



# Adverse Childhood Experiences and Trauma Informed Care

## Challenges for the Education System

Teri Pettersen, MD  
[teri.pettersen@gmail.com](mailto:teri.pettersen@gmail.com)  
Senate Committee on Education  
25 September 2018

# The ACE Study

Kaiser, San Diego

Asked over 17,000 Kaiser adults

Abuse

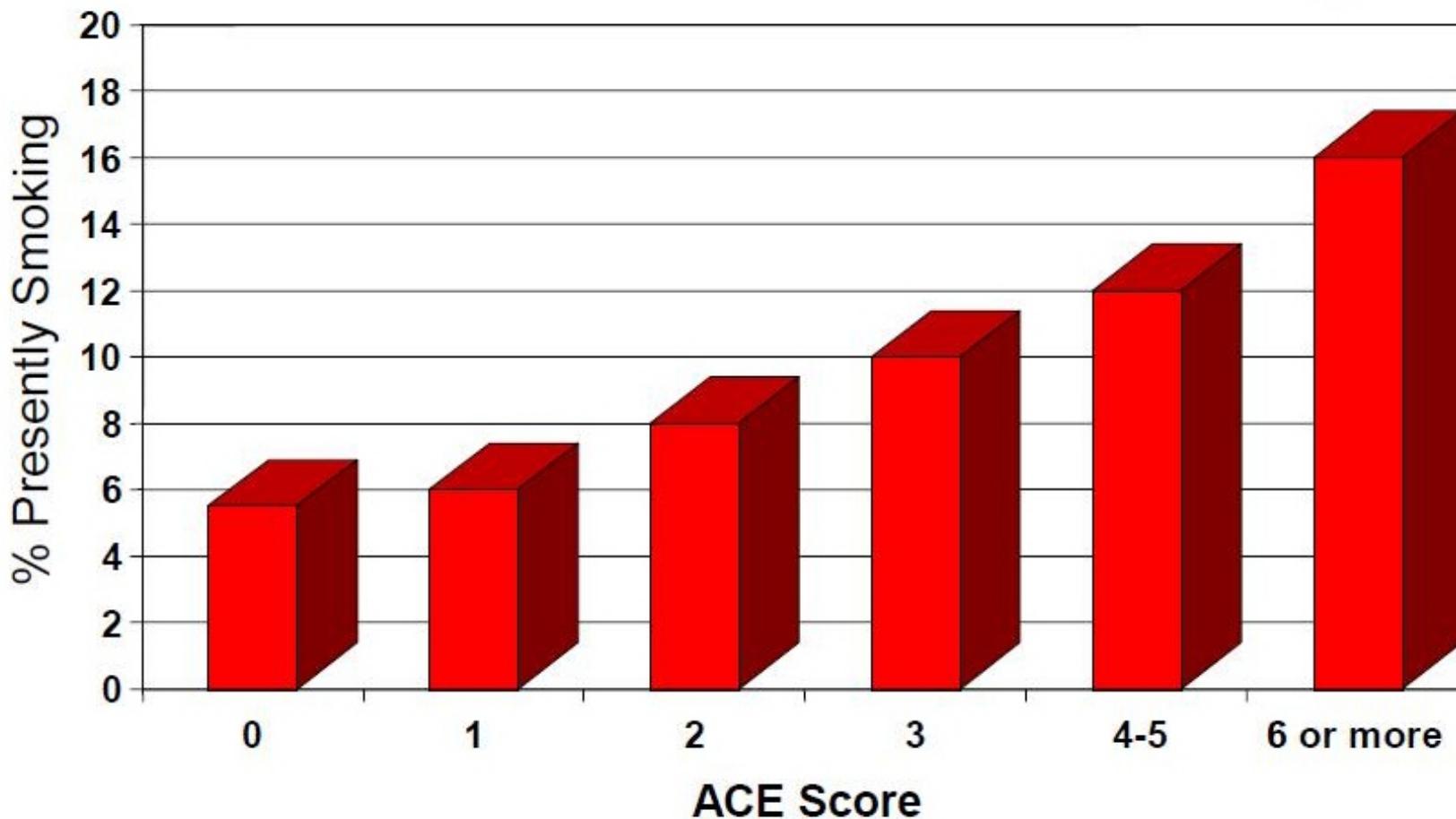
Neglect

Major Household Dysfunction

# The Results

The higher one's ACE score the greater one's risk of later adopting high risk health behaviors and experiencing poor health outcomes.

## ACE Score vs. Smoking



Alcoholism and alcohol abuse  
Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD)  
Depression  
Fetal death  
Health-related quality of life  
Illicit drug use  
Ischemic heart disease (IHD)  
Liver disease  
Risk for intimate partner violence  
Multiple sexual partners  
Sexually transmitted diseases (STDs)  
Smoking  
Suicide attempts  
Unintended pregnancies  
Early initiation of smoking  
Early initiation of sexual activity  
Adolescent pregnancy  
Psychotropic Medications Prescribed

**Increased ER Visits**

**Increased Medical Office Visit**

**Increased Fractures**

**Increased risk of early death  
from a heart attack**



# In the School Setting

Children with ACE Scores of 3 or more:

3 Xs the risk of academic failure

5 Xs the risk of attendance problems

6 Xs the risk of behavior problems

# How Trauma Affects Learning

Trauma can impair the ability to:

Form relationships

Regulate emotions

Process information (verbal/non-verbal, written)

Organize material

Transition from one activity to the next

Lay down new memories

Understand cause and effect

# Behaviors Associated with Trauma

Impulsivity

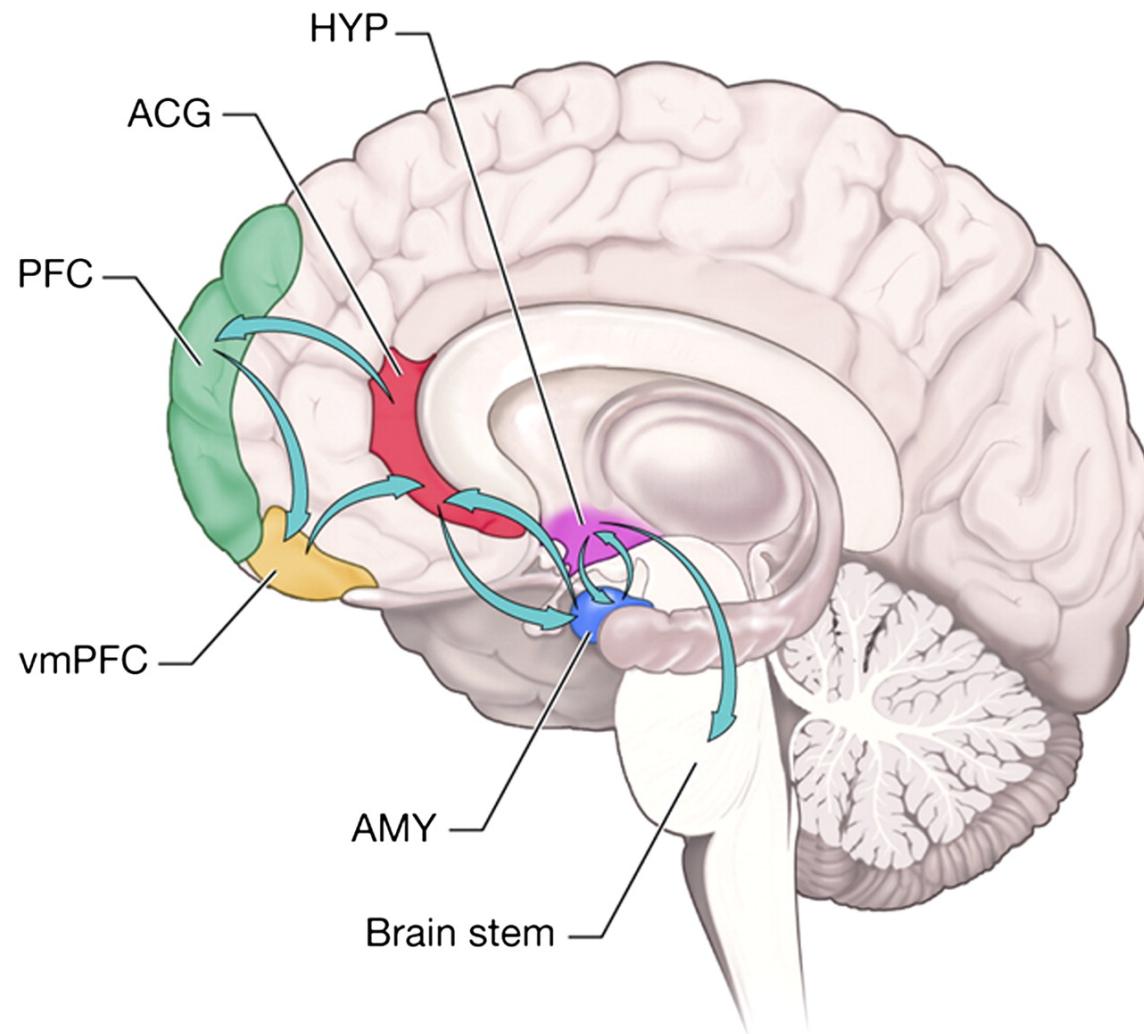
Aggression/Defiance

Withdrawal/Avoidance

Overly protective of personal space/belongings

‘Immaturity’

# Why is This?





# What Must Happen First

- Education for all members of the school community
- A trusting relationship must be in place before teaching and learning can take place

# Famous Examples

- Head Start, Trauma Smart





# Elementary School

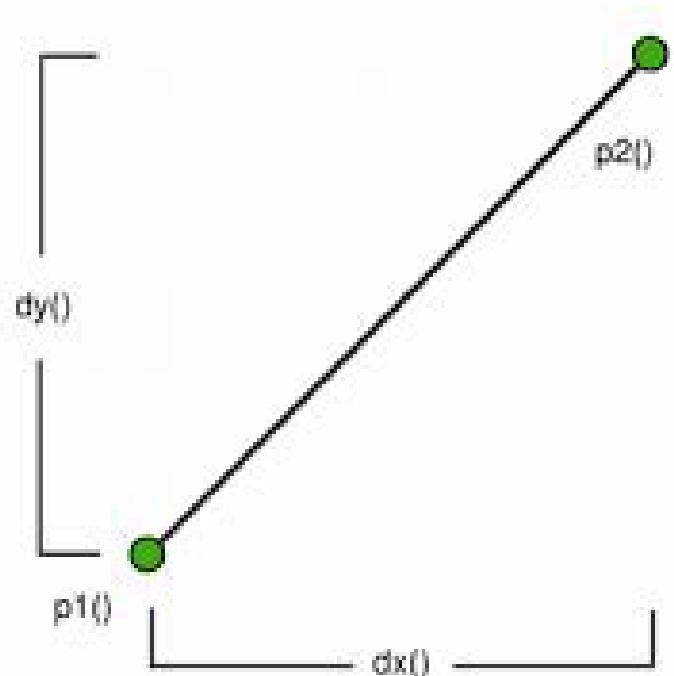
John Wetton Elementary School, Gladstone

“More than new strategies and tools... a change in the mindset about the philosophy of learning...and the way that kids and staff interact.”

## A Process



## Not An Endpoint



# In Teens

Increased risk for :

- Smoking
- Substance use/abuse
- Pregnancy
- Suicidal thoughts and attempts



# **Lincoln High School, Walla Walla**

## **2009-2010 (Before trauma informed approach)**

- 798 suspensions (days students were out of school)
- 50 expulsions
- 600 written referrals

## **2010-2011 (After new approach)**

- 135 suspensions (days students were out of school)
- 30 expulsions
- 320 written referrals

ACEs Too High, April 2012

# Jim Sporleder

“Its our biggest challenge right now that we have dysregulated adults working with dysregulated kids.”



# The Big Secret

- Self-Regulation of Adults
- Caring Adult-Child Relationships
- The Incredible Power of Community Collaboration

# Mental Health in Schools

- Children are more likely to access mental health services through primary care and schools than through specialty mental health clinics
- In some areas as many as 70% of students who receive mental health care, receive those services through school

# Kids do best if mental health promotion is not a separate activity

- Deep breathing
- Progressive relaxation
- Mindfulness
- One-minute Dance Party
- Traditional Martial Arts

APPs: Mind Yeti, Gonoodle.com

What is predictable is  
preventable

# ASK

- Prioritize prevention of child abuse and neglect
- Promote attachment and early relationships
- 2 generation models

# Support Kids, Schools and Teachers



A wide-angle photograph of a serene lake. The water is very still, creating a perfect mirror for the surrounding environment. On the left, a dense forest of tall, dark evergreen trees stands along the shore. To the right, a large, forested hill rises, its slopes covered in a mix of green and brown, suggesting a mix of living trees and possibly some dead or dying timber. The sky above is a bright blue, dotted with large, white, fluffy clouds. The overall atmosphere is peaceful and natural.

Thank You