

# Central Oregon TRACES

## Trauma, Resilience, and Adverse Childhood ExperienceS

**Background:** Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) are somewhat self-explanatory. They are bad or unhealthy things that happen to a child while growing up (see table to the right). Unfortunately, we know that ACEs are present in well over half of the adult population and more than 10% have experienced four or more. Why is this important? Research shows as the number of ACEs goes up, so does the likelihood of a person having more diseases, a lower level of academic attainment, increased lost time from work, and even a lower life expectancy! The associated costs of ACEs to society in productivity, health care, special education, child welfare and criminal justice are estimated to exceed \$100 Billion a year.<sup>1</sup>

**Vision:** We envision a place where every individual has the ability to weather the adversity in their life. A region where leaders, organizations, and communities actively build systems that help foster resiliency (and reduce ACEs from occurring in the first place). A locale where strengths are emphasized and our citizens report high levels of health and well-being, all children graduate on time and achieve their highest level of education success, and all adults are financially stable and contributing participants in their community.

ACEs include having experienced the following individual conditions:

- Physical abuse
- Verbal abuse
- Sexual abuse
- Physical neglect
- Emotional neglect

They also include having experienced the following environmental conditions:

- A parent who's an alcoholic
- A mother who's a victim of domestic violence
- A family member in jail
- A family member diagnosed with a mental illness
- The absence of a parent through divorce, death, or abandonment

### What can we actually do about ACEs?

New research shows us that ACEs can lead to toxic stress and put an individual in a heightened "fight or flight" state. Fortunately, the good news is that resiliency trumps ACEs by literally "rewiring the brain." From learning new coping skills and changing perspectives to building social supports and strong relationships to increasing awareness and access to resources, we can all help make a positive difference in our community. See back to learn how you can help!

*"The science on this is clear. Building resilience to overcome trauma is one of the very best ways to ensure overall wellbeing for all people in the communities we serve. From training our own staff to providing funding for community trainings, to building this into our strategic plan, we're putting our leadership and our financial support behind this work in a big way."*

*- Dan Stevens, VP Government Programs for PacificSource Health Plans*

### How did TRACES start?

As several key industries in the region - healthcare, education, early childhood - built collaborative strategies to address the complex issues they each faced, separately they began to identify childhood trauma as a root cause. Realizing they could do more to address this issue if they all worked together, Central Oregon Health Council, Better Together, the Early Learning Hub and United Way joined forces to help organize the thinking, learning and activities of the partners - and TRACES (Trauma, Resilience, and Adverse Childhood ExperienceS) was born. In May 2017, over 100 people representing 60+ organizations from every community in Central Oregon attended a kick-off event. A post-event survey indicated that over 97% thought that working together for greater impact was the right approach.

**Join the  
Movement!**  
[www.tracesco.org](http://www.tracesco.org)

1. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/acestudy>

# What you can do right now to address trauma and build resiliency

Recognize that each person ultimately needs to feel loved and good about themselves. If they aren't getting those feelings through positive behaviors (e.g. working together, coaching, playing, teaching, learning, etc.), they will seek those feelings elsewhere (e.g. bullying, drugs and alcohol, etc).

**Remember, learning more about ACEs is not about excusing or condoning certain types of behavior - it's about understanding what may be going on and being more effective in your response.**

## As an Individual:

- Participate in your own healing or recovery work (we know that more than half of all adults have experienced at least 1 ACE)
- Be willing to reflect on your values and beliefs
- Practice just noticing how you feel in response to everyday encounters (interactions with other people, news stories, traffic congestion, etc.) What types of situations trigger intense emotions? What helps you feel calm? What brings you joy?
- When someone around you misbehaves in some way, try to reframe your response based on "what happened to that person?" vs "what's wrong with that person?"
- Continue to learn and invite others to learn - start a discussion group or have your book club read about the topic

## As an Organization:

- Make trauma education and resilience building part of your company strategy to support employees and to build employee engagement
- Evaluate your organization's values: How does it live those values? How are the values encouraged among employees?
- Learn about and model emotional intelligence, cultural diversity, equity and inclusion
- View all members of the organization as having equal value
- Shadow a day at work in positions other than your own (or ask a co-worker to describe their typical day in an email or over coffee)
- Ask people how they like to be appreciated for good work or say thank you (i.e. "catch people doing things right!")
- Learn each other's DISC, Myers-Briggs or other personality style or type. Do you look at people differently? Have fun with these tools.
- Initiate study groups or book clubs around topics related to non-violent communication

## As a Service Provider (Clinician, Therapist or Teacher):

- Recognize that negative behavior may be an outcome of something that a person or student experienced previously in their life
- Never work harder than your clients or patients
- Have good boundaries with your time, your co-workers, and your clients
- Have an ethical compass and stick to it
- Sit with human suffering/adversity great or small
- Have both "in-the-moment" and long-term coping and self-care habits (e.g. breathing techniques, drinking your favorite tea at work, taking yoga or having a faith practice)

## As a Supervisor:

- Recognize that negative behavior may be an outcome of something that an employee experienced previously in their life
- See your employees as "whole" people where something they may have done wrong does not entirely define them
- Understand your employees' personal and professional hopes and dreams; let them know that you care about them
- Provide encouragement and support whenever possible, give them opportunities to succeed

## What's missing? Let us know about other tips so they can be shared!

### Want to learn more?

Go to [www.tracesco.org](http://www.tracesco.org) for resources such as books, articles, videos and examples of what is being done in other communities

### Want to do more?

Become a Partner Organization, convene a local workgroup, make a donation