

## Poverty Simulation

Growing up I never wanted for anything. I always had the store brand clothing I wanted, the brand new Nike shoes, and the newest iPhone. I had the nice 4 bedroom, 3 bathroom house in a good school district, I always came home to a hot meal, more than anything...I had a house that had heat, air conditioning, and electricity. I was afforded certain luxuries from birth, luxuries that people (including myself) take for granted. I was lucky to have a mother and a father that had good jobs, jobs that are always going to be needed in our society. Unfortunately, there are people in this country that don't have the same luxuries. We don't know what we have until we don't have it, until we need it.

Something every single one of these videos had in common was the misfortune of being without funds. All of these people had a family to support, bills took up 90% of their income, most made under \$15,000 a year. Some families were living in trucks, their kids washed up at a convenient store to look presentable for the day ahead. Other families relied on the money their children had for: gas money or food for the week. Hardship for these families were inevitable. These children were susceptible to moving on a dime, having their entire lives uprooted on a whim, and most of these kids have understood this as a way of life. These children understand the concept of money, they understand mom and dad don't have it, they understand other families have money but they don't, and they understand that they can't afford simple luxuries and accept that fact for what it is.

I admit that my knowledge on lower socioeconomic communities is limited to say the least, so this simulation proved to be an incredible learning experience. And while I have always known that there are people less fortunate than I, I never really understood their obstacles. Or...how I will eventually be in the position to try and help those less fortunate than myself. As a future nurse, I will have a unique ability to possibly effect lower socioeconomic communities. As I learned in the Ted Talk called "How Childhood Trauma Affects Health Across a Lifetime," individuals who suffered from

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childhood trauma face an alarming high rate of statistics. A person who had a rough childhood: someone who lived in poverty as a child, a child who lived with a parent suffering from substance abuse, or a child who lived with a parent suffering from mental illness can be physiologically altered compared to those who suffered a minimal amount of trauma throughout their childhood.

I learned from this simulation that ACEs or living in poverty increases the risk of heart disease, developing cancers, and increases the risk of engaging in risky behaviors as adolescents and adults. As a whole, immunization rates decrease, as well as nutrition, language development, social development, and those living in poverty live up to 20 years less than those who did not or do not live in poverty. In the grand scheme of things, these facts make a lot of sense. Why would a family of four with a \$15,000 salary pay hundreds of dollars a month for health insurance? Why would the same family take their sick child to the doctor or get their child their scheduled immunizations? Why would they spend a hundred dollars at a specialty food store when they can get frozen meals for \$2 a box?

I also learned why it is so important that we have health and social programs in place for lower socioeconomic communities. These individuals are not going to seek out help for their health or their nutrition. As nurses, we need to make sure we are doing everything in our power to help these individuals as we would for someone who can afford the care they need. We need to refer these people to social workers or programs that can ensure they can afford the medications, screenings, and any preventative measures they should be entitled to. I believe something as simple as directing families in need to the right people or organizations, showing compassion, and providing a safe space for these families will greatly improve outcomes. We should go above and beyond for those that are in need because we are in the unique position to do so. This simulation will impact my nursing career because it

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opened my eyes to those less fortunate. It has made me aware that I can take part in doing something for families in need and I will try my hardest to do.