

EmBRACE

A vehicle for changing the culture through an ACE lens

Emotionally & Brain Resilient to Adverse Childhood Experiences

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) are a complex set of related childhood experiences which can either directly affect a child/young person (sexual, emotional and physical abuse; physical and emotional neglect) and, indirectly affect them due to the environment in which they live, often referred to as household dysfunction (such as living with a parent/caregiver who has mental illness; is incarcerated; has substance dependency; where there is domestic abuse or, loss due to separation / divorce).

The research provides a strong dose-response relationship between ACE and poor physical and mental health, chronic disease, lower academic success in childhood and, into adulthood. It also shows the relationship between ACEs and violence; if we could prevent ACEs, violence would be halved – for both victims and perpetrators of violence. Children and young people who are exposed to ACEs have increased – and sustained – levels of stress.

When exposed to stressful situations, the fight, flight or freeze response floods our brain with corticotrophin-releasing hormones (CRH), a normal and protective response. However, when repeatedly exposed to ACEs, more CRH is produced by the brain, which results in the child being constantly in heightened state of alert, constantly in fight, flight or freeze mode and do not reach the natural recovery mode. In this heightened neurological state a young person is unable to think rationally and it is physiologically impossible for them to learn.

EmBRACE (Emotional and Brain Development to Adverse Childhood Experiences) within an educational setting is an innovative programme which provides a framework for educational settings to meet the challenge of addressing the factors which directly affects brain development and subsequently learning as a result of repeated exposure to ACEs. EmBRACE provides a school or college with a structure to become ACE Informed, bringing about a culture change through an ACE-informed lens - that not only improves outcomes for students, but also supports staff and parents too. One key area of EmBRACE focused on working with staff to build strong relationships with students and/or parents to help them understand how resilience can be developed to combat the negative impact of ACEs – therefore reducing the consequences of ACEs.

Understanding ACEs within various settings is important when taking a holistic approach to supporting children and young people and for key stakeholders working collaboratively. Learning from the successes of EmBRACE within an educational setting is paramount and provides a platform to demonstrate transferable skills to implement EmBRACE within a police setting. The outcomes of the EmBRACE have been used to train Early Action Police Officers to have a basic knowledge of ACEs.

EmBRACE is different to other wellbeing programmes. EmBRACE is not a process or a training package. EmBRACE focuses on a change management approach, creating the conditions in which an ACE-informed culture is developed and enhanced. EmBRACE is a vehicle that leads to a cultural change of our staff and clients, all through an ACE lens.



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The strength of EmBRACE is to implement over a defined time period to embed the thinking, the understanding, the responses and consider how the 'organisation' becomes ACE-informed. EmBRACE also challenges resistant to change and recognises that each establishment is unique.

The delivery model supports staff in recognising how childhood adversity impacts on brain development. Once staff understand this, which is a challenging learning curve for many, they will be guided to identify effectively the 'fight, flight or freeze' behavioural patterns in children, young people and families who they work with. This approach allows them to look at their approach and to implement ACE informed and trauma enforced strategies, including the building of strong relationships, within their own working environments. Recognising that staff can change their practice, resulting in a positive contribution to culture change is a significant step forward, as is educating parents and families. There are various components to the EmBRACE programme in order to provide a structure to inform the action planning, monitoring, evaluation process and meet the current national Ofsted standards for schools.

EmBRACE within a Police Setting is an innovative programme that provides a framework for the police to meet the challenge of addressing the factors which directly affects brain development and has an impact on challenging behaviour, including anti-social behaviour, violence, domestic abuse, which are increased as the number of ACEs increases. EmBRACE within a Police Setting provides a structure for all members of the police force to become ACE-informed, bringing about a culture change through an ACE-informed lens. This approach not only improves outcomes for children and young people and their families, but also supports its staff. One significant area to focus is to 'Engage with families through an ACE Lens'. This involves working with parents / caregivers to defuse and de-escalate challenging situations, build strong relationships with them and their children to help them understand ACEs, encourage them to reflect on their own contribution to the number of ACEs their child may have, how resilience is essential in combating the negative impact of ACEs and how to support them in the process of addressing change, and in particular to reduce violence and domestic abuse.

It must be emphasised again that EmBRACE is not a process or a training programme. However, there are various components, i.e. change tools, which will be implemented in order to provide a structure to inform the action planning, monitoring and evaluation process and, to adhere to high standards of care and, to ensure that it is sustainable by bringing about cultural change.

The main components are to establish trauma informed teams, which includes informing and supporting parents; strategic oversight and planning including policy changes; using a coaching model which supports staff development including self-reflection and, working with parents / families.

A detailed programme will be provided upon acceptance of my consultancy services and delivery.



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