



The Power of ACEs

By Southeast Health Group

There has been a lot of buzz lately about Adverse Childhood Experiences, or ACEs for short. Oprah Winfrey recently highlighted ACEs in a piece for 60 Minutes, in which she described the importance of helping children heal from trauma:

www.cbsnews.com/news/the-life-changing-story-oprah-reports-this-week.

An ACE score is used to measure a child's exposure to physical, emotional and sexual abuse, family instability, family violence and substance use experienced in the first 18 years of life. Professionals use a short paper and pencil test to sum up the areas of a child's exposure to trauma. The number of ACEs a child has experienced is a

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powerful predictor of health and wellbeing later in life, and can even predict life expectancy.

The Centers for Disease Control and Kaiser Permanente conducted the original Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) Study from 1995-1997. It is one of the largest investigations of childhood abuse and neglect and later-life health



and well-being. Their framework shows how trauma can disrupt brain development, which results in impaired social, emotional and cognitive development. Young people then adopt health risk behaviors that can lead to disease, disability, social problems and early death. Find out more about ACE's here www.acestoohigh.com.

“On the bright side, children are incredibly resilient and can overcome ACE's,” said Laura DiPrince, Chief of Mental Health Operations for Southeast Health Group. “The antidote to trauma is to create safe, stable, nurturing relationships and environments for all children.”

Supportive communities can have a positive impact on a broad range of health problems and on the development of skills that will help children reach their full potential. Programs such as scouting, church youth groups, after school programs and sports clubs can give children safe harbor from stress and chaos in other areas of their lives.

“Our Summer Jam program, for example, is a skill building program that helps young people learn ways to handle stressful situations and cope with adversity,” said DiPrince.

Southeast Health Group is bringing Tom Hays, MA to talk about ACE's on April 6th in Lamar, and April 20th in La Junta in a free, all-day workshop format. Participants will learn new skills to help develop resilience in children, help them identify feelings and emotions, and create environments where they can feel physically and emotionally safe. The program is designed for parents, teachers, caregivers, and community members who are concerned about children's exposure to toxic stress and resulting damage to the brain and overall health.

To sign up for the free workshop, call Jackie Brown at (719) 688-8721 or email jbrown@semhs.org. Lunch will be provided.