

## What are ACEs?

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) are serious childhood traumas that can result in toxic stress, causing harm to a child's brain. This toxic stress may make it difficult to learn, to play in a healthy way with other children, and can result in long-term health problems.

THE CENTERS FOR DISEASE CONTROL AND PREVENTION (CDC) VIEWS ACEs AS ONE OF THE MAJOR HEALTH ISSUES IN THE 21ST CENTURY.

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

May cause lasting health problems

Increases problems with learning and memory, which can be permanent

"I can't hear you, I can't respond to you, I am just trying to be safe!"

Reduces ability to respond, learn, figure things out, which can result in problems in school

### Exposure to ACEs can increase the risk of:

- Adolescent pregnancy
- Alcohol and drug abuse
- Asthma
- Depression
- Heart disease
- Intimate partner violence
- Liver disease
- Sexually-transmitted disease
- Smoking
- Suicide

### ACEs can include:

- Emotional abuse
- Physical abuse
- Sexual abuse
- Emotional neglect
- Physical neglect
- Mother treated violently
- Household substance use
- Household mental illness
- Parental separation or divorce
- Incarcerated household member
- Bullying (by another child or adult)
- Witnessing violence outside the home
- Witnessing a brother or sister being abused
- Racism, sexism or any other form of discrimination
- Experiencing homelessness
- Natural disasters and war



### SURVIVAL MODE RESPONSE

Increased heart rate, blood pressure, breathing and muscle tension. When a child is in survival mode, self-protection is their priority.

# The good news is **RESILIENCE** can bring back health and hope!

## What is Resilience?

Resilience is the ability to be healthy and hopeful despite experiencing stressful events. Research shows that when caregivers provide physically and emotionally safe environments for children and teach them how to be resilient, the negative effects of ACEs can be reduced.

## 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 caregivers

Caregivers who know how to solve problems, who have healthy relationships with other adults, and who build healthy relationships with the children in their care.

### 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 and caregivers can help 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:

### 1-2-3 Care Toolkit

[srhd.org/1-2-3-care-toolkit](http://srhd.org/1-2-3-care-toolkit)

### ACES 101

[acestoohigh.com/aces-101](http://acestoohigh.com/aces-101)

### CDC Parent Information

[cdc.gov/parents](http://cdc.gov/parents)

### CDC Kaiser Adverse Childhood Experiences Study

[cdc.gov/violenceprevention/acestudy](http://cdc.gov/violenceprevention/acestudy)

### Community Resilience Initiative

[criresilient.org](http://criresilient.org)



## ACEs Coalition of West Virginia

One Creative Place, Charleston, WV 25311

304-205-5685 • [info@wvaces.org](mailto:info@wvaces.org) • [www.wvaces.org](http://www.wvaces.org)

