

# Why the Focus on Trauma?

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# What will we talk about?

1. Understand and define what is considered a traumatic event
2. Understand the prevalence of trauma as a public health issue across various populations
3. Recognize the potential impact of trauma

# What is Trauma?

- Traumatic event a person experiences, witnesses or is confronted with actual or threatened death or serious injury or threat to the physical integrity of oneself or others
  - Often includes a response of intense fear, helplessness or horror
  - Private or public experiences

# Trauma is Personal

- The most “severe” violence is not necessarily that which wounds most deeply
- The meaning and specific impact of violence varies between cultures and individuals
- Only the person him/herself can judge

Changes a person's view of the world



# Single Episode

- Acute trauma is a single traumatic event limited in time
  - > Serious accidents
  - > Community violence
  - > Natural disasters
  - > Sudden or violent loss of a loved one
  - > Physical or sexual assault



# Chronic/Complex Trauma

- Experience of multiple traumatic events which may be varied
- May refer to longstanding abuse, neglect or war
- Represents cumulative effects

# Prevalence

- Over half of the general adult population have experienced at least one major traumatic event
- 1 in 4 have experienced at least two events

# Prevalence

Mentally Ill: 97% of homeless women with SMI have experienced severe physical and sexual abuse

Children/Youth: est. 3 million children and adolescents in the US are exposed to serious traumatic events each year.

Transgenerational: Caregivers reported being exposed to an average of 7 traumatic events

Child Welfare: Rates among adults who were formerly placed in foster care was found to be twice as high as rates as in US War Veterans

LGBTQ: 84% of LGBTQ students were called names or had their safety threatened as a result of their sexual orientation or gender expression.

Military: PTSD occurs in about 11-20% of Veterans of the Iraq and Afghanistan wars.

Corrections: A study of 100 men incarcerated, 59% reported some form of childhood sexual abuse prior to puberty

Juvenile Justice: 93% of children in detention report exposure to trauma



# Effects All Aspects of Life

- ◎ Actual structure and function of the brain
- ◎ Impacts:
  - > Relationships
  - > Emotion Regulation
  - > Attention/Concentration
  - > Perception of the World

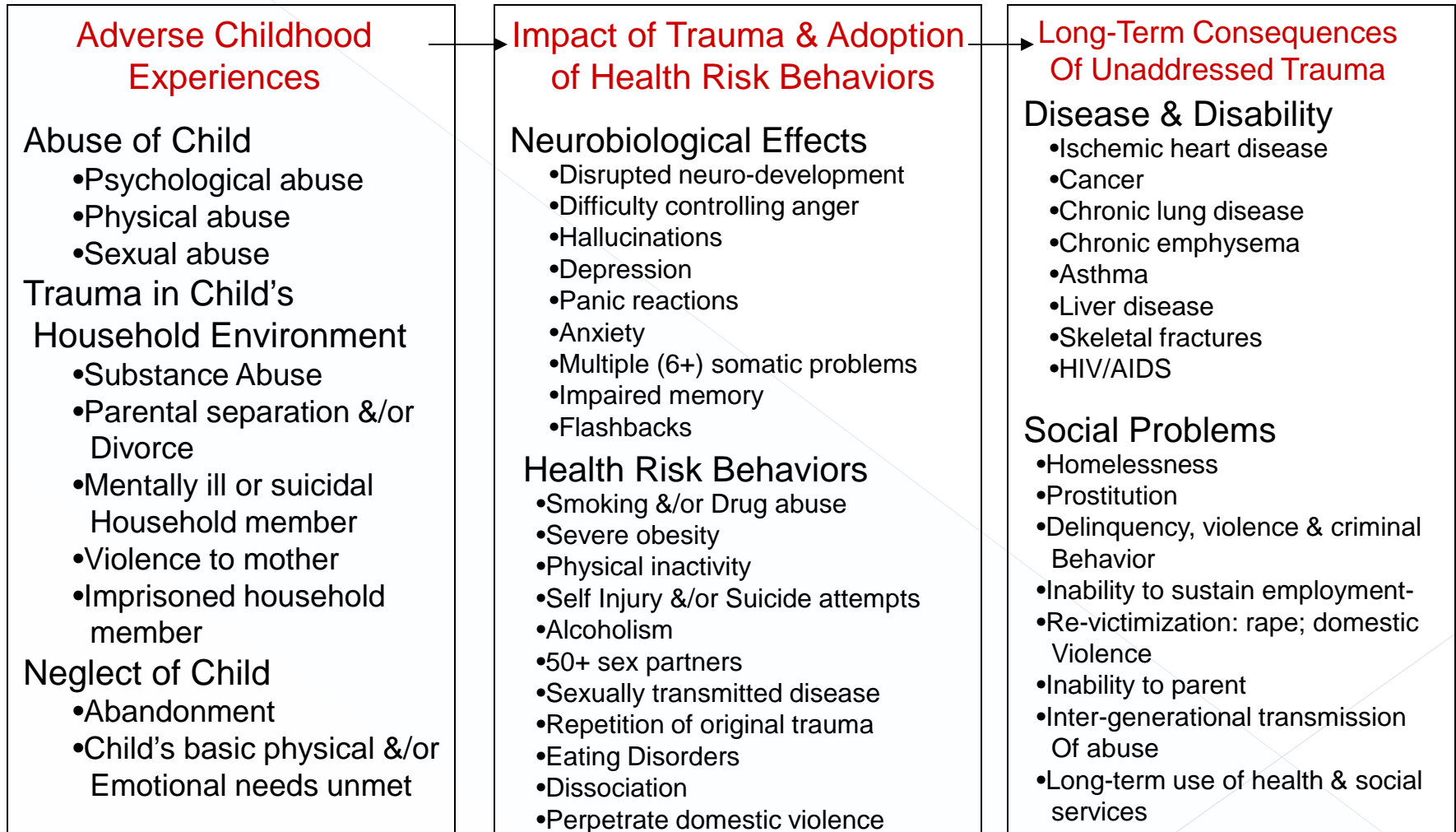


# ACE Study

- Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) Study
- CDC and Kaiser Permanente
- Question: Do childhood experiences affected adult health later? And how?
- Individuals were predominantly white, college educated

# Adverse Childhood Experience (ACE) Study

Without intervention, adverse childhood events (ACEs) may result in long-term disease, disability, chronic social problems and early death. Importantly, intergenerational transmission that perpetuates ACEs will continue without implementation of interventions to interrupt the cycle.



# Effects on Body Chemistry

- ◉ Stimulates stress response pathways
  - › Releases adrenaline and other hormones into the blood stream
- ◉ Repeated acute stress response take a toll on the body overtime
- ◉ Makes it difficult to return to baseline
  - › Hypo or hyper state of arousal

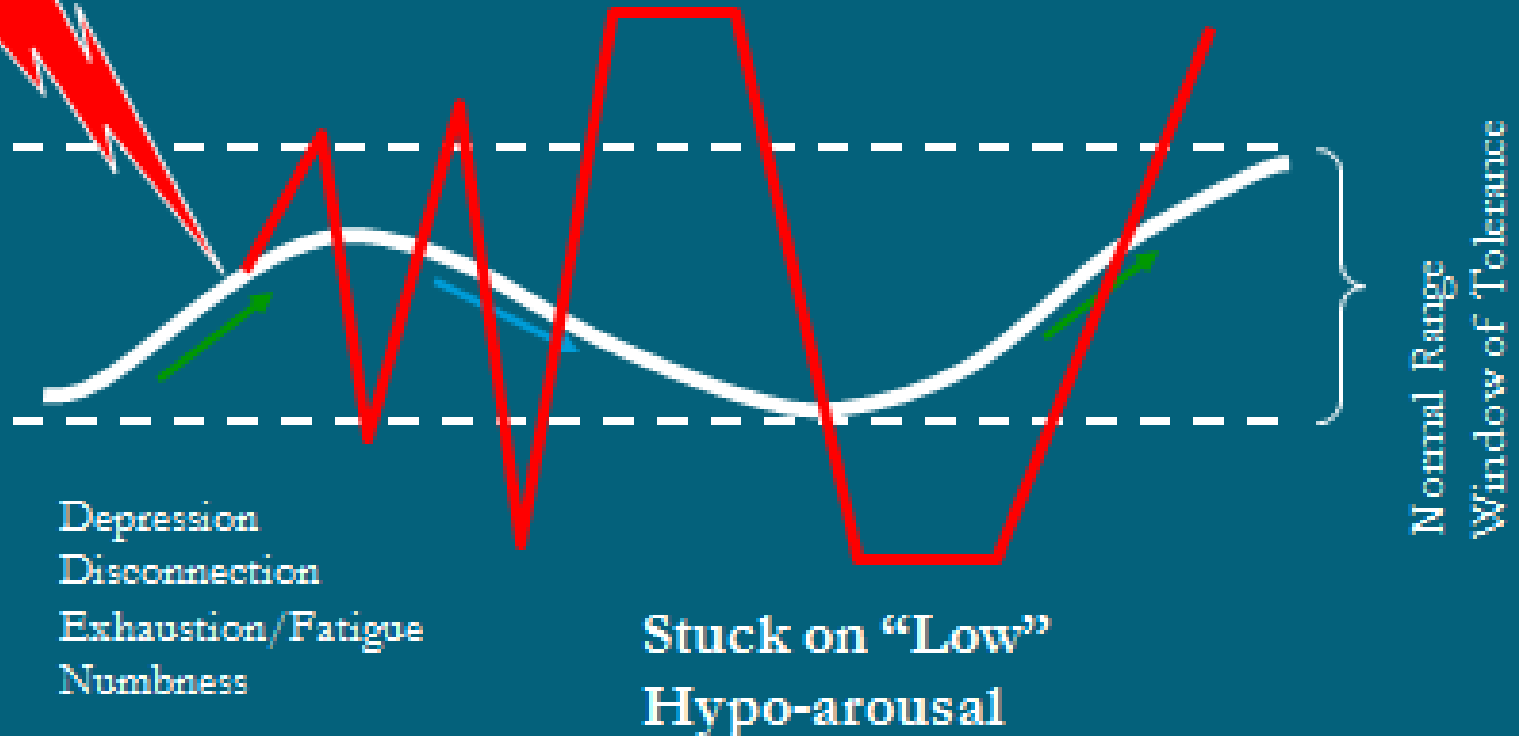


# Trauma impacts on nervous system

**Traumatic  
Event!**

Hyperactivity  
Hypervigilance  
Mania  
Anxiety & Panic  
Rage

Stuck on "High"  
Hyper-arousal



# Brain Development



## Brain at Birth

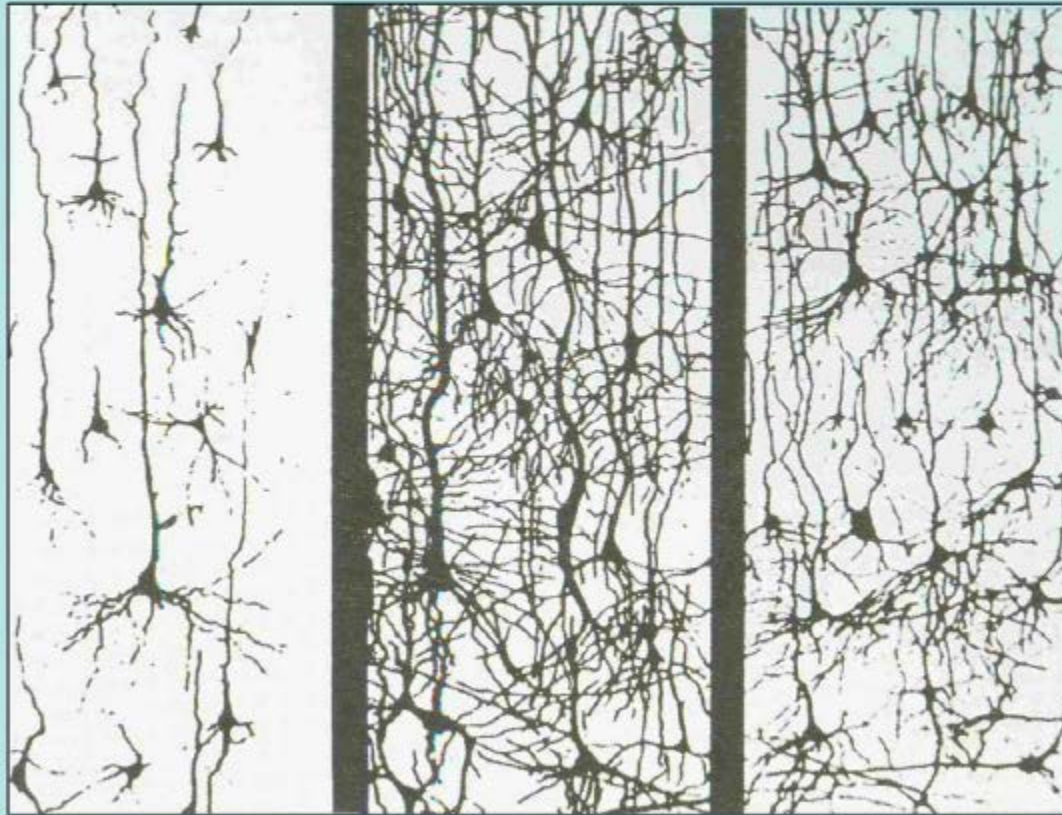
- 25% the size of the adult brain in weight and volume (less than 1lb)
- Nearly the same number of neurons as adult brain (100 billion)
- 50 trillion synapses (connections between neurons)
- Brain stem and lower brain well developed (reflexes), higher regions more primitive

# Synaptic Density

At Birth

6 Years Old

14 Years Old



# Impact on Brain Development

- ◉ More Stimulation the Better...right?
- ◉ Yes, but...
  - > When stimulation comes from chronic trauma it strengthens connections to the trauma emotional response
  - > Reduces the size of the cortex
    - Memory, attention, language



# Impact on Worldview

## Typical Development vs Developmental Trauma



### ◎ Attachments with Adults

- › Nurturing & stable **vs** mistrust & inability to depend on others

### ◎ Belief

- › Generally good things will happen to me **vs** World is unsafe and bad things are my fault

### ◎ Self-worth

- › Positive & others will see my strengths **vs** Assumption others will not like me

### ◎ Future

- › Optimistic **vs** fear & pessimism

### ◎ Impact on the World

- › I can have a positive impact **vs** Hopeless and lack of control

# Changing the Question

- ◉ What is wrong with you?
  - > I am aggressive
  - > I am depressed
  - > I am an alcoholic
  
- ◉ What happened to you?
  - > I am a survivor of trauma



# What Do We Do???

- All systems and even communities can become trauma informed to  the negative impact
  - › Trauma Aware
  - › Trauma Responsive
  - › Trauma Informed
  - › Trauma-Specific Services and Interventions

# Resources

- National Children's Traumatic Stress Network
  - [www.nctsnet.org/nccts](http://www.nctsnet.org/nccts)
- National Center on PTSD
  - [www.ncptsd.va.gov/facts/specifics](http://www.ncptsd.va.gov/facts/specifics)
- ◎ The Adverse Childhood Experience Study-
  - > [www.acestudy.org](http://www.acestudy.org)
- Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)
  - <http://www.samhsa.gov/>

# Questions

