

Strengthening our Families: Risk and Protective Factors of Child Abuse

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Objectives

- Discuss adverse childhood experiences and their link to adult health outcomes
- Explain risk factors associated with higher rates of child abuse
- Describe some of the protective factors for child abuse



Adverse Childhood Experiences

- Relationship of childhood abuse and household dysfunction to many of the leading causes of death in adults. The adverse childhood experiences (ACE) study. Am J Prev Med 1998;14:245--58



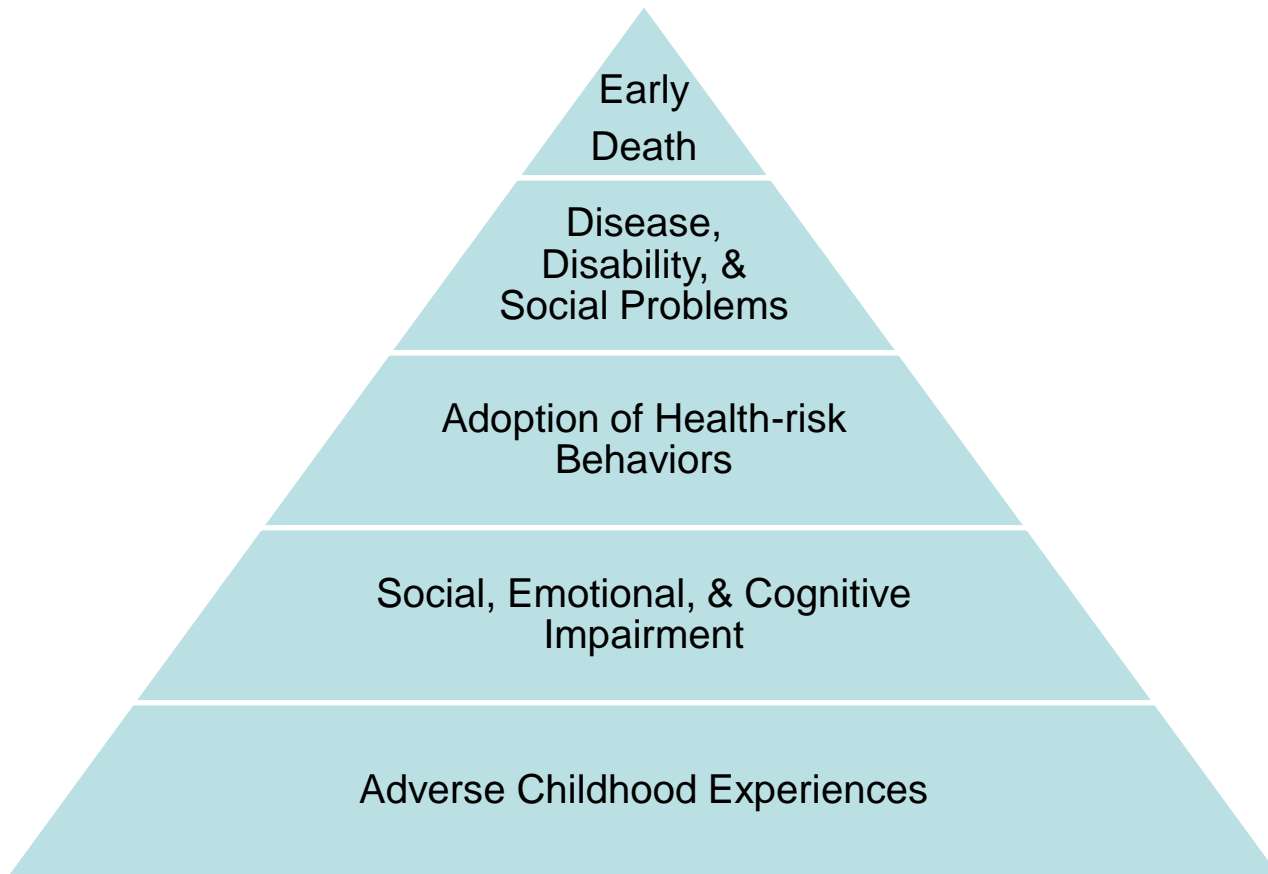
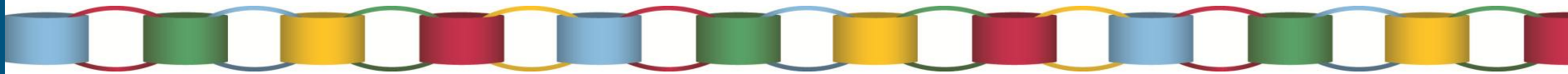
ACEs

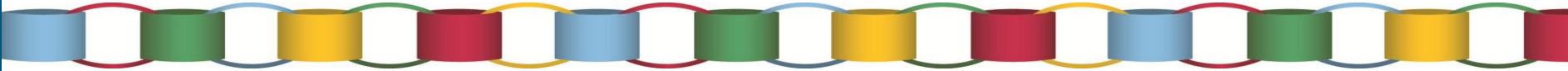
- Adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) studied were: psychological, physical, or sexual abuse, as well as family dysfunction (e.g., an incarcerated, mentally ill, or substance-abusing family member; or domestic violence).
- ACEs have been linked to a range of adverse health outcomes in adulthood, including substance abuse, depression, suicide attempt, ischemic heart disease, diabetes, cancer, and premature death



ACEs

- There is a strong relationship between the number of ACEs and the subsequent risk factors that are leading causes of death in adults.
- If experience 4 or more categories of ACE, there is a 4 to 12 time increase in smoking, poor self rated health, > 50 sexual partners and STDs.
- 1.4 to 1.6 time increase in physical inactivity and severe obesity.

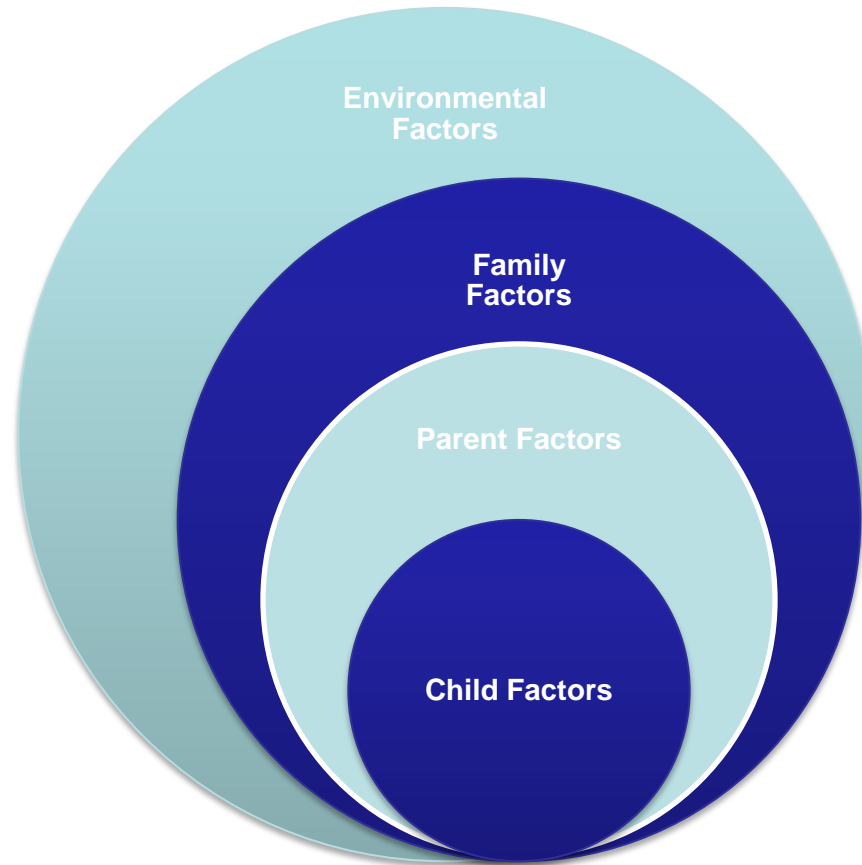




All forms of child abuse are adverse experiences, so what are the risk and protective factors?



Risk Factors





Child Factors

- Age
 - Under 4 years has highest rate of documented abuse
 - Infants are at highest risk for abusive head trauma and failure to thrive
 - Teenagers are at highest risk for sexual abuse
- Disabilities- physical or mental
- Health –prematurity (may disrupt bonding)



Parent Factors

- Personality and psychological health i.e. low self esteem, poor impulse control, depression, antisocial behavior.
- Parental history of abuse. About 1/3 of all individuals who were abused will subject their children to abuse.
- Substance abuse- children whose parents abuse alcohol or drugs are almost 3x more likely to be abused and 4x more likely to be neglected.



Parent Factors

- Attitudes and knowledge- The less satisfied the caregiver is with their children and the greater the perception of parenting as being difficult, the greater the risk of maltreatment. Inappropriate expectations of developmental level.
- Age- younger age of parent increases risk but this may be related to other factors such as poverty, stress.



Family Factors

- Family structure: non related parent figure in home, single parent, rigid structure, military deployment, chaotic household (greater numbers of people in the home and/or living on and off with various people.
- Domestic violence
- Stress: i.e. marital dissatisfaction
 - It is unclear if abusive parents *experience* more life stress or *perceive* more events and life experiences as being stressful.
- Parent child interaction: closed indirect communication, authoritarian



Single Parent Home

- 77% increased risk of physical abuse
- 87% increased risk of being harmed by physical neglect
- 165% increased risk of experiencing physical neglect
- 74% increased risk of emotional neglect
- 80% increased risk of serious injury from abuse
- 120% increased risk of some type of maltreatment overall



Environmental Factors

- Poverty and unemployment
- Social isolation and lack of social support-
isolation is a predictor of emotional stress and
depression
- Violent communities



Poverty

- Poverty may interplay with or be due to depression, substance abuse, social isolation
- Increases stress
- May be unable to provide for their children
- Due to bias, there may be an over reporting of low socioeconomic groups or under reporting of high socioeconomic groups.



Protective Factors

- Nurturing and attachment
- Knowledge of parenting and of child and youth development
- Parental resilience
- Social connections
- Concrete supports for parents
- Social and emotional competence of children



Framework

- Focus on identifying protective factors and on better understanding of how protective factors may contribute to or explain positive outcomes.
- Crosses disciplines i.e. integrate health care, social services and education programs
- **A Life Course Approach Resource Guide
Developed by the MCH Training Program**



Nurturing and Attachment

- A child's bond with a caring adult affects all aspects of behavior and development
- Necessary to develop trust
- Later in life have better academic grades, healthier behaviors, more positive peer interactions, and increased ability to cope with stress



Nurturing and Attachment

- Infant characteristics
 - Temperament: fussy or passive will affect the mother-infant interaction
- Parent/Caregiver characteristics
 - Insensitive, unresponsive
- Environment
 - Violence, overcrowding lead to distress



Parenting Knowledge

- Children need consistent rules and expectations, safe opportunities that promote independence
- Good parenting fosters psychological adjustment, success in school, motivates to achieve
- Inappropriate developmental expectations fosters frustration in the parent i.e. infant crying, toilet training



Parental Resilience

- Resilience is the ability to cope with stress, flexibility to bounce back when things don't go well. If parent had secure attachment (probably no violence or abuse), less likely to abuse child.
- Multiple life stressors (marital conflict, financial stress, history of abuse, health problems) reduce the capacity to cope



Social Connections

- If parent is isolated with few social connections, higher risk of abuse and neglect
- Network of emotionally supportive friends, family, neighbors makes it easier to care for the child and themselves.
- Network provides a sympathetic listener, advice, or concrete support.



Concrete Supports

- Help parents to identify and access resources (childcare, health care, mental health services) may reduce stress that results in abuse or providing concrete needs (food, clothing, housing, transportation) may prevent unintended neglect when the parent can't provide for their child



Social and Emotional Competence

- Parents model how to express and communicate emotions, self regulate, and make friends.



In Summary

- Child Abuse can lead to long term disability and early death.
- We can help prevent abuse by
 - Promoting bonding with infants
 - Providing resources such as substance abuse treatment programs, respite care for children with disabilities, family resource centers in low income areas
 - Encourage social networks to decrease stress
 - Increase parenting knowledge: Period of Purple Crying, Parenting classes (i.e. Positive Parenting Program)



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