



HEALTHY OUTCOMES  
FROM POSITIVE EXPERIENCES

## The 4 Building Blocks of HOPE

*Research has shown that Positive Childhood Experiences (PCEs) help children grow into healthy, resilient adults. These PCEs can be categorized into 4 Building Blocks. This resource is designed to help medical providers increase access to the Building Blocks for the children they serve.*

*For Medical Providers*



**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 providers promote access to supportive relationships?

- Ask caregivers about the types of positive relationships they may recall from childhood. Celebrate those with them! Encourage them to think about which components of those relationships they want to offer to their children.
- Share information about parent-child attachment. Validate and reflect back when you see warm reactions between parent and child.
- Ask about other positive adults in the child's life- coaches, teachers, pastors, mentors. Celebrate those relationships.





## **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 providers promote access to safe, stable, equitable environments?**

- Ask about habitability of homes. Consider a partnership with a local legal aid clinic to draft a template letter for remediations that families can offer to their property owners if rentals are not meeting health codes.
- Provide information on local subsidized preschools, Early Head Start, and Head Start programs.
- Ask about guns in the home. Have a conversation about gun safety and asking about guns in friends' homes.



## **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 providers promote access to social and civic engagement?**

- Ask about what families do outside of school and work and delight with them around those activities.
- Have fliers or links on your website to Community Centers, after-school activities, and mentoring programs in your community.



## **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 providers support social and emotional growth?**

- Help a child name their feelings as they arise and talk about what that feeling feels like in the child's body.
- Proactively normalize disagreements in peer groups and share information about how to disagree respectfully and productively.
- Encourage social connection like you would encourage eating healthy foods or exercising.



**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](http://positiveexperience.org) or email [HOPE@tuftsmedicalcenter.org](mailto:HOPE@tuftsmedicalcenter.org).**

