



BEYOND TRAUMA

Building Resilience to Adverse Childhood Experiences



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Acknowledgements

A joint project of Interface Children & Family Services and ACEs Connection Network.

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About Strategies:

The California Department of Social Services, Office of Child Abuse Prevention (OCAP), established Strategies in 1997 to provide outreach, education dissemination, training, and technical assistance to enhance the capacity of California organizations in preventing child abuse and neglect. Strategies is a nationally recognized alliance of experienced trainers, organizational development coaches, facilitators, and support staff providing training, coaching, facilitation, and technical assistance for community-based organizations, county agencies, and networks in their work to prevent child abuse and neglect.

About ACEs Connection:

ACEs Connection is a social network that accelerates the global movement toward recognizing the impact of adverse childhood experiences in shaping adult behavior and health, and reforming all communities and institutions — from schools to prisons to hospitals and churches — to help heal and develop resilience rather than to continue to traumatize already traumatized people.

The network achieves this by creating a safe place and a trusted source where members share information, explore resources and access tools that help them work together to create resilient families, systems and communities. A companion site, ACEsTooHigh.com, provides news to the general public as part of the ACEs Connection Network.

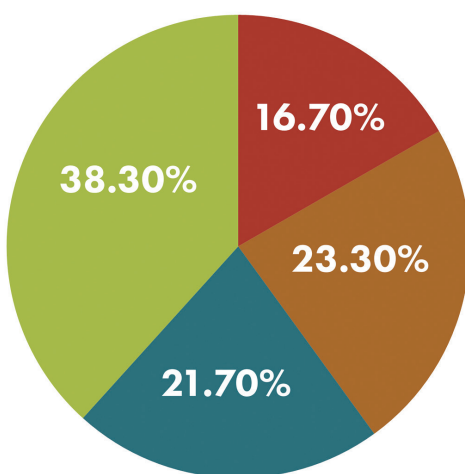
*This publication was made possible by funding from the State of California,
Department of Social Services, Office of Child Abuse Prevention.*



How We Can Create Resilient, Self-Healing Communities

Most of us have experienced some type of childhood trauma that follows us into our adult years. The long-term impact of this trauma depends on many things. If we had a caring adult in our lives – a parent, neighbor, teacher or coach who helped us through the hard times or believed in us, the consequences of that trauma aren't as bad as they might have been.

Prevalence of ACEs among California adults



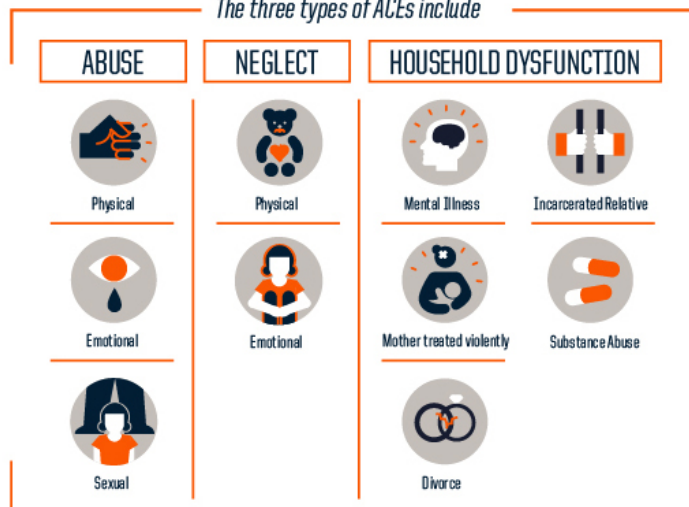
Credit: Center for Youth Wellness

What we've learned over the last 20 years is that trauma does not equal only violence. Trauma is also divorce, living with a parent who's an alcoholic or who's depressed, experiencing racism, being an immigrant, being bullied...many experiences that we think of as "normal".

But we now know that these adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) harm our brains and bodies, even though we may not acknowledge it personally or as a society. ACEs cause most of California's chronic physical and mental health issues, as well as our social and economic issues. And the more types of trauma we experience, the more severe the consequences can be.

However, we also now know that we can change our families, our organizations, and our communities so that we and our children can have healthy lives. We can stop traumatizing already traumatized people. We can build resilience in all parts of our lives – our personal lives, our family lives, our work lives, and our community lives.

The three types of ACEs include

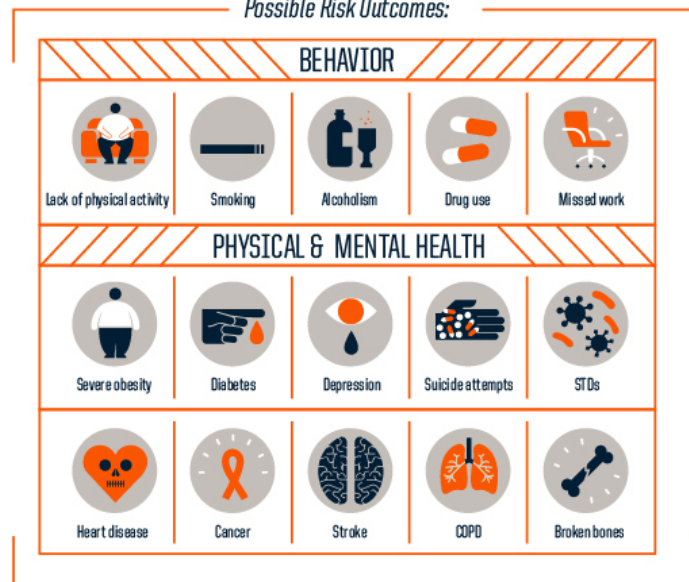


WHAT IMPACT DO ACEs HAVE?

As the number of ACEs increases, so does the risk for negative health outcomes



Possible Risk Outcomes:



Credit: Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

The Five Parts of ACEs

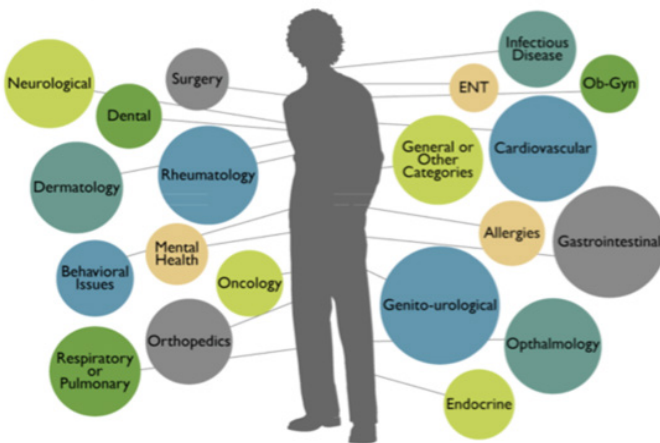
Childhood Trauma Causes Chronic Disease, Mental Illness and Violence

The ACE Study showed that there's an unmistakable link between adverse experiences in childhood and adult onset of chronic disease, mental illness, violence and being a victim of violence. The more types of ACEs a person has, the worse the consequences. Also, there are other types of ACEs besides those in the ACE Study – bullying, racism, witnessing violence outside the home, witnessing a sibling being abused, or involvement with the foster care or the juvenile justice systems.

Those ACEs Cause Toxic Stress, Which Harms the Brain

There are three major types of stress. We all need positive stress to thrive. Tolerable stress comes during life's ups and downs, with a parent or friend to help us recover. But too many children and adults experience toxic stress – extreme, frequent or extended trauma without a caring adult to help. This long-term toxic stress – that can come from living with a physically and verbally abusive alcoholic parent, for example – keeps a child on red alert. This produces stress hormones that damage a kid's brain.

Consequences of Lifetime Exposure to Violence and Abuse



Credit: ACEsConnection.com

What is your ACE Score?

The original ACE Study used these questions to determine participants' ACE scores. The total number of "yes" answers is the participant's ACE score, out of 10.

Prior to your 18th Birthday:

1. Did a parent or other adult in the household often or very often swear at you, insult you, put you down, or humiliate you? Or act in a way that made you afraid that you might be physically hurt?
2. Did a parent or other adult in the household often or very often push, grab, slap, or throw something at you? Or ever hit you so hard that you had marks or were injured?
3. Did an adult or person at least 5 years older than you ever touch or fondle you or have you touch their body in a sexual way, or attempt to or actually have oral, anal, or vaginal intercourse with you?
4. Did you often or very often feel that no one in your family loved you or thought you were important or special? Or your family didn't look out for, feel close to, or support each other?
5. Did you often or very often feel that you didn't have enough to eat, had to wear dirty clothes, and had no one to protect you, or your parents were too drunk or high to take care of you or take you to the doctor if you needed it?
6. Were your parents ever separated or divorced?
7. Was your mother or stepmother often or very often pushed, grabbed, slapped, or had something thrown at her? Or sometimes, often, or very often kicked, bitten, hit with a fist, or hit with something hard? Or ever repeatedly hit over at least a few minutes or threatened with a gun or knife?
8. Did you live with anyone who was a problem drinker or alcoholic, or who used street drugs?
9. Was a household member depressed or mentally ill, or did a household member attempt suicide?
10. Did a household member go to prison?

POSITIVE STRESS

Mild/moderate and short-lived stress response necessary for healthy development

TOLERABLE STRESS

More severe stress response but limited in duration which allows for recovery

TOXIC STRESS

Extreme, frequent, or extended activation of the body's stress response without the buffering presence of a supportive adult

Intense, prolonged, repeated and unaddressed

Social-emotional buffering, parental resilience, early detection, and/or effective intervention

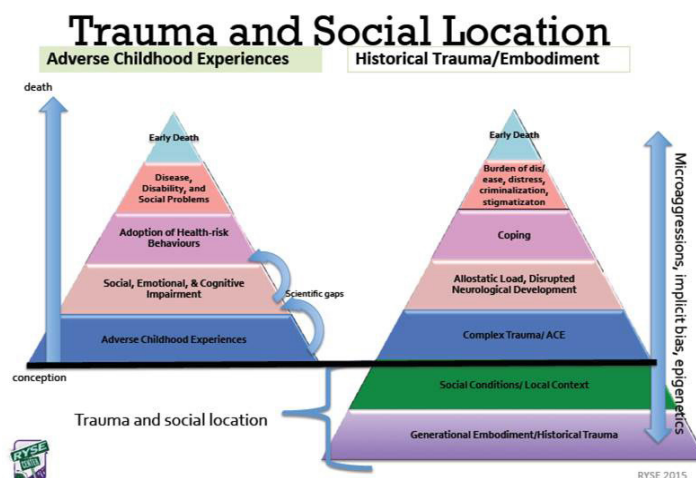
Credit: Center for Youth Wellness

Toxic stress also hurts our bodies...

In a red alert state, our bodies pump out stress hormones all the time, and this makes for a lot of internal wear and tear. Blood pressure and glucose levels stay high, which weakens the heart and blood vessels, and can lead to type 2 diabetes. So even if we haven't smoked, become alcoholic or obese to cope with our ACEs, our risk of heart disease, diabetes, arthritis and other diseases increases. If we experience an additional traumatic event, our bodies have trouble returning to a normal state. Over time, we become more sensitive to trauma or stress, and develop a hair-trigger response to events that other people shrug off.

...and it can be passed from one generation to the next.

Toxic stress can actually turn our genes on and off, and cause long-term changes in all parts of our bodies and brains. The genes that control our ability to regulate stress hormones, for example, don't work as well, and we can respond to trauma and stress with anger, frustration, depression, or violence. These changes can be transferred from generation to generation, especially if the social environment doesn't change enough to promote healing, such as for those social environments for ethnic groups that experience generations of oppression and racism.



Credit: RYSE Center

The good news is that resilience research shows that our brains are plastic, and that our bodies want to heal!

The brain is continually changing in response to our social environment. If the toxic stress stops and is replaced by practices that build resilience, the brain can slowly undo many of the stress-induced changes. Bodies can slowly heal. Changing from living in a very stressful environment to one with little stress requires a lot of work from us who are trying to change, with support from supportive friends and family, workplaces, and communities.

Who's Doing Trauma-Informed, Resilience Building Practices?

Pediatric Clinics

At Bay View Child Health Center in San Francisco, parents answer a 16-question survey about their children's ACEs. Children who have 1-3 ACEs with symptoms, or 4 or more ACEs with or without symptoms are referred, with their families, to the Center for Youth Wellness for services. These services include mental health, social services, home visits, and school liaisons. At Roseland Pediatrics in Santa Rosa, CA, parents learn about ACEs science and do their and their children's ACE scores. If they say they have even one ACE, the clinic provides services for them.

Elementary Schools

Four years after El Dorado Elementary School in San Francisco, CA, integrated the HEARTS program (Healthy Environments and Response to Trauma in Schools) in 2009-2010, suspensions dropped 89% and referrals dropped from 674 a year to 50. Kids learn how to recognize their response to trauma and how to soothe themselves. Teachers also learn self-care. The kids spend more time learning; teachers spend more time teaching.



Credit: ACEsTooHigh.com

Health Care Clinics

Since 2014, counselors at Elsie Allen Health Clinic at Elsie Allen High School in Santa Rosa, CA, ask all students who come through their doors about their ACEs – there are 16 questions on their ACE survey -- and explain ACEs science to them. The counselors say that asking kids about their ACEs has had a greater impact on their work than any other information they ask the students for because it helps develop better relationships with the students. And the entire staff is more understanding about some of the kids' behaviors.

Supplemental ACE Questions

- » Have you ever had a household member go to jail/prison or be deported?
- » Have you ever experienced homelessness or been in foster care?
- » Have you had to move or change schools a number of times?
- » Have you experienced the death of a very close friend or family member?
- » Have you been extremely ill or injured?
- » Have you ever been pregnant or gotten someone pregnant?

Youth Services

San Diego Youth Services changed from an inflexible and punitive rules-based approach to rules based on safety that provide youth the assistance they need to succeed. The agency works with them to create a safety plan that helps youth identify early warning signs that they may need help, ways they can help themselves, ways others can help them, and identifies people who can offer support. The changes have led to a drop in physical violence and incidents requiring police intervention, and an increase in self-sufficiency and health.

Communities

Several communities across California – including Ventura, Yolo, Sacramento and Sonoma counties – have started resilience, ACEs or trauma-informed initiatives, all with the same goals: They aim to have every organization in their community integrate trauma-informed and resilience-building practices based on ACEs science. They do ACEs presentations for organizations across the education, health care, juvenile justice, law enforcement, business, faith-based, child care, social services and public health sectors. They invite organizations to join the initiative, to integrate trauma-informed and resilience-building practices, and to share their results with the community through their groups on ACEsConnection.com, a social network for people who are creating resilient, self-healing communities.

How Can We Use ACEs Science to Build Resilience?

In Our Personal Lives

There's no doubt about how to build resilience in our personal lives: Having good and safe friends who are there when we need them. Living in a safe place. Getting enough sleep. Eating just enough nutritious food. Exercising. Practicing mindfulness, supportive prayer, or deep breathing. Learning. Helping others. Understanding our own ACEs and how they affect our lives.

In Our Family Lives

If parents learn about ACEs science, we are better equipped to understand what triggers us into anger, depression, frustration, or violence. We can learn how to soothe ourselves so that we don't pass on our ACEs to our kids. We can ask for help when we need it from friends, teachers in our kids' schools, clergy in our places of worship, nurses and physicians in our health care system. And, by learning how our children grow, and what they need at each stage of their lives, we can make sure they get what they need when they need it.

In Our Work and Community Lives

Resilient families can exist only if the organizations that parents work in, the systems that control those organizations, and the communities that families live in are healthy. Thousands of organizations and communities across the United States are implementing trauma-informed, resilience-building practices based on ACEs science. They participate in programs such as the National Council on Behavioral Health's Trauma-Informed Learning Communities; the Sanctuary Model, a three-year program for organizations and communities; the Mobilizing Action for Resilient Communities (MARC) project; and/or ACEsConnection.com's community groups. Many organizations and communities demonstrate early and remarkable success in solving our most intractable problems, such as school suspensions, homelessness, violence, poverty and hopelessness.

In Our Work with Families

Across California and the nation, parents, programs, organizations and local, state and federal agencies have embraced the Strengthening Families™ approach to helping families thrive AND promoting children's best development.

Using the Strengthening Families™ approach, programs and practitioners have altered their work with children and families to provide everyday opportunities for families and to build protective factors needed to nurture young children effectively.

It's about helping all families be the best they can be, even under stress. And about helping children thrive. By partnering with families in building protective factors, we are creating stronger families and stronger communities.

The Five Protective Factors

Strengthening Families™ is a research-informed approach to increase family strengths, enhance child development and reduce the likelihood of child abuse and neglect. It is based on engaging families, programs and communities in building five protective factors:

- » **Parental Resilience:** Managing stress and functioning well when faced with challenges, adversity, and trauma.
- » **Social Connections:** Positive relationships that provide emotional, informational, instrumental, and spiritual support.
- » **Knowledge of parenting and child development:** Understanding child development and parenting strategies that support physical, cognitive, language, social, and emotional development.
- » **Concrete support in times of need:** Access to concrete support and services that address a family's needs and help minimize stress caused by challenges.
- » **Social and emotional competence of children:** Family and child interactions that help children develop the ability to communicate clearly, recognize and regulate their emotions, and establish and maintain relationships.

Resources

ACEs Science

The CDC-Kaiser Permanente Adverse Childhood Experiences Study (ACE Study)

<http://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/acestudy/>

A Hidden Crisis: Findings on Adverse Childhood Experiences in California

<https://app.box.com/s/nf7lw36bjjr5kdfx4ct9>

Got Your ACE Score?

<http://www.acestoohigh.com/got-your-ace-score>

ACEs 101

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

ACEs Primer (video)

<https://vimeo.com/139998006>

Harvard Center on the Developing Child

<http://developingchild.harvard.edu>

Toxic Stress Derails Healthy Development (video)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rVwFkcOZHJw>

Childhood Disrupted – How Your Biography Becomes Your Biology and How You Can Heal (book)

<https://www.amazon.com/Childhood-Disrupted-Becomes-Biology/dp/1476748357>

SAMHSA's Concept of Trauma and Guidance for a Trauma-Informed Approach

<http://store.samhsa.gov/product/SAMHSA-s-Concept-of-Trauma-and-Guidance-for-a-Trauma-Informed-Approach/SMA14-4884>

The Amazing Brain: Materials for Parents, Caregivers and Professionals

<http://www.multiplyingconnections.org/node/44>

Who's Using this Science to Build Resilience?

Pediatric Clinics

<https://acestoohigh.com/2015/08/03/pediatricians-screen-parents-for-aces-to-improve-health-of-babies/>

El Dorado Elementary

<https://acestoohigh.com/2014/01/28/hearts-el-dorado-elementary/#more-2996>

Health Care Clinic

<https://acestoohigh.com/2015/10/06/customizing-the-aces-screen-for-the-specific-experiences-of-high-school-students/>

Youth Services

[https://acestoohigh.com/2014/12/14/san-diego-youth-services-embraces-a-trauma-informed-approach-kids-](https://acestoohigh.com/2014/12/14/san-diego-youth-services-embraces-a-trauma-informed-approach-kids-do-better-staff-stay-longer-programs-more-effective/)

[do-better-staff-stay-longer-programs-more-effective/](https://acestoohigh.com/2014/12/14/san-diego-youth-services-embraces-a-trauma-informed-approach-kids-do-better-staff-stay-longer-programs-more-effective/)

Communities

ACEsConnection.com

<http://www.acesconnection.com/groups>

Community Resilience Cookbook

<http://communityresiliencecookbook.org/tastes-of-success/>

How Can We Use ACEs Science to Build Resilience?

Personal

Mindfulness

Dan Siegel

<http://www.drdansiegel.com/blog/category/mindfulness/>

MindfulSchools.org

<http://www.mindfulschools.org/>

David Lynch Foundation

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

Resilience Factors

Center for Resilient Children

<http://www.centerforresilientchildren.org/adults/assessments-resources/>

Family

Strengthening Families Five Protective Factors

<http://www.cssp.org/reform/strengtheningfamilies/about#protective-factors-framework>

Harvard Center on the Developing Child

<http://developingchild.harvard.edu/science/key-concepts/resilience/>

Echo Parenting

<http://www.echoparenting.org/parenting-programs/parenting-classes>

Community and Work

NEAR@Home

<https://thrivewa.org/nearhome-toolkit-guided-process-talk-trauma-resilience-home-visiting/>

ACEsConnection.com Roadmap to Resilience

<http://www.acesconnection.com/blog/directory-of-roadmap-to-resilience-toolkit-v-1-0>

National Council on Behavioral Health Trauma-Informed Learning Communities

<http://www.thenationalcouncil.org/consulting-best-practices/areas-of-expertise/trauma-informed-care-learning-community/>

Sanctuary Model

<http://www.sanctuaryweb.com/>