

CONVERSATION GUIDE

The Effects of Early Experiences on Lifelong Learning and Health

Part 3: Outcomes Associated with Early Adversity

(with Dr. Nicole Sherren, Palix Foundation)

Understanding that children who are exposed to toxic stress have more negative outcomes in learning and health across the lifespan creates a convincing imperative for creating welcoming, caring, respectful and safe learning environments.

Key understandings

- The types of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) most commonly studied are: physical, emotional, or sexual abuse; physical or emotional neglect; witnessing domestic violence; growing up with a parent with a substance abuse problem or untreated mental illness; having an incarcerated family member; and being abandoned by a parent for any reason
- Children who experience adversity early in life are at substantial risk of being identified with developmental delays at age three. The more adverse experiences a child has, the more likely the child will experience a developmental delay. Children who have been physically abused often perceive anger in emotionally ambiguous adult facial expressions, which can change their perception of the safety and security of their environment and relationships.
- The vast majority of youth who are in conflict with the law have had at least one significant adverse childhood experience.
- Adverse childhood experiences increase the risk of developing addictions, depression, and anxiety in adulthood.
- Adverse childhood experiences increase the risk of developing heart disease, diabetes, cancer, and many other chronic health conditions in adulthood.
- Whether a child has positive or negative life outcomes can be thought of like a scale that tips to one side or another. If we work together as a community to ensure that there are lots of positive experiences stacked on one side, and as few toxic stresses as possible stacked on the other side, the child will have a positive and healthy life outcome.

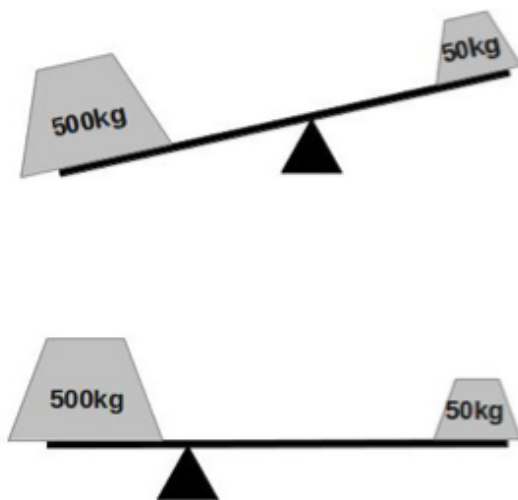
For more information

- Visit *Harvard Centre on the Developing Child* “In Brief: The Impact of Early Adversity on Children’s Development”:
<http://developingchild.harvard.edu/resources/inbrief-the-impact-of-early-adversity-on-childrens-development/>

Questions for reflection and discussion

- Which of the research findings was most surprising to you? Why?
- Which of the research findings have the most relevance for your school or jurisdiction?
- Which of the research findings would you like to know more about?
- Consider the slide below. What are the implications of this information for designing interventions and supports for students?

What Determines Whether a Child's Life Outcomes Are Negative or Positive?



Resilience is a product of our genes and experiences, like a scale that can be tipped in one direction or the other.



- What are the implications of this research for interacting with and supporting families?
- What is your current understanding of 'protective interventions'? What new kind of interventions might your school or jurisdiction consider exploring?