

Trauma-Sensitive Teachers

DETERMINING YOUR STUDENTS' ACES SCORES

Part of meeting our students right where they're at is knowing how they've been impacted by trauma. A good starting point is knowing a student's ACEs score.

An ACE score is basically a tally to determine the # of different types of trauma someone has experienced in their childhood. According to the Adverse Childhood Experiences study, the more trauma experienced, the higher the score and the higher risk for later health problems.

While there are many types of childhood trauma, the ACE study takes into account 10 types. Half are personal – physical abuse, verbal abuse, sexual abuse, emotional neglect, and physical neglect. The other half are connected to family members – an alcoholic parent, a mother who has experienced domestic violence, one who is or has been incarcerated, one who has been diagnosed with a mental illness, and losing a parent through divorce, death, or abandonment.

We most likely will not know a lot of the answers to the questions on our own. It's important to create a relationship with parents, and let them know this information will help you really help their child. Note that it may be best to let them know you will keep this information confidential, and that it will only be used in order to help the child.

Below are the questions to determine the ACE score.

Prior to your 18th birthday:

1. Did a parent or other adult in the household often or very often... Swear at you, insult you, put you down, or humiliate you? or Act in a way that made you afraid that you might be physically hurt? No___If Yes, enter 1 __

2. Did a parent or other adult in the household often or very often... Push, grab, slap, or throw something at you? or Ever hit you so hard that you had marks or were injured? No___If Yes, enter 1 __

3. Did an adult or person at least 5 years older than you ever... Touch or fondle you or have you touch their body in a sexual way? or Attempt or actually have oral, anal, or vaginal intercourse with you? No___If Yes, enter 1 __

4. Did you often or very often feel that ... No one in your family loved you or thought you were important or special? or Your family didn't look out for each other, feel close to each other, or support each other? No___If Yes, enter 1 __

5. Did you often or very often feel that ... You didn't have enough to eat, had to wear dirty clothes, and had no one to protect you? or Your parents were too drunk or high to take care of you or take you to the doctor if you needed it? No___If Yes, enter 1 __

6. Were your parents ever separated or divorced? No___If Yes, enter 1 __

7. Was your mother or stepmother: Often or very often pushed, grabbed, slapped, or had something thrown at her? or

Sometimes, often, or very often kicked, bitten, hit with a fist, or hit with something hard? or Ever repeatedly hit over at least a few minutes or threatened with a gun or knife? No___If Yes, enter 1 __

8. Did you live with anyone who was a problem drinker or alcoholic, or who used street drugs? No___If Yes, enter 1 __

9. Was a household member depressed or mentally ill, or did a household member attempt suicide? No___If Yes, enter 1 __

10. Did a household member go to prison? No___If Yes, enter 1 __

Now add up your "Yes" answers: _ This is your ACE Score

Now that you know a child's ACE score, it can shed light on how much trauma a student experienced. This score is not the sole answer, far from it. But it is one piece of the puzzle.

Using this information, you can start determining how the trauma has impacted the student, and more importantly, how you can help him or her feel safe in your classroom and start building a trusting relationship with you.

For more info on the ACE study, go to www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/acestudy.



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