

# **Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACES), Complex Trauma, and Risk Associated with Opioid Use Disorder**

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# Trauma:

*"an exceptional experience in which powerful and dangerous events overwhelm a person's capacity to cope."* (Fitzgerald and Groves)

# Experience of Trauma:

2 broad areas of adversity

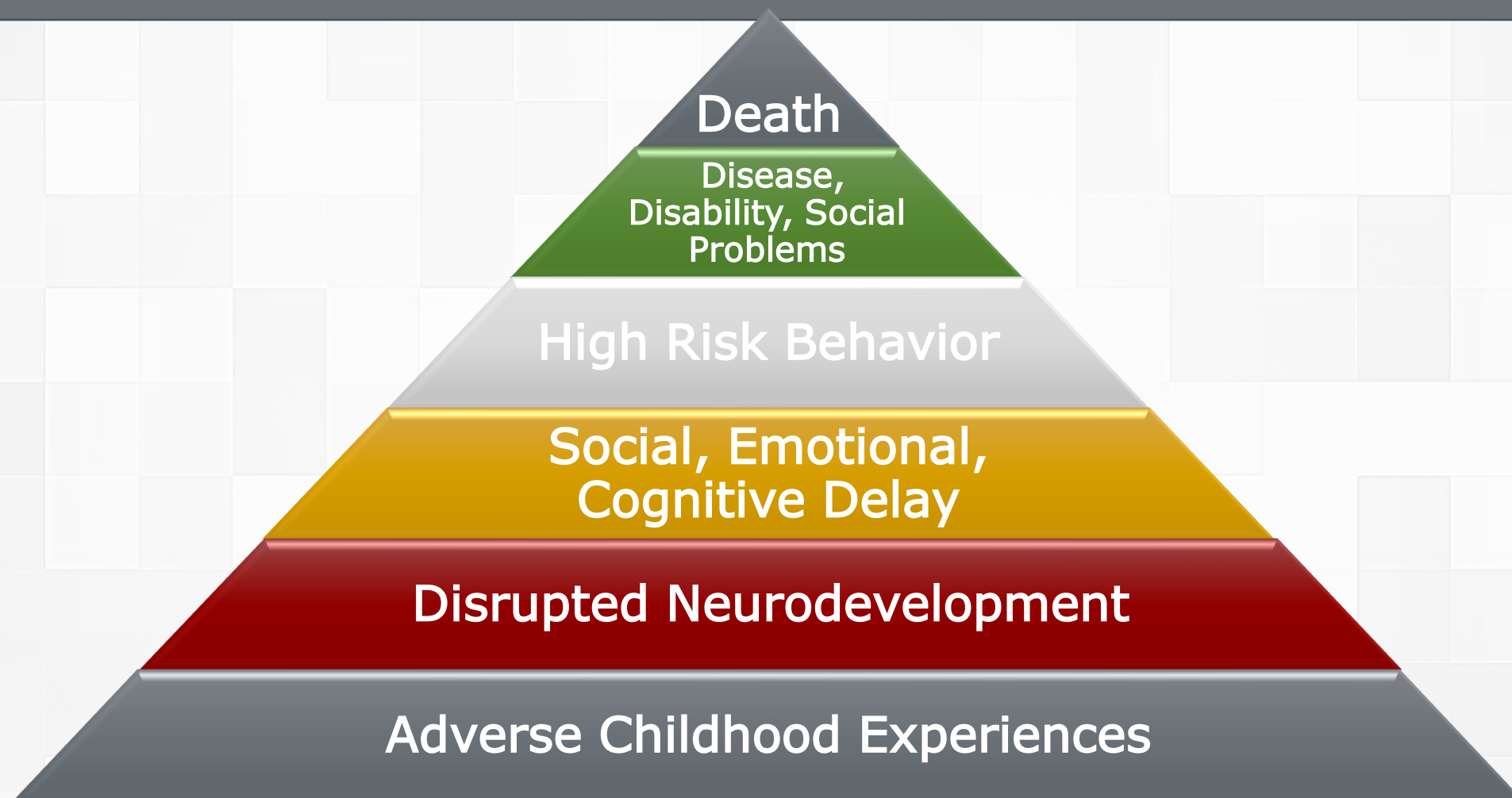
Severe and  
persistent  
disruptions in  
caregiver  
relationships

Threats to  
basic physical  
and emotional  
safety

# ACES

The Adverse Childhood Experience Study





# What are ACEs?

- Physical abuse
- Emotional abuse
- Sexual abuse
- Neglect (physical or emotional)
- Domestic Violence
- Substance abuse
- Caregiver mental illness
- Incarceration of a caregiver
- Divorce

# Odds for academic and health problems with increasing ACEs in Spokane children

	Academic Failure	Severe Attendance Problems	Severe School Behavior Concerns	Frequent Reported Poor Health
Three or More ACEs N =248	<b>3</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>4</b>
Two ACEs N=213	<b>2.5</b>	<b>2.5</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>2.5</b>
One ACE N=476	<b>1.5</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2.5</b>	<b>2</b>
No Known ACEs =1,164	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0

# Complex Trauma:

“Complex trauma outcomes are most likely to develop and persist if an infant or child is exposed to danger that is unpredictable and uncontrollable because the child’s body must allocate resources that are normally dedicated to growth and development instead to survival.”

Cook, Blaustein, and Spinazzola, 2003

# Core brain development principles:

## Bruce Perry



- **Principle 1:** Relationships are crucial for healthy development.
- **Principle 2:** Brain function is hierarchical.
- **Principle 3:** Brain development is 'use dependent.'
- **Principle 4:** Brain systems change with use throughout life.

*"Learning about the psychobiology of stress, toxic stress, and trauma is liberating for people. It gives us explanatory reasons for some of the puzzling behaviors we engage in and the feelings that can come to dominate us."*

Chronic Stress and Trauma (Bloom, 2013, p. 48)

# Opioid Use in Rural Communities

- Individuals in rural communities have higher rates of opioid-related deaths than those in metropolitan areas
- Rural adolescents are more likely to use prescription opioids nonmedically than their urban counterparts
- Increased rates of polydrug use and clinical depression are also associated with rural opioid use

Keyes et al., 2014

# Trauma and Opioid Use in Rural Areas

- Exposure to ACES is common in individuals with substance use disorders
- Economic downturns more adversely affect rural communities
  - Unemployment stress
  - Fewer opportunities for long-term careers with upward mobility potential
  - Outward migration of youth from rural to urban areas increases impacts of economic deprivation

# A trauma-informed system...

R

realizes the widespread impact of trauma and  
paths towards resilience

recognizes how it shows up

responds by integrating into practices,  
procedures and policies

resists re-traumatization

# The Tip of the Iceberg



# Questions?

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