

STRESS & EARLY BRAIN GROWTH

Understanding Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)

What are ACEs?

ACEs are serious childhood traumas -- a list is shown below -- that result in toxic stress that can harm a child's brain. This toxic stress may prevent child from learning, from playing in a healthy way with other children, and can result in long-term health problems.

Adverse Childhood Experiences can include:

1. Emotional abuse
2. Physical abuse
3. Sexual abuse
4. Emotional neglect
5. Physical neglect
6. Mother treated violently
7. Household substance abuse
8. Household mental illness
9. Parental separation or divorce
10. Incarcerated household member
11. Bullying (by another child or adult)
12. Witnessing violence outside the home
13. Witness a brother or sister being abused
14. Racism, sexism, or any other form of discrimination
15. Being homeless
16. Natural disasters and war

Exposure to childhood ACEs can increase the risk of:

- Adolescent pregnancy
- Alcoholism and alcohol abuse
- Depression
- Illicit drug use
- Heart disease
- Liver disease
- Multiple sexual partners
- Intimate partner violence
- Sexually transmitted diseases (STDs)
- Smoking
- Suicide attempts
- Unintended pregnancies

How do ACEs affect health?

Through stress. Frequent or prolonged exposure to ACEs can create toxic stress which can damage the developing brain of a child and affect overall health.

Reduces the ability to respond, learn, or figure things out, which can result in problems in school.

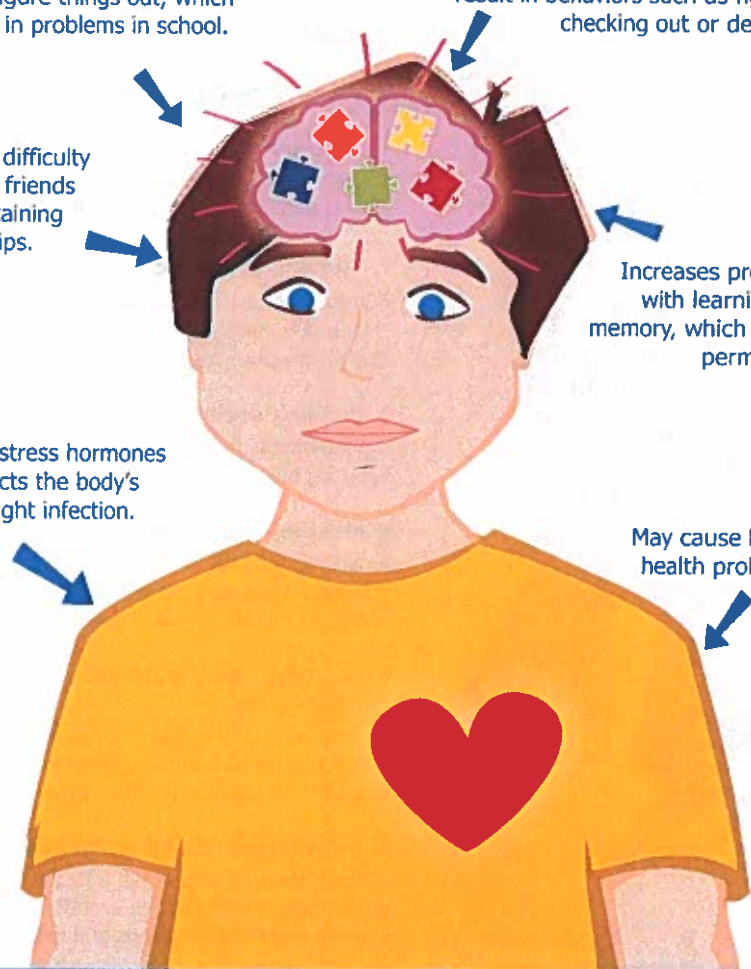
Lowers tolerance for stress, which can result in behaviors such as fighting, checking out or defiance.

Increases difficulty in making friends and maintaining relationships.

Increases problems with learning and memory, which can be permanent.

Increases stress hormones which affects the body's ability to fight infection.

May cause lasting health problems.



A Survival Mode Response to toxic stress increases a child's heart rate, blood pressure, breathing and muscle tension. Their thinking brain is knocked off-line. Self-protection is their priority. In other words:

"I can't hear you! I can't respond to you! I am just trying to be safe!"

The good news is resilience can bring back health and hope!

What is Resilience?

Resilience is the ability to return to being healthy and hopeful after bad things happen. Research shows that if parents provide a safe environment for their children and teach them how to be resilient, that helps reduce the effects of ACEs.

Resilience trumps ACEs!

Parents, teachers and caregivers can help children by:

- Gaining an understanding of ACEs
- Creating environments where children feel safe emotionally and physically
- Helping children identify feelings and manage emotions
- Creating a safe physical and emotional environment at home, in school, and in neighborhoods

What does resilience look like?

1. Having resilient parents

Parents who know how to solve problems, who have healthy relationships with other adults, and who build healthy relationships with their children.

2. Building attachment and nurturing relationships

Adults who listen and respond patiently to a child in a supportive way, and pay attention to a child's physical and emotional needs.

3. Building social connections

Having family, friends and/or neighbors who support, help and listen to children.

4. Meeting basic needs

Providing children with safe housing, nutritious food, appropriate clothing, and access to health care and good education.

5. Learning about parenting and how children grow

Understanding how parents can help their children grow in a healthy way, and what to expect from children as they grow.

6. Building social and emotional skills

Helping children interact in a healthy way with others, manage their emotions and communicate their feelings and needs.

Resources:

ACES 101

<http://acestoohigh.com/aces-101/>

Triple-P Parenting

www.triplep-parenting.net/global/home/

Resilience Trumps ACEs

www.resiliencetrumpsACEs.com

CDC-Kaiser Adverse Childhood Experiences Study

www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/acesstudy/

Zero to Three Guides for Parents

www.zerotothree.org/about-us/areas-of-expertise/free-parent-brochures-and-guides/



Quick Tips to Nurture Resilience in Children



Resilience is the capacity to thrive in both good times and difficult ones. It can be developed and nourished at any age, in every person.

Relationships matter

Parents, coaches, teachers, caregivers and other adults in the community help children develop resilience.

Ingredients for resiliences:

- Supportive environments
- Caring connections
- Positive experiences

Self-care

Take care of you! Time for rest, exercise and nutrition set an example for your child.

Attachment

Regularly share special time with your child. Being connected promotes health and development.

Self-worth

Show your child appreciation for who they are, not what they do or could do.

Feelings

Help your child learn to recognize and name different emotions.

Soothe

Help your child develop ways to self-soothe when angry, like taking five deep breaths.

Rules

Include your child in setting rules and expectations to develop a sense of ownership.

Choices

Provide choices whenever possible and safe. Making choices teaches about decision making and consequences.

Accountability

Show your child that mistakes are part of life. Help your child find the lesson in a mistake.

Empathy

Imagine yourself in your child's place. Understanding promotes trust and respect.

Belonging

Help your child find healthy and safe activities for developing friendship and community.

For more information:

(541) 682-8786 • aces@co.lane.or.us
Adverse Childhood Experiences Project
Lane County Health & Human Services

lanecounty.org/aces



Quick Tips for Kids to Nurture Resilience



Resilience is being able to thrive in both good times and hard times. We can grow our resilience at any age.



Self-care

Sleep, exercise and healthy foods are important ways we care for ourselves.



Attachment

Time with friends and family is good for our growing minds and bodies.



Self-worth

We are important not for what we do but for who we are.



Feelings

Recognizing and naming our feelings helps us to talk about them.



Soothe

Taking care of ourselves when we are upset helps. Five deep breaths are always great!

Relationships Matter

Friends, family and caring adults including parents, coaches and teachers help us to grow our resilience.



Rules

Understanding and talking about rules helps us to be safe.



Choices

Having and making safe choices teaches us about the world.



Accountability

Mistakes are part of life. Finding the lessons in them helps us to learn.



Empathy

Thinking about how others feel helps us to have trust and respect for everyone.



Belonging

Including others builds friendship and community.

For more information:
(541) 682-8786 • aces@co.lane.or.us or us
Adverse Childhood Experiences Project
Lane County Health & Human Services

lanecounty.org/aces

