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Reflection 5

Adverse childhood experiences are the single greatest unaddressed public health threat facing our nation today. Early adversity dramatically affects health across a lifetime as it causes early disease and early death. The higher your ACE score, the worse your health outcome. For a person with an ACE score of 4 or more, their relative risk of chronic obstructive pulmonary disease is two and a half times that of someone with an ACE score of zero. They're also two and a half times at greater risk for hepatitis. They are four and a half times more likely to be diagnosed with depression and a staggering twelve times more likely to take their own lives. A person with an ACE score of seven or more had triple the lifetime risk of lung cancer and three and a half times the risk of ischemic heart disease, the number one killer in the United States of America. Sixty seven percent of the population has experienced at least 1 ACE and nearly thirteen percent had four or more ACEs. Childhood trauma impacts the developing brains and bodies of children in several ways. Firstly, it affects their nucleus accumbens, which is the pleasure and reward center of the brain that is implicated in substance dependence it inhibits the prefrontal cortex, which is necessary for impulse control and executive function, which is a critical area for learning. There are also measurable differences in the amygdala, which is the brain's fear response center. High doses of adversity not only affect brain structure and function, but also affect the developing immune and hormonal systems as well. We can treat symptoms

with home visits, care coordination, mental health care, nutrition, medication, screenings and most importantly, educate parents on the detrimental impacts of ACEs and toxic stress.