

## **Resilience: The Biology of Stress and the Science of Hope**

*October 2017*

The Stillwater local government channel will run the highly acclaimed documentary [\*\*Resilience: The Biology of Stress and the Science of Hope\*\*](#) every evening at 7:00 pm through Thanksgiving. It can be viewed on the following channels:

- Suddenlink channel 14
- ATT U-Verse channel 99

This Sundance award-winning documentary sheds light on the effects of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) as documented by nearly two decades of patient research findings analyzed by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC). Produced by James Redford (Robert Redford's son), the documentary presents the damaging effects of trauma and adversity in childhood, and what medical, educational, and other community-based organizations are doing to help families and children overcome these effects.

The study of ACEs has transformed our understanding of the effects of child adversity and trauma. The original study, published in 1998 by [\*\*Drs. Vincent Felitti\*\*](#) at Kaiser-Permanente in California and [\*\*Robert Anda\*\*](#) at the CDC. They discovered that their patients who reported having four or more adverse events in childhood (physical, emotional or sexual abuse, physical or emotional neglect, parent substance use, mental illness, incarceration, divorce or domestic violence) were two- to three-times as likely to have heart disease, cancer, diabetes, stroke, depression, and other chronic illnesses. They were more likely to smoke, abuse alcohol or drugs or be obese. And patients with six or more of the ten adverse experiences had a 20-year reduction in life expectancy. No other risk factors are even nearly as powerful a predictor of future health problems as the ACEs questions.

In the 20 years of research on ACEs since the original study, researchers throughout the world, in clinics, schools, prisons and other settings have documented an irrefutable link between childhood adverse experiences and poor outcomes for health, learning, relationships, and later functioning. The nationally recognized practitioners and experts interviewed in the documentary share the belief that the ACEs epidemic is the number one public health problem facing us today, and the major reason why children struggle in school and in life.

ACEs are particularly important for us in Oklahoma. Oklahoma is at the top in the prevalence rate for ACEs, as one in six children here already have at least 3 ACEs (as reported in 2014 by [\*\*Child Trends\*\*](#)). ACEs can be a consequence of trauma experienced by whole communities. Historical trauma is passed from generation to generation, unless parents and communities have the tools to address the effects of trauma and adversity.

However, there is hope for those of us with high ACEs. Research on building resilience has found that creating trauma-informed practices in schools, law-enforcement, and the justice system help children build coping skills. Creating programs in medical clinics and social service agencies helps identify high-risk children and families and provide effective treatments to manage stress from trauma and adversity. There is also a deepened understanding of specific ACEs and the power of Protective and Compensatory Experiences (PACEs) for buffering ACEs and building resilience in children and adults alike. With better research and understanding, we can systematically improve societal and medical practices to address the enduring effects of early childhood adversity.

We at the Center for Integrative Research on Childhood Adversity ([CIRCA](#)) and Oklahoma State University need your help to promote this unique opportunity to view the *Resilience* documentary in our Oklahoma communities. We encourage you to watch it, invite your friends, neighbors, and colleagues to a viewing event in your home, at a church small group meeting, civic club meeting, or other similar venues.



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