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## The Impact of Trauma and Poverty for Children in the Classroom

April 2017



Dear Friends,

Recently I shared the [Adverse Childhood Experience \(ACE\) Questionnaire](#) with a close friend of mine. With a score of 6 out of 10, I understood in a whole new way the impact of childhood trauma on my friend's life.

We all know that families experiencing homelessness have experienced trauma. Homelessness itself is traumatizing. If it's traumatic for mothers in Bridge of Hope, how traumatic is it for their children? There's a good deal of research pointing to the harmful effects of trauma on child health and development.

Indeed, trauma impacts children's ability to learn. Homeless children are twice as likely to have a learning disability, repeat a grade, or to be suspended from school due to interrupted schooling. Ninety-seven percent of homeless children have moved at least once a year, resulting in a potential 3-6 months of education loss. (American Psychological Association. 2016. [Effects of Poverty, Hunger and Homelessness on Children and Youth.](#))

The impact on learning is more than just interrupted schooling. **Childhood trauma can cause the child's brain to get caught in the fight/flight/freeze response.** It's a self-protective response that arises when the thalamus and amygdala produce cortisol and adrenaline. Under normal circumstances, these hormones serve a short-term purpose (i.e. empower one to jump

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Tim Durkan  
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What if we extended a basic level of the respect, patience and understanding that we

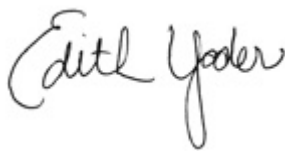
out of the way of an oncoming car) after which the hormones dissipate from the body.

But with trauma, particularly recurring ongoing trauma, these hormones fail to dissipate. And their presence in the brain prevents the hippocampus from performing its proper function in the process of learning.

To learn more about the impact of trauma on learning, tune into Crystal Martin, Lead Intervention Specialist for the School District of Lancaster. Crystal presented a fabulous workshop entitled *The Impact of Trauma and Poverty for Children in the Classroom* at our 2016 Bridge of Hope Conference. [Part 1](#) and [Part 2](#) are available for viewing on our YouTube Channel.

As we walk with families facing homelessness during these days of Lent, I find myself praying that the Light of Christ will break into the dark and fearful places of each child's life. And may the Light of Christ break into your life in these days of Lent as well.

## Blessings,



want for ourselves to those living on the streets?

## What's New?

- Anne Dunnenberger, our Director of Outreach, will have an exhibit at the [Lutheran Services in America](#) conference from **May 3-6** in Washington, D.C. [Contact Anne](#) if you will attend the conference or want to learn more about becoming a Bridge of Hope Program Site to leverage the power of Neighboring Volunteers from churches to end family homelessness - like [Bridge of Hope @ Lutheran Services Carolinas](#) (NC) and [Bridge of Hope @ Samaritas-Westland](#) (MI).
- Join us at our [2017 Gala Luncheon](#) on May 12, 2017 at Doubletree Resort in Lancaster (PA). Thank you to all our generous [Gala sponsors!](#)

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