The Nation’s Conversation:
Making Scotland the World’s First ACE-Aware Nation

Sunday September 23, 2018
A message from TIGERS and connected baby

ACE-Aware Scotland

Dr Suzanne Zeedyk explains the science of Adverse Childhood Experiences and why so many Scots are embracing this grassroots movement that could enrich the way we care for children across Scotland.

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ACE-Aware Scotland
Happening in the first place, prevent adverse experiences can realise their full potential. We must work together to create a united approach across society.

The first adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) study took place more than 20 years ago, but the evidence base has been gaining increasing awareness in recent years, particularly in Scotland.

It is clear that such adverse experiences aren’t new but the way we are recognising and tackling them in Scotland is changing. I am determined to drive progress on our vision that this means that our experiences are harmful. To further our work on this, I am delighted that we have committed to incorporating the principles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child into domestic law in Scotland. This demonstrates our commitment to the rights of children and young people in Scotland.

As part of the broader range of work we’re doing to help prevent ACEs, we are supporting parents, families and children by investing in mental and infant health, providing support to young mothers through the Family Nurse Partnership and taking action to tackle child poverty.

We’re also investing in school nurse and counselling, providing funding to support health and wellbeing interventions in school, and supporting children to maintain contact and relationships with parents in prison where appropriate.

In addition to this, we’re implementing national trauma training for Scotland’s workforce, and working to increase awareness in communities, so people can recognise and prevent ACEs. We will also support young people and adults who have suffered from the impact of these experiences.

Our getting it right for every child approach aims to improve outcomes, support the wellbeing of our children and young people, and address their needs early.

This is about families and agencies working together with the needs of the child or young person at the centre. I’m delighted to be speaking at the ACEs造福 Nation conference today and looking forward to hearing about the strategies you have in place to support your communities.

We have piloted an eight-week ACE-awareness programme in schools across Scotland to ensure we are doing all we can to prevent adverse childhood experiences and support children and adults affected.

TROUGTH this discussion we have been exploring the impact that childhood adversity can have on individuals and whole ACE-awareness-trained professionals look across a variety of sectors, including health, criminal justice, education, and social work.

We need to know that repetition to positive or negative experiences (ACEs) in life, especially during our most formative years, can have a significant impact on our development.

We have piloted an eight-week ACE-awareness programme in schools across Scotland to ensure we are doing all we can to prevent adverse childhood experiences and support children and adults affected.

We must start by understanding how ‘our people’ are biologically programmed. We need to know that repetition to positive or negative experiences (ACEs) in life, especially during our most formative years, can have a significant impact on our development.

It is those experiences that will impact our ability to stay regulated, build resilience and enable us to move to the cognitive part of our brain that allows us to problem solve, creativity in our thinking and understand new concepts.

Why an understanding of human development can have a positive impact in your business...

Many of these characteristics have developed in childhood and are created by the environment and relationships we experience. This means that our experiences can change our biology, impacting on our ability to stay calm and focused in times of pressure, short decision-making and being able to understand our internal cues.

At TIGERS, our knowledge of ACEs and understanding of human development has led to a focus on staff wellbeing. It is creating a significant impact on the relationships that we have internally, externally and externally. We are experiencing that wellbeing is not a one-off event, it’s a daily routine. It allows us to take ownership of our own development needs and gives greater understanding to our physiological responses to build resilience in the workplace. It allows leaders to understand that our staff are unique individuals and that when we experience stress, it’s not just about the situation at hand, but also how our own ACEs influence our reactions.

ACE-Aware Scotland Adverse Childhood Experiences

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Immersive Afternoon Conference

25th September 26th September

at Hampden Park

at SEC Armadillo

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IF PEOPLE EXPERIENCE POOR EMOTIONAL WELLBEING THEY ARE MORE LIKELY TO STRUGGLE

John Swinney MSP, Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills offers an insight into why the Scottish Government is focusing on childhood adversity and encouraging more action to prevent and address adverse childhood experiences

Scotland: Where Our Children Should Grow Up, Safe and Respected
A "The way it was" was close to the man and the man's story, and I wanted to talk about it. There are the words of Victor Frankel, talking about the buildings of the man's story. I thought we would come into talking about this. I have written this piece in coming. It is important to remind us of our work into Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) in 2007. I knew what he meant and I knew how to find out. There is an ACE Movement now underway in Scotland. I want to talk about it, but it has taken a long time to come. I want to remind myself of its history.

On July 18, 2007, Dr. W. W. Felitti spoke at the Scottish Police College at a conference hosted by the Violence Reduction Unit and the World Health Organization. The conference was supported by Scottish Government and attended by many senior civil servants and Ministers. In Scotland, at that time, there was no regular talk from politicians and professionals alike about our children. Perhaps we were too scared of what we were seeing, perhaps we lacked the courage; perhaps the task was too big, too ambitious. Perhaps we did not have the voices that allowed us to see the faces of the most future generations. That was the year we embarked on the ACEs study. ACEs were an important element of our Preventive Health Strategy published in 2007. They have made huge numbers of people aware of ACEs. They speak about the trauma caused by ACEs. They speak about the grief that is caused by ACEs. They speak about the suffering that is caused by ACEs. They speak about the loss that is caused by ACEs. They speak about the joy that is caused by ACEs. They speak about the love that is caused by ACEs. They speak about the fear that is caused by ACEs. They speak about the hope that is caused by ACEs. They speak about the resilience that is caused by ACEs. They speak about the kindness that is caused by ACEs. They speak about the compassion that is caused by ACEs. They speak about the courage that is caused by ACEs. They speak about the strength that is caused by ACEs. They speak about the wisdom that is caused by ACEs. They speak about the beauty that is caused by ACEs. They speak about the truth that is caused by ACEs. They speak about the love that is caused by ACEs. They speak about the resilience that is caused by ACEs. They speak about the kindness that is caused by ACEs. They speak about the compassion that is caused by ACEs. They speak about the courage that is caused by ACEs. They speak about the strength that is caused by ACEs. They speak about the wisdom that is caused by ACEs. They speak about the beauty that is caused by ACEs. They speak about the truth that is caused by ACEs. They speak about the love that is caused by ACEs. They speak about the resilience that is caused by ACEs. They speak about the kindness that is caused by ACEs. They speak about the compassion that is caused by ACEs. They speak about the courage that is caused by ACEs. They speak about the strength that is caused by ACEs. They speak about the wisdom that is caused by ACEs. They speak about the beauty that is caused by ACEs. They speak about the truth that is caused by ACEs. They speak about the love that is caused by ACEs. They speak about the resilience that is caused by ACEs. They speak about the kindness that is caused by ACEs. They speak about the compassion that is caused by ACEs.
Jenn Knussen, Headteacher of Pittenweem East Primary School, Fife, writes about her experience of applying trauma-informed teaching.

‘Little people matter’ time to change our thinking on ‘challenging behaviour’ in the classroom ...

ADULTS ARE BETTER ABLE TO SUPPORT A CHILD WHEN THEY RECOGNISE DISTRESS

The phrase ‘challenging behaviour’ is no longer used in our school. We talk about ‘difficult behaviour’. I am hugely grateful to my colleagues for this compassion and openness in the early days of that shift. This was five years before the term ‘ACEs’ began to be widely adopted in this country. But our shared insight allowed us to change to a language of connection and compassion.

As our understanding of the driving nature of distress upon behaviour deepened, colleagues began to ask ‘What has happened to this child?’ Colleagues became curious, and about a child’s history, family surroundings and about their childhood experiences. It occurred when a child experienced trauma.

Once a child experienced trauma, school became a safe place for a child to gain their dignity, resilience, that any children in relationship to the world to be repaired. Trust comes through safety. Our school team places a high value on the trust our children and families have in us. As in every aspect of learning, children make ‘mistakes’ with their work.

They need coaching and support. We need to help them if they made mistakes in literacy or maths, and to encourage all children to develop a love for public displays in classrooms where their children are doing important jobs, but it is a different story when it comes to classes of behaviour stickers. Our school team was referred to update these. The best reward our children can recover is faithfulness and approval, nurturing their feeling of belonging.

Our children knew that they mattered. Yes, it can be hard to remember who is getting a kitten or who has a wobbly tooth. But we know this is important to a child, so we make a little things matter, just as little people matter.

As the rationale becomes more aware of adverse childhood experiences and how to mitigate their impact I recall the uncertainty at the start of my school’s journey.

I remember our results. The school’s success in improving the way the word and we are spreading. A child needs two more about making Scotland an ACE-Aware Nation at www.ace-awarenation.com

ACE-Aware Scotland
Adverse Childhood Experiences

Making Scotland the World’s First ACE-Aware Nation

In September, drawing together more than 2000 attendees, gives us a chance to create the courage that is crucial for change.

Education Campaigner David Cameron argues that there has never been a better time to drive forward the ACEs Movement. The ACE-Aware Conference in September, Scotland ... It’s time to wake up and act on the science of childhood adverse experiences.

Scotland ... It’s time to wake up and act on the science of childhood adverse experiences.

WAKE-UP... so says 2,000 experts who have gathered at the 20th September ACE-Aware Conference in Scotland. For the past two years, the ACEs Movement has been growing apace with the momentum of the ACEs Movement in Scotland. The goal of the ACEs Movement is to drive change in the decisions we make, the legislation, policies and practice.

It is clear that we need to wake up to the situations we are failing at our children, through our own ignorance and indifference, and be up to the impact of ACEs.

That effort has been incredibly successful. Close to 2,000 people are likely to attend the ACE-Aware Scotland Conference on 20th-22nd September. The conference will be aiming the keynotes speaker in the world of childhood experiences (ACEs), and their children who are inspired, loved and valued and encouraged parenting and education across the country.

I am excited to attend the ACE-Aware Scotland Conference. The ACEs Movement has been growing with the momentum of the ACEs Movement, and the ACE-Aware Scotland Conference is the perfect opportunity to make a difference.

Scotland ... It’s time to wake up and act on the science of childhood adverse experiences...
What would an ACE-Aware nation look like?

In my role leading Children’s First, Scotland’s National Charity, I regularly find myself having conversations with people about the many ways children’s lives affect us for the rest of our lives. These conversations are often about how we can protect children from abuse and neglect, how to support those who are suffering from the stresses that living in poverty puts on their families, and how we can continue to improve our safeguarding approach and support children and young people to recover and repair after such traumatic experiences. I am often asked about what role the Arts sector can have in sharing some of these conversations with the 2000 people who attended the ACE-Aware Scotland Conference in Glasgow and the thousands of others around Scotland who already have an established or nascent interest in the ACE discussion. I will talk about how the insights from these conversations have shaped our work at Children’s First and the place that they have in our organisation. I am inspired by the brave and resilient people in Scotland, especially the children, who are so often spoken about and written about, but who are far too often the victims of the devastating effects of the unhelpful strategies that we develop to cope with the trauma they suffer. How can we nurture more compassion in our country? I suppose I am asking what an ACE-Aware Scotland nation looks like. One recent and unexpected conversation has helped me find answers to this question. I was on a bus travelling into Glasgow city centre to speak at an event for youth workers and policy makers. I lost in thought about what to say to them that could have maximum impact. As I thought about this, I heard their voices beat loud and clear at each event. A woman sat opposite me. She was one of those Glasgow women who look older than their years, the kind of woman you know right away and engage in a chat about the weather. Just as I did, she would tip her head to the side and say to me, “Right, how is it on the bus, then?”

This woman ended at me as she usually did, and she commented it was a beautiful day. I went on to talk about what a wonderful country it is. I got off the bus at a stop where the road narrowed to two ends running in opposite directions. I was young then, escaping to the streets of a city with the brand “People”. I walked for a few minutes through the streets, and I was thinking about them being “unbearably beautiful” in the city. I caught her eye and, without thinking, I asked, “Don’t you ever wonder what happened to her?”. The locked her eyes up and took all of five seconds for her sharp blue eyes to flick with “Ar, right enough,” she said. “My neph- er was famale.” She paused thoughtfully, and said, “I have to be honest; I’ve never thought about that before.” As we got off the bus, she stared at me for a moment and then said, “That was the beginning of the end, but it was the beginning of the end, wasn’t it?”

I AM INSPIRED BY THE KINDNESS OF SCOTTISH PEOPLE FOR MY CHILDREN

The ACE study is showing us that a child living in our country is seven times under threat. We have a public health issue on our hands. Common manifestations include kids being medicated, mental health issues, low educational attainment, ADHD, autoimmune diseases, cancer, addiction, sexual transmitted diseases, frustrated parents who feel they have lost control of their kids, antisocial Behaviour, kids self-depecting in street drugs and alcohol, youth violence.

Growing up in poverty, experienced personal trauma, emotional loss and difficulty and had experiences of abuse. Their view of the self and personal identity has been shaped in the eyes of their early environments. You might say their brains never had a chance.

Scotland – it’s time to change shame and blame for compassion

I F I TRIED to describe to you what I am passionate about raising awareness and preventing Adverse Childhood Experiences. I could not do justice to the damage that ACEs do in our culture. To share my beliefs, I need to share how many of the people we speak with about them are “unbearably beautiful” in the city. I caught her eye and, without thinking, I asked, “Don’t you ever wonder what happened to her?”

It’s a glaring issue that needs attention. I have worked in prevention for a long time now, and what I can tell you is, in nearly all cases that individuals caught in the cycle of trauma and anti-social behaviour that I have worked with, what has been most prevalent in their life was their exposure to adverse childhood experiences. For example, we know that ACEs are common, and that ACEs contribute to chronic diseases, mental illness and being non-compliant. We know that ACEs are currently a pressing concern for young people within the same families. We are at a point where we need to consider our early years practitioners, as having a role in addressing the importance of ACEs.

The Scottish Government has made clear that the ACE-Aware Scotland Conference in September is a key part of the ongoing support and research that and that we have to keep on the agenda of hope rather than despair. It tells us everything we can do that everybody can contribute. When we understood it, we can change it. Advocacy is a template for growth.

I CAN’T SIMPLY BLAME KIDS FOR NOT BEHAVING ACCORDINGLY

The ACE-Aware Nation will look like. It will be heard and understood. The ACE-Aware Nation will look like. It will be heard and understood. We can’t simply blame kids for not behaving accordingly.

I AM FRIEND to the manager of Big Bird Nursery, a preschool and child care service operating at Larkhall, South Lanarkshire. As the things that make me especially proud that we have ensured all our staff are trained in attachment. We understand we need the workforce to do our job. We will help the young and vulnerable living with us to help their children stay in touch.

Children of all ages experience stress as they move from a home to a new educational environment. This can be unsettling, making reducing that stress, providing a nurturing environment to help children thrive is to get. That’s what we do. We are an attachment training that has taught us. Our approach is informed by the research showing that children who experience attachment and understanding children’s needs are about how we can support them. We need to focus on the ACEs and the way they are showing people. We need to look for the ACEs and the way they are showing people. We need to look for the ACEs and the way they are showing people. We need to look for the ACEs and the way they are showing people.

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Hazel Sneddon, manager of Big Bird Nursery, explains why all early years staff in the country should be trained in the biology of relationships – and why her nursery focuses on children’s emotional needs rather than managing behaviour

How a child’s experience in nursery helps prevent heart attacks in adulthood

When I speak to my nursery workers, I talk about what a beautiful country it is. I get off the bus at a stop where the road narrowed to two ends running in opposite directions. I was young then, escaping to the streets of a city with the brand “People”. I walked for a few minutes through the streets, and I was thinking about them being “unbearably beautiful” in the city. I caught her eye and, without thinking, I asked, “Don’t you ever wonder what happened to her?”

I locked her eyes up and took all of five seconds for her sharp blue eyes to flick with “Ar, right enough,” she said. “My nephew was female.” She paused thoughtfully, and said, “I have to be honest; I’ve never thought about that before.” As we got off the bus, she stared at me for a moment and then said, “That was the beginning of the end, but it was the beginning of the end, wasn’t it?”

Let’s give one example of what attachment practice looks like. I was walking down a noisy street, with the car hooting, and an adult who had not been in school for many years turned to me and said, “How can it be prevented?”

We all react and respond differently to trauma and adversity in our lives. It is our response that defines us as a person. It is our response that defines us as a person. It is our response that defines us as a person. It is our response that defines us as a person.
We asked Scotland, ‘What does an ACE-Aware Nation look like to you?’
Here are your contributions to the ‘Nation’s Conversation’.

- ‘Strong ethics and kindness to all. It’s important that we mould our youth into becoming kinder people in hope of a better future’
- ‘One with health equality, improved health, no generational trauma, emphasis on positive relationships, services that see the whole person and not just the problems, everyone understands the impact of trauma and what you can do about it. What would your ACE-Aware Nation look like?’
- ‘An ACE-Aware Nation would realise trauma is biological so, like any other childhood illness we could help children recover and make reasonable adjustments, so they can thrive’
- ‘Using kindness and love to give young people the chance to be who they are meant to be’
- ‘An ACE-Aware (and responsive) Nation believes that there is always hope’
- ‘Inclusion for all! Every child given the chance to thrive!’
- ‘An ACE-Aware Nation would know this is not just about children. It is about humans and compassion and demonstrating that people matter even when they think they don’t’
- ‘A society in which individuals, families, leaders, communities, organisations and systems have the courage and freedom to show love, compassion and vulnerability to understand and forgive each other and themselves, endeavour to stamp-out despair and shame and nurture hope and purpose for all’
- ‘A nation where behaviour is treated as the symptom of ACEs and there is a genuine desire to look for the root of that problem and stop it happening again - Applied to both children and adults alike’
- ‘A country where children have a future and not a destiny; where what happens to them is not dictated by what has happened to them’
- ‘An ACE-Aware Nation would recognise the impact of ACEs, know that “even if the mind forgets, the body remembers” (the trauma) and understand that every behaviour is a communication. But know too that there is hope’

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