

SEPTEMBER 7, 2021

SEARCH ...

HOME > OPINION > Resiliency is the answer

Resiliency is the answer

September 1, 2021 John Peters II Opinion 0

By Charlotte Reeves Guest Columnist



Editor's Note: This is one of a series of columns to be shared with Mount Airy News readers by the Surry County Substance Abuse Recovery Office.

WEATHER

Mount Airy, NC 27030

Weather	Wind	Rain	Sun	M
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79.2 °F
Mostly Sunny

63 °F 85 °F

62 86 WED	54 81 THU	55 82 FRI
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2:04 PM Tue Sep 7 W

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In the past two months we have discussed how there is a growing body of research which has made it increasingly apparent that Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) are a critical public health issue. ACEs are potentially traumatic experiences and events, ranging from abuse and neglect, to living with an adult with a substance use disorder (SUD) and/or mental health issues. ACEs can have negative lasting effects on the health and well-being of children during childhood or later in life.

However, more important than exposure to any specific event of this type, is the accumulation of multiple adverse experiences during childhood.

Repeated exposures to ACEs have detrimental long-term health consequences, including the development of SUD. As the ACEs study has shown, child abuse and neglect are the single most preventable causes of mental illness, the single most common cause of drug and alcohol use disorders, and a significant contribution to leading causes of death such as diabetes, heart disease, cancer, stroke, and suicide (Kolk, 2014).

One thing that researchers have found to work as a protective factor against ACEs is resilience. Resilience, as defined by Phillips, Reipas, & Zelek (2019), is the positive adaptation used in the face of adversity, that mitigates the negative effects of stress, and promotes lifelong physical and mental wellbeing. Well supported research teaches us about seven positive childhood experiences that can successfully build resilience throughout adulthood (Ranch, 2020). These include:

- Being able to talk with family about one's feelings
- Having family support, participating in community traditions
- Having a sense of belonging in high school
- Having support from friends
- Having at least two non-parent adult's interest
- Feeling safe and protected by an adult in the home

Concrete examples of things that can build resilience are finding connections with family and friends, performing self-reliant activities such as exercise, music, or drawing, or having optimism, calmness, and/or confidence. Working to build resilience is important when we are doing well so that we can use it as a reserve when we need it, like charging a battery. The long-term goal here is to improve the mental ability to handle, or recover quickly, from hardships.

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The intention of this series of articles is to show there are simple exercises we can use to dramatically lower the impact of ACEs on affected young lives. It is especially important to adolescents since the strength of their resiliency skills can influence their future opportunities. We have a powerful ability to break the cycle of ACEs by teaching our community to recognize the signs that someone is experiencing an unbalanced life and to help them find stability. Everyone deserves to live their best life.

Community members can assist our youth to become more resilient by teaching them skills necessary to successfully overcome negative life barriers. With solid decision-making, our youth will gain self-esteem, self-confidence and grow their resilience, which results in improved life success and satisfaction.

If you, or someone you know, would benefit from learning more about ACEs or resiliency, please contact Charlotte Reeves, Surry County Office of Substance Abuse Recovery Community Outreach Coordinator, at reevesc@co.surry.nc.us. Visit our website at surrycountycare.com for more information about substance use disorder and the many resources in our County.

Charlotte Reeves is the Community Outreach Coordinator for Surry County Substance Abuse Recovery Office. She may be reached at 336-401-8218 or reevesc@co.surry.nc.us.



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