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Human Behavior in The Social Environment II

Reflection #5

1) Adverse Childhood Experiences can negatively impact one's life expectancy. A study showed that it can make a 20 year difference in life expectancy. The higher your ACE score, or the more ACEs a person has been exposed to, the worse a person's health outcome is likely to be. A person with an ACE score of 4 or more is 2.5 times more likely to develop chronic obstructive pulmonary disease than a person with an ACE score of 0. This is also true for hepatitis. A person with an ACE score of 4 or more is 2.5 times more likely to develop hepatitis. A person with an ACE score of 4 or more is 4 times more likely to develop depression than someone with an ACE score of 0.

2a) The Adverse Childhood Experiences study found that 67% of the population had at least 1 Adverse Childhood Experience.

2b) 12.6%, or 1 in 8 individuals had experienced 4 or more ACEs.

3a) Childhood trauma negatively impacts brain development. It can affect the pleasure and reward center of the brain. This can be related to a person's likelihood to develop an addiction. ACEs can also impact the brain's stress response system which creates our flight or fight response. The hormones released during times of high stress can take a toll on your body. Higher stress levels caused by childhood trauma increases an individual's chance of developing heart disease or cancer.

3b) This points to the fact that stress can have a physical impact on our bodies. Hopefully this study allows pediatricians and others to work on ways to intervene if a child has a high ACE score or an ACE score of 1. Therapy, parent or caregiver education, and possibly mediation can help to support a child in this situation. We as a society must take mental health and stress more seriously. We must normalize seeking treatment and reducing stress.

4) Routine screening of kids at their yearly physical is important. Patients that do screen positive for ACEs can get support such as home visits, home coordination, holistic interventions, or medication. Educating parents is also important. Since early adversity impacts health throughout a person's lifetime, we must deal with this issue. Helping children with ACEs to lower their stress or have healthy outlets for their stress can reduce their risk factors for disease and health issues later in life.