

# NOAS

## PreService:

### Trauma Overview

### Learner Guide

#### Overview

- ✚ This course defines trauma and explores how trauma influences brain architecture, development, and the ability to attach

#### Learning Objectives

- ✚ Define trauma and toxic stress
- ✚ Describe how the brain adapts based on experience
- ✚ Describe how trauma impacts attachment and development

Please take care of yourself  
during this course.

#### Trauma-Informed

Certified foster caregivers are required to be trauma-informed. The term means:

- ✚ Realize the prevalence of trauma
- ✚ Recognize how trauma affects all individuals
- ✚ Respond to trauma by putting this knowledge into practice
- ✚ Resist re-traumatizing the individual

## Trauma Defined

- ✚ As you listen to the childhood experiences of Alex, write down what you think are important details.

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Adverse experiences like Alex's are called traumas.

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Service Administration (SAMHSA) define trauma using the 3 E's:

- ✚ Event or series of events or a set of circumstances
- ✚ Experience an individual perceives as physically or emotionally harmful or threatening
- ✚ Effects on the individual's functioning and physical, social, emotional, or spiritual well-being.

It is the experience and how a person perceives the experience which makes it traumatic.

## Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE)

Are one way to categorize childhood traumas. The ten categories of ACES are:

### Abuse

1. Physical
2. Emotional
3. Sexual

### Neglect

4. Physical
5. Emotional

### Household Dysfunction

6. Mental Illness
7. Mother treated violently
8. Divorce
9. Incarcerated relative
10. Substance abuse

✚ The more ACEs a person experiences, the more at risk they are for negative health and behavioral outcomes later in life, such as substance misuse, depression, heart disease, and suicide attempts.

✚ Adverse experiences (trauma) are risk factors, not predictive factors. Risk can be lowered with interventions that build in protective factors.

✚ Can you think of other experiences that would qualify as trauma, but are not represented in ACEs?

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### Trauma Symptoms

- ✚ Depression
- ✚ Disassociation
- ✚ Hypervigilance
- ✚ Physical complaints

### Trauma Symptoms Activity

Match each of the four trauma symptoms to one scenario below.

Scenario 1:

Several times this month Marco has turned down invitations from friends. He finds he just doesn't have the energy to get out of bed and shower. He is easily agitated by small things and is irritable with his friends when they encourage him to get out of the house

✚ Trauma symptom: \_\_\_\_\_

#### Scenario 2:

Whenever Ana goes to dinner with friends, she always must sit in the chair facing the entrance. Throughout dinner she watches the door and the people at other tables in the restaurant.

✚ Trauma symptom: \_\_\_\_\_

#### Scenario 3:

Sam has been to see his doctor several times this year complaining of stomach pains. His doctor has run several tests and can find no cause for his pain.

✚ Trauma symptom: \_\_\_\_\_

#### Scenario 4:

Sandy just received a poor six-month review at her new job. Her direct supervisor catches her “daydreaming” often and she has been unable to meet her quota.

✚ Trauma symptom: \_\_\_\_\_

### Toxic Stress

✚ The continual rush of hormones produced when our threat response system is stuck in the “on” position is called toxic stress.

Unaddressed toxic stress can lead to:

- ✚ Difficulty reasoning and problem-solving
- ✚ Chronic or recurrent physical complaints
- ✚ Sensitivity to sounds, smells, touch, or light
- ✚ Difficulty identifying and managing emotions
- ✚ Unhealthy coping mechanisms

Notes:

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## Trauma and the Brain

Consider Dr. Siegel's hand analogy to remember three areas of the brain.

- ✚ Brainstem (palm): basic survival
- ✚ Limbic System (thumb): emotional center
- ✚ Cortex (knuckles and fingers): executive functioning

Because the cortex continues to grow and develop for a long time, it is the most susceptible part of the brain to change based on experiences.

- ✚ Children with positive experiences and a nurturing caring adult build and strengthen neural pathways that help them grow and learn.
- ✚ As a foster caregiver, how will you identify toxic stress in the children placed in your home?
- ✚ How can you help children build neural pathways that help them grow and learn?

Notes:

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## Acknowledging Your Trauma

- ✚ It is important to address any personal trauma history before the placement of a child in your home. This allows you to provide more effective care.

Complete the ACE questionnaire and consider:

- ✚ How have my childhood traumas affected me as an adult?
- ✚ Do I have any trauma-related issues that I need to address before becoming a foster caregiver or adoptive parent?

Instructions: Below is a list of 10 categories of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs). From the list below, please place a checkmark next to each ACE category that you experienced prior to your 18th birthday. Then, please add up the number of categories of ACEs you experienced and put the total number at the bottom.

1. Did you feel that you didn't have enough to eat, had to wear dirty clothes, or had no one to protect or take care of you?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_

No \_\_\_\_\_

2. Did you lose a parent through divorce, abandonment, death, or other reason?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_

No \_\_\_\_\_

3. Did you live with anyone who was depressed, mentally ill, or attempted suicide?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_

No \_\_\_\_\_

4. Did you live with anyone who had a problem with drinking or using drugs, including prescription drugs?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_

No \_\_\_\_\_

5. Did your parents or adults in your home ever hit, punch, beat, or threaten to harm each other?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_

No \_\_\_\_\_

6. Did you live with anyone who went to jail or prison?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_

No \_\_\_\_\_

7. Did a parent or adult in your home ever swear at you, insult you, or put you down?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_

No \_\_\_\_\_

8. Did a parent or adult in your home ever hit, beat, kick, or physically hurt you in any way?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_

No \_\_\_\_\_

9. Did you feel that no one in your family loved you or thought you were special?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_

No \_\_\_\_\_

10. Did you experience unwanted sexual contact (such as fondling or oral/anal/vaginal intercourse/penetration)?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_

No \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Total - Your ACE score is the total number of checked yes responses.



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FOSTER ♥ CONNECT ♥ SUPPORT  
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**CWTP**

Ohio Child Welfare  
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## Resources

Dr. Nadine Burke Harris' Ted's Talk, How Childhood Trauma Affects  
Health Across a Lifetime

[https://www.ted.com/talks/nadine\\_burke\\_harris\\_how\\_childhood\\_trauma\\_affects\\_health\\_across\\_a\\_lifetime](https://www.ted.com/talks/nadine_burke_harris_how_childhood_trauma_affects_health_across_a_lifetime)

Building Adult Capabilities to Improve Child Outcomes (Center for the  
Developing Child): [https://youtu.be/urU-a\\_FsS5Y](https://youtu.be/urU-a_FsS5Y)