

REFERENCE TOOL

Assessing Adults for Lifetime Exposure to Violence

**Linda Chamberlain PhD MPH
Family Violence Prevention Fund**

The long-term effects of exposure to violence are well documented. Adverse experiences during childhood can be predictive of health problems as an adult and increase the risk of being victimized and/or perpetrating violence as an adolescent and adult. Past exposure to violence often compromises parenting skills and can lead to intergenerational family violence.

There is increasing awareness of the importance of assessing adults for current or recent victimization, particularly intimate partner violence and sexual assault. Due to the strong correlation between prior exposure to violence, health problems, and revictimization, routine assessment should be expanded to include more questions on lifetime exposure to violence.

The purpose of this reference tool is to provide examples of questions and resources on assessment for lifetime exposure to violence, including childhood abuse, childhood exposure to intimate partner violence, sexual assault/rape, and unwanted sex, that health care and service providers can integrate into their current assessment practices and routine history forms. The information provided below is from studies and clinical and research instruments. Information on how to obtain assessment instruments is provided. Two key points should be noted: (1) there are many other forms of victimization that have major implications for health that are not referenced in this tool, and (2) there are many other comprehensive self-report assessment and interview instruments to assess for lifetime exposure to violence.

CHILDHOOD SEXUAL ABUSE

When you were a child (under 18 years of age), were you ever pressured into forced contact with the sexual part of your body, with the sexual part of someone else's body, (or were too young to understand something sexual had happened to you)?

Reference: Runtz, MG, Roche, DN. Validation of the Trauma Symptom Inventory in a Canadian Sample of University Women. *Child Maltreatment*. 1999;4(1):69-80.

Population: 775 women (mean age 19.9 years) at a university in western Canada completed a self-administered survey. Ethnicity of respondents was: 85% European descent; 12% Asian, African, or East Indian descent; and 2% First Nations people.

Background: The question on sexual abuse was modeled after a similar question used by Bryer et al, 1987 and followed by a series of detailed questions that explored the nature of the sexual abuse as part of the Trauma Symptom Inventory (TSI), an assessment tool for the long-term effects of child abuse that can be purchased by contact Dr. John Briere (Jbriere@hsc.usc.edu).

Disclosure: 18.5% of women reported a history of childhood sexual abuse before the age of 18

During childhood and adolescence, did anyone ever expose themselves (their sexual organs) to you?

During childhood and adolescence, did anyone masturbate in front of you?

Did a relative, family friend, or stranger ever touch or fondle your body, including your breasts or genitals, or attempt to arouse you sexually?

During childhood and adolescence, did anyone try to have you arouse them, or touch their body in a sexual way?

Did anyone rub their genitals against your body in a sexual way?

During childhood and adolescence, did anyone attempt to have intercourse with you?

Did you have other sexual experiences involving a relative, family friend, or stranger?

Reference: Wyatt GE, Guthrie D, Notgrass DM. Differential Effects of Women's Child Sexual Abuse and Subsequent Sexual Revictimization. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*. 1992;60(2):167-173.

Population: A sample of 248 urban women (126 African American and 122 White American) between the ages of 18 and 36 years old were recruited through random-digit dialing to be interviewed.

Background: These questions are part of the Wyatt Sex History Questionnaire (WSHQ), a 478-item structured interview that assesses retrospective and current consensual and abusive sexual experiences from childhood to adulthood and lasting effects of these experiences.

Disclosure: 62% of women reported at least one incident of contact or noncontact child sexual abuse before 18 years of age; 112 women experienced childhood sexual abuse involving contact and 42 experienced only abuse not involving contact.

When you were a child or teenager, did you ever have any unwanted sexual experiences?

Did anyone force or persuade you to have sexual intercourse against your wishes before age 17?

Can you think of any upsetting sexual experiences before age 17 with a related adult or someone in authority, e.g. teacher?

Sexual abuse detail questions:

How old were you when it began?

Was the other person someone that you knew?

Was the other person a relative?

Did the other person live in your household?

Did this person do it to you on more than one occasion?

Did it involve touching private parts of your body?

Did it involve touching private parts of the other person's body?

Did it involve sexual intercourse?

Reference: Bifulco A, Brown GW, Harris TO. Childhood Experiences of Care and Abuse (CECA): a Retrospective Interview Measure. *Journal of Child Psychology, Psychiatry, and Allied Disciplines*. 1994;35:1419-1435.

Population: The reliability of the CECA instrument was evaluated with two study populations of London women. One study population was a convenience sample of 225 from European backgrounds between the ages of 18 and 65 who were registered with two local health centers. The other study population was a representative sample of working class women from European or Afro-Caribbean backgrounds between the ages of 18 and 50 who had a child living at home.

Background: The CECA instrument is designed to be used in semi-structured interview format. The above-referenced study indicated that the CECA has satisfactory inter-rater reliability and validity. This instrument has been used in numerous research studies to assess for childhood abuse.

CHILDHOOD PHYSICAL ABUSE

Sometimes parents or other adults hurt children. While you were growing up, that is, in your first 18 years of life, how often did a parent, stepparent, or adult living in your home:

(1) **push, grab, slap, or throw something at you,**

(2) **hit you so hard that you had marks or were injured**

Response options: Never, once/twice, sometimes, often, or very often

Reference: Felitti VJ, Anda RF, Nordenberg D, Williamson DF, Spitz Am, Edwards V, Koss MP et al. The Relationship of Adult Health Status to Childhood Abuse and Household Dysfunction. *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*. 1998;14:245-258.

Population: More than 20,000 men and women enrolled with Kaiser Permanente in southern California have participated in this landmark study. Approximately three-quarters of respondents were white; the mean age for men and women was mid-50's.

Background: These questions are from the Conflict Tactics Scale (Straus, 1979) and were incorporated into a self-administered health questionnaire that was mailed to patients as part of the Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) study. This groundbreaking study documented the high prevalence of childhood trauma and long-term health effects and has led to an ongoing research and a multitude of publications.

Disclosure: Physical abuse was defined as “often” or “very often” in response to the first question or *sometimes, often, or very often* to the second question. More than one-quarter (28%) of adults (men and women) disclosed childhood physical abuse in the original study.

Was there any form of physical fighting or violence in your home when you were growing up?

Reference: Feindler EL, Rathus JH, Silver LB. *Assessment of Family Violence: Handbook for Researchers and Practitioners* 2003. American Psychological Association. Tool available by contacting Robert T. Ammerman, Children’s Hospital Medical Center, 3333 Burnett Ave., Cincinnati, OH 45229-3039. Phone: (513) 636-8209

Population: Developed for families where family violence (abuse, neglect, exposure to intimate partner violence) is occurring, has occurred, or is likely to occur. Studies evaluating reliability and validity have shown promising results.

Background: This question is from the Child Abuse and Neglect Interview Schedule-Revised (CANIS-R). The CANIS-R is a semi-structured interview designed to be administered to parents. CANIS-R has more than 100 questions to assess parents’ past and current experiences of family violence including corporal punishment (ex. How were you disciplined as a child?), children’s exposure to violence and abuse, and children’s behavioral problems and disciplinary problems.

When you were a child or teenager were you ever hit repeatedly with any implement (such as a belt or stick) or punched, kicked, or burnt by someone in the household?

Physical abuse detail questions:

How old were you when it began:

Did the hitting happen on more than one occasion?

- How were you hit?**
1. Belt or stick
 2. Punched/kicked
 3. Hit with hand
 4. Other

Were you ever injured, e.g. bruises, black eyes, broken limbs?

Was this person so angry that they seemed out of control?

Reference: Bifulco A, Brown GW, Harris TO. Childhood Experiences of Care and Abuse (CECA): a Retrospective Interview Measure. *Journal of Child Psychology, Psychiatry, and Allied Disciplines*. 1994;35:1419-1435.

Population: The reliability of the CECA instrument was evaluated with two study populations of London women. One study population was a convenience sample of 225 from European backgrounds between the ages of 18 and 65 who were registered at one of two local health centers. The other study population was a representative sample of working class women from European or Afro-Caribbean backgrounds between the ages of 18 and 50 who had a child living at home.

Background: The CECA instrument is designed to be used in semi-structured interview format. The above-referenced study indicated that the CECA has satisfactory inter-rater reliability and validity. This instrument has been used in numerous research studies to assess for childhood abuse.

[When you were a child, did a family member ever:]

- (a) beat or really hurt you by hitting you with a bare hand or fist;**
- (b) beat or hit you with something hard like a stick or baseball bat;**
- (c) injure you with a knife, shoot you with a gun, or used another weapon against you;**
- (d) hurt you badly enough so that you needed a doctor or other medical treatment;**
- (e) physically injured you so that you were admitted to a hospital;**
- (f) beat you when you didn't deserve it**

Reference: Widom CS, Shepard RL. Accuracy of Adult Recollections of Childhood Victimization: Part 1: Childhood Physical Abuse. *Psychological Assessment*. 1996;8(4):412-421.

Population: 1,196 young adult survivors (mean age = 29.23 years) of physical child abuse who were followed up as part of a prospective-cohort study to evaluate the accuracy of adult recall.

Background: This question is part of the Self-Report of Childhood Abuse Physical instrument (SRCAP), a brief structured interview for adults to assess for childhood experiences of physical abuse. Adults are asked whether a family member engaged in the six items listed above.

Everyone gets into conflicts with other people and sometimes these lead to physical blows such as hitting really hard, kicking, punching, stabbing, throwing someone down etc. Before you were 16, did any of the following people do that to you?

This question is followed by a list of potential perpetrators including father, mother, brother, sister, friend, and acquaintance.

Reference: Bryer JB, Nelson BA, Miller JB, Krol PA. Childhood Sexual and Physical Abuse as Factors in Adult psychiatric Illness. *American Journal of Psychiatry.* 1987;144 (11):1426-1430.

Population: A convenience sample of 68 women, mostly Caucasian, who had been admitted for psychiatric care.

Background: Participants completed a self-administered questionnaire.

Disclosure: 18% of women disclosed physical abuse before the age of 16

CHILDHOOD EXPOSURE TO INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE

Sometimes physical blows occur between parents. While you were growing up in your first 18 years of life, how often did you father (or stepfather) or mother's boyfriend do any of these things to your mother (stepmother)?

- (1) push, grab, slap, or throw something at her,**
- (2) kick, bite, hit her with a fist, or hit her with something hard,**
- (3) repeatedly hit her over at least a few minutes,**
- (4) threaten her with a knife or gun, or use a knife or gun to hurt her**

Response options: Never, once/twice, sometimes, often, or very often

Reference: Felitti VJ, Anda RF, Nordenberg D, Williamson DF, Spitz Am, Edwards V, Koss MP et al. The Relationship of Adult Health Status to Childhood Abuse and Household Dysfunction. *American Journal of Preventive Medicine.* 1998;14:245-258.

Population: More than 20,000 men and women enrolled with Kaiser Permanente in southern California have participated in this landmark study. Approximately three-quarters of respondents were white; the mean age for men and women was mid-50's.

Background: The questions for childhood physical abuse are extracted from the Conflict Tactics Scale (Straus, 1979) and were incorporated into a questionnaire that was mailed to patients. The study, referred to as the Adverse Childhood Experiences or ACE study, is groundbreaking research on the high prevalence of childhood trauma and long-term health affects that has led to ongoing research and a multitude of publications.

Disclosure: Physical abuse was defined as “*often*” or “*very often*” in response to the first question or *sometimes*, *often*, or *very often* to the second question. More than one-quarter (28%) of adults (men and women) disclosed childhood physical abuse in the original study.

ADULT SEXUAL AGGRESSION/ASSAULT/RAPE

Has a male ever had sex with you when you didn't want to because you felt pressured by the reasons he gave you? [Rape]

Has a male ever had sex with you when you didn't want to because he used force? [Coercion]

Has a male ever used force to try to get you to have sex with him when you didn't want to but the sex didn't happen? [Attempted rape]

Reference: Kenney JW, Reingholtz C, Angelini PJ. Ethnic Differences in Childhood and Adolescent Sexual Abuse and Teenage Pregnancy. *Journal of Adolescent Health*. 1997;21:3-10.

Population: 1937 women between the ages of 18 and 22 years from rural and urban communities. Ethnicity/racial background of respondents was: 40.5% Non-Hispanic Anglos, 28% Mexican-Americans, 14.6% African-Americans and 16.5% American Indians.

Background: These questions are from a modified version of the Koss and Oros Sexual Experiences Survey (Koss et al, 1982). The authors added language to obtain the age at which each type of abuse first occurred. The questions were incorporated into a self-administered questionnaire on women's sexual and reproductive health.

Disclosure: Approximately one-third of women reported one or more forms of sexual abuse before age 18, included 20% who had been raped. Almost one-third of the sexual abuse occurred before age 13.

Since age 18, did anyone ever expose themselves (their sexual organs) to you?

Since age 18, did anyone masturbate in front of you?

Since the age of 18, have you ever been raped?

Since the age of 18, has anyone ever tried to rape you?

Reference: Wyatt GE, Guthrie D, Notgrass DM. Differential Effects of Women's Child Sexual Abuse and Subsequent Sexual Revictimization. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*. 1992;60(2):167-173.

Population: A sample of 248 urban women (126 African American and 122 White American) between the ages of 18 and 36 years old were recruited through random-digit dialing to be interviewed.

Background: The questions are part of the Wyatt Sex History Questionnaire (WSHQ), a 478-item structured interview that assesses retrospective and current consensual and abusive sexual experiences from childhood to adulthood and lasting effects of these experiences.

Disclosure: 35% of women disclosed sexual assault/rape in adulthood; 55 experienced contact sexual abuse (rape or attempted rape) and 32 experienced noncontact abuse.

Have you ever:

Had sexual intercourse with a man (woman) when you (she) didn't want to because he (you) used some degree of physical force (twisting your [her] arm, holding you [her] down etc.) ?

Been in a situation where a man (you) obtained sexual acts with you (a woman) such as anal or oral intercourse when you (she) didn't want to by using threats or physical force (twisting your [her] arm, holding you [her] down etc.) ?

Reference: Koss MP, Oros CJ. Sexual Experiences Survey: A research Instrument Investigating Sexual Aggression and Victimization. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*. 1982;50(3):455-457.

Population: A representative sample of 3,862 male and female university students; ethnicity/race of respondents was 91% white, 7% black, and 2% Hispanic and Native American

Background: The Sexual Experiences Survey is a self-administered questionnaire with 12 yes-no questions that ask about various degrees of coercion, threat, and force associated with past experiences of sexual intercourse.

Disclosure: 8.2% of women and 2.7% of men had sexual intercourse when they didn't want to involving some degree of physical force

6.4% of women and 2.4% of men had been in a situation where they were involved in sexual acts when they didn't want to be due to threats or physical force

UNWANTED SEX

Would he [your partner] break up with you unless you would have sex?

Does he [your partner] ever make you have any kind of sex when you don't want to?

Would he [your partner] get mad at you if you didn't want to have sex?

Does he [your partner] give you money or gifts for any kind of sex?

Reference: Blythe MJ, Fortenberry JD, Temkit M, Tu W, Orr DP. Incidence and Correlates of Unwanted Sex in Relationships of Middle and Late Adolescent Women. *Archives of Pediatric and Adolescent Medicine*. 2006;160:591-595.

Population: 279 female adolescents (mean age 15.9 years) were recruited from primary health care clinics that serve teens in an urban setting. The ethnic/racial background of participants was: 88.5% African American, 10.8% white, and 0.7% Hispanic/Latino.

Background: Teens participated in face-to-face interviews as part of a longitudinal study over 27 months.

Disclosure: 40.9% of female adolescents disclosed some form of unwanted sex at least once. The most prevalent form of unwanted sex (37.6%) was due to fear that their partner would get angry if denied sex. One-tenth of participants reported forced sex.

Have you ever:

Had a man (woman) misinterpret the level of sexual intimacy you desired?

Been in a situation where a man (you) became so sexually aroused that you felt it was useless to stop him even though you did not want to have sexual intercourse? (could not stop yourself even the woman didn't want to?)

Had sexual intercourse with a man (woman) when you didn't really want to because he (you) felt pressured by his (your) continual arguments?

Had sexual intercourse with a man (woman) even though you (she) didn't really want to because he (you) threatened to end your relationship otherwise?

Reference: Koss MP, Oros CJ. Sexual Experiences Survey: A research Instrument Investigating Sexual Aggression and Victimization. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*. 1982;50(3):455-457.

Population: A representative sample of 3,862 male and female university students; ethnicity/race of respondents was 91% white, 7% black, and 2% Hispanic and Native American

Background: The Sexual Experiences Survey is a self-administered questionnaire with 12 yes-no questions that ask about various degrees of coercion, threat, and force associated with past experiences of sexual intercourse.

Disclosure: 70.5% of women and 53% of men had someone misinterpret the level of sexual intimacy they desired

32.8% of women and 23.0% of men been in a situation where he or she became so sexually aroused that it was useless to stop even though they didn't want to have intercourse

21.4% of women and 15.0% of men had intercourse when they really didn't want to because they felt pressured by continual arguments

5.9% of women and 4.4% of men had sexual intercourse when they didn't really want to because of threats of ending the relationship

EMOTIONAL ABUSE

Has anyone ever abused you?

Emotionally?

Past 30 days In Your Life

• Made you feel bad through hard words

□

□

Reference: Addiction Severity Index (ASI) 5th Edition-North Dakota Adaptation for use with Native Americans, Carise D, Wicks K, McLellan AT, Olton P. Download at <http://www.tresearch.org/resources/instruments.htm>

Population: The ASI is available in a standard English version, a Spanish version, and the version for use with Native Americans that has been designed with consideration for Native American Cultural and Ceremonial Practices.

Background: The Addiction Severity Index (ASI) is a structured interview that assesses substance abuse and related potential problem areas including victimization and perpetrating abuse. The victimization questions assess for recent and lifetime physical, sexual, and emotional abuse. Extensive information about evaluation and use of the ASI and other related resources are available at no cost through the above-referenced website.