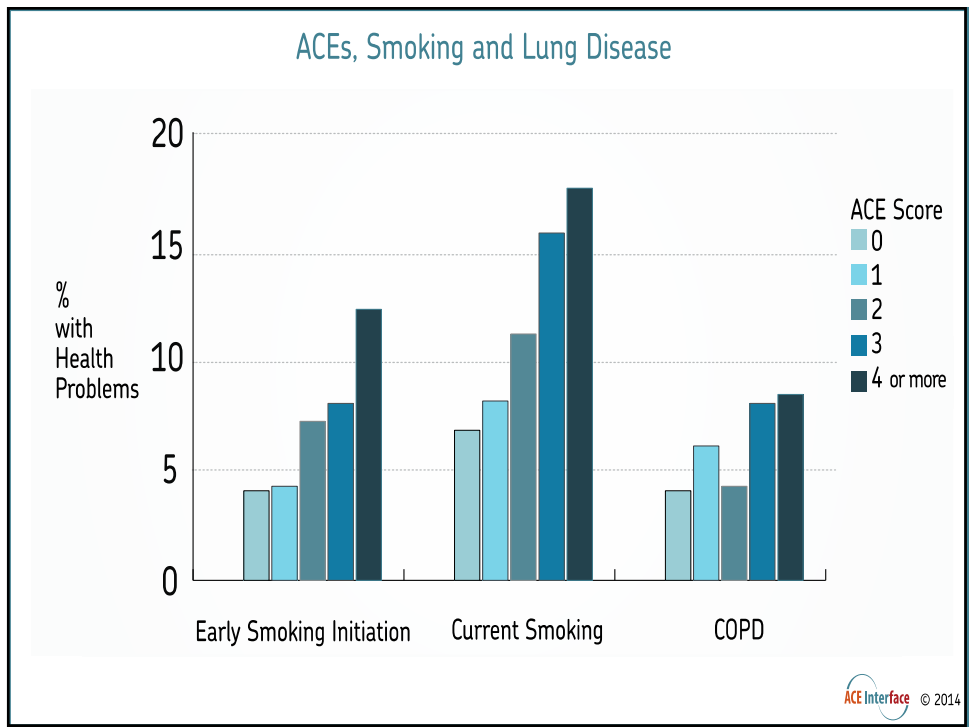
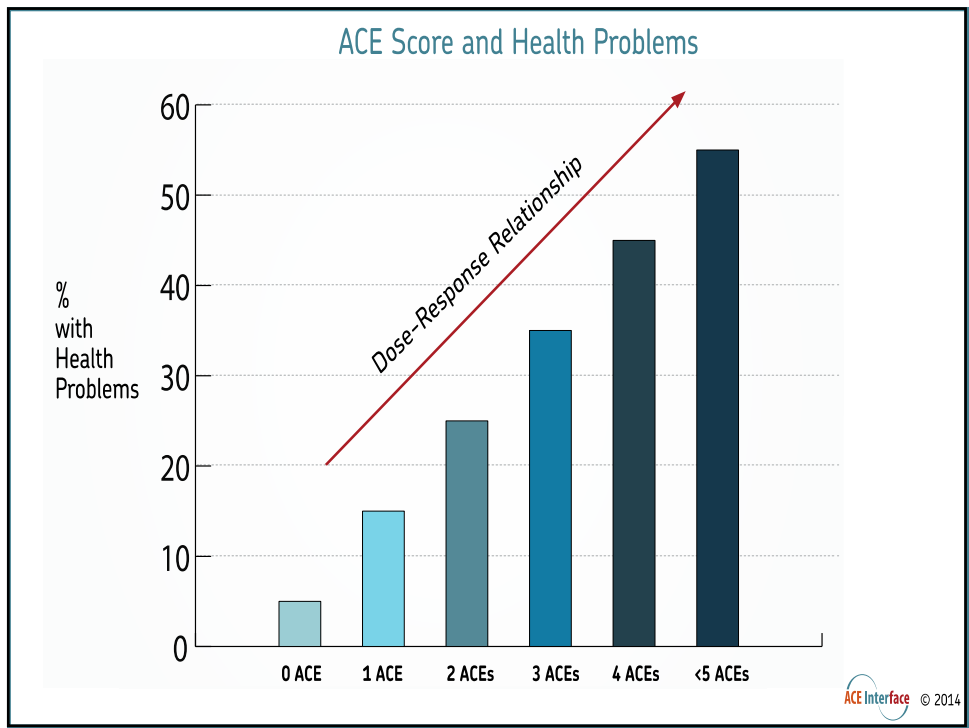
The ACE Study

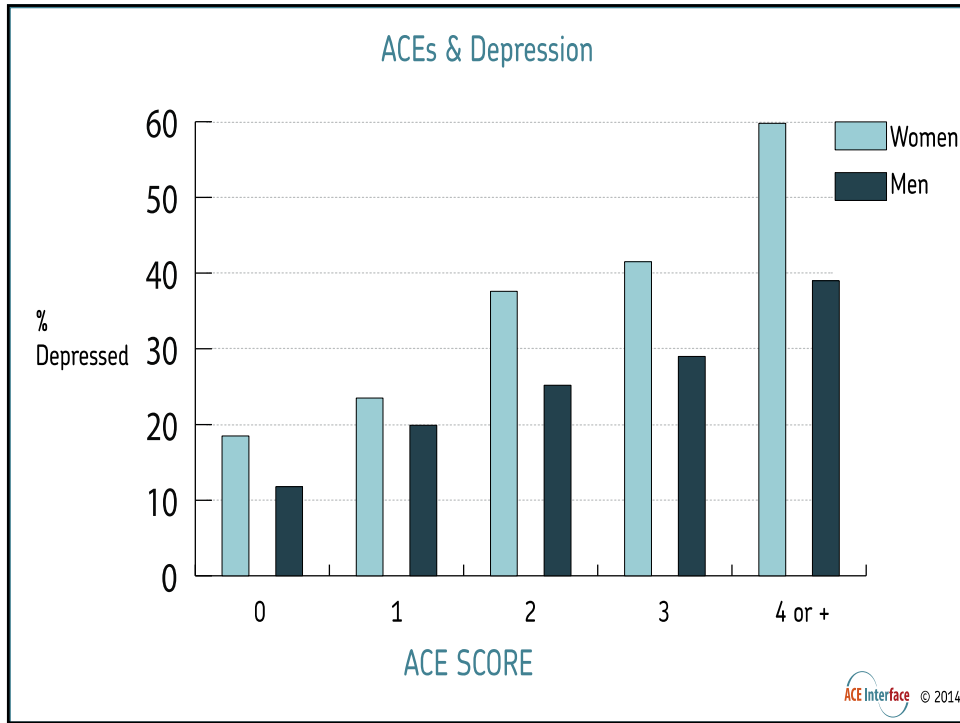
- Who participated in it?
- What was their background?
- Why did they do the study?



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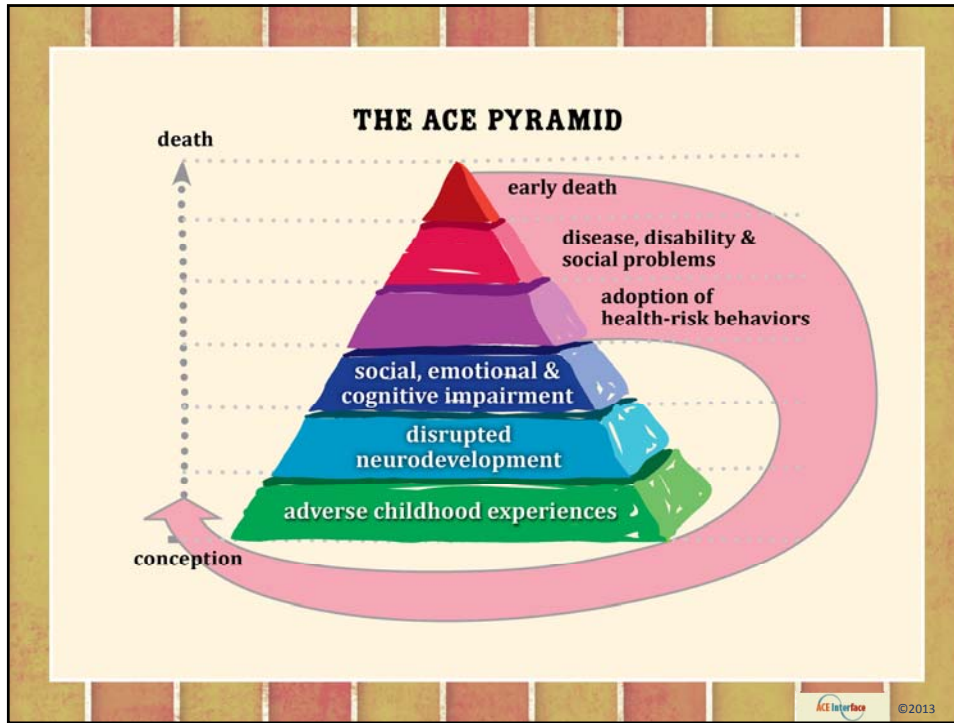






Health, Mental Health, and Social Problems Connected to ACEs

- Panic reactions
- Depression
- Anxiety
- Hallucinations
- Sleep disturbances
- Severe obesity
- Smoking
- Alcoholism
- Illicit drug use
- IV drug use
- Early intercourse
- Promiscuity
- Sexual dissatisfaction
- Amnesia (childhood)
- High stress
- High blood pressure
- Heart disease
- Problems with anger
- Perpetrating domestic violence
- Liver disease
- Missed work
- And many others....



SPOKANE ELEMENTARY ACES STUDY: ODDS FOR ACADEMIC AND HEALTH PROBLEMS WITH INCREASING ACES

Spokane Elementary School Students	Academic Failure	Severe Attendance Problems	Severe School Behavior Concerns	Frequent Reported Poor Health
Three or More ACEs N=248	3	5	6	4
Two ACEs N=213	2.5	2.5	4	2.5
One ACE N=476	1.5	2	2.5	2
No Known ACEs =1,164	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0

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MN Dept. of Education ACE-like Study

- In 2013, the Minnesota Department of Education added seven ACE study-like questions to the Minnesota students survey

They found that as students' scores went up, so did the likelihood of:

- using alcohol within the past 30 days
 - ACE 0 = 10.9%; ACE 7 = 73.3%
- seriously considering suicide and also of actual suicide attempts
 - ACE 0 = 4.9%; ACE 7 = 61.6% (suicidal ideation)
- students feeling very trapped, lonely, sad, blue, depressed, or hopeless about the future
 - ACE 0 = 18.6%; ACE 4 = 70.3%

Summary

ACEs are common

ACEs are highly interrelated

ACEs have a cumulative impact

Discussion Break

What is one thing you would share with a friend or colleague about what you have learned thus far and why?

Is there a student(s) that you started thinking about differently after hearing this information?

For More on ACEs

- CDC ACEs webpage
 - <http://www.cdc.gov/ace/>
- ACE Interface
 - <http://aceinterface.com/>
- ACES Too High
 - <http://acestoohigh.com/>

What can we do?

What can a school do?

How do we build resilience?

**Resilience is common and ...
arises from ... normal *rather than*
extraordinary human
capabilities, relationships, and
resources.**

**In other words, resilience
emerges from *ordinary*
magic.**

—Ann Masten, 2009

Compassionate Teaching and Discipline Principles

- Always empower, never disempower.
- Provide unconditional positive regard.
- Maintain high expectations.
- Check assumptions. Observe. Question.
- Be a relationship coach.
- Provide guided opportunities for helpful participation.

— from *The Heart of Teaching and Learning: Compassion, Resiliency and Academic Success*; 2011

Schools are a Place of Resilience!

- Schools and school staff can be intentional about how they interact with students
- POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS are a powerful intervention
- The students that need those relationships the most can be the hardest ones to have them with...

Schools: Providing Supports

- Schools can, and often do provide programs and supports focused on:
 - School Climate
 - Social and Emotional Learning (SEL)
 - Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) and school-wide Positive Behavior Supports (SW-PBS)
 - Response to Intervention (RtI)
 - Student Support Staff (school psychologist, school nurses, school counselors, school social workers)

Additional School Supports

- MindUP, Yoga Calm, and Zones of Regulation
- Prevention and early intervention groups
- Social-Emotional Learning, Skill-building groups (e.g., Second Step)
- Responsive Classroom
- Restorative Practices
- Alternatives to Suspensions
- Positive Relationships **are** the evidence-based practice

Build Resilience

- Resilience: positive adaptation despite adversity
- In early childhood, successful secure attachment
- In later childhood, mastery of school and establishing meaningful peer and adult relationships
- In adults, meaningful intimate and loving relationships
- A virtuous cycle- Reduce exposure to vulnerability and increase access to protective resources
- What does resilience look like?
- Belief/Competence
 - Hope
 - Self-efficacy
- Skills
 - Emotional regulation/tolerance for change
 - Relational skills
 - Executive function
- Environment
 - Social support
 - Forgiving, repairable settings
 - Access to the social and material resources for adaptation

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Helping to co-regulate

- Where are you at on a scale of 0-10?
- Avoid argument and power struggle
- Calm down (walk) – pacing; you can assess the child's body/emotions (don't talk until they are calm; focus on calming down first)
 - Check in (for both of you): 0-10 scale
- Questions to Avoid:
 - What did you do? (can start an argument)
 - What were you thinking? (not useful in the moment)

Repair and Skill-Building

- There doesn't have to be a punishment or punitive consequence, rather Compassionate Accountability
- How do you repair the harm that was done?
- How do you help students with lagging skills?
- Planning for the future
 - How can you help them build skills?
 - Role play, etc.
 - How do you help the adults plan for the future if this comes up again ?

There is HOPE: Repetition Can Rewire

- Many, many, many times!! 100, 200 or more!
- Intentionally deciding what we want their REPEATED EXPERIENCE to be = HOPE
- It all comes down to healthy, positive, nurturing, and honest relationships

Contact Information

- Mark Sander, Psy.D., L.P.
Hennepin County and Minneapolis Public Schools
- Senior Clinical Psychologist; Director of School Mental Health; and ACEs Certified Master Trainer
- 612-668-5489
- mark.sander@hennepin.us

Resources

- Daniel J Siegel and Tina Payne Bryson, *he Whole-Brain Child: 12 Revolutionary Strategies to Nurture your Child's Developing Mind*
- Richard Davidson, *The Emotional Life of The Brain*
- Rick Hanson, Ph.D., *Hardwiring Happiness: The New Brain Science of Contentment, Calm and Confidence*
- Daniel Goleman, *Emotional Intelligence*
- Paul Tough, *How Children Succeed: Grit, Curiosity, and the Hidden Power of Character*

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Dr. Mark Sander will briefly review the research exploring how trauma affects children's and adolescents' biological, physiological, social, emotional and brain development. Then he'll provide evidence-based strategies to help you create a more trauma-sensitive school environment, including how to:

- Use schoolwide and classroom approaches to improve students' self-regulation and social-emotional skills
- Build resiliency into the school climate to support both students and staff
- Incorporate into your work with students an understanding of their adaptive responses to environmental circumstances and toxic stress
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Presented by Geneva L. Englebrecht

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Along with lessons to be learned from recent case law, Geneva Englebrecht will empower you and your staff to avoid common pitfalls with detailed explanations of:

- The key components of IDEA eligibility under the OHI category
- Why a medical diagnosis does not automatically qualify a student as Other Health Impaired
- How to determine what evaluations are necessary
- Strategies to properly analyze the criteria in determining IDEA eligibility
- Differences between the IDEA and Section 504
- And more!

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Geneva L. Englebrecht is an attorney with the Houston office of Thompson & Horton LLP. She has extensive experience in disability and special education law, advocacy, training, mediation, and due process hearings, and regularly advises clients regarding the IDEA, Section 504 and the ADA. She is a popular presenter on such topics as special education, Section 504, student discipline, use of law enforcement for students with disabilities, and anti-bullying in general and special education.



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February 24, 2016

Mark A. Sander

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