ABSTRACT

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) defines Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) as “All types of abuse, neglect, and other potentially traumatic experiences that occur to people under the age of 18.” Studies show that the higher a person’s ACE score, the odds increase for suicidality. This information is important to be aware of when working with clients that have experienced these types of traumas in their past.

ACEs = Adverse Childhood Experiences

LITERATURE REVIEW

ACEs affect children in many different ways and can lead to a variety of significant health risks. One of the most significant being the risk of suicidality. Research has shown that the higher the ACE score, the more of a risk they have of suicidal ideations and attempts. This is likely due to the detrimental effects on early childhood development, which compounds over time leading to negative outcomes.

The research discusses various factors that increases suicidal attempts in those with high ACE scores. The long-term exposures to stress at such a young age creates a vulnerability that leads to a higher likelihood of suicidal ideations and actions later in life. This is also connected to greater externalizing behaviors such as aggression, impulsivity, and adolescent problem behaviors such as school difficulties and substance abuse. Not only that, but it also relates to internalizing feelings like loneliness, depression, lower concept of self and lower mental health functioning in general.

Factors, such as having clarity of one’s own identity, have been found to help mediate the relationship between ACEs and suicide rates. Improving their self-concept by using narrative coherence to increase self-awareness and receiving social support from others that are close to them build on these protective factors. Early intervention has been found to be essential in decreasing the developmental issues that youth face after adverse childhood experiences in order to lessen potential suicidal behavior.

REFERENCES


CONCLUSION

• ACEs can lead to significant physical and mental health risks. These factors work together in a complex relationship to potentially impact many facets of people’s lives, especially suicidality.
• The accumulation of ACEs may be more significant than any individual traumatic experience.
• ACEs significantly inhibit over 40 different outcomes of adult functioning, affecting health, behavior, and life potential, and are recognized as basic causes of disease and earlier death in adult life.
• Although ACEs have seemed to produce maladaptive outcomes, these experiences do not mean that it is impossible to overcome or prevent these situations.
• The best way to avoid ACEs is to create a consistent and nurturing environment that can protect against childhood trauma and foster a place for children to heal from these experiences if they have already occurred.