

WHAT ARE ADVERSE CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES (ACES)

Adverse Childhood Experiences are any frightening, shocking or overwhelming experiences which happen in a child's life before the age of 18.

A child can experience these events as out of their control and terrifying. They might not feel that they can process the traumatic sensations in their bodies, hearts and minds with anyone in their life, so all too often adverse experiences remain unsaid.

Studies from across the world show that interpersonal traumas such as physical, emotional or sexual abuse can shatter a child's sense of safety. Other areas that may impact them include:

- Abuse –Physical, emotional and sexual
- Neglect –physical and emotional
- Household adversity –mental illness, domestic violence, substance misuse, separation or having a parent or loved one serving time
- Bullying
- Racism
- Death or long term illness of a parent or sibling
- Exposure to community violence or war
- Living with extreme adverse economic conditions

People with 6+ ACEs may die

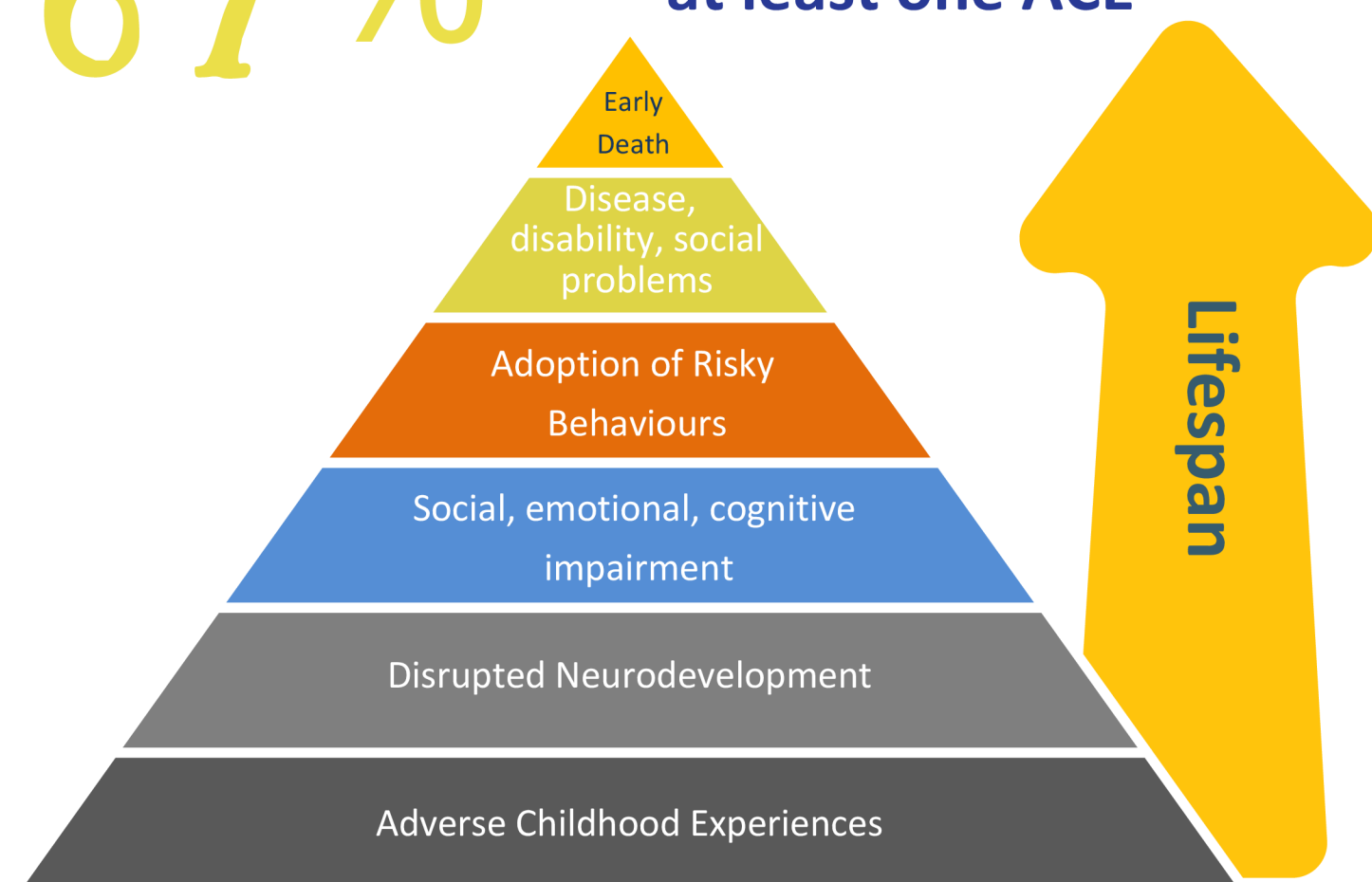
20YRS

earlier than those who have none



1/8 of the population have more than 4 ACEs

67% of the population have at least one ACE



4 OR MORE ACEs

3 X the levels of lung disease and adult smoking



14 X the number of suicide attempts

4.5 X more likely to develop depression



11 X the level of intravenous drug abuse

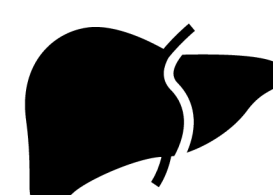
4 X



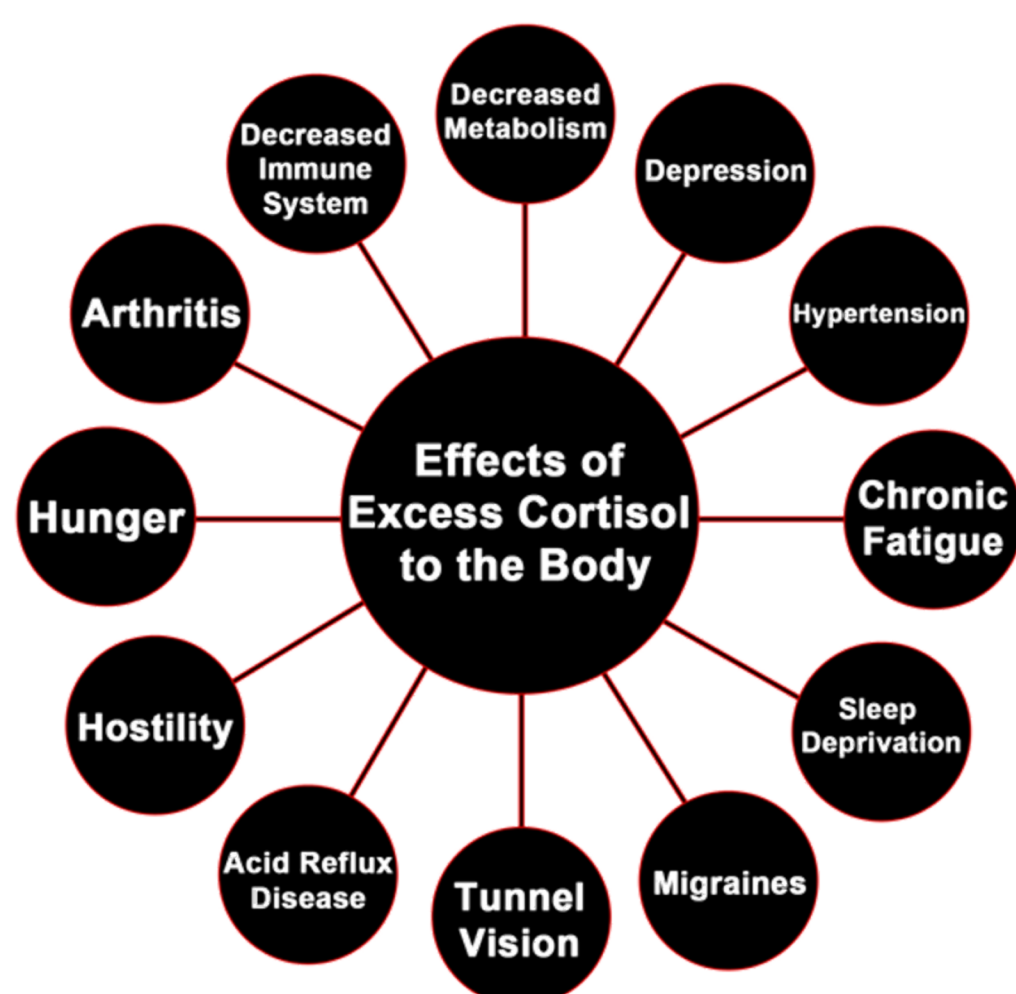
as likely to have begun intercourse by age 15

2 X

the level of liver disease

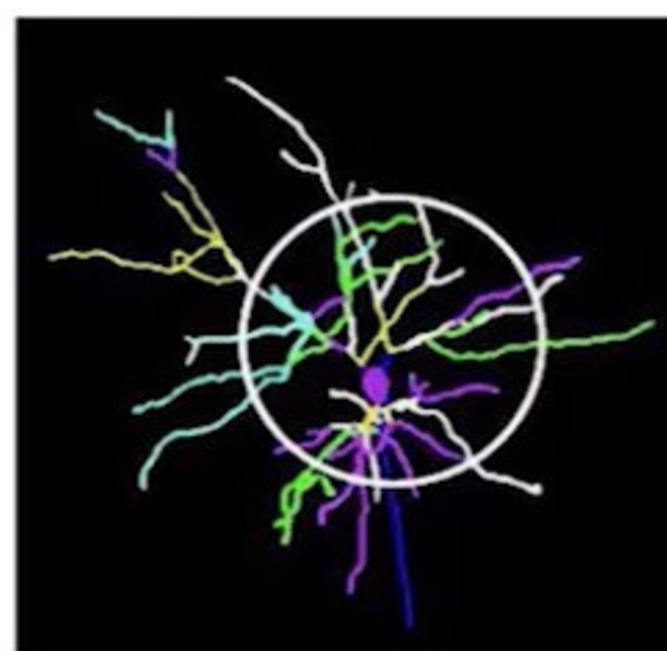


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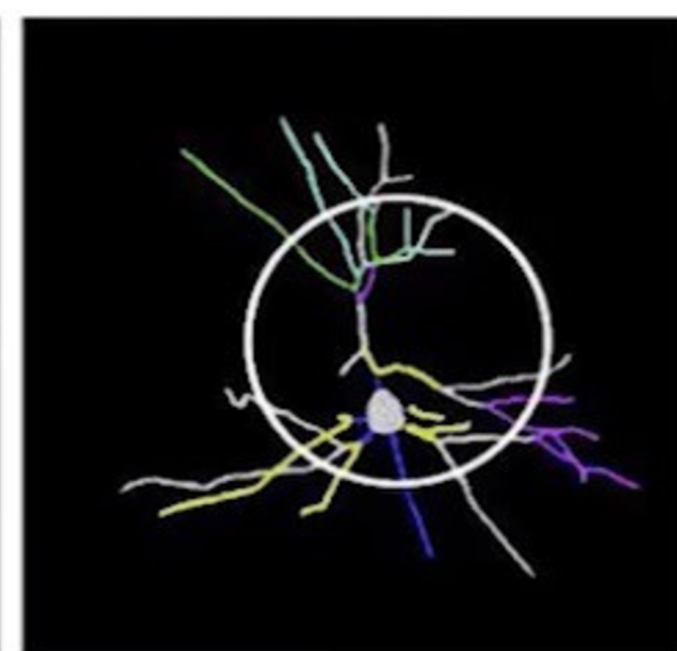


Cortisol - The Stress Hormone

THE IMPACT OF TOXIC STRESS ON THE BRAIN



Typical neuron: many connections



Neuron damaged by toxic stress: fewer connections

CREATE-CONNECT-CALM

Understanding brain development that has experienced trauma allows us to understand children affected by it. Through safe, supportive and creative relationships, healing from Childhood Adverse experiences can begin to take place. Adults who can connect with a child's difficult feelings and experiences and listen with empathy can validate their experience of the world and create a safe relationship based on trust and curiosity.

The long-term impact of ACES may lead to challenging behaviours when threatened such as:

- Hyperarousal –“I don't care” Fight or Flight, disruptive, overwhelmed, struggle to regulate.
- Hypoarousal –“I give up” Freeze, lacking energy and curiosity, no focus, tired.
- Hypervigilance –Eager to please, poor sense of self, reactive to new experiences or change.

PROTECTIVE FACTORS

We can all provide protective factors for the children we work and create with. Some of these include, but are not limited to:

- Adults who believe in them
- Having clear and fair rules
- Creative expression
- Adults who listen
- Agency and opportunities to collaborate in their learning
- Emotionally available adults
- Playing games/having fun
- Inspiration and hope
- People who help their parents too