



A CUP OF HEALTH WITH CDC

Bad Memories

Adverse Childhood Experiences — Five States, 2009

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[Announcer] This podcast is presented by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. CDC — safer, healthier people.

[Dr. Gaynes] Welcome to *A Cup of Health with CDC*, a weekly feature of the *MMWR*, the Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report. I'm your host, Dr. Robert Gaynes.

Memories and experiences from childhood can have good and bad long-term effects on a person's physical and emotional well-being. A recent CDC study in five states found that more than half of respondents reported some type of adverse childhood experience that continues to affect them today.

Dr. Valerie Edwards is a research psychologist with CDC's National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion. She's joining us today to discuss the lingering effects of adverse childhood experiences. Welcome to the show, Valerie.

[Dr. Edwards] Thank you for having me, Bob.

[Dr. Gaynes] Valerie, what do you consider an "adverse childhood experience?"

[Dr. Edwards] Well, adverse childhood experiences are traumatic and they include things such as verbal, physical, and sexual abuse, as well as forms of family dysfunction, such as growing up with a mentally ill family member or a family member who is substance abusing, witnessing domestic violence as a child, having a family member incarcerated, or having your parents be separated or divorced.

[Dr. Gaynes] What kinds of problems can adverse childhood experience lead to later in life?

[Dr. Edwards] Adverse childhood experiences can contribute to the development of substance abuse problems, such as smoking, excessive alcohol use or abuse, drug abuse, and may be a contributing factor to obesity, as well as leading on to chronic diseases, such as cancer, diabetes, heart disease, and even premature mortality.

[Dr. Gaynes] Are these experiences more common in any particular sex or age group?

[Dr. Edwards] Well, it appears that women are more victimized than men, in general, with the exception of men report more physical abuse than women. Among age groups, it seems that people 55 years or older report fewer of any of these types of adverse childhood experiences, but people who are younger than 55 don't report any differences between the different age groups.

[Dr. Gaynes] Where should a person go for help?

[Dr. Edwards] Start with your health care provider and they may decide to refer you to a psychotherapist or someone who is familiar with working with these kinds of issues.

[Dr. Gaynes] Valerie, what kinds of treatment are available for people suffering from the lingering effects of adverse childhood experiences?

[Dr. Edwards] One of the most effective kinds of treatment is a form of psychotherapy that's called trauma-focused cognitive behavioral therapy. And this treatment is focused on helping people to develop coping skills to deal with the kinds of feelings and problems that they may have that arise from having experienced adverse childhood experiences or other traumatic events. In order to find a practitioner who can give this kind of therapy, I would suggest that you contact your local mental health association.

[Dr. Gaynes] Where can listeners get more information about getting help for the effects of adverse childhood experiences?

[Dr. Edwards] Go to www.cdc.gov and in the search box type in "adverse childhood experiences" and this will give you a link to our website.

[Dr. Gaynes] Thanks, Valerie. I've been talking today with CDC's Dr. Valerie Edwards about the problems associated with adverse childhood experiences.

Remember, such events can lead to depression and other problems, such as heart disease, diabetes, cancer, and substance abuse. If you feel like adverse childhood experiences are affecting you today, talk to your health care provider.

Until next time, be well. This is Dr. Robert Gaynes for *A Cup of Health with CDC*.

[Announcer] For the most accurate health information, visit www.cdc.gov or call 1-800-CDC-INFO, 24/7.