

# NEW HOPE FOR SERIOUS ILLNESSES? RADICAL FINDINGS INVOLVE CHILDHOOD TRAUMA

Did some bad things ever happen to you as a child, up to the age of 18? If so, what could that possibly have to do with a serious health problem for you now?

Surprisingly, modern researchers suggest that following this lead could hold promise for people with chronic or severe illnesses – *and also for millions of other people...*

A massively important finding has come out of the world's largest ongoing scientific study connecting serious illness with childhood trauma, the Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) study.

It is this: **undeniably -- unresolved childhood traumatic events are associated with development of ALL the primary adult health and behaviour risks or diseases.**



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The ACE study has been based since 1998 on 17,421 middle class patients in Kaiser Permanente hospitals in the U.S., with ongoing followup.

***Observers say that the study turns the question 'What's wrong with you?' on its head. The real question is, 'What's happened to you?'***

## **‘ALL THAT TIME AGO? BUT I NEVER EVEN THINK ABOUT WHAT HAPPENED**

—’

Participants whose health history is recorded filled in a one-page questionnaire on common categories of childhood trauma – not single traumas, but categories. The report states: ‘Persons with multiple categories of childhood exposure were (are) likely to have multiple health risk factors later in life.’

In the ACE questionnaire, scoring for 10 questions, each YES counts as one ACE. As the number of ACEs increases, so does the risk for negative outcomes. Study results show that :

- Out of 10 common causes for death, a high ACE question score ticks 7 of these.
- People with 6 or more ACEs are likely to have a shorter lifespan by 20 years.
- An ACE score of 4 increases the risk of alcoholism by 700% and of attempted suicide by 1,200%, doubles heart disease and lung cancer rates.
- People with 4 or more ACEs are significantly more at risk for heart disease, stroke, cancer, liver disease, bone fractures, high blood pressure, chronic lung disease, diabetes, obesity, Alzheimer’s, addictions including smoking, gambling and sex, and more. They are also more likely by 460% to develop depression.
- Chronic pain is more common with people who have experienced childhood trauma. Misusing prescription pain medications is more likely with people who have been through 5 or more traumatic events.
- More than 1 in 5 study participants reported 3 or more ACEs.
- ACEs are common across all populations. Statistics suggest that more than two-thirds of the U.S. population have 1 or more ACEs. This means roughly 218 million people. Two-thirds of the Australian population is about 16 million people. Two-thirds of the world population is upwards of 4 billion people.
- ACEs contribute to most of our health problems including chronic disease, as well as to behavioural problems, and to financial and social health issues.
- Addiction? It is ‘a normal response to the adversity experienced in childhood, just like bleeding is a normal response to being stabbed’, according to Dr. Daniel Sumrok, director of the Centre for Addiction Sciences at the University of Tennessee.
- Both criminal activity and becoming a victim are also included. Someone with 4 or more ACEs is 20 times more likely to spend time in prison, 15 times more likely to have committed violence against another person in the past year, and 14 times more likely to have been a victim of violence.

These dramatic findings have rocked the healthcare world.

Healthcare leaders such as Dr. Robert Block, a past president of the American Academy of Pediatrics, are saying things like, ‘Adverse childhood experiences are the greatest unaddressed health issue facing our nation today.’

One in four Australian adults – more than 5 million people — are survivors of childhood trauma, according to the Blue Knot Foundation, which specialises in complex trauma. This is repeated ongoing interpersonal trauma and abuse, often from childhood, as an adult, or both.

Some populations are even more vulnerable to experiencing ACEs because when growing up its members have lived in disadvantaged social and economic conditions.

### **HALF A CENTURY DELAY?**

ACE's 10 questions are about childhood trauma involving abuse, neglect and household dysfunction. They include parents divorcing – physical, sexual or emotional abuse – physical/emotional neglect – domestic violence – mental illness in the family – substance abuse – a family member incarcerated.

You can access the questionnaire at <https://www.acestoohigh.com/got-your-ace-score>.

Award-winning science author and energy psychology specialist Dawson Church Ph. D. says, 'The average age of the ACE study participants was 57, indicating that the traumatic events that led to disease had occurred half a century earlier.'

Researchers coined the phrase 'toxic stress' to mean how ACEs 'get under the skin' and trigger biological reactions that lead to such startling outcomes, according to Harvard University's Centre on the Developing Child. When a child experiences multiple ACEs over time – especially without support – excessive stress affects his or her developing brain as well as immune and other regulatory systems, and cardiovascular system. It's much like revving a car engine for days or weeks at a time.

Dr. Church explains that a number of other studies have found associations between psychological distress and physiological deterioration.

'Distress' yes — although some of the traumatic experiences involved in setting up ill health later in life may be buried in memory. Our brain has placed some early-life distress 'underground', so that we can get on with life.

Memories of trauma, conscious or unconscious, have largely been unrecognised by both practitioner and patient as playing a role in undermining long-term physical health.

The ACE medical researchers were originally led to do this study by a fact that surprised them when they were conducting a clinic treating patients for obesity. They found that as many people began to lose weight, they stopped coming for treatment.

Questioned by the doctors, many said they felt they needed to keep extra body weight to somehow protect them from memories of abusive events, often sexual, that had happened to them in childhood

### **'CHILDHOOD TRAUMA IMPACTS EVERYONE': BRITISH CLINICIAN**

British integrative medicine expert Niki Gratix is one of many who have been shocked by the study.

She said, 'Emotional trauma in childhood is probably the most underexposed risk in terms of chronic disease onset in adulthood — and probably its biggest contributing factor.'

A bioenergetic practitioner, Niki co-founded one of the U.K.'s largest mind-body clinics, with patients in 35 countries treated both nutritionally and psychologically for

Chronic Fatigue Syndrome/ME (myalgic encephalomyelitis). Successful results with the clinic's patients appeared in the British medical journal *Open*.

In an interview with Dr Raphael Kellman, author of 'The Microbiome Diet', Niki said, 'The statistics I found in the ACE study were absolutely mind-blowing, massive, gigantic.'

'The information changed the lives of ACE researchers involved. Essentially, it uncovered a huge hidden crisis. People just aren't aware about the data.'

**'For instance, if you have ACEs in childhood you have a 600% increased risk of chronic fatigue syndrome and fibromyalgia.'**

### **TIME DOES NOT HEAL**

'So time doesn't heal,' Niki points out. Trauma stays stored in both the psyche and the epigenetic changes, for a lifetime, unless you intervene.

'The bottom line is, practically everybody is influenced by ACEs.'

(ACE writer Jane Stevens comments that having no or low ACEs doesn't mean that life is a bed of roses either...)

### **SOURCES OF TRAUMA**

Of course, children and young people can be traumatised in many more ways than 10. The researchers did not expect the huge findings. They reduced their original questionnaire from 100 questions to 10 common experiences.

Perhaps you can mentally add to the list of categories.

Here is an additional list for childhood adverse experiences compiled by Niki:

- Bullying
- Racism
- Traumatic birth experience
- Attachment trauma with a caregiver early in life (leading to relationship insecurity)
- Traumas you don't know about, (such as in your first 1-3 years, massively linked with Irritable Bowel Syndrome or similar).
- Traumas inherited generationally, held in the body. (Epigenetic research reveals how we pass trauma from generation to generation through our genes. But also, how effective resolution of trauma puts a stop to this chain of suffering.)
- Other kinds of trauma including events adults would not think of as trauma because they happened within family life yet impacted vulnerable children.

Leading edge birth trauma-oriented researchers have added pregnancy ACES as well as:

- Infant (0 – 18 months) Baby ACES including attachment and feeding difficulties, circumcision, adoption, medical or incubator trauma, and
- Early Childhood (18 months to 3 years) ACES re abuse or neglect.

Among many other traumatic childhood experiences is continual recognition while growing up in your own family that you are unloved, or growing up in a series of other families knowing you are unwanted.

Clinicians who specifically investigate from these new findings record that psychological and/or physical trauma often proves to be a significant factor in ill health, causing, contributing to, or keeping it in place.

### **NEW FOCUS FOR HEALTHCARE?**

In such an alarming study – where is the good news?

Well, clues lie in the names:

- This study was first published in the American Journal of **Preventive** Medicine
- Co-sponsor with healthcare giant Kaiser Permanente was the leading U.S. public health institution, the Centres for Disease Control and **Prevention**

Prevention? How can we possibly prevent children nationwide or worldwide from having adverse experiences?

Yes, some community enterprises have been set up in response to this study, for example, 5,000 police officers in Wales have been trained to spot childhood trauma in wayward teenagers.

And the study has sparked a spate of new initiatives in parental training in the U.S., aiming at prevention in the future.

But regardless of how well-meaning parents are, few are/were trained child specialists or likely to take courses to learn more. Let's say that by and large our parents — also our schoolteachers – are/were fallible human beings trying to do their best.

### **SUPPORT MINIMISES EFFECTS**

Not all children who suffered trauma will develop serious illness later in life, as a statement from the American Academy of Pediatrics points out: 'Adverse experiences and other trauma in childhood ... do not dictate the future of the child. Children survive and even thrive despite the trauma in their lives.

'For these children, adverse experiences are counterbalanced with protective factors. Adverse events and protective factors experienced together have the potential to foster resilience.'

This means that the severity of aftereffects on a child's development depends on whether or not a child receives any or effective support after a traumatic experience.

### **HIDDEN COSTS OF STRESS: your emotions**

Traditionally, people who develop serious illness are told that unhealthy lifestyle, recreational drugs, bad diet and lack of exercise can incubate health problems, and perpetuate them. This is likely to be true whether or not the sufferer has a backstory of adverse childhood experiences.

Such high risk behaviour can itself be an outcome of untreated childhood trauma, so that a person doesn't value him or herself.

**But the emerging information from this study introduces an extra element into traditional physical treatment: your emotions.**

Most people don't realise the extent of the destructive physical effects when unresolved mental and emotional stress land on their body. So — they don't connect their mental/emotional states with disease.

Physiologically, fear and anxiety flood the body with stress hormones, especially adrenalin and cortisone. These biochemicals are designed to come into play short-

term when you are in danger, to facilitate your primitive physical response to fight, flee or freeze. These are possible subconscious reactions to confrontation with, say, a wild animal. When the danger has passed, ideally the body returns to calm, which promotes cascades of healing biochemicals, such as DHEA. There's a balance between stress and peace states.

Do you know someone who says, 'I'm a worrier'? Unhappily, many people with anxiety conditions never leave the 'fight-flight-freeze' state of feeling in danger. The reason is that, unlike animals, humans are able to imagine danger, and the body does not know the difference. Extreme worry or stress activates the toxic biochemicals almost continuously. The balance between hypervigilance and relaxation is disrupted or hardly operates at all.

Imagine your body flooded with toxic biochemicals, for months, perhaps years, decades. Someone has likened this to a car being revved non-stop.

(Stress experts say that depression is focussed on the past, anxiety on the future...)

A chronic state of stress often gets to feel normal. Yet it is constantly impairing your body systems: your central nervous system, respiratory, cardiovascular, digestive, muscular and immune systems.

Most of us pay less attention to our psychological health than to our physical health...perhaps even less attention than to the wellbeing of our car.

However, in the years since this study was first published, its seemingly bad news has been broadcast sufficiently by respected specialists that public awareness of mind-body connections has begun to grow.

Whether we have good reason for ever-present anxiety and fear, or whether it's tied to unresolved past traumas we hardly give a thought to now, the physiological result is the same: continual insidious wear and tear. 'The Body Keeps the Score' is the title of a book about this by psychiatrist Bessel Van Der Kolk. Another is 'The Body Bears the Burden' by trauma expert Dr. Robert Scaer.

### **ANY SOLUTIONS FROM ACE RESEARCHERS?**

Yes – ACE study originators Dr. Vince Felitti and Dr. Robert Anda do have opinions about how to help.

**Dr. Church reports, 'The authors of the ACE Study compared the (current) healthcare system's focus on treating disease in adults to a fire brigade directing their water at the smoke, rather than at the fire below.**

**'They recommended that health care be refocussed on treating the emotional traumas that are the source of most "physical" disease.**

**'While "psychological" and "physical" might be distinctions that are useful in medicine, the body simply does not make those distinctions.'**

For the first time in history, notes this researcher, 'clinicians (have) the means to douse the fire from which much ill health springs.'

### **AN EXPERIMENT: THE VETERANS STRESS PROJECT**

Dr. Church was aligned with those recommendations when in 2009 he founded the non-drug Iraq Stress Project. This is a service offering free or low cost treatment to war veteran PTSD sufferers by qualified practitioners of the innovative psychotherapy called Emotional Freedom Techniques or EFT tapping, a leader in the new field of energy psychology.

Later he changed the project's name to Veterans Stress Project to include service personnel from other wars, as far back as the Vietnam war.

Full-blown PTSD is a hideous result of trauma. It's typically a life sentence condition that plagues sufferers with flashbacks, intrusive thoughts, insomnia, and many more physical, mental and emotional symptoms. War veterans with PTSD experience unstoppable war memories. Severe PTSD often leads to addictions, isolation, homelessness, suicide. It has no official cure.

(PTSD not only afflicts at least 20% of war veterans. Dr. Peta Stapleton of Bond University reveals that 8 people in every 100 will develop PTSD symptoms if not the disorder at some time in their life.)

Well -- were these war memories unstoppable? Not with EFT's acupressure-and-mindfulness techniques.

Through neutralising treatment applied in the Veterans' Stress Project, by 2019 about 80% of the 20,000 veterans who received 6-10 EFT sessions no longer qualify as having the disorder. Some of those sessions were conducted by phone or online. These damaged men and women have their lives back — plus some simple tapping skills to help them release everyday stresses for themselves.

After initial indifference, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs now acknowledges that science-backed EFT is an acceptable therapeutic intervention. (So do the conservative American Psychological Association, Britain's National Health Service, and the Canadian Psychotherapy Association.)

Dr. Dawson Church hosts a major website for EFT tapping, where you can read many reports of mental, emotional and physical health improvements:

[www.eftuniverse.com](http://www.eftuniverse.com)

But back to trauma and adverse experiences in childhood. There is some evidence that service personnel who develop PTSD had trauma build-up before they went to war, many in childhood.

### **WHAT IF ...**

Following the ACE discoveries of time-lag, two clear possibilities now stand out.

With good reason we can wonder what might happen if:

- 1) such childhood traumas were dissolved — even decades later during illness?
- 2) or even earlier in life?

- ***Would this lighten or avoid serious illness?***
- ***Does this new information give us a possible way out now, at least for some people?***

While the Aces literature tells us that such childhood damage 'permanently affects' our physical, emotional and mental health, resilience research in ACEs science shows that damage done to brains and bodies from such toxic stress need not be irreversible.

To help mitigate ACEs effects, Harvard's Centre on the Developing Child suggests a range of interventions from trauma therapy to exercise and social support.

Energy psychology practitioner Sarah Murphy is one of many therapists emphasising that, along with prevention attempts, the question of *healing* ACEs needs more attention. For example, she cites the long history of Emotional Freedom Techniques (EFT tapping) of helping people heal trauma. A 2017 meta-analysis found that EFT is exceptionally effective in treating Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder.

ACE writer Jane Stevens agrees: 'No matter who has ACEs, kids or adults, it's not too late to heal.'

### **EFT TAPPING: What is it?**

**As mentioned with war veterans, the groundbreaking capacity to dissolve even long-term traumatic effects in a short time is one of the benefits of EFT tapping. This is such an unusual result that typically it needs to be experienced to be believed.**

Unlike talk therapy, stress release with EFT directly involves the body. This partly explains why most people report experiencing actual change during EFT sessions, such as emotional releases, spontaneous cognitive shifts, physical sensations and pain release.

EFT has been tested in practice over more than two decades. More than 100 peer-reviewed scientific studies on EFT, as well as countless reports from individuals worldwide, demonstrate that EFT tapping has dissolved many kinds of stress. Therefore a multitude of personal problems including some physical ailments have lightened significantly or disappeared — although EFT does not claim anything but to lower or eliminate stress.

### **SAFEGUARDING YOUR HEALTH?**

In the light of ACE discoveries, logically, healing at least some of your foundational adverse childhood experiences as soon as possible with the help of a trauma-informed practitioner is likely to safeguard your present and future health.

EFT is part of a new, fourth wave of psychotherapy. Traumatic memories remain after EFT treatment, but they hold no emotional charge. Typically this can happen gently in one or two sessions, although extended trauma treatment may take a few more.

A common comment after EFT has melted away deeply held troublesome feelings is, 'I feel so relieved...I feel lighter'.

Professional EFT help may also uncover forgotten adverse experiences that have contributed to overall anxiety or depression, so that these may also be neutralised. Excepting trauma memories, after minimum tuition you can do some of this inner clearing work yourself.

Given these new findings, some people choose to neutralise early memories while they are well — or during illness.

One big difficulty remains: how can we **prove** we have prevented something, namely serious illness, or its further development? Future science may come up with a way, but currently we can't.

However, armed with this new information, individuals do now have a choice.

**Taking action to heal or neutralise unresolved childhood trauma during or before negative physical effects manifest has to be an individual choice for self-care — with an aim to be happier and healthier anyway.**

### **MORE ABOUT EFT TAPPING**

Emotional Freedom Techniques, or EFT tapping, is an innovative psychotherapy system for deep and lasting stress release. Its ability to facilitate change for the better, quickly and gently, is often called 'amazing' by those who experience it. Its various techniques centre around a core repeatable process, which accesses the nervous system particularly.

A person fingertaps 9 key locations on head, upper body and hands, while briefly tuning into and voicing a specific problem. For example, 'Even though I have this (problem, fill in the blank), I accept myself anyway.'

Sometimes described as 'psychological acupuncture', EFT has a remarkable track record worldwide. Stress can be neutralised no matter how long ago the adverse experiences or traumas occurred.

People discover for themselves how such experiences still inhibit their lives, including because of negative thought patterns, or beliefs, they adopted at the time of trauma. Those bad experiences that occurred during childhood when our brains and bodies were in development are foundational. If they stay unresolved (untreated) they tend to activate negative behaviour patterns we feel trapped in. Many results are fast, even for tapping beginners, although serious problems require more EFT expertise and persistence.

Studies show that in one hour of an individual's EFT tapping the stress hormone cortisol in the body reduces by almost one quarter, far more than other therapies. A group EFT experience by researcher Dr. Peta Stapleton of Bond University found that participants' cortisol levels dropped by 43%.

EFT was developed in the Nineties by U.S. engineer Gary Craig, out of a previous more complex system, Thought Field Therapy, developed by the late U.S. psychologist Dr. Roger Callahan. Some of its concepts date back to the origins of modern psychology in the 1800s, while others are drawn from ancient cultures.

### **TAPPING ENHANCES YOUR DNA**

In his award-winning book on energy healing and EFT, *The Genie in Your Genes*, Dr. Church distils information from 300 scientific studies including epigenetics, electromagnetism and quantum physics.

EFT enables relaxation, yet goes way beyond this. Scientific evidence shows that tapping beneficially affects your DNA as well as rewiring your brain into less stressful thought patterns and reactions.

A recent study showed that after one hour of EFT tapping, 72 genes were significantly regulated. Among the functions of these genes were:

- The suppression of cancer tumours
- Protection against the sun's ultraviolet radiation
- Type 2 diabetes insulin resistance
- Immunity from opportunistic infections
- Antiviral activity
- Synaptic connectivity between neurons
- Creation of both red and white blood cells
- Enhancement of male fertility
- Building white matter in the brain
- Metabolic regulation
- Neural plasticity
- Strengthening cell membranes
- Reducing oxidative stress.

EFT is spreading fast globally, not only because millions of people are deciding 'It works!' It was launched on the Internet, which speeds it around internationally. And its ongoing tally of peer-reviewed scientific studies opens it to millions more. In 2018 in a worldfirst, EFT gained a government approval when the U.K. government recommended that public money be invested in further research into EFT trauma treatment.

### **SUMMARY: AN EXTRA APPROACH TO ILLNESS?**

It's never too late to neutralise stress...perhaps even never too late to heal. EFT can support whatever else you're doing to heal.

#### ***Niki Gratrix:***

'So, for people to get to the root cause of their illness, they need a change in worldview.

'So far we have this view of the world as still a kind of matter, biochemistry — physical things that you can see, touch, and feel -- are the only things that are real. 'And what we need to change in our worldview is start to realize that the invisible worlds of our emotions and even what's going on at a quantum level exist, are real, are having a massive impact on us and our biology.'

#### ***Dr. Dawson Church:***

'Under very specific conditions, fear-based memories may be revised by the brain.

'Many genes are being turned on and off every day by your beliefs, feelings, and attitudes. Every thought you think ripples throughout your body, affecting your immune system, brain and hormone system.

'The new energies emerging in the field of energy psychology, especially EFT, are able to quickly neutralise traumatic emotions, by activating physiological mechanisms.

'Now we're starting to understand that our consciousness conditions our genetic expression, moment by moment.

***'This insight allows us to use consciousness change as a medical intervention.***

'Changing energy patterns before they manifest as disease works at a level of cause that is of a higher order than matter.'

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