

Children and Trauma

Tips for Teachers

What Every Teacher Should Know

About half of all children in the U.S. are exposed to traumatic life events

- Traumatic events can include abuse, violence, terrorism, disaster, traumatic loss, etc.
- Many experience more than one such event



Almost all children experience acute distress immediately after exposure to a traumatic life event

- However, only a substantial minority develop ongoing distress that may warrant clinical attention
- Children's reactions to trauma can differ depending on age, culture, race/ethnicity, previous exposure to trauma, and home/community environments

Signs and Symptoms of trauma commonly seen in children

- the development of new fears
- separation anxiety (particularly in young children)
- sleep disturbance, nightmares
- sadness
- loss of interest in normal activities
- reduced concentration
- decline in school work
- anger
- somatic complaints
- irritability



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Teachers should be aware that some children experience adverse childhood experiences (ACE's) from an early age



What are ACE's?

ACE's Defined

- ACE's are stressful or traumatic events that occur early in a child's life or through chronic exposure.
- Ethnic and racial minority youth are exposed to a greater number of ACE's due to: racial trauma, intersecting identities, minority stressors

Examples of ACE's

Examples include:
parental incarceration
family violence
community/ neighborhood violence
parental instability
gang violence
teen pregnancy
substance use
parental instability
abuse
neglect



Impact of ACE's

- ACE's can have lasting effects on a child's physical and mental health and development.
- A greater number of ACE's, coupled with repeated exposure, are linked to social, emotional, and cognitive impairment; adoption of health risk behaviors; greater risk of disease and poor health outcomes
- Examples include: early alcohol and substance use, suicide attempts, depressive episodes, poor school performance lower educational attainment, etc.

