What if time doesn’t heal all wounds? What if the past is never truly forgotten? What if we could link the greatest public health crises of our time to one single idea?

There is a strong relationship between trauma and health throughout a person’s life. For us to have better health we need to understand the prevalence of this trauma. Adverse childhood experiences, or ACEs, can help explain this relationship. In 1998, breakthrough research linked adversities in childhood with adult health outcomes.

Nearly two thirds of adults have at least one adverse childhood experience. ACEs can include neglect, abuse, significant household dysfunction and community adversity. ACEs cause a toxic amount of stress hormones in the body. Their presence negatively impacts the healthy development of children’s hearts, brains and immune systems. Countless studies show that the roots of many common diseases stem from ACEs.

This connection must be utilized. If health care providers can better understand the realities of their patients, they can better serve them. We can no longer ignore the toll that trauma takes on our lives. It must be an element of every health discussion. ACEs will not always cause poorer health outcomes.
There are ways to protect against them, and to heal them in adulthood. Patients deserve care that is tailored to their personal experiences and strategies that recognize the realities of everyday life. Without acknowledging the connections between past stressors and current physical health, we are missing too many opportunities to help people realize their full health potential.