When Time Doesn’t Heal All Wounds

Robert K. Ross, M.D.
President & CEO
The California Endowment
What if there was a hidden crisis responsible for high rates of obesity, heart disease, substance abuse, suicide and many other serious ailments that shorten lives?

And what if we could do something about it?
Childhood Trauma Means You Grew Up With…

- Recurrent physical abuse.
- Recurrent emotional abuse.
- Sexual abuse.
- Emotional or physical neglect.
Childhood Trauma Means
You Grew Up With…

• Adults who are substance abusers
• An incarcerated household member.
• Caregivers who are mentally ill.
• Mother treated violently.
• One or no parents.
But trauma also can occur at the community level

- Neighborhood violence
- Cumulative effects of racism and implicit bias
- Intergenerational trauma
Trauma is More Common Than We’d Like to Admit

One in seven of all California babies born in 2006 and 2007 had been reported for abuse or neglect by age five.

25% of Californians report 2-3 adverse childhood experiences (ACEs)
And Trauma Tends to Cluster

Alcohol Abuse in the Home and the Risk of Other Household Exposures During Childhood

- 0 alcohol abusers
- 1 alcohol abuser
- 2 or more

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>0 alcohol abusers</th>
<th>1 alcohol abuser</th>
<th>2 or more</th>
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<td>Mother treated violently</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mental illness</td>
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<td>15</td>
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<td>Drug use</td>
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<td>Suicide attempt</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Member imprisoned</td>
<td>5</td>
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Why Does This Matter?

Dozens of studies have confirmed that childhood trauma accurately predicts serious health problems later in life.

Time does not heal all wounds.
Childhood Trauma vs. Adult Alcoholism

ACE Score

0               1                2              3              >=4
Childhood Trauma vs. Intravenous Drug Use

The graph shows the percentage of individuals who have injected drugs (y-axis) in relation to their ACE score (x-axis). The ACE score ranges from 0 to 4 or more. The graph indicates a significant increase in the percentage of individuals who have injected drugs as the ACE score increases.
Adverse Childhood Experiences vs. Smoking as an Adult
Childhood Trauma vs. Likelihood of >50 Sexual Partners

Adjusted Odds Ratio

ACE Score
Childhood Experiences Underlie Chronic Depression

![Bar chart showing the percentage of individuals with a lifetime history of depression based on ACE score, with separate bars for women and men.](chart.png)
Childhood Experiences Underlie Later Suicide

ACE Score

0             1              2              3         >=4

% Attempting Suicide

0  5  10  15  20  25
For kids, the stakes are high

• Trauma is the No 1 predictor of school suspension and No 2 predictor of academic failure (after being in special education)
• Kids with 2+ adverse childhood experiences are 3x more likely to repeat a grade
• 90% of kids in juvenile justice system have a history of trauma
Brain Science Helps Explain Why

- Nurturing, responsive, and individualized interactions from birth build healthy brain structure.

- Healthy brain architecture is the foundation required for future learning, behavior and health.
HOW STRESS CHANGES A CHILD’S BRAIN

3-YEAR-OLD CHILDREN

Normal

■ Prolonged exposure to trauma triggers physiological changes in the brain.
■ Neural circuits are disrupted, causing changes in the hippocampus, the brain’s memory and emotional centre.

Extreme neglect

■ This can cause brain shrinkage, problems with memory, learning and behaviour.
■ A child does not learn to regulate emotions when living in state of constant stress.
■ Associated with greater risk of chronic disease and mental health problems in adulthood.
The brain is wired for survival, first and foremost

- Cortisol and adrenaline flood the brain, leading to “fight, flight or freeze” response.

- “Rational” brain goes offline
For kids, trauma overwhelms internal ability to cope

- So they use other coping strategies: drinking, smoking, sexual promiscuity, drug use.

- Behavioral symptoms include jumpiness, defiant behavior, withdrawal, inability to focus, lack of trust.
Finally, some good news..

- The effects of trauma can last a lifetime, but they don’t have to.
- There are ways to buffer the effects of trauma and build resilience.
- Nurturing relationships are crucial.
To prevent trauma, we must start early

- Pre-natal and early childhood:
  - Screen moms-to-be
  - Awareness building among pediatricians
  - Provide training in positive parenting
  - Invest in home visitation
  - Provide quality child care and pre-school
Trauma-Informed Schools

- Training of educators and school staff about trauma and brain development
- Teach “self regulation” – what to do when you are anxious and angry
- Replace suspensions and expulsions with peaceful conflict resolution
- School based health services
- Guard against over medication of children
In communities

• High quality child care
• Support for parents
• Mentoring and after-school programs
• Community healing and relationship-building, such as La Cultura Cura
In the child welfare system

- Maximize the child’s sense of safety and help kids reduce overwhelming emotion.
- Help children make new meaning of their trauma history and current experiences.
- Train workers and providers in understanding trauma.
- National Child Traumatic Stress Network is a resource
The power of youth leadership

• Healing through self-expression, storytelling, the arts and activism.

• Putting trauma stories to work to improve the community.
Believing in Resilience

- Just as the location of a fulcrum affects a scale, the environment around children affects their development.

- A small dose of resilience can outweigh a large dose of trauma.
health happens here
with Resilience