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## I Need to Know about Adverse Childhood Effects: Response 2

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“I need to know about adverse childhood effects”

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***Case Conceptualization***

The case of Lucas will require a professional school counselor to use a wide variety of skills, including consultation, collaboration, and counseling, all viewed through a culturally responsive perspective. The challenges Lucas encountered in his first 6 years of life have, not surprisingly, influenced his development. According to Erikson (as cited by Fiore, 2001), children who fail to form secure attachments early in life are prone to mistrust, which is evident in Lucas’s reluctance to participate in new situations or join group activities. Later stages of Erikson’s model detail how children develop autonomy and begin to understand they are responsible for their own behavior -- both traits that seem to be lacking in Lucas’s development. Through a lens of social learning theory, we might also point out the fact that appropriate social/emotional skills were likely not modeled for Lucas during the formative years, which may have also contributed to his issues with social interaction (Broderick & Blewitt, 2015).

Despite Lucas’s many developmental issues, we are concerned about the choice to retain him in kindergarten. Research has shown retention to be only a marginally effective intervention at best, and an overtly harmful one at worst (National Association of School Psychologists, 2011), with studies linking the practice to increased behavioral difficulty, poor peer relationships, and decreased self-esteem (Jimerson, 2001). Additionally, African American males are disproportionately retained when compared with students from other ethnic backgrounds (National Center for Education Statistics, 2010) -- an ongoing equity issue our schools must address.

While Lucas’s case is challenging, we feel that a team of concerned individuals collaborating on a variety of interventions aimed at increasing his prosocial behaviors could make a difference for this young man. Below, we will discuss how a school counselor could lead such an effort by utilizing his/her skills in consultation, collaboration, and cultural responsiveness.

***Consultation***

Our first step in this case would be to engage in direct consultation with Ms. Karis. In this role, the school counselor (consultant) would arrange to meet with the Ms. Karis (consultee) to develop an intervention or series of interventions that could be implemented at home to address Lucas's developmental issues, such as attachment. In this case, one possible intervention might be strategies a reward system under which Lucas could have lunch with his mother (or other trusted adult) on Fridays during weeks he did not have issues in school (morning separation, behavior referrals, etc.). Another strategy Ms. Karis and the classroom teacher might try is systematic desensitization, whereby the mother is gradually less involved with the morning drop-off over the course of several weeks until the point is reached at which she need not even enter the school building. As interventions are tried, the school counselor would work collaboratively with Ms. Karis and the classroom teacher to assess the effectiveness of each intervention and develop new possibilities if necessary.

### ***Collaboration***

It is clear that this case would be too much for any school counselor to handle alone. Instead, it would clearly require the collaboration of many individuals, including the school counselor, teachers, administrator(s), parent(s), existing care providers, and community organizations. While the school counselor might "run point" on organizing and coordinating a team of individuals, he/she cannot and should not be the sole source of support for Lucas, Ms. Karis, and/or the classroom teacher. If the school has a Student Assistance Team (SAT) or Response to Intervention (RTI) team, Lucas's case should immediately be referred for discussion and development of a multi-tiered system of support that would likely include ongoing behavior monitoring; positive behavior intervention and support (PBIS) strategies; reward systems; and counseling interventions. Ms. Karis should play a significant role in any team that examines Lucas's case, as her insights into his early development (including interventions tried at home and in previous educational and social settings) would be invaluable. In addition, we would advise the counselor to seek a "consent to share information" from Ms. Karis so that all the professionals involved in Lucas's case (physicians, therapists, etc.) could be contacted and involved in planning and monitoring the effectiveness of interventions. These professionals might also be consulted about Lucas's ADHD (and

any other underlying disabilities) that might qualify Lucas for special services and accommodations under IDEA or Section 504.

### ***Cultural Responsiveness***

Understanding the cultural dimension in this case is a critical component. Although we are unsure of the cultural makeup of the school community, we do know that Lucas is being raised in a home environment culturally different from his previous home environment on many levels (i.e., socioeconomic and race). Another key piece of information absent from this case is whether there is a male role model in Lucas' life. One strategy we recommend is to find a mentor for Lucas, preferably an African American male. Mentored youth have shown improvement in outcomes in behavioral, emotional, social, and academic domains spanning development (DuBois, Portillo, Rhodes, Silverthorn & Valentine, 2011). Throughout Lucas' development, the counselor can assist Ms. Karis understand the unique identity development process including his racial identity development and invite Ms. Karis to assist Lucas in developing and nurturing connections to his culture of origin as he grows up with a foot in both worlds. Although grief may be a natural part of this process, we believe it is important to assist Lucas in the meaning making process of his loss. Meaning making assists the student with identity development following a loss, making sense of the loss, and finally searching for benefits following a loss (Neimeyer, 2005). These three components within meaning-making would all be beneficial to Lucas as he continues coping with the losses he experienced early in life, and works to build healthy relationships and interact cooperatively with others.

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