



Crestwood Recovery Resilience Solutions

The Impact of Childhood Trauma and What Mitigates It

Theresa shares a part of her story that gives us the opportunity to discuss the impact of childhood trauma. This is such an important focal point, since many of us have had to deal with early life experiences that continue to haunt us as adults. Trauma affects each of us differently but there are some common indicators that are spelled out in the literature. For example, here are a list of the ten indicators spelled out in the Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) test:

1. Did a parent or other adult in the household often or very often... a) Swear at you, insult you, put you down, or humiliate you? or b) Act in a way that made you afraid that you might be physically hurt?
2. Did a parent or other adult in the household often or very often... a) Push, grab, slap, or throw something at you? or b) Ever hit you so hard that you had marks or were injured?
3. Did an adult or person at least 5 years older than you ever... a) Touch or fondle you or have you touch their body in a sexual way? or b) Attempt or actually have oral, anal, or vaginal intercourse with you?
4. Did you often or very often feel that ... a) No one in your family loved you or thought you were important or special? or b) Your family didn't look out for each other, feel close to each other, or support each other?
5. Did you often or very often feel that ... a) You didn't have enough to eat, had to wear dirty clothes, and had no one to protect you? or b) Your parents were too drunk or high to take care of you or take you to the doctor if you needed it?
6. Were your parents ever separated or divorced?
7. Was your parent/caregiver: a) Often or very often pushed, grabbed, slapped or had something thrown at him/her? or b) Sometimes, often, or very often kicked, bitten, hit with a fist, or hit with something hard? or c) Ever repeatedly hit over at least a few minutes or threatened with a gun or knife?

8. Did you live with anyone who was a problem drinker or alcoholic, or who used street drugs?
9. Was a household member depressed or mentally ill, or did a household member attempt suicide?
10. Did a household member go to prison?

As you listen to Theresa's story you will recognize the indicators that affected her and you will also hear the "saving graces" that mitigated the effects. In nearly all stories of people surviving childhood trauma there will be a point where another person steps in who, through loving and respectful connecting, begins to remind the child who they really are and how precious they are. In Theresa's case, you'll hear her talking about her grandmother being "that person" who regularly gave her the love and attention she needed. This gave her the strength to step beyond the trauma and break out of the behaviors she had established that she thought kept her safe and take the next steps in her growth. She also mentions teachers that supported her in this process.

This sounds a lot like peer support doesn't it? There is often "this person" who believes in someone, holding the hope for them until they can hold it for themselves. So once again, regardless of age, if there is someone who can hold the hope for us, we can survive and eventually thrive if given the opportunity.

Theresa's story also shows illustrates another aspect of trauma which often gets overlooked, and that is beyond PTSD, there is PTG, or post traumatic growth. Studies about PTG show that people can use the painful experiences that have harmed them to get stronger and wiser and more resilient, as Theresa has done.

Later this month we have the pleasure of having Raul Almazar as our guest and among many other things, Raul is an expert in the areas of trauma. He will be able to take us much deeper into a meaningful understanding of trauma.