



Roots and Trees

Reflecting the glow of recovery from Starlight at Tamasee

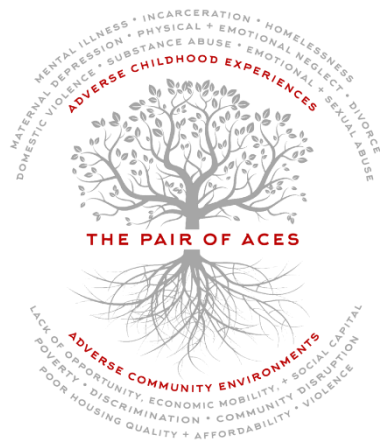
By Jon Holland, CEO of Tamasee DAR School



My mom and I rode out Hurricane Hugo in 1989 in a mobile home. That was an terrifying experience. Living in Florida for eight years and the Gulf Coast of Alabama for seven gave me my fill of tropical weather, boarding windows, and power outages. Since moving back to the Carolinas, we've had a couple of brushes with severe weather. Tropical Storm Irma dropped a tree on the home we lived in at the time. Maybe you too have worried about that tree in the yard leaning a little too far to the side. When the wind gusts and rains comes in torrents, we hope the roots hold.

Yet sometimes we want the roots to release. Not during a severe storm of course, but when we notice the tree is diseased and it's time to uproot and replant. Addiction and recovery are like this. Sometimes the roots of addiction are a genetic predisposition. The studies vary, and you can dive into the research if you're interested. Quite a few I've seen indicate more than half of those who struggle with addiction are hard wired for it. It may be from generations of use changing the genetic coding and then being passed down, or it

may be due to another challenge like ADHD or anxiety. For some, we simply inherited the roots.



Then you can investigate the data on trauma and addiction. The research as well as the anecdotal testimony of clinicians in treatment centers indicates 80% to 90% of people with a serious addiction issue experienced trauma. The earlier or more severe the trauma the more likely someone will deal with addictive behavior. Researchers use the phrase “a pair of ACEs” to talk about trauma and toxic stress. Adverse Childhood Experiences include abuse and neglect, domestic violence, homelessness, divorce, or a significant caregiver with mental health issues, substance use, or incarceration. Adverse Community Environments include poverty, discrimination, community violence, poor housing, and a lack opportunities. These ACEs create stress a child cannot handle. They live in survival mode and need something to medicate the pain. For many, the roots of addiction were planted long before we had any say in the matter.



The good news is the tree can be uprooted and new one planted! Our brains and hearts can heal. We can choose treatment options to address the genetic predispositions. We can engage in counseling, inner healing, prayer, and loving, safe relationships to heal the trauma. We can learn new coping skills and a healthy lifestyle to deal with stress. Our recovery tree can grow strong so it will not only withstand life’s storms but also provide shade for generations in our families.

At Starlight at Tamasee, we believe in treating the real roots of addiction, and we believe mothers and children can plant new, strong trees with deep, healthy roots in their lives. To learn more about Starlight, visit starlight.tdarschool.org, or contact us at starlight@tdarschool.org or 864-944-1390. If your church or civic group is interested in a presentation on recovery, contact Jon Holland at jholland@tdarschool.org.