

Case Study: The Story of Akasha

Akasha Green is a 32 years old African American woman who grew up in Baltimore. She has two younger sisters, an older step-sister and an older step-brother. She knew who her biological father was but did not interact much with him – he struggled with heroin and alcohol addictions and spent several years incarcerated. Akasha has lived at different times with her mother, but when Akasha's mother's bi-polar symptoms were not controlled, Akasha has lived with her aunt, her stepfather, and her grandmother. The most positive influence in Akasha's life has been her maternal grandmother. Other aunts were also influential. Akasha finished high school and started attending community college classes but became pregnant with her first child, DeeDee, when she was 20 years old (DeeDee is now 12). She had another daughter, Asia, when she was 23 (Asia is now 9), and a son, Calvin, when she was 25 (Calvin is now 7). DeeDee's father provides some child support but Akasha gets no child support from Asia and Calvin's dad. Akasha has struggled to find consistent work. Currently she is working a temporary job 15 hours a week and does not qualify for benefits from her job. She has no car and so must get to jobs and her children's schools by public transport, which is a challenge. Akasha has suffered from depression and anxiety. She has practiced cutting in the past to help her cope. She does not have a primary healthcare provider, and has been to the Emergency Department (ED) at a local hospital three times in the past six months for high blood pressure and unstable blood sugar (she has Type 2 diabetes). At a recent visit to the ED, Akasha completed the Urban ACES and Resilience questionnaires. She scored 8/14 on the Urban ACES (higher score indicates more trauma) and 36/60 on the Resilience questionnaire (higher score indicates more resilience).

What are the ethical implications of the following?

- The original ACEs excluded 4 domains: racial discrimination, bullying, community violence, foster placement.
- Traditional health care approach focuses on each bodily system rather than the whole, and on the individual patient rather than a patient's children.
- How might what clinicians do now impact a person's ACEs and resilience? What obligations do health care professionals have to address prior and future trauma/neglect?

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