

The Impact of Violence and Trauma Across the Lifespan

Presentation to the U.S. Department of Justice
Interagency Wellness Forum – January 20, 2016

Helga Luest * Survivor, Advocate, Trainer

Director, Marketing Communications & Publications, Abt Associates

What is Trauma?

The experience or witnessing of:

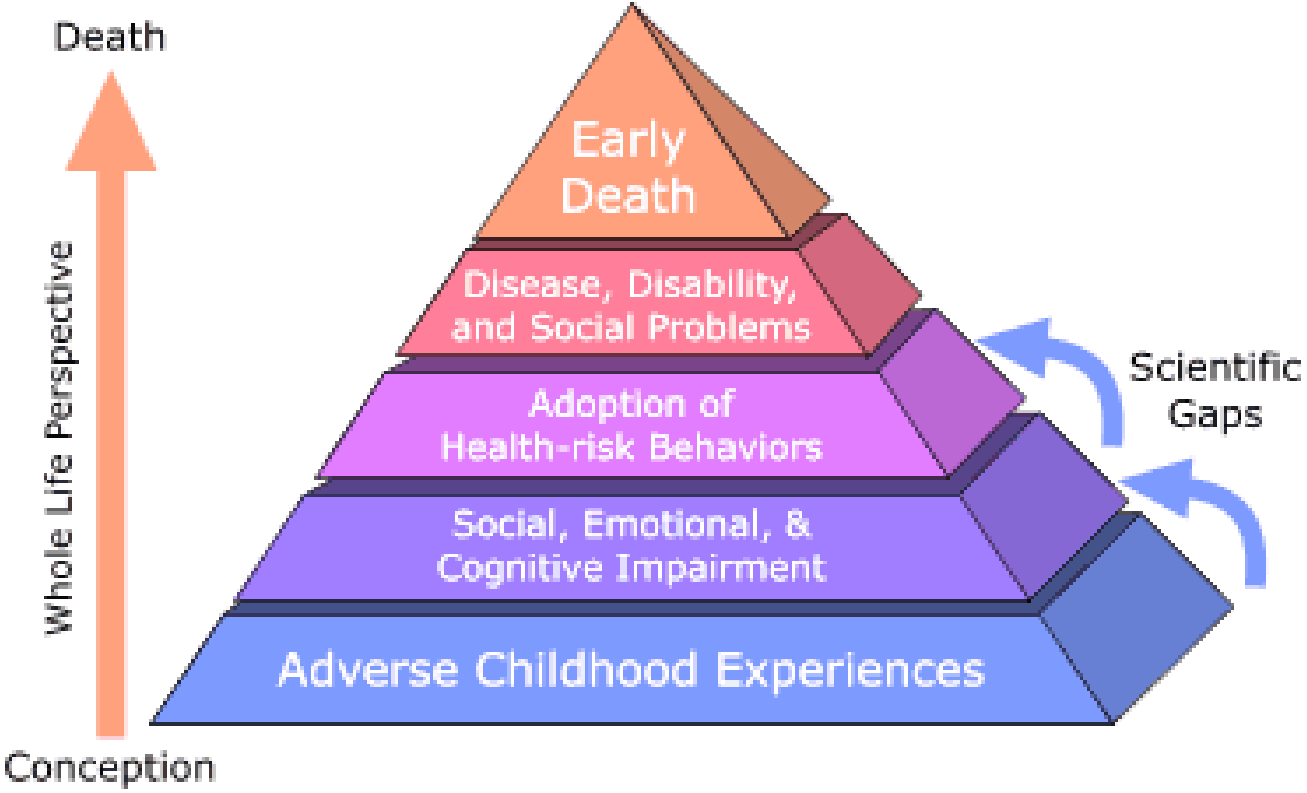
- violence
- abuse
- neglect
- terrorism
- disaster
- war

...and how a survivor responds to that experience

Coping and Adapting

- Substance abuse
- Aggression and violence
- Obsessive behavior
- Eating disorders
- Smoking
- Self injury
- Sexual promiscuity

Adverse Childhood Experiences Study



Trauma: Common Struggles

- Emotional “numbness”
- Sleep disturbance
- Flashbacks and “triggers”
- Lowered self esteem
- Difficulty focusing/presenteeism
- Dissociation/detachment from others
- Impaired attachments (agitated interactions/poor interpersonal skills)
- Anger and aggression issues
- Job loss and career change



The Impact of Trauma – Effects are:

- Neurological
- Biological
- Psychological
- Economic
- Social
- Spiritual

Trauma Theory

- Traditional approach
 - You are sick - You are bad - You are sick and bad
- Trauma theory
 - You are not sick or bad, but injured

How Childhood Trauma Plays Out in Adult Life...



Steps in a Better Direction

- Policy
 - Integrating Trauma-Informed Approaches (not just in policy, but in how we design, implement, and evaluate programs)
- Training/ Building a Skilled Workforce
 - Mandated and Incentivized Training and Education on Trauma
 - Training and Education on Secondary and Vicarious Trauma
- Promote Healing and Support
 - Peer Support
 - Wellness

Contact Information

Helga Luest

- W: 301-347-5149;
helga_luest@abtassoc.com
- C: 202-550-5678;
helgaluest@gmail.com