

Breaking the Cycle: Addressing Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) Among Marginalized Youth Through Affirming Mental Health Care

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Abstract Overview

Marginalized youth—including LGBTQ+ youth, youth of color, disabled youth, and other underserved groups—experience disproportionately high rates of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) such as family rejection, discrimination, community violence, and abuse. These traumatic events are strongly correlated with long-term health and behavioral challenges.

Learning Objectives

- Identify common ACEs that disproportionately affect LGBTQ+ and other marginalized youth.
- Understand the long-term mental and physical health implications of unaddressed childhood trauma.
- Explore affirming, trauma-informed approaches that enhance engagement and outcomes for marginalized youth.
- Apply strategies for creating inclusive care environments across diverse mental health settings.
- Recognize how popular culture and political discourse can negatively impact young people.

Key Insights

1. The Disproportionate Burden of ACEs

LGBTQ+ youth, youth of color, and disabled youth experience higher levels of ACEs compared to their peers, often rooted in systemic inequities and identity-based trauma.

2. Long-Term Health Implications

Unaddressed trauma is linked to depression, anxiety, PTSD, chronic illness, substance use, homelessness, and self-harm.

3. Affirming Trauma-Informed Care

Safe environments, empowerment of youth, and resilience building are essential in disrupting cycles of trauma.

4. Systemic and Social Factors

Barriers to care, discrimination in healthcare, and harmful cultural/political discourse intensify minority stress for marginalized youth.

Conclusion

Marginalized youth carry a disproportionate burden of ACEs, but these outcomes are not inevitable. Affirming, trauma-informed care and systemic change can break cycles of adversity, reduce harm, and foster healing. Clinicians, educators, and community leaders all have a role in creating environments

where marginalized youth are empowered to thrive.

References (selected)

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Notes
