

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 a 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.

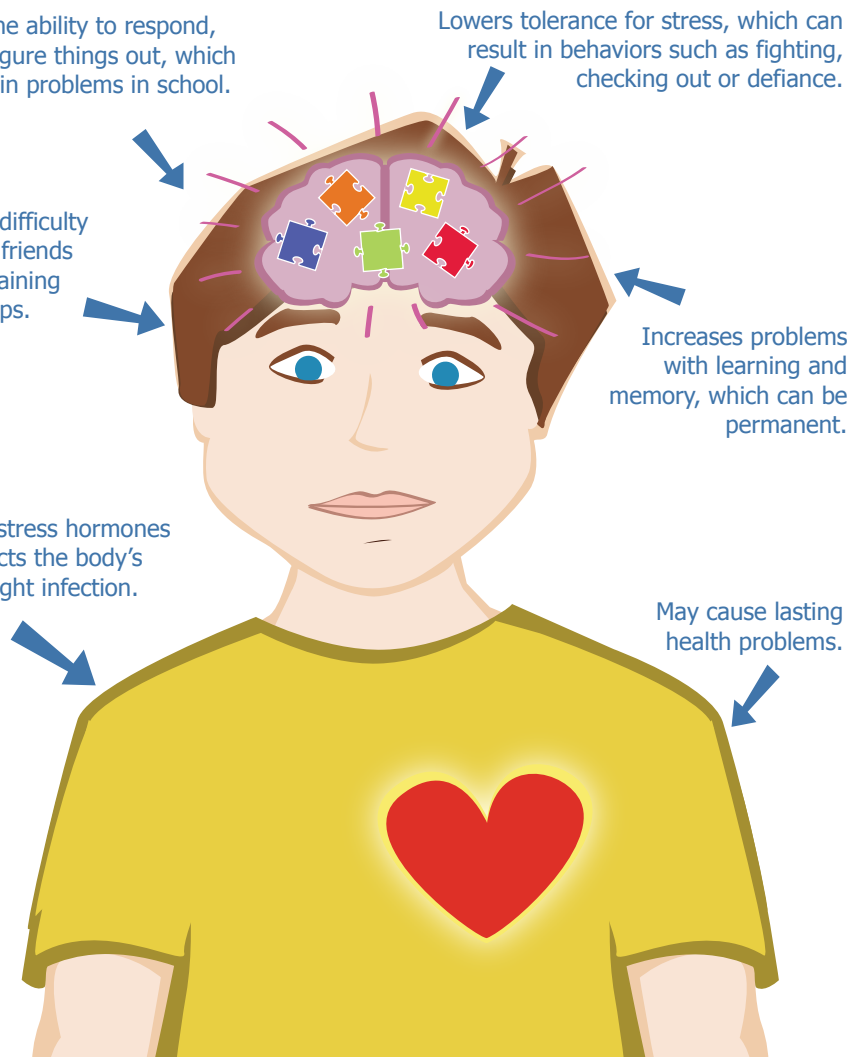
Lowers tolerance for stress, which can result in behaviors such as fighting, checking out or defiance.

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
- Helping children identify feelings and manage emotions
- Creating safe physical and emotional environments 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

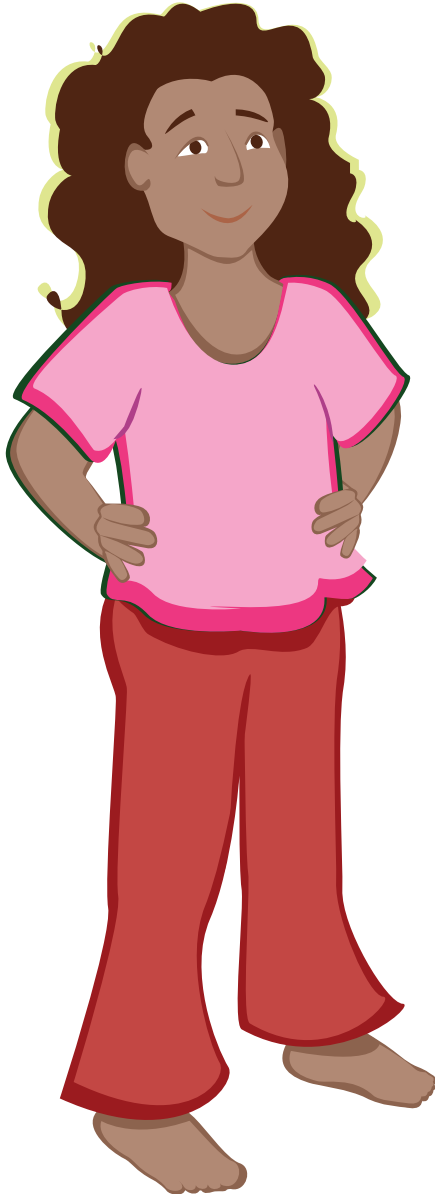
Providing children with safe housing, nutritious food, appropriate clothing, and access to health care and good education.

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/glo-en/home/

Resilience Trumps ACEs

www.resiliencetrumpsACEs.org

CDC-Kaiser Adverse Childhood Experiences Study

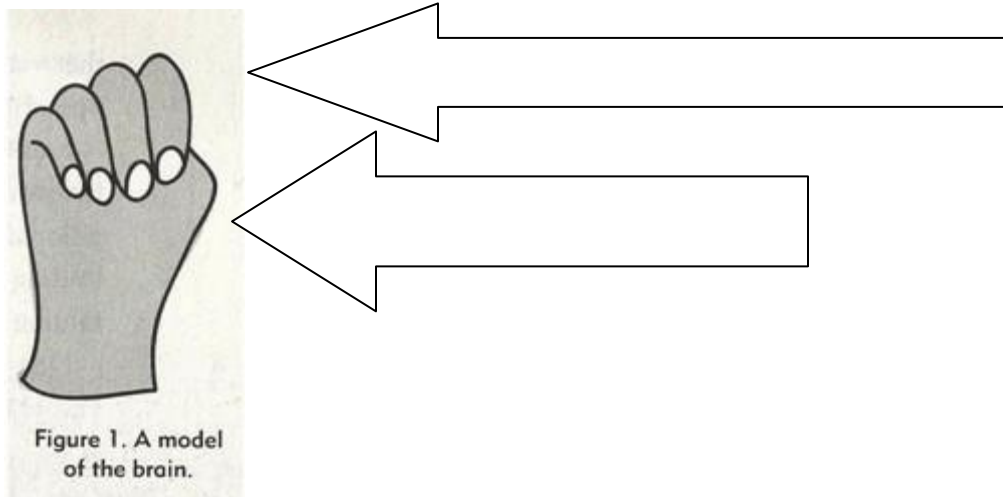
www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/acesstudy/

Zero to Three Guides for Parents

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

Hand Model of the Brain-Dr. Dan Siegel

Make a fist with your thumb tucked inside your fingers. This is a model of your brain; your fist is the brain and your wrist and forearm are the spinal cord.

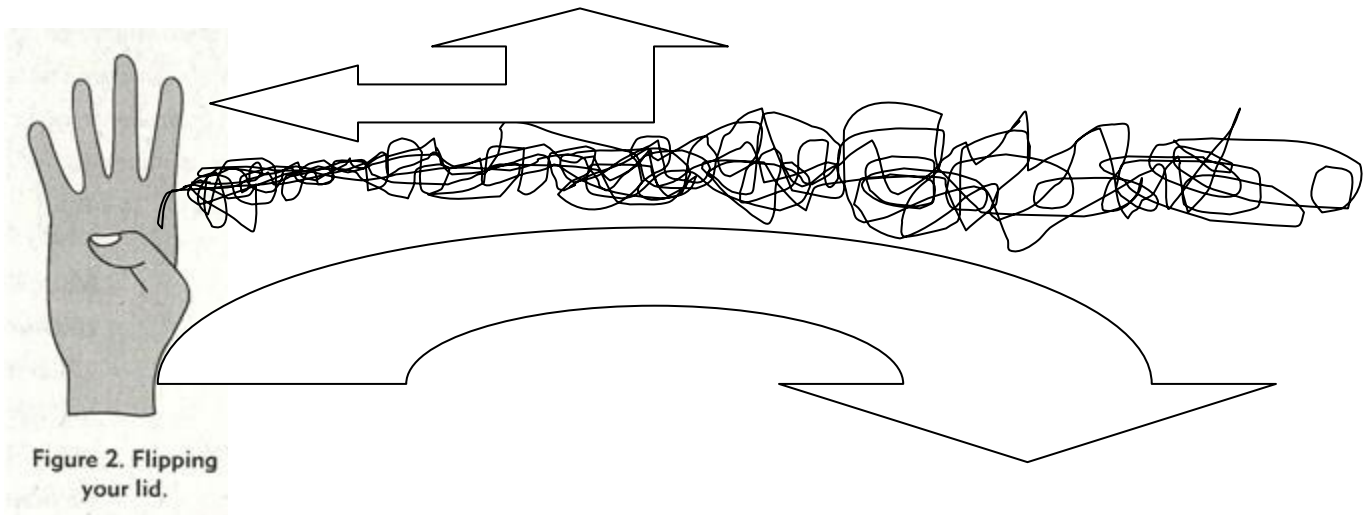


Your thumb, tucked in the middle of your fist, is the midbrain. This is where our emotions and memories are created and processed, as well as where the fight-or-flight reflex is triggered. The midbrain is our “emotional brain.”

The back of your hand and fingers, encasing everything, is the cerebral cortex. This is where higher functioning occurs. This part of our brain allows us to think logically, act with kindness and empathy, and it houses our reasoning and problem-solving abilities. The cortex is our “rational brain.”

The brain is set up to communicate with itself. It sends messages from section to section about what our bodies are feeling and needing. So, when a child screams, “NOOOO!” and lashes out to hit because he is angry, a parent’s brain interprets this data as, “Hmm, I don’t like this, and I need to be treated differently.” Only we don’t always react so calmly, right?

Take another look at your brain-fist. See where your fingernails are? This is the logic and reasoning part of the brain that kicks into gear when we have a problem to solve. But sometimes the emotional brain (thumb) and the rational brain (fingers) don't communicate so well. The emotions of the midbrain are simply too overwhelming, our fight-or-flight reflex triggers, and we "flip our lids." Now make all four of your fingers stand straight up. Flip.



See your fingertips now? See how far away from the midbrain they are? When we "flip our lids," our rational brains have a very poor connection with our emotional brains. Our feelings are intense, and we're not able to access the logical, problem-solving part of our brain. In order to restore our rational brain to its coherent state, we need to calm our anger and ease our fears (close fingers over thumb again).

Of course, our brains don't actually change shape like this, but this simple demonstration is a valuable tool in understanding how they function during emotionally charged situations. Both children and adults experience flipped lids. But as the human brain isn't fully mature (all parts communicating effectively) until the mid-twenties, children flip their lids much more often. They need a lot more help "re-connecting" the rational brain with the emotional brain—that is, calming down—and learning how to respond to strong emotions.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DD-lfP1FBfk>

A Guide for Youth
**Understanding
Trauma**



By Brianne Masselli and Johanna Bergan
Youth M.O.V.E. National

INTRODUCING HAYDEN & JESSIE



Hello! I'm Hayden, an advocate for youth. Today we are going to talk about trauma



Hey! I'm Jessie, a youth advocate

MAKING SENSE OF IT ALL

When youth witness or experience a horrible event, they often do not have words to help make sense of what is happening and do not realize the potential for long lasting effects. It can be challenging to ask for help. As a result, youth often work to make sense of it alone. Managing these challenging emotions and stressful events by themselves can often lead to additional struggles such as unhealthy habits like smoking or drinking, hanging out with the wrong group of friends, acting out or internalizing their feelings and isolating themselves as a way to be safe.

This guide is designed to help youth make a connection between stressful events and the potential lasting impacts. Understanding trauma and having a framework to talk about past experiences can help in processing and asking for help. This understanding supports healing.

Funding for this product was made possible by 5UR1SM059944-05 from SAMHSA. The content of this publication does not necessarily reflect the official policies of the Department of Health and Human Services; nor does mention of trade names, commercial practices, or organizations imply endorsement by the U.S. Government.

A special thank you to our fellow contributors Sherry Peters, Senior Policy Associate, Georgetown University, Hayley Winterberg, youth advocate and editor for this project, and Matthew Leavitt of Waving Hand, LLC (www.wavinghand.com) for graphic design and layout.



I was 25 before I understood how my childhood experiences were impacting my adult life. The adults in my life seemed to understand, and they often tossed out words I didn't understand or labels to 'help' me understand why I was behaving and feeling the way I did. But those labels never really helped me understand my circumstances. I lived in survival mode all the time, struggling both physically and emotionally to stay afloat.

Making sense of my labels and childhood experiences didn't come until I understood trauma and could explain my childhood experiences.



I'm trying to figure out what all this trauma stuff has to do with my life. I'm not sure I even know what trauma is and I definitely haven't experienced it.

Yeah, I feel like adults are trying to fix me, and telling me what's wrong. They use words I don't understand, or words that don't describe what I'm actually going through.



So I may not recognize events in my life as trauma because I can dismiss them? It can feel as if it's just how things go, bad things happen?

Trauma is experienced differently by everyone. It takes work to get to a place of healing from these experiences; trauma isn't something you can just get over. Did you know that just witnessing domestic violence, being separated from your family or feeling as if no one cares about you can all be considered trauma? It took me a long time to learn it wasn't just about some major event you had to witness. It can be things we see and experience everyday, just too much of that stress can very well be trauma.

These events may become your normal and you adapt and deal with them in the best way you can. I'll share my story to provide you with an example. Remember everyone has different experiences and they impact us individually.

WHAT IS TRAUMA?

Trauma is any bad event or emotional strain that has or is happening to you. Trauma can also be one or more events witnessed by you. These events leave a lasting impact on you and may continue to bother you throughout your life. It is important to remember that these events impact your sense of safety, often impact your relationships with others and shape who you are.

I'm not sure I get it. I understand that bad things happen, but I've been told you're just supposed to suck it up and move on. Can you give me an example of trauma? I've only ever heard of trauma as a really bad car accident, bombing or something MAJOR like that.



HAYDEN'S STORY

I grew up in a home where my parents fought about everything. Some days the fights felt like loud conversations, other days my dad would hit my mom, make her cry and they would throw things at each other. As a child I thought this was how parents acted, that it was normal. I learned to follow the "rules" so I would not be punished. This was my reality. I learned to be a rule follower because then there was less fighting. I followed rules at home, school and church to make sure no one would get me in trouble with my dad. But I didn't WANT to follow the rules. I was only safe to be me with my friends, because they didn't tell on me, no matter what bad things I was doing - drinking, smoking, hanging with the wrong crowd, and all that.

I didn't learn what healthy relationships looked like, and I always felt unsafe, living in fear of getting hurt or yelled at. This caused me to avoid people. I felt very alone. Even now, when I see people fighting it makes me sad and it brings me right back to a place where I want to run, hide or avoid people. Because of those experiences I frequently find myself in unhealthy relationships. I didn't learn how to manage conflict or how to stand up for myself. I would avoid new situations and relationships because I felt so anxious. To manage anxiety I was told to 'snap out of it' and used several types of meds. When I would talk to a therapist they focused on how to make me less depressed or less anxious. These conversations were focused on how I was feeling in the moment, not how I grew up and how traumatic experiences taught me my way of dealing with stress and fear.

What Happened: Grew up in a violent family

How did it make me feel: Became a rule follower, felt alone, afraid and anxious

How does it still bother me? I avoid situations in order to feel safe. I don't speak up for myself in relationships and I struggle to understand what a healthy relationship really is. When I become stressed I run away to avoid it, either by ending the relationship or quitting my job.

I had to name what I had experienced, and acknowledge it was trauma. I needed help to understand what had happened in my childhood and the lasting effects, how it made me feel and why it still bothers me. Helping professionals are now calling these events from childhood "adversities" and researchers are studying the impact these Adverse Childhood Experiences or ACEs can have on us as we get older.



WHAT ARE THE ACEs?

Adverse Childhood Experience (ACE) is a research study conducted by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and Kaiser Permanente to look at how childhood events impact us in the long run. ACEs are a list of events that have been demonstrated to have lasting effects, both physically and emotionally. Some of these events may seem small, while others more severe, but all may impact us. The response to traumatic events and experiences vary among people, as trauma is individualized. Only you truly understand the full impact of an experience and how it affects your daily life.

It is important to know that we all experience things differently. A friend or sibling who experienced the same event may not have the same response you have. And that is OK! Many youth have experienced abuse, neglect and household dysfunction but it doesn't mean that they are traumatized. We all have different ways to manage and cope with that stress.

Hayden – I still don't know about trauma and all that, but this relates to my life. There are some parts of your story that are like mine. I thought "Wait, I felt that way" or "I went through that too!"

Recognizing that one or more of these events is something you have experienced or currently are experiencing is important to your health. Reaching out to others and talking about your experiences and how it impacts you, can be healing. Let's keep talking to see how particular events have impacted you and help you to understand how they continue to make you feel.

Yeah, some of this stuff comes up in my daily life. I'm not sure I'm comfortable talking to other people about them. I don't want to seem weird or something. I'm willing to try to talk to someone, but no promises.

That's okay, there are people who can help and who really care. It's important to realize you aren't weird or anything. Trauma can happen to anyone at any time. You are not alone.



ACES CATEGORIES

HOUSEHOLD DYSFUNCTION

MENTAL ILLNESS
MOTHER TREATED VIOLENTLY
DIVORCE
INCARCERATED RELATIVE
SUBSTANCE ABUSE

NEGLECT

PHYSICAL
EMOTIONAL

ABUSE

PHYSICAL
EMOTIONAL
SEXUAL

IMPACT

You know what... I am always having issues sleeping, and if I do sleep I have nightmares. It really sucks, so I avoid sleeping and then I jump from being happy to mad. I don't understand what is wrong with me, but now I think it could be how my experiences are affecting my life.

One thing you can do is to look at the ACE's and ask yourself,
Has this happened to me?
Do I think about it a lot?
Does it get in the way of my daily life?

If you answered yes to these questions then it may have a bigger impact than you realize. Making sense of what has happened can be helpful in learning new ways to cope and build skills to manage stress and heal from the pain.

Exactly! That's great that you are seeing how trauma may be impacting your life.

Research has shown that many people have an ACE or multiple ACE's (link). What is most important is how you are able to manage those experiences physically and emotionally. These experiences may lead to:

- Low self- esteem
- Anxiety
- Nightmares
- Mood swings
- Headaches
- Disrupted sleep patterns
- High risk behaviors

Other times these experiences may not have a lasting impact with emotional or physical symptoms. What is important is making the connection that a particular event is still bothering you in some way.

You may have experienced some of these and they may have caused you to feel upset, sad or withdrawn. You may also have other reactions. It's important to understand what reactions are common for you. Remember these reactions are normal responses for those who have experienced trauma. Jessie, have you been thinking about what may cause a reaction for you?

For me when I see someone yelling at a child, I feel saddened because I know what that is like. When I hear yelling I feel anxious and sometimes I have a physical reaction and jump. I get really upset when people poke me because my dad used to do that to me when he was mad. How about you try this for yourself?

- A. When I see _____ I feel _____
- B. When I hear _____ I feel _____
- C. I tend to get upset more when _____ happens.
- D. Or create your own _____

No, not really. I just now am realizing that I'm reacting to it. What causes it for you?

SYMPTOMS & TRIGGERS

Your reactions to adverse experiences can help you understand yourself and what you need to work on to begin healing. Youth who have experienced trauma often have moments where things happen completely out of their control; external events that may cause a sudden reaction or make them feel a certain way. The sudden onset of these emotions could be caused by external events that are often referred to as triggers. Triggers mean that you experienced something and it caused a negative impact or reaction on how you were feeling in that moment.

These types of reactions can come in many forms such as:

- Smells, sounds, colors or places
- Anniversary dates of the event or loss
- Loud voices, yelling or fighting
- Being around alcohol or drugs
- Certain gestures like pointing, poking or grabbing
- Media or news about particular events
- Bullying and name calling
- Feeling as if you don't have control in that moment
- Public safety authority figures like police officers, fire fighters or emergency medical technicians (EMTs).

I am starting to think about events that give me a strong reaction to find my triggers. I can see how my past experiences can be called trauma and how these experiences and my reactions are connected. I'll give this a try.

When I see someone being picked on/bullied, I feel hopeless and sad.

When I hear someone cussing at a person, I feel my anger boiling out like a volcano.

I get really bothered when a fight or argument happens.

WHAT'S NEXT?

The good news is that youth are resilient and despite adversity are resourceful in finding ways to meet needs! Many youth find it helpful to talk with someone. Youth will share when they form a trusting relationship with an adult. When youth understand these experiences as trauma it takes away the blame youth may feel around the events. When we name our adversities as trauma it shifts the feeling that something is wrong with us to something has happened to us.

First would be to name it for what it is: If it was a particular adversity or multiple adversities then name it as trauma.

If you are unsure, that's ok. Knowing that something has happened to you is the start. Once you can name it, talk about it: Think about who you share this private information with. Youth can consider how best to share their story by considering the following; what I want to share, why I want to share and what I hope is done with the information I share.

Yes!! Starting a conversation about your experiences and trauma can be hard; here are some things to keep in mind.

What can I do to reach out and start rewriting my negative story into something positive?

What if I'm not sure about what's bothering me?

So conversations may look different depending on who I decide to share this information with?



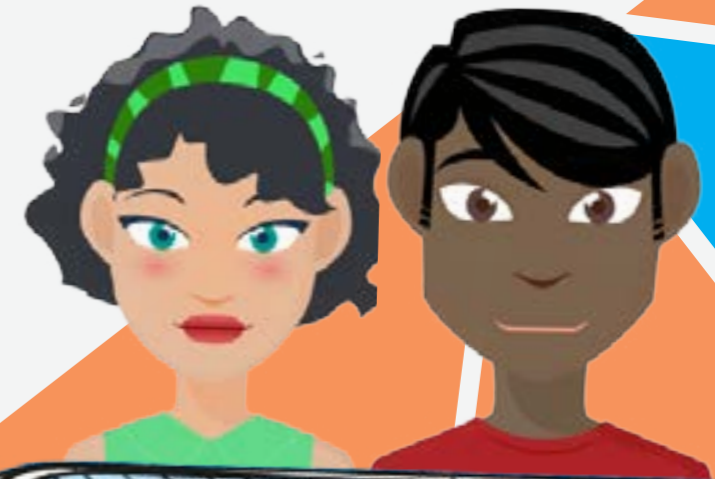
- Share with a caring adult, (one you are comfortable with and whom you trust)
- Set up a safe place in which to share.
- Tell your story as your story. Be open & honest, but you don't have to share anything you don't want to.
- Discuss how it has impacted you, what your feelings are and how you are coping.
- Create a space for support and share what could be helpful to your healing process.
- Discuss what you would like to do in the future and what are your next steps for healing and growth.

RESILIENCY

Resiliency is just a fancy word which means the ability to bounce back and ability to cope with stress and adversity in a healthy manner. Many youth are extremely resilient and are able to use their life experiences to help them grow. We can learn to be resilient as well!

There are some things to keep in mind while building your resilience.

- Understand that your experiences are unique: It's okay to take time to make sense of it all.
- Build and identify coping skills such as calling a friend, exercising, drawing, creating music or other activity that makes you feel better: choose what works best for you.
- Make connections to others: It is important to find supportive people to build resilience.
- Make connections to services: You may need professional help in processing trauma. There is nothing wrong with asking for help, and there are many who specialize in working with trauma.
- Take care of yourself: This may seem simple, but it is essential to take good care of yourself. This includes getting enough sleep, healthy meals, and making time for things you enjoy.
- Build resilience: You have the power to rewrite your story, choose how you relate to and manage your experiences.



No one gets to choose the hand that they were dealt and bad things happen. But I can change how I let it affect me and my life. I am in control of how I feel and what I do about it.

Jessie, I am so glad I have gained your trust and you shared your experiences with me. Because of my experiences I have learned how important it is to help young adults learn what trauma is and how it may be affecting them. I found a framework to explain my experiences, I had words to advocate for myself and I became aware of services that specifically dealt with the trauma I had experienced. This understanding allowed me to reconnect with service providers, to actually work through my childhood trauma and better understand how it was connecting to my adult behaviors.

I had experienced trauma and just didn't know what to name it. This shifted my thinking, which allowed me to name my pain and most importantly, to re-write my story of survival to one of healing and hope.

Thank you for chatting with me. I understand what has happened to me, and it's called Trauma. I get how to share my experiences and know how to ask for support. I feel better knowing that I'm not in this alone. I am excited to move on from this by getting support and building resiliency.



I'm so glad we were able to talk today, and that you are empowered to create your journey of healing. Here are some more resources for you to check out!!



Supportive adults and providers looking for additional resources can check out Georgetown University's National Technical Assistance Center for Children's Mental Health's Trauma Informed Care website:

Georgetown University
Resources



Youth and young adults looking for additional resources can check out Youth M.O.V.E. National's Resource website:

Youth M.O.V.E. National
Resources



For additional resources use your smart phone to scan these QR codes



Apps For Raising Happy, Healthy Children



By Linda Burgess Chamberlain PhD, MPH
for the Institute for Safe Families

We all want to be the best parents we can be. This booklet helps you to recognize how things in your past, such as how you were raised, can help you parent or can get in the way and make it hard for you to be the kind of parent you want to be. Some adults have pasts that can haunt them. Parents need care and support too. In this booklet, you will also find strategies for both you and your children to be stronger, happier and healthier.

This resource has phone numbers, cell phone Apps, ideas and websites that may be helpful to you or someone else you know who is a caregiver for children including step-parents, teenage parents, grandparents, relatives and other caring adults.

SHARE:



PHONE #'S



APPS



WEBSITES



RESOURCES



SHARE WITH FRIENDS



LEARN MORE



LIKE



Every parent and adult who cares for children wants to raise happy, healthy children. When parents feel safe and supported in their own lives, they can take better care of their children. While families may have different cultural values about parenting, all children need to feel safe and connected with their caregivers.

Parenting is hard work. Even on the best of days, all parents have moments when they feel frustrated, disappointed or embarrassed when they can't keep it all together. If parents had a difficult childhood themselves, these feelings can make tough times even harder to deal with. Being a single parent can be really difficult as well. There are simple things a parent can do to help children and themselves do better in tough times. A first step is to know how children respond to stress and to understand how stress in our own childhood may affect us as adults.



Parenting Helplines for Anonymous Support and Advice:

Parent Helpline: 1-855-4A-PARENT (1-855-427-2736)

Boys Town National Hotline: 1-800-448-3000

Child Help: 1-800-4A-CHILD (1-800-422-4453)

All stress is not bad. Dealing with losses and bad times teaches children how to deal with the ups and downs of life. But, there are things that can be so scary or stressful for children that there can be lasting negative effects. The most important thing for children who are dealing with high levels of unhealthy stress is to have supportive parents and other caring adults who can help them cope.

The way a child is affected when something bad happens may not be obvious right away. Since no two children are the same, each child will have a different response. When children can't let their feelings out or tell their own stories, bottled up emotions often come out later as unwanted behaviors and problems such as temper tantrums and teens feeling like nobody cares about them.



SHARE WITH FRIENDS



LEARN MORE



LIKE



The way a child is affected when something bad happens may not be obvious right away.

When stress is severe, goes on for a long time, or if several bad things happen close together in time, it can be harder for children to get through the bad times. Signs that children are having trouble coping include:

- Acting out, being aggressive or fighting with other children
- Difficulty paying attention
- Problems with calming down
- Being hyperactive and impulsive

Children who are over-stressed are more likely to have physical health problems, such as headaches, stomach problems and asthma. The good news is that everyday things that parents do with their children such as reading stories, singing songs, and giving lots of hugs can help children get through tough times.



fosteringresilience.com

Parenting tips to foster strengths in children, recognize signs of trouble in children, and a special section for teens on how to manage stress.



nctsn.org

Understanding children and stress



DOWNLOAD A QR CODE READER APP TO ACCESS RESOURCES ON YOUR SMARTPHONE!

SCAN ME!



IT'S ABOUT PARENTS TOO!

SHARE WITH FRIENDS



LEARN MORE



LIKE



REDUCE STRESS!

Simple Steps for Parents

Tough times that you had as a child can affect you as an adult in unexpected ways. Feeling stressed out or sad most of the time and having panic attacks as well as using alcohol, drugs, tobacco or over-eating to cope can be reactions to what happened when you were a child.

Parenting takes a lot of energy and focus. If you are feeling tired, overwhelmed or are struggling with memories from your childhood, it can be more difficult to understand your children's behaviors and needs. If you don't feel safe, it is harder to help your children feel safe. When stressed, parents may use forms of discipline that don't work. Spanking and hitting children can cause them to act out and be more aggressive.

If you had hard times during your childhood, it's important to know ***it's not your fault***. It's not about *what's wrong with you*, it's about understanding *what happened to you*. Understanding how things that happened during your childhood connect to how you feel now is an important part of healing and can prevent other problems for you and your kids. Recognizing things that you keep doing but want to change, and then finding healthier ways to manage that stress can help you to feel better and to be the kind of parent that you want to be. Parents also need people to talk to who will listen and be there for them.

SIMPLE STEPS FOR PARENTS TO REDUCE STRESS

-  **STOP WHAT YOU'RE DOING FOR A FEW MINUTES** and take some deep breaths until you feel calmer. It can be hard to remember what helps when things are really stressful. Check out "Tactical Breather Trainer," a free cell phone App that uses pictures and talks you through deep breathing or go to www.childdevelopmentinfo.com and search for "52 proven ways to reduce stress".
-  **TRY TO IDENTIFY THINGS THAT ARE ESPECIALLY STRESSFUL** (for example, toilet training or talking with your teen about dating and sex) and see if someone else can help with or do that task.
-  **TALK WITH A TRUSTED FRIEND**, neighbor or family member about what's going on.
-  **FIND A PARENTING SUPPORT GROUP** to connect with other parents. Connect with other parents online at www.nationalparenthelpline.org/articlesblogs/nph-blog or ask an expert online at www.parenting.org.



anxietybc.com

Advice for parents, other caregivers and youth on how to manage anxiety.



albertafamilywellness.org

Videos and resources about how children's brains develop.



Tactical Breather Trainer App

Scan to Download the Tactical Breather App in the App Store





If you don't own a smartphone, links to all of these websites are available online at:

www.instituteforsafefamilies.org




All forms of child abuse (physical, sexual and emotional) and neglect are very stressful for children. Living in homes where adults are hurting or threatening one another is also harmful for children. Information about helping families when there has been abuse, neglect or other trauma can be found at www.nctsn.org/resources/audiences/parents-caregivers. For information about how to recognize child maltreatment and prevention tips for parents go to www.preventchildabuse.org. You can call these help lines 24 hours a day:

Child Help: 1-800-4A-CHILD (422-4453)
Domestic Violence Hotline: 1-800-799-SAFE (7233)
Treatment Referral: 1 800 662-HELP (4357)

 **nsvrc.org**
Sexual abuse prevention resource for parents.

 **preventchildabuse.org**
Information on healthy development of children and how to prevent abuse before it ever happens.



- SHARE WITH FRIENDS 
- LEARN MORE 
- LIKE 

The following questions ask about some of the problems that many families experience that can be stressful for children. These questions are adapted from a study called ACES, which stands for Adverse Childhood Experiences. Please answer the questions below about things that you and your child(ren) may have experienced.

Did you (before you were 18 years old) or your child live with someone who:	YOU		YOUR CHILD(REN)	
	YES	NO	YES	NO
Was depressed, mentally ill or suicidal?	YES	NO	YES	NO
Served time in jail or prison?	YES	NO	YES	NO
Was a problem drinker or an alcoholic?	YES	NO	YES	NO
Used illegal street drugs or abused prescription medications?	YES	NO	YES	NO
Did you (before you were 18 years old) or has your child had any of these things happen:				
Had a parent or guardian who died?	YES	NO	YES	NO
Heard or saw someone being stabbed or shot?	YES	NO	YES	NO
Placed in foster care?	YES	NO	YES	NO
Bullied by other children?	YES	NO	YES	NO
Treated badly or unfairly because of something about you such as your race, sexual orientation, place of birth, disability, etc.?	YES	NO	YES	NO
Punished or disciplined by being slapped, hit or spanked?	YES	NO	YES	NO
Punished or disciplined by being hit with a belt, paddle, brush or other object?	YES	NO	YES	NO

If you answered yes to any of the questions above, consider talking with your health care provider about how these experiences may have affected you and/or your child(ren).

BUILDING BLOCKS FOR HAPPY, HEALTHY FAMILIES

SHARE WITH FRIENDS



LEARN MORE



LIKE



FAMILY

There are messages and skills that you can share with your children that can strengthen them and help them do better in good times and bad times. When children learn these, they build connections in their brains that help them to succeed in school, to behave in the ways you would expect, and to become happier and healthier. When parents manage stress in positive ways, parents' brains can change in ways that will help them to be healthier and happier too! These strengths build on one another like building blocks that can help children of all ages and their adults to better deal with stress.

LOVE ↔ STRENGTH

The questions below ask about positive things that help children when times are tough. Take a minute to think back to your childhood and answer these questions about yourself.

As a child (before I was 18 years old):

I had someone I could talk to when I was upset or scared.	YES	NO	NOT SURE
I knew that my parent(s)/caregiver(s) loved me.	YES	NO	NOT SURE
There was someone in my life who helped me feel important or special.	YES	NO	NOT SURE
I was able to ask for help when I needed it.	YES	NO	NOT SURE

I AM CONNECTED

[HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS]



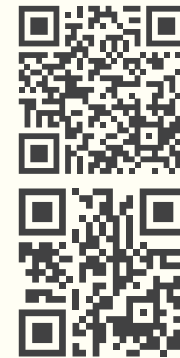
instituteforsafefamilies.org

Download parent booklets about positive discipline, early brain development, adolescent brain development, and helping children exposed to violence



familytlc.net

Steps for building stronger relationships with your children and helping them succeed



- Warm, loving relationships with your children build a foundation that will stay with them forever. Be firm and consistent, but not scary, when you discipline them, and give them lots of praise when they do what you want them to do— **“You did a good job being quiet like I asked you to. Good listening!” “I appreciate that you came home on time tonight. I know I can trust you.”**
- Tell your children how important they are— **“I’ll always love you”** and **“I love you for who you are.”**
- Have fun together – play, laugh, and do things with your children that they enjoy. **“Jake, why don’t we walk over to the park together so you can show me the skateboarding jump you were talking about?”**
- Taking time for yourself and seeing friends without your kids can help parents to be less stressed. You are not being a “bad” parent when you take time for yourself. It might even make you more patient with your children to be with friends and other people who care about you.

I UNDERSTAND HOW YOU FEEL

[EMPATHY]

- Children learn to think about other people's feelings when you show them that you understand how they feel.
- Watch for signs that tell you how your children are feeling and ask questions such as ***"How did you feel when Johnny started crying after you took his toy away?"*** or ***"Shawna, what were you feeling when you shouted at me and slammed the bedroom door?"***
- Experts teach us that you will not spoil a child by hugging and caring for them when they are crying. In fact, the more you hold and hug and kiss your children, the more they understand that you care and will be there when they need you. And teens need to know that you'll still be there for them too. You are also teaching your children how to love and support others.

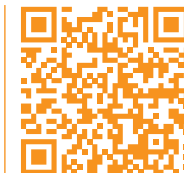


MORE GREAT RESOURCES:

- When your toddler acts out, stay close. Make sure he is safe from harm and offer physical comfort. Rock her or hug him while saying ***"I am right here and I love you"*** while also correcting behavior by saying something like ***"but you cannot hit your sister."*** This will help your child to "unload" difficult feelings. And you are showing your child the kind of caring behavior that you want him to learn.
- Teens tell us that they often feel like no one understands or asks them how they feel. Ask your teen how she is feeling and tell her how you are feeling too—***"I am frustrated with you. The reason I am frustrated is that you promised you would talk to me if you needed help with your writing assignments. Your teacher just called and told me that you are three assignments behind. What can we do to solve this problem?"***



healthychildren.org
This website from the American Academy of Pediatrics offers loads of information on children's physical and mental health needs.



parentingscience.com/teaching-empathy-tips.html
Parenting Science is dedicated to families who want information based on the scientific evidence.



**BUILDING
BLOCKS FOR
HAPPY,
HEALTHY
FAMILIES**



Web sites listed in this booklet are for informational purposes only. Endorsement is not implied.

I AM IN CONTROL

[SELF-REGULATION]

BUILDING
BLOCKS FOR
HAPPY
HEALTHY
FAMILIES



self-regulation.ca
Brochure (PDF) about how to help children identify when they are becoming over-stressed and help them learn how to calm down.

- Children need to learn to manage their emotions and how they behave. This helps them to be able pay attention and do better when things are stressful.
- Help your child to recognize what stresses her (*"It's scary when I hear yelling."*) and what it feels like when he starts to feel out of control (*"I get hot all over and make fists."*) Ask your child to talk to you about it.
- Children learn how to deal with stress from you. Practice ways to reduce stress with your child. *"Let's pretend we're blowing bubbles and take some deep breaths so we can both calm down. I'm taking a deep breath in and blowing a big bubble to you. Now you take a big breath and blow a bubble to me."*
- Exercise helps children to burn off energy and calm down. Try simple movements such as telling your child, *"Pretend you are a squiggly, wiggly piece of spaghetti—now shake and wiggle until you feel all quiet inside"* or if things start getting heated up while talking with your teenager, *"Let's both cool down a bit. Why don't you play some basketball or go for a walk and we'll talk later."*

I CAN DO IT!

[SELF-ESTEEM]

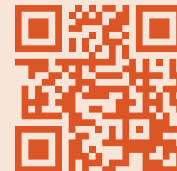


GOOD JOB!

- Children need to learn early to believe in themselves; you are their most important confidence builder.
- Catch your child doing something good and say things like, *"I'm proud of the way you shared your toy with your brother"* or *"You really look great today. Have a good time with your friends."*
- Your children are not "bad," although sometimes their behaviors are difficult. When you want to change something that your child is doing, start by praising and encouraging him. For example, *"You did a good job listening to me when I told you to stop pinching your friend, Tommy. Thank you. But, it's not OK to hurt someone else. Next time, try using your words to say what is making you mad."*
- Being the kind of parent you want to be builds your confidence too!



Go to kidshealth.org/parent/emotions/ select **"Developing Child's Self-Esteem"** – for great ideas for young children, teens and parents too.



journeyofhearts.org
Online healing place with resources and contacts to help adults and children deal with loss and grief.

Know Someone Who Needs Help?
Share this brochure with your friends, family, or loved ones who might need help & support.

Partnering with Parents, Apps For Raising Happy, Healthy Children has been created with support from:



instituteforsafefamilies.org

...
This brochure is available to
download from ISF's website.

American Academy
of Pediatrics



DEDICATED TO THE HEALTH OF ALL CHILDREN™

aap.org

American Academy
of Pediatrics



DEDICATED TO THE HEALTH OF ALL CHILDREN™

Pennsylvania Chapter

preventchildabusepa.org
pascan.org



**Multiplying
Connections**

multiplyingconnections.org



**Prevent Child Abuse
America**

preventchildabuse.org

Reflective Listening Skills

Why they are important?

- Show that feelings matter
- Show that it is possible to talk about uncomfortable or complicated feelings
- Show that we care about the child's feelings
- Teach the child that all feelings are acceptable, even though certain behavior is not
- Defuse an uncomfortable situation
- Reduce a child's urge to act out because the child feels heard
- Teach the child a vocabulary for articulating how they feel
- Reduce whining, anger and frustration

Basic Skills?

- Listening before speaking
- Deal with personal specifics, not impersonal generalities
- Decipher the emotions behind the words, to create a better understanding of the message
- Restate and clarify how you understand the message
- Understand the speaker's frame of reference and avoid responding based only on your own perception
- Respond with acceptance and empathy

From <http://cultureofempathy.com>