

# Childhood Trauma's Impact on Health Risks

*As the number of traumatic events experienced during childhood increases, the risk for the following health problems in adulthood increases:*

- *Depression*
- *Alcoholism*
- *Drug abuse*
- *Suicide attempts*
- *Heart, liver, and pulmonary diseases*
- *Fetal death during pregnancy*
- *High stress*
- *Uncontrollable anger*
- *Family, financial, and job problems*

*With help from families, providers, and the community, young children can demonstrate resilience when dealing with trauma.*

As the number of adverse events (i.e., physical, emotional, and sexual abuse; neglect; violence; and natural disasters) experienced in childhood increases, the risk for the following health problems increases: depression; alcoholism; drug abuse; suicide attempts; heart, liver, and pulmonary diseases<sup>1</sup>; fetal death during adolescent pregnancy; high stress; uncontrollable anger; and family, financial, and job problems.<sup>2,3</sup> The effects of these events are long-term, powerful, cumulative, and may be invisible to health care providers, educators, social service organizations, and policymakers because the linkage between trauma and problems later in adulthood is concealed by time, the inability to “see” the process of neurodevelopment, and the effects of the original traumatic events, which may not become evident until much later in life.<sup>4</sup>

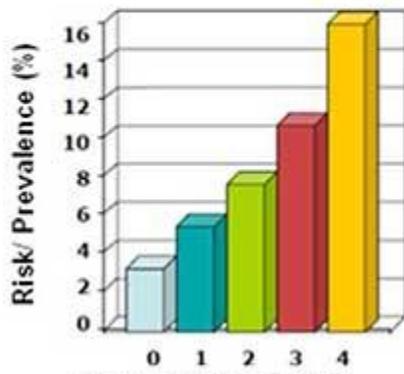
Research has shown that caregivers can buffer the impact of trauma and promote better outcomes for children even under stressful times when the following Strengthening Families Protective Factors<sup>5</sup> are present:

- Parental resilience
- Social connections
- Knowledge of parenting and child development
- Concrete support in times of need
- Social and emotional competence of children

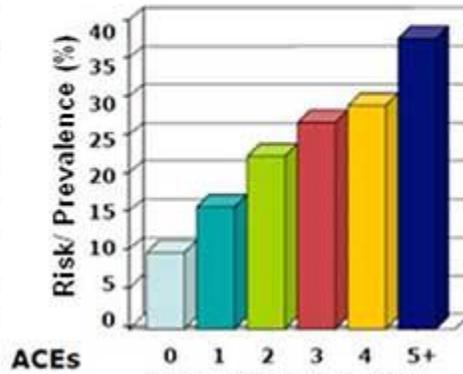
## Risk of Adult Substance Abuse Increases with more Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)

Self-Report: Alcoholism

Self-Report: Illicit Drugs



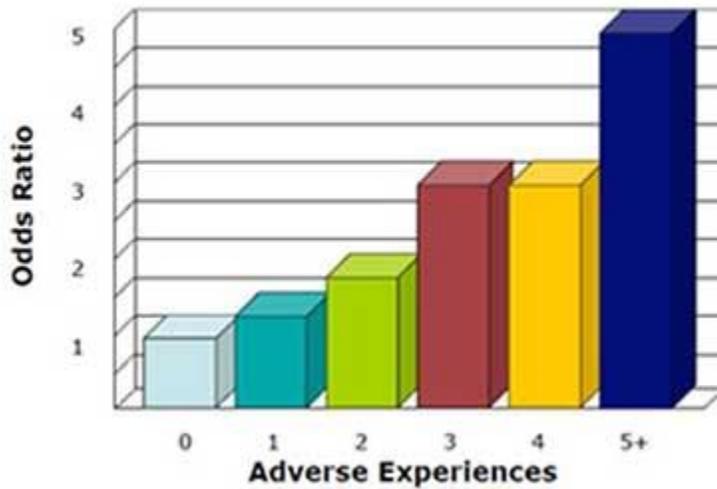
Source: Dube et al., 2002



Source: Dube et al., 2003

[Text description of this chart is available on a separate page.](#)

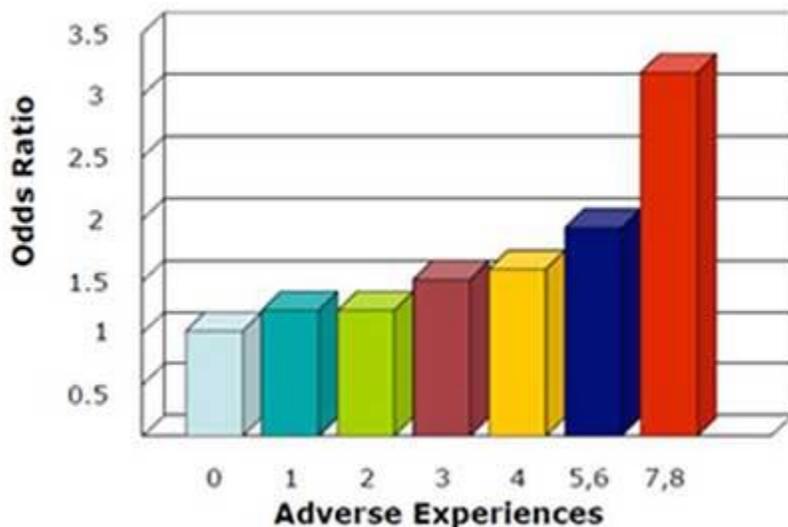
## Risk of Depression in Adult Women Increases with more Adverse Childhood Experiences



Source: Chapman et al., 2004

[Text description of this chart is available on a separate page.](#)

## Risk of Adult Heart Disease Increases with more Adverse Childhood Experiences



Source: Dong et al., 2004

[Text description of this chart is available on a separate page.](#)

For more information on the impact of adverse childhood experiences, please visit <http://www.cdc.gov/ace/index.htm>.

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5. Horton, C. (2003). Protective factors literature review. Early care and education programs and the prevention of child abuse and neglect. Center for the Study of Social Policy. Retrieved from [http://strengtheningfamilies.net/images/uploads/pdf\\_uploads/LiteratureReview.pdf](http://strengtheningfamilies.net/images/uploads/pdf_uploads/LiteratureReview.pdf) (PDF).

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