

Trauma and Relationships: Interpersonal Neurobiology Put Into Practice

Charmayne R. Adams, Arden A. Szepe, & Adam W. York

University of Tennessee

Developmental Trauma:

- Specific events or experiences that occur within a given developmental stage and influence later development, adjustment, and physical and mental health (SAMSA, 2015).
- ACEs can negatively affect a person's well being into adulthood. Whether or not these experiences occur simultaneously, are time-limited, or recur, they set the stage for increased vulnerability to physical, mental, and substance use disorders and enhance the risk for repeated trauma exposure across the lifespan (SAMSA, 2015).

ACE Category	Women Percent (N = 9,367)	Men Percent (N = 7,970)	Total Percent (N = 17,337)
ABUSE			
Emotional Abuse	13.1%	7.6%	10.6%
Physical Abuse	27%	29.9%	28.3%
Sexual Abuse	24.7%	16%	20.7%
HOUSEHOLD CHALLENGES			
Mother Treated Violently	13.7%	11.5%	12.7%
Household Substance Abuse	29.5%	23.8%	26.9%
Household Mental Illness	23.3%	14.8%	19.4%
Parental Separation or Divorce	24.5%	21.8%	23.3%
Incarcerated Household Member	5.2%	4.1%	4.7%
NEGLECT			
Emotional Neglect ³	16.7%	12.4%	14.8%
Physical Neglect ³	9.2%	10.7%	9.9%



Impact on Relationships:

- Approximately 70% of attachment styles formed during childhood and adolescence are stable throughout adulthood and through marriage (Sharfe, 2003).
- Trauma often leads to the formation of a pursuer-distance pattern in relationships (Henry et al., 2011).
- Partners of traumatized individuals tend to experience what has sometimes been called Secondary Traumatic Stress (Figley, 1998).

Implications for Practice:

- Creates insight into the development of, and difficulty in breaking, patterns of thinking and behaving
- Attention to the history and relational styles of both romantic partners is important (Riggs, K., Cusimano, A., & Benson, K., 2011).
- Counselors must remain attuned and aid clients in responding to the somatic/physiological effects of interpersonal stress:
 - Increased heart rate
 - Flushed face
 - Increased perspiration
 - Tightening of the muscles
 - Shaking of the hands and/or body