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I recently came across a study in the journal Child Abuse & Neglect that disturbed me.

Victor Carrion, MD led a team of Stanford University researchers who looked at children living in a poor, violent neighborhood.

This study built on past findings which associated worsening adult health to their childhood exposure to nine types of adverse childhood events.



The investigators most recently found a strong link between adverse childhood experiences such as abuse, trauma and neglect, and the children’s mental and physical health.

Reviewing the medical charts of 701 pediatric patients from the Bayview Child Health Center in San Francisco, they found that 67% of the children had experienced 1 or more categories of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs). Even worse, 12% had experienced 4 or more ACEs.

Increased ACE scores correlated with increased risk of learning/behavior problems and obesity.

I’m sure that for most of you, this research isn’t necessarily surprising.

What did disturb me, though, was the suggestion by the investigators that these children may be getting misdiagnosed with ADHD rather than with PTSD or another trauma-related disorder.

It has noted that the child’s hyperarousal and cognitive difficulties could easily pass as symptoms for ADHD if the practitioner did not know to look for signs of trauma.

Children can heal from PTSD, but only if they are receiving the correct treatment. Just think of the ramifications of a traumatized child not only receiving no trauma interventions, but also being treated for something else.

The mistake may be made more frequently than we think, as many disorders have similar symptoms to PTSD.

**Finding Your ACE Score**

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**While you were growing up, during your first 18 years of life:**

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?

Yes 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?

Yes 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?

Yes 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?

Yes 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?

Yes No If yes enter 1 \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

6. Were your parents **ever** separated or divorced?

Yes 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 at least a few minutes or threatened with a gun or knife?

Yes No If yes enter 1 \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

8. Did you live with anyone who was a problem drinker or alcoholic or who used street drugs?

Yes No If yes enter 1 \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

9. Was a household member depressed or mentally ill, or did a household member attempt suicide?

Yes No If yes enter 1 \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

10. Did a household member go to prison?

Yes No If yes enter 1 \_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Now add up your “Yes” answers: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ This is your ACE Score.**