

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
13. Racism, sexism, or other discrimination
14. Being homeless
15. Natural disasters or 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 abuse
- Suicide attempts

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.

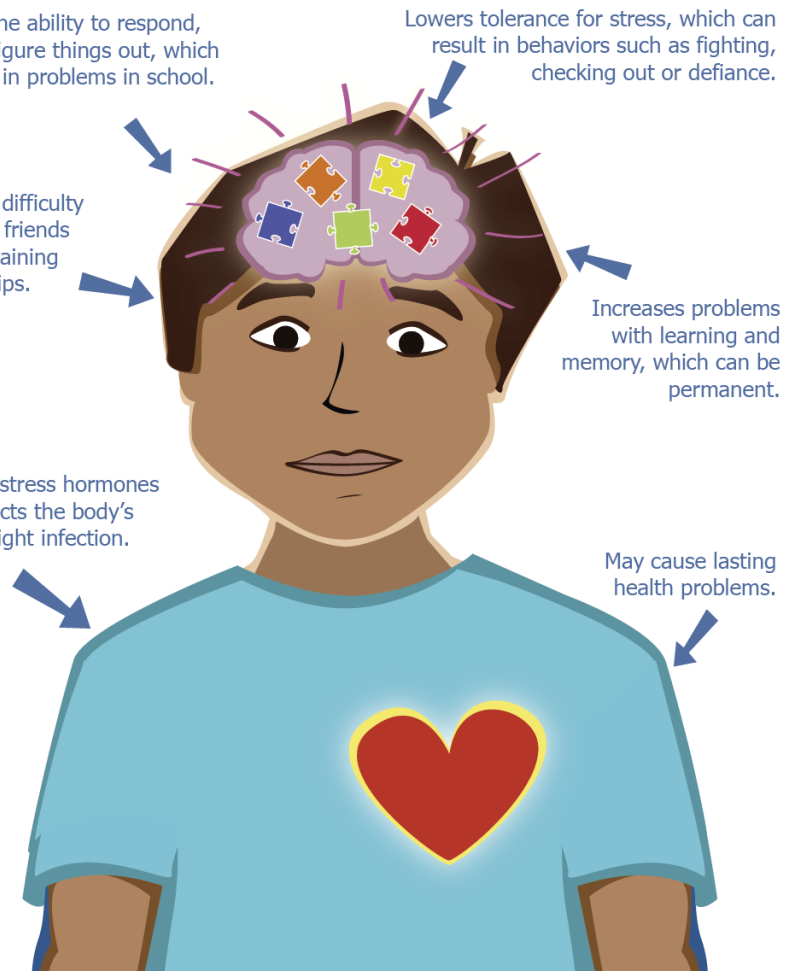
Lowers tolerance for stress, which can result in behaviors such as fighting, checking out or defiance.

Increases difficulty in making friends and maintaining relationships.

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

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

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!"

WAYS MENTORS CAN HEAL ACEs

NURTURE & PROTECT KIDS AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE



Be a source of safety and support.

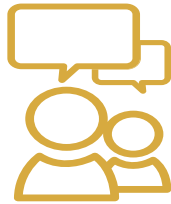
MOVE AND PLAY

Drum. Stretch. Throw a ball. Dance. Move inside or outside for fun, togetherness and to ease stress.

MAKE EYE CONTACT

Look at kids. It says, "I see you. I value you. You matter. You're not alone."

SAY, "SORRY"



We all lose our patience and make mistakes. Acknowledge it, apologize, and repair relationships. It's up to us to show kids we're responsible for our moods and mistakes.

GIVE HIGH-FIVES



Let your mentee know they are doing a good job. Offer high-fives, a thumbs up or other signs that they are doing well.

SLOW DOWN OR STOP

Rest. Take breaks. Take a walk or a few moments to reset or relax.

HUNT FOR THE GOOD

When there's pain or trauma, we look for danger. We can practice looking for joy and good stuff, too.



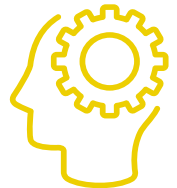
BE THERE FOR KIDS

It's hard to see our mentees in pain. We can feel helpless. Simply being present with our mentees is doing something. It sows them we are in their corner.

HELP MENTEES TO EXPRESS MAD SAD & HARD FEELINGS

Hard stuff happens. But helping mentees find ways to share, talk, and process helps. Our mentees learn from us.

KEEP LEARNING



Understand how ACEs impact you and your mentoring.



Championing Kids. Strengthening Communities.

ACEs (adverse childhood experiences) are potentially traumatic events that occur in childhood (0-17 years). For example: experiencing violence, abuse, or neglect, witnessing violence in the home or community, having a family member attempt or die by suicide.

Source: Donna Jackson Nakazawa, *Childhood Disrupted: How Your Biography Becomes Your Biology & How You Can Heal* and ACEs Connection (pacesconnection.com)