

Take 5! for Trauma & ACEs

Adverse Childhood Experiences and Trauma

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) are a common source of trauma in the lives of children and youth. And the effects of trauma are well-documented, including negative impacts on learning, physical and mental wellness, the ability to form healthy relationships, and lifelong development.

Childhood adversity is a widespread problem; ACEs are reported in every community regardless of socio-economic or cultural factors. In fact, *most* of us have experienced at least one adverse experience in our early years.¹ More than half of the population have an ACE score of 2 or more.² And almost 20% report a score of 4 or more ACEs before reaching the age of 18. That's a lot of adversity to navigate at a very critical time in a child's development.

The impact of childhood adversity is abundantly clear. The higher the ACE score, for example, the higher the risk for physical and mental health challenges, behavior problems and learning problems. High ACE scores are associated with executive function challenges, for example, as well as anxiety & depression, obesity, high-risk behaviors, substance abuse, self-harm and suicide.

With such conclusive evidence, ACEs are now getting attention from educators, health professionals and policy makers alike. We want to protect kids from adverse experiences. *And* we want to give them some practical tools that they can use when adversity shows up in their lives. That's where Take 5! comes in.

Take 5! Self-Reg Asset-Building: Tools to Help Kids Deal with Trauma

When kids have many self-reg assets in their hand, they can thrive ... even when life brings experiences of adversity and trauma. So, let's work together to help kids grow their self-reg capacities ... offering practical tools that support them to navigate adversity, and bounce back when the going gets a little rough.



¹ In a recent California study, nearly 2/3 of adults report having at least one adverse experience in their history. 61.7% reported 16.7 percent report having an ACE score of 4 or more. These results are consistent across socio-economic lines, and across cultural and geographic boundaries.

² To measure ACEs, adverse experiences are divided into three categories: abuse, neglect and household dysfunction. Abuse includes physical abuse, emotional abuse, and sexual abuse. Neglect may be physical or emotional. And household dysfunction is a factor when family experience includes mental illness, family violence, divorce, when a family member is incarcerated, and when substance abuse is part of the picture.

Healthy Lives Start with Healthy Minds

Mental health is a growing concern among professionals who support young people. And trauma is a known risk-factor for acquiring mental health problems – in childhood, or later in life.

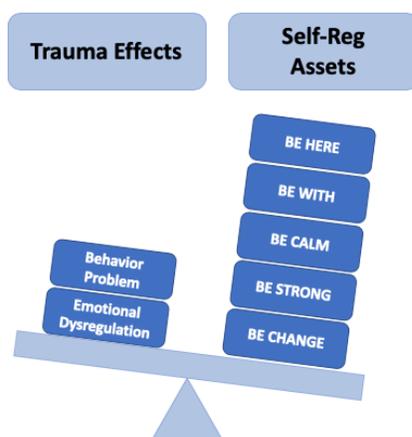
The self-reg skills promoted by Take 5! offer a practical response to the mental health challenges facing young people today, including experiences of trauma.³ If you're familiar with Marsha Linehan's work with Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT),⁴ for example, you'll recognize the important contribution that DBT makes to Take 5! While these skills are proven to be therapeutically effective, they are also valuable tools for fostering mental well-being and resilience in children, youth and adults alike.

To clarify, Take 5! is all about capacity-building. It's not therapy. While some of us are qualified therapists, most aren't. But we do have an investment in preventing mental health challenges, and growing healthy minds. And each one of us can be an asset builder.

Trauma and Self-Reg Assets: Connecting the Dots

Kids and adults who have experienced trauma often have self-reg challenges. We know that trauma can diminish self-regulation capacity in five key areas: mindful awareness, relationships, emotion regulation, distress tolerance, and change intelligence ... for example, a mindset that promotes growth and development.

But, just as early adversity can have lifelong effects, self-reg asset-building can also have lifelong effects. While it may not prevent trauma, having plenty of self-reg assets can buffer the effects of trauma. And self-reg asset-building can help foster conditions that support healing.



³ Take 5! is grounded in the principles and practices of Dialectical Behavior Therapy. DBT is a rigorously researched and evidence-based therapeutic modality that is offering comprehensive new tools to therapists, counselors and other human service practitioners. Previously complex and difficult-to-treat mental health challenges, such as chronic suicidality and borderline personality disorder, have responded well to the DBT approach. A growing body of research and evidence shows that DBT is also effective with other mental health challenges: self-harm, anger, addictions, anxiety, depression, ADHD, bi-polar disorder, trauma & PTSD, and violence.

Take 5! Self-Reg Asset-Building: Five Assets that All Kids Need

These are the self-reg assets that Take 5! helps to grow and strengthen:⁵

- **Mindful Awareness** ... I can be fully present & aware of my own inner experiences ... my thoughts, feelings, attitudes, assumptions ... and how they're connected to my body and my actions.
- **Interpersonal Effectiveness** ... I can be present with others, and see things from another person's perspective. I understand that what I do affects others, just as their actions affect me; this helps me to set healthy boundaries.
- **Emotion Regulation** ... I can pay attention to the signals my body is sending, and am learning to monitor and modify my responses. Using my self-reg skills, I'm less likely to be hijacked by sensory & emotional triggers.
- **Resilience & Thriving** ... I'm better able to tolerate distress and resist urges. I'm learning to bounce back from adversity, and to make healthier choices. More and more, I'm able to say that "Life went sideways. But I didn't. At least not for long."
- **Connectedness & Contribution** ... I'm more confident that, even in difficult circumstances, positive change is possible. I know that what I do matters, and that I can make a difference in the world.



⁵ While Take 5! Self-Reg Asset-Building is informed by the principles and practices of Dialectical Behavior Therapy, it also integrates research and evidence-based practice in neuroscience, positive child & youth development, trauma and attachment, adult development, and mindfulness research in education.

Take 5! for Trauma & Adverse Childhood Experiences

Kids who have experienced trauma often have self-regulation challenges. These challenges show up in classrooms and other community settings in ways that are familiar to educators and other professionals: environmental sensitivities, sensory overload, distraction, stress, anxiety, depression, and anger are just a few examples. When we support kids to grow their capacity for self-regulation, however, we help them address the sensory, emotional, mental and behavioral challenges that often show up when trauma is part of the picture.

When kids have an abundance of self-reg assets, they can more effectively navigate challenging life conditions. And we can help by offering practical tools that support them to navigate adversity, and bounce back when the going gets a little rough.

At the Take 5! Institute, we are working toward a future in which children, youth, and adults can THRIVE, encouraged and supported to grow into their potential and live their purpose ... even when life brings experiences of adversity and trauma. We hope you'll join us on the journey.

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