Evidence that adverse childhood experiences cause difficulties in later life

The essentials of good parenting

When things go wrong: Physical and Emotional abuse
Babies and infants are amazing

Babies are built for learning

Their brains are far more active than ours

Babies are like scientists: they experiment and learn from the results

Development is a complex interplay between genetic make-up, neuronal pathways and experience
WHY THE EARLY YEARS MATTER

- Chronic stress in childhood can lead to a range of health problems throughout life
- Children develop best when they are loved and nurtured
- Investing in the early years pays off
- Development of faith and trust
- Being a good parent is the most important job a person can ever do
Early cognitive support provided by parents in the early years is protective against bullying at school.

Zimmerman et al.,
Arch Ped Adol Med, 2005
CHILDREN LIVING WITH DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

- 56% have difficulties with social relationships, within their own families and outside the family
- 41% have emotional and behavioural problems

Cleaver et al.,
UK Dept of Health, 2005
EARLY LIFE STRESS

Pooled data from Australia, USA and Europe

The greater the amount of early life stress, the greater the amount of personality problems, nicotine dependence and effect on brain function

McFarlane et al.,
J.Integr. Neurosci., 2005
The greater the number of adverse childhood experiences (serious household dysfunction, witnessing domestic violence, child abuse) the greater the risk in adult life of:

- Depression
- Suicide attempts
- Multiple sexual partners
- Sexually transmitted disease
- Alcoholism

Dube et al., Preventive Medicine, 2003
Does parenting come naturally?

How helpful are the experts?
PARENTING TIPS

- Helping your child’s emotional development
- Helping your child’s intellectual development
- Where do fathers fit in?
- “Wilful behaviour”
- Effective discipline
MORE PARENTING TIPS

- Mothers and paid employment
- Choosing the best childcare
- Lone parents
- The role of Society
Helping your child’s emotional development
Helping your child’s intellectual development
Where do fathers fit in?
“Wilful behaviour”
Effective discipline
Mothers and paid employment
Choosing the best childcare
Lone parents
The role of Society
## WILL THE CHILD SINK OR SWIM?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LIFERAFTS</th>
<th>DANGEROUS CURRENTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A child-friendly society</td>
<td>A ‘me’ society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good child care</td>
<td>Indifferent childcare</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effective boundaries for behaviour</td>
<td>Letting the child do as he wishes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sensible discipline</td>
<td>Harsh, inconsistent or humiliating discipline</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
WILL THE CHILD SINK OR SWIM?

LIFERAFTS

Parents who agree on child-rearing
Two parents in a good relationship
Child talked with, listened to, played with and respected
Love is unconditional

DANGEROUS CURRENTS

Inconsistent parenting
Unsupported, lone parent
Child not valued as a person, no time for play and teaching
Love has to be earned
252,831 notifications

ie 700 cases/day

....and most cases are never reported
Child abuse is rated as less a concern than the rising cost of petrol and problems with public transport.
32% believed that children made up stories about being abused

17% believed that well-educated parents did not abuse their children

16% did not know that the abuser was often someone the child knew

13% believed that boys were only rarely victims of sexual abuse

Australian Childhood Foundation, 2006
CHILD ABUSE

A spectrum with overlap

Neglect
Failure to thrive
Physical abuse
Sexual abuse
Emotional abuse
“CHILD ABUSE THRIVES IN THE SHADOWS OF PRIVACY AND SECRECY. IT LIVES BY INATTENTION.”

Bakan, 1971
“The History of Childhood is a nightmare from which we have only recently begun to awaken. The further back in history one goes, the lower the level of child care, and the more likely children are to be killed, abandoned, beaten, terrorised and sexually abused.”

de Mause, 1974
The Battered-Child Syndrome

C. Henry Kempe, M.D., Denver, Frederic N. Silverman, M.D., Cincinnati, Brandt F. Steele, M.D., William Droegemueller, M.D., and Henry K. Silver, M.D., Denver
PHYSICAL ABUSE

- What forms does it take?
- Who does it?
- Who are the victims?
- What are the consequences?
- What can be done?
WHAT FORMS DOES IT TAKE?

- Bruises
- Broken bones
- Burns
- Bleeding inside the skull and brain
- Drowning
- Poisoning
- Damage to abdominal organs
WHO DOES IT?

- Unrealistic expectations
- Problems with anger control
- Poor childhood experiences
- Poor coping skills
- Poor relationship with the child
- Lack of supporting relationships with others
What are the consequences?

What can be done?
CHILD ABUSE

A spectrum with overlap

Neglect

Failure to thrive

Physical abuse

Sexual abuse

Emotional abuse
## CHILD ABUSE IN AUSTRALIA

### Substantiated cases

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Abuse</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Neglect</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional abuse</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical abuse</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual abuse</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
EMOTIONAL ABUSE

A hidden form of Child Abuse
EMOTIONAL ABUSE

A concentrated attack by an adult on a child’s self-esteem and social competence.
FIVE TYPES OF EMOTIONAL ABUSE
(after Garbarino, Guttman & Seeley)

- Rejecting
- Terrorizing
- Ignoring
- Isolating
- Corrupting
REJECTING

- Refusal to show affection
- Refusal to touch
- Refusal to acknowledge the child’s worth and needs
TERRORIZING

- Threatening with extreme punishment
- Setting expectations which are unable to be met, resulting in punishment
- Punishment results
- Child lives in climate of fear and unpredictable threat
IGNORING

- The adult is psychologically unavailable to the child
- Sometimes occurs because the adult is totally preoccupied with their own needs
ISOLATING

- Prevents child from social mixing with others
- Limits opportunities for child to develop friendships
- Child feels alone in the world
CORRUPTING

- The adult models and encourages antisocial values
- Reinforces antisocial behaviours in child
- May lead to aggression, deviant sexuality, drug use, dishonesty
Emotional abuse can lead to the child developing life-long:

- Negative view of life
- Distrust
- Seeing the world as hostile
- Low self-esteem
- Being difficult to help
- Inability to form satisfactory relationships