

ACEs are common. Understanding a child's lived experiences can help reframe how you react to their behavior.

Adverse Childhood Experiences and Toxic Stress

Potential Adverse Childhood Experiences, including insecure households and relationships can have long lasting effects on youth up to adulthood. Support the engagement of communal growth by helping children reach their fullest potential. Building strong neighborhoods and communities can create greater opportunities for all youth to thrive.

What is ACE?

The acronym ACE stands for Adverse Childhood Experiences. This study that originated by the CDC and the Kaiser Permanente health care organization includes questions of possible adversity experienced by youth (from infancy to age 17). There is a strong correlation of ACEs experienced and an increase in the chance of poor mental and physical health, educational and occupational challenges, and affected brain

development such as attention, decision-making, and responses to stress.

Stress Compared to Toxic Stress

Stress is commonly experienced, however, when the body faces extreme stress, one's body releases a stress response. When these stress levels continue to happen in an unsafe environment, this can cause toxic stress and traumatic re-occurrences.

Protective factors, like
**family strengths &
resilience**

help mitigate the
impact of trauma on
development.

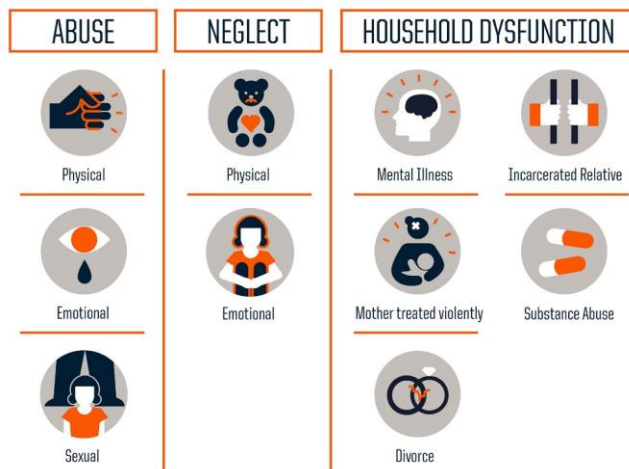


Increased Risk in Adulthood When Experiencing Childhood Adversity

Research has shown that what we have experienced in our youth can have a substantial impact as we get older. ACEs can cause life lasting effects on overall health. There is an increased risk of sexually transmitted infections, teen pregnancy, substance abuse, mental health related challenges, incarceration, and a wide range of chronic diseases, such as an increased risk of cancer, diabetes, heart disease, and suicide.

ACE Scores Include

- Divorced parents
- An incarcerated relative
- Substance abuse
- Violence within the home
- Child who has experienced emotional, sexual, and/or physical abuse or neglect

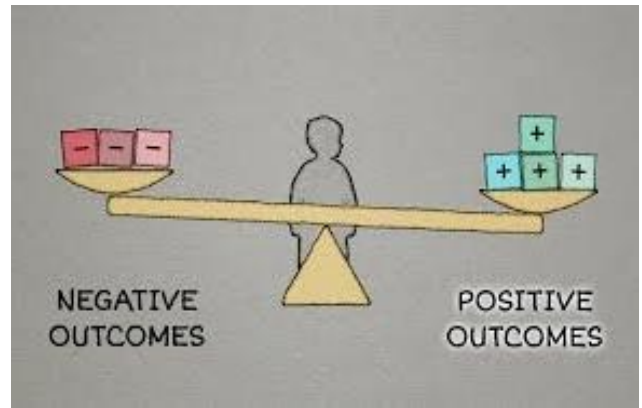


Approaches

How can I help my child who has experienced adversity?

How to Build and Promote Resilience

The development of Resilience can help with the visualization of a balance scale. Healthy coping skills and positive experiences counterbalance impactful childhood adversity.



Seven Core Ideas to Develop and Strengthen Resiliency in Youth

1. Build understanding of their skills
2. Help children confidently grow beliefs of their capabilities
3. Connecting youth within their community by building strong support systems
4. Teaching children the moral values of right and wrong
5. Encouraging children to contribute within society to better support other's well-being
6. Finding healthy coping skills for their specific needs
7. Teaching children to make their own decisions which helps them gain a sense of control within their lives

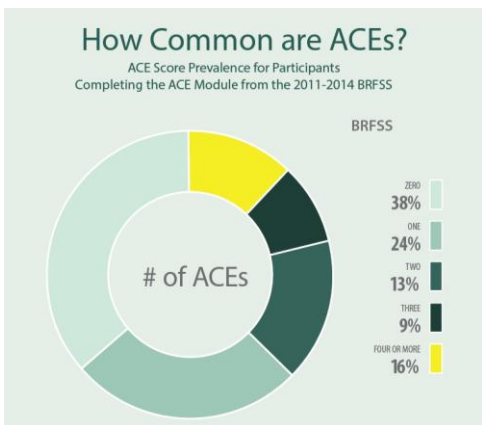
"This ACE score that you have is not an inevitability." Dr. Bruce Perry

Understanding and Reframing

It is important to recognize that the child's lived experiences can affect how they may react—Reframing to **why** you may be acting this way, rather than **what** are you doing and **what** is wrong with you?

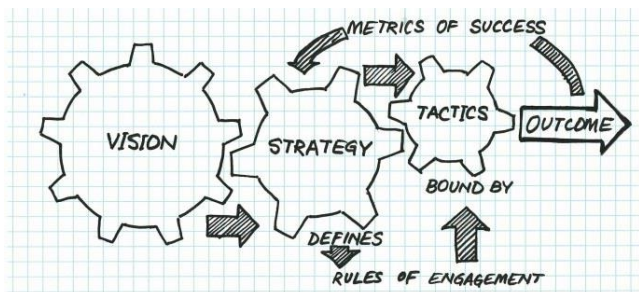
It may also be helpful to understand that ACEs are a lot more common than people might expect.

- Surveyed across 25 states, around 61% of adults reported having experienced at least one form of ACE
- Nearly 1 in 6 reported they had experienced four or more types of ACEs



Create Awareness and Educating Families, Communities, and Policymakers

- Reduce stigma of seeking help and support (Such as substance misuse, mental health, and parenting challenges)
- Develop community solutions rather than relying on individual responsibility
- Advocate for stable and nurturing relationships and social environments



Protective Factors

Individual and Family

- Children developing and maintaining positive relationships
- Actively engaging in educational and social settings
- Children having a caring adult as an additional support and mentor outside of the family
- Meeting children where they are developmentally rather than chronologically
- Encouragement in household of parental engagement, supervision, and rule enforcement
- Families with healthy conflict solutions help children work through day-to-day challenges

Community

- Where families have opportunities for medical care and mental health services
- Where there is access to secure and safe housing, along with stable food security
- Families having access to economic and financial resources and support

Strategies and Approaches of Prevention

Secure A Strong Start for Youth

- Engagement from family and preschool/early education
- Enriched developmental opportunities

Teaching Skills and Coping Mechanisms

- Social-emotional learning and behaviors
- Supporting healthy and stable relationships

Promoting Protection Against Violence and Adversity

- Public education with focus on building restorative relationship skills
- Legislation reform in favor of social economic stability and overall communal growth
- Creating bystander approach and supportive allies

"Connectedness counterbalances adversity."
Dr. Bruce Perry



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Resources

Information on developmental milestones and positive parenting:
<https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/child/default.htm>

Help Children Manage Traumatic Events:
<https://adaa.org/living-with-anxiety/children-and-teens/tips-parents-and-caregivers/help-your-child-manage-traumatic->

Information and Tips on Trauma and Mental Health for Professionals who serve Children:
<https://www.apa.org/pi/families/resources/task-force/child-trauma>

For Vermont State Resources/Services through the Clara Martin Center:
<http://www.claramartin.org/state-resources.html>

Trainings and Tools

Online trainings to learn and prevent ACE's:
<https://vetoviolence.cdc.gov/apps/aces-training/#!/#top>

How Childhood Trauma Affects Health Across a Lifetime, follow the link for a Ted Talk by Nadine Burke Harris, A Pediatrician with focus on Trauma:
https://www.ted.com/talks/nadine_burke_harris_how_childhood_trauma_affects_health_across_a_lifetime?language=en#t-37070

Services

National Alliance on Mental Illness includes

- Guidebook on treatment strategies and state support programs
- Vermont Mental Health Providers and Designated Agencies

<https://namivt.org/nami-resources/>

University of Vermont Medical Center offers mental health services providing treatment to

- Trauma and Stress-related Disorders
- Depression, Mood, and Anxiety Disorders

Psychological Services and how to access services:
<https://www.uvm.edu/cas/vermontpsych>

Department of Mental Health provides resources and services for

- Child Trauma
- Information of how to be Trauma-informed
- Child Trauma Services in Vermont and developed Policy

Upcoming Events with community discussion:
<https://mentalhealth.vermont.gov/services/children-youth-and-family/child-trauma>

Vermont Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health includes

- Local Support Lines
- Events
- Trainings and Resources

<https://www.vffcmh.org/>