



Geary County

K-STATE RESEARCH AND EXTENSION NEWS

geary.k-state.edu

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Ask the Agent

Q: I know a family who is struggling with trauma. Where can they get help?

A: There are several options available in Geary County and the surrounding area. Here are three resources as a start:

Crisis Center Hotline
Junction City: 762-8835; OR 1-800-727-2785; Hotlines, crisis interventions, food and shelter, referrals, support groups for survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault.

Konza Prairie Community Health Center Junction City: 238-4711. Provides outpatient services including psychiatry, therapy, and case management.

Pawnee Mental Health Services 762-5250 (after hours emergency: 1-800-609-2002). Provides outpatient services for children, adolescents and adults experiencing emotional, mental health, or substance use issues.

For more information call the Geary County K-State Research & Extension office at: **785-238-4161**

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Trauma and ACEs

Have you recently heard terms such as “trauma-informed schools” or “trauma-informed care” and wondered what they mean or why “trauma” has become a more prevalent topic in the news? This month’s FCS Connection newsletter is going to focus on the research, terminology, and impact trauma is having on our community and state.



February 2020

The topic is challenging to wrestle with, but the effects that trauma has on families and communities are significant and warrant a closer look.

From 1995 to 1997, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and Kaiser Permanente, a large nonprofit healthcare service organization, studied the effects of childhood abuse and neglect, household challenges, and later-life health and well-being. In that study, termed the Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) Study, it was discovered that survivors of childhood trauma are up to 5,000 percent times more likely to attempt suicide, have eating disorders, or become IV drug users. It also revealed that almost every school has students who have been exposed to traumatic events.

ACEs are potentially traumatic events that occur in childhood between the ages of 0 to 17 years. The Kansas Children Service League defines ACEs as “the term used to describe all types of abuse, neglect, as well as household dysfunctions or traumatic circumstances that occur to people under the age of 18. They can be caused by such situations as experiencing abuse or violence, witnessing violent acts, or by having a family member attempt or die by suicide to name but a few examples. These experiences can have a dramatic impact on a child’s ability to develop a basic sense of safety, stability, and bonding with members of their household.

According to recent research studies, ACEs are linked to a wide array of health issues including chronic health, mental illness, and substance misuse in adulthood. ACEs can also have a negative impact on an individual’s education and career path. ACEs are more prevalent in our country than you might expect – with about 61% of adults surveyed from a 25 state area reporting that they had at least one type of ACE and nearly 17% reporting four or more ACEs.

The financial, social, and educational impact of ACEs is staggering. The CDC estimates that the average lifetime cost of non-fatal child maltreatment is \$830,928 per victim. Included in this total is the costs related to child welfare, criminal justice, and special education systems. Those with a higher number of ACEs have an increased risk for poor educational and employment outcomes. Additionally, there is a direct link between the number of ACEs and health. As the number of ACEs increase, so do the social, emotional, and cognitive impairments suffered by the victim. There is an increase in diseases, injury, disability, and health-risk behaviors.

Our juvenile justice and corrections systems in Kansas are overwhelmed with the impact ACEs have on their agencies. Research on ACEs has revealed higher prevalence rates of adversity and trauma for justice-involved youth compared to youth in the general population.

By raising awareness of childhood trauma and the impact it has, communities can work together to provide support to victims and establish systems that help prevent the ACEs from occurring in the first place. *“One of the best ways to prevent ACEs is to create safe, stable, nurturing relationships and environments for children at home, work and in the community. When parents have healthy relationships and environments that they work and live in, they are prepared to provide similar supports to their children.”* Kansas Children Service League

Trauma & ACEs

(continued)

What Does it Mean?

Trauma Informed Schools

One out of every four children attending school has been exposed to a traumatic event that can affect learning and/or behavior. —NCTSN Child Trauma Toolkit for Educators

Schools that have begun work to develop a trauma-informed environment employ adults who have been trained to recognize and respond to students (and perhaps their parents) who have been impacted by traumatic stress. Students are given clear expectations and receive instruction on communication strategies that will help them navigate through stressful situations. These coping skills lend themselves to a student's ability to handle extreme situations while creating a safe, respectful, and supportive learning environment.

Trauma-informed care

This type of care typically relates to physical and mental health care services. This approach changes a health provider's filter from "what's wrong with you" to "what happened to you." It includes a shift in the organization's philosophy from an assessment checklist to recognizing the whole person through transparency, collaboration, cultural sensitivity, building trust, and empowering both patients and staff.

According to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMSA), a trauma-informed approach includes the following characteristics (the 4 R's):

- ◆ Realizes the widespread impact of trauma and understands potential paths for recovery
- ◆ Recognizes the signs and symptoms of trauma in clients, families, staff, and others involved with the system
- ◆ Responds by fully integrating knowledge about trauma into policies, procedures, and practices
- ◆ Resists re-traumatization

The good news

ACEs can be prevented! What can a community do to help prevent ACEs? The CDC offers these prevention measures at the community level:

- 1) Strengthen economic supports to families.
- 2) Promote social norms that protect against violence and adversity.
- 3) Ensure a strong start for children.
- 4) Teach skills.
- 5) Connect youth to caring adults and activities.
- 6) Intervene to lessen immediate and long-term harms.

Read more about each of these measures in "Preventing Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs): Leveraging the Best Available Evidence. A link to the publication can be found on the Geary County K-State Research & Extension website at:

<https://www.geary.k-state.edu/health-home-family/>

Coping with Traumatic Events

While each person's response to a traumatic event varies, some of the common responses include fear, grief, and depression. Most people report feeling better within a few months of the event, but if the trauma was repetitive in nature, the impact often lasts for much longer, if not into adulthood.

What can you do for yourself on the heels of a traumatic experience?

- Understand that your symptoms may be normal, especially right after the trauma. • Keep to your usual routine.
- Take the time to resolve day-to-day conflicts so they do not add to your stress.
- Do not shy away from situations, people and places that remind you of the trauma.
- Find ways to relax and be kind to yourself.
- Turn to family, friends, and clergy person for support, and talk about your experiences and feelings with them.
- Participate in leisure and recreational activities.
- Recognize that you cannot control everything.
- Recognize the need for trained help, and call a local

mental health center.

What can you do for your child?

- Let your child know that it is okay to feel upset when something bad or scary happens
- Encourage your child to express feelings and thoughts, without making judgments
- Return to daily routines

The severity of the event, your exposure to the traumatic event, or seriousness of the threat to life, history to past trauma, the duration of the event, or other history of psychological problems can all influence the duration of the trauma's impact. If you find that you or your child have not been able to recover from the effects of the trauma or that the symptoms are severe enough during the first month that it interferes a lot with your family, friends, or job, you may need to seek professional help.

Preventing ACEs could potentially reduce a large number of health conditions. For example, up to 1.9 million cases of heart disease and 21 million cases of depression could have been potentially avoided by preventing ACEs.

Stress Relief and More

As the bumper sticker says, "Stress Happens!" but you don't need to let it get the best of you. Too much stress harms us physically and emotionally. When stress is prolonged, it becomes distress. Recognizing what the symptoms of distress are is the first step in helping you work through your emotions in a healthy pro-active way.

Mental exercise is often overlooked as a successful method for reducing stress. Through praying, meditating, deep-breathing, or self-calming practices, you can reduce or eliminate your stress level right where you are. When used effectively, mental exercises can increase the oxygen to your brain and remove the tension in your muscles – bringing your body to a relaxed state.

Physical exercise is an excellent way to relieve stress and to relax. Take an inventory of what your daily activity looks like in a normal setting. What can you add to your routine to increase the level of physical exercise you engage in each day or week? Physical exercise, such as gardening, housework, swimming, bicycling, or walking can reduce stress and improve your overall physical health at the same time.

A combination of both mental and physical exercise are also a very effective way to reduce stress. Check out these specific tips to help your mind and body relax and melt away any stress you are feeling:

Breathe: Deeply through your nose and slowly out your mouth.

Muscle relaxation: Tense and relax each major muscle group. Start with your face, and go down to your toes.

Take time-outs: Allow yourself brief breaks.

Plan for stressful situations: This way, you won't be caught off guard.

Positive self-talk: Avoid negative thinking; don't be hard on yourself. Reward yourself for managing stressful situations.

Be strong: State your needs and goals to others clearly. Respect others' goals and feelings. Work together with others.

Exercise: Always talk to your doctor before beginning any exercise program. Be active at least 30 minutes on most days of the week. Make lifestyle changes to increase your physical activity.

Enjoy yourself: Take time out for hobbies and friends. Do something you enjoy. Call a friend.

Avoid drugs, alcohol, and cigarettes: They really do not help.

Take care of yourself: Sleep well, eat well, and live well.

Family Health

Do you need help getting started on your stress-reduction plan? Try forming a team for the Geary County Extension Walk Kansas Program! Walk Kansas is a team-based program, meaning that you are part of a 6-member team and together you will select a goal (challenge) to work toward during the 8 weeks. Here are the options for your team.

Challenge 1: Discover the 8 Wonders of Kansas! This journey requires each person to get 2 ½ hrs of moderate activity per week.

Challenge 2: Go Cross Country from Troy (NE) to Elkhart (SW), which requires 4 hrs of activity per person/week.

Challenge 3: Little Balkans to Nicodemus – a trail that takes you through SE Kansas and then up to Nicodemus with interesting stops along the way. This requires 6 hrs of activity per person/week.

Developing and participating in a walking plan can help you:

- ◆ Break through stress
- ◆ Melt off body fat, lose weight and keep it off
- ◆ Boost your mood
- ◆ Improve your creativity
- ◆ Increase your earning potential

- ◆ Enhance your love life
- ◆ Tone and tighten your entire body

Experience positive benefits to your body such as:

- ◆ Improves eye health – reducing risk of glaucoma
- ◆ Keeps skin young and supple – look and feel years younger
- ◆ Improves lung capacity
- ◆ Strengthens bones
- ◆ Reduces risk of cancer
- ◆ Helps with arthritis – relieves stiffness and improves range of motion in joints
- ◆ Improves balance and coordination
- ◆ Reduces risk of diabetes and strengthens immune system

If you want to experience one or more of these benefits, consider building a Walk Kansas team. You have almost 6 weeks to find five other friends, co-workers, or family members to join you in this fun program. The cost, \$10 per participant, is minimal and you will receive weekly newsletters that give you encouragement and a variety of resources to help you reach your goal – both personally and as a team. The program runs from March 15 thru May 9, so register your 6-member team before March 15 at: www.walkkansasonline.org

Geary County

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Junction City, KS 66441

Upcoming Geary County Extension Programs

****Requires pre-registration. Call 238-4161 to pre-register****

March

****Strengthening Families 7-17—Meeting weekly on Tuesdays from 4:00—5:30pm January 21 thru March 31.** Class sessions focus on building communication, bonding and resiliency within a family. Promotes the use of bonding, boundaries, and monitoring to support family members in resisting the use of drugs and alcohol and teaches alternative positive coping skills. Registration and cost information can be found online at <http://www.geary.k-state.edu/health-home-family/>. Look for the link in the Upcoming Events section.

March

15 Walk Kansas 2020 Begins! Registration is now open online at [www:walkkansasonline.org](http://www.walkkansasonline.org). The registration fee is \$10 per person for each 6 member team. Join the movement for a healthier you!



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