

Poverty/ACE's Reflection

The short video entitled "Hard Times Generation: Families living in cars" was eye opening to me. I was blessed because I never experienced that level of poverty and hunger myself. I grew up in a lower middle-class household with my father, mother, and younger brother. We did not have extra income for fancy clothes or far away fabulous vacations, but my parents made sure that we were never hungry. The video illuminated the deep levels of poverty in many parts of this country and also how quickly a family can end up homeless and living out of a car. It is very disheartening that we live in one of the richest countries in the world and yet we do so little to address the systems that lead to homelessness. The videos entitled "Brain hero" and "Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE's): Impact on brain, body, and behavior" both talked about the affect childhood stresses have on the developing brain of a child. Children with loving and supportive caregivers have lower incidences of heart disease, obesity, and diabetes. Positive stresses can help children develop coping skills and give them confidence that will usually help them be more successful in school. Children who do not have caregivers that support them during stressful times will often suffer adverse childhood experiences. ACE's include both physical and emotional abuse as well as neglect. Children who are exposed to frequent, chronic, and uncontrolled stress are more likely to engage in risky behavior and be more likely to suffer disease or disability as an adult. They are also more likely to abuse tabaco, drugs, and alcohol. The "ACE's" video talked about how prolonged exposure to ACE's at a young age can affect the immune system. These changes lead to great chances of disease and infection. ACE's can also lead to brain changes which can result in increased emotional distress, poor impulse control, and learning difficulties. They can even cause changes in gene expression through epigenetics. The Ted talk video by Nadine Burke Harris "How Childhood Trauma Affects Health Across a Lifetime" really highlighted the negative affects that ACE's can have over the course of an entire lifetime. The correlation between ACE's and later in life increased incidences of diseases like ischemic heart disease, COPD, and lung cancer was very eye opening to me. It gave

concrete numbers to the mental health / physical health connection that is often overlooked in the medical field. These videos will help me be a better nurse because my eyes have been opened to the very real connections between mental health and physical health outcomes.