



HEALTHY OUTCOMES
FROM POSITIVE EXPERIENCES

The 4 Building Blocks of HOPE

Research has shown that Positive Childhood Experiences (PCEs) can help protect against the poor health outcomes associated with Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs). These PCEs can be categorized into 4 Building Blocks. This resource is designed to help educators increase access to the Building Blocks for the children they serve.

For Educators



Relationships within the family and with other children and adults through interpersonal activities.

Being in nurturing, supportive relationships are critical for children to develop into healthy, resilient adults. Individuals that recall having these types of relationships during childhood experience significantly lower rates of depression and poor mental during adulthood. What types of relationships are we talking about?

- Foundational relationships with parents and/or caregivers who respond to a child's needs and offer warm, responsive interactions
- Adults outside of the family who take a genuine interest in a child and support their growth and development
- Healthy, close, and positive relationships with peers

How can educators promote access to supportive relationships?

- Be a supportive relationship! Take the time to connect with children in your class, especially those you know or suspect might not have many adults who believe in them.
- Share information with the child about after school activities where they might connect with coaches, mentors, or peers.
- Connect children who could use more supportive relationships with the school guidance counselor.





Safe, equitable, stable environments for living, playing, and learning at home and in school.

Children who live, learn, and play in safe, stable, and equitable environments are less likely to experience poor mental and physical health as adults. What do we mean by safe, stable, and equitable environments?

- A safe, stable environment, secure in meeting a child's basic needs, including adequate food, shelter, and healthcare.
- A nurturing home where a child is emotionally secure.
- A stable school environment where children feel valued and receive high-quality education
- A community environment to play and interact with other children safely and equitably

How can educators promote access to safe, stable, equitable environments?

- Make your classroom a safe space for all students! Address bullying and teasing in the moment, and encourage your class to be upstanders instead of bystanders.
- Diversify materials in your classroom to make sure that children feel represented. Look at the books on the shelf, posters on the wall, and examples in your curricula. Are all kinds of families, all genders, all races, all abilities represented?
- If your school doesn't already provide supplemental food on the weekends and over breaks to students who receive free lunches, talk to your administration to see if you can start a program.
- Know the community resources! More students than you think come to school hungry, without secure housing, and having witnessed violence in the home. Be the person who notices and connects them with support.



Social and civic engagement to develop a sense of belonging and connectedness.

Children need to feel connected to their communities, loved, and appreciated. Involvement in social institutions and environments, awareness of cultural customs and traditions, and a cultivated "sense of mattering" and belonging helps children develop into secure and resilient adults. What are some examples of social and community engagement?

- Being involved in projects, peer-mentoring, or community service through one's school or religious organization
- Partaking in family cultural traditions
- Participating in organized music, art, or sports

How can educators promote access to social and civic engagement?

- Ask students what they do outside of school, and delight with them around those activities. Consider having students create projects sharing with their classmates about their favorite social activity.
- Have fliers in the classroom for Community Centers, after school activities, and mentoring programs in your community.
- Encourage civic engagement and volunteering in your classroom.
- Consider offering your own after-school opportunity to engage the children in your classroom.



Opportunities for social and emotional growth.



Children need to have ample opportunity to develop their sense of self-awareness and social cognition, learn how to self-regulate emotions and behaviors, and acquire skills needed to respond functionally and productively to challenges. Many of these skills arise during child-centered play. Some children will naturally pick up these skills, others may need adults to help them name and understand their own feelings. Either way, these skills are critical for children to be able to become resilient, emotionally healthy adults. What do we mean by opportunities for social and emotional growth?

- Developing a sense of emotional and behavioral self-regulation
- Having the ability to respond to challenges in a productive manner
- Developing key socially and culturally appropriate communication and interpersonal skills

How can educators support social and emotional growth?

- Help a student name their feelings as they arise and talk about what that feeling feels like in the student's body.
- Normalize disagreements in peer groups and share information about how to disagree respectfully and productively.
- Consider implementing a social and emotional learning (SEL) curriculum in the classroom if your district doesn't already require it.



Information in this handout is sourced from research done by Dr. Robert Sege from the Center for Community-Engaged Medicine at Tufts Medical Center and Dr. Charlyn Harper Browne from the Center for the Study of Social Policy. The Building Blocks were first published in the following paper:

Sege and Browne. Responding to ACEs with HOPE: Health Outcomes from Positive Experiences. Academic Pediatrics 2017; 17:S79-S85

To learn more about HOPE, the 4 Building Blocks, and more, visit positiveexperience.org or email HOPE@tuftsmedicalcenter.org.

