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.

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.

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 outside the home
13. Witness a brother or sister being abused
14. Racism, sexism, or any other form of discrimination
15. Being homeless
16. Natural disasters and war

How do ACEs affect health?

- Reduces the ability to respond, learn, or figure things out, which can result in problems in school.
- Increases difficulty in making friends and maintaining relationships.
- Increases stress hormones which affects the body’s ability to fight infection.
- Lowers tolerance for stress which can result in behaviors such as fighting, checking out or defiance.
- 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!”

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 violence
- Sexually transmitted diseases (STDs)
- Smoking
- Suicide attempts
- Unintended pregnancies
The good news is resilience can bring back health and hope!

What is Resilience?
Resilience is the ability to return to being healthy and hopeful after bad things happen. Research shows that if parents provide a safe environment for their children and teach them how to be resilient, that helps reduce the effects of ACEs.

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 parents**
   Parents who know how to solve problems, who have healthy relationships with other adults, and who build healthy relationships with their children.

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 can help their 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:

**ACES 101**
http://acestoohigh.com/aces-101/

**Triple-P Parenting**
www.triplep-parenting.net/glo-en/home/

**Resilience Trumps ACEs**
www.resiliencetrumpsACES.org

**CDC-Kaiser Adverse Childhood Experiences Study**
www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/acestudy/

**Zero to Three Guides for Parents**

Thanks to the people in the Community & Family Services Division at the Spokane (WA) Regional Health District for developing this handout for parents in Washington State, and sharing it with others around the world.
Hand Model of the Brain—Dr. Dan Siegel

Make a fist with your thumb tucked inside your fingers. This is a model of your brain; your fist is the brain and your wrist and forearm are the spinal cord.

Your thumb, tucked in the middle of your fist, is the midbrain. This is where our emotions and memories are created and processed, as well as where the fight-or-flight reflex is triggered. The midbrain is our “emotional brain.”

The back of your hand and fingers, encasing everything, is the cerebral cortex. This is where higher functioning occurs. This part of our brain allows us to think logically, act with kindness and empathy, and it houses our reasoning and problem-solving abilities. The cortex is our “rational brain.”

The brain is set up to communicate with itself. It sends messages from section to section about what our bodies are feeling and needing. So, when a child screams, “NOOOO!” and lashes out to hit because he is angry, a parent’s brain interprets this data as, “Hmm, I don’t like this, and I need to be treated differently.” Only we don’t always react so calmly, right?
Take another look at your brain-fist. See where your fingernails are? This is the logic and reasoning part of the brain that kicks into gear when we have a problem to solve. But sometimes the emotional brain (thumb) and the rational brain (fingers) don’t communicate so well. The emotions of the midbrain are simply too overwhelming, our fight-or-flight reflex triggers, and we “flip our lids.” Now make all four of your fingers stand straight up. Flip.

See your fingertips now? See how far away from the midbrain they are? When we “flip our lids,” our rational brains have a very poor connection with our emotional brains. Our feelings are intense, and we’re not able to access the logical, problem-solving part of our brain. In order to restore our rational brain to its coherent state, we need to calm our anger and ease our fears (close fingers over thumb again).

Of course, our brains don’t actually change shape like this, but this simple demonstration is a valuable tool in understanding how they function during emotionally charged situations. Both children and adults experience flipped lids. But as the human brain isn’t fully mature (all parts communicating effectively) until the mid-twenties, children flip their lids much more often. They need a lot more help “re-connecting” the rational brain with the emotional brain—that is, calming down—and learning how to respond to strong emotions.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DD-lfP1FBFk
A Guide for Youth
Understanding Trauma

By Brianne Masselli and Johanna Bergan
Youth M.O.V.E. National
Adverse Childhood Experience (ACE) is a research study conducted by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and Kaiser Permanente to look at how childhood events impact us in the long run. ACEs are a list of events that have been demonstrated to have lasting effects, both physically and emotionally. Some of these events may seem small, while others more severe, but all may impact us. The response to traumatic events and experiences varies among people, as trauma is individualized. Only you truly understand the full impact of an experience and how it affects your daily life.

It is important to know that we all experience things differently. A friend or sibling who experienced the same event may not have the same response you have. And that is OK! Many youth have experienced abuse, neglect and household dysfunction but it doesn’t mean that they are traumatized. We all have different ways to manage and cope with that stress.

Recognizing that one or more of these events is something you have experienced or currently are experiencing is important to your health. Reaching out to others and talking about your experiences and how it impacts you, can be healing. Let’s keep talking to see how particular events have impacted you and help you to understand how they continue to make you feel.

Hayden – I still don’t know about trauma and all that, but this relates to my life. There are some parts of your story that are like mine. I thought “Wait, I felt that way” or “I went through that too!”

Yeah, some of this stuff comes up in my daily life. I’m not sure I’m comfortable talking to other people about them. I don’t want to seem weird or something. I’m willing to try to talk to someone, but no promises.

That’s okay, there are people who can help and who really care. It’s important to realize you aren’t weird or anything. Trauma can happen to anyone at any time. You are not alone.

I had to name what I had experienced, and acknowledge it was trauma. I needed help to understand what had happened in my childhood and the lasting effects, how it made me feel and why it still bothers me. Helping professionals are now calling these events from childhood “adversities” and researchers are studying the impact these Adverse Childhood Experiences or ACEs can have on us as we get older.

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Supportive adults and providers looking for additional resources can check out Georgetown University’s National Technical Assistance Center for Children’s Mental Health’s Trauma Informed Care website:

Youth and young adults looking for additional resources can check out Youth M.O.V.E. National’s Resource website:

Georgetown University Resources

Youth M.O.V.E. National Resources

For additional resources use your smart phone to scan these QR codes

Thank you for chatting with me. I understand what has happened to me, and it’s called Trauma. I get how to share my experiences and know how to ask for support. I feel better knowing that I’m not in this alone. I am excited to move on from this by getting support and building resiliency.

I’m so glad we were able to talk today, and that you are empowered to create your journey of healing. Here are some more resources for you to check out!!
Apps For Raising Happy, Healthy Children

By Linda Burgess Chamberlain PhD, MPH
for the Institute for Safe Families
Partnering with Parents, Apps For Raising Happy, Healthy Children has been created with support from:

- Institute for Safe Families
- American Academy of Pediatrics
- American Academy of Pediatrics (Pennsylvania Chapter)
- Multiplying Connections
- Prevent Child Abuse America

Visit instituteforsafefamilies.org, aap.org, preventchildabusepa.org, multiplyingconnections.org, and preventchildabuse.org for more information.
Reflective Listening Skills

Why they are important?

• Show that feelings matter
• Show that it is possible to talk about uncomfortable or complicated feelings
• Show that we care about the child’s feelings
• Teach the child that all feelings are acceptable, even though certain behavior is not
• Defuse an uncomfortable situation
• Reduce a child’s urge to act out because the child feels heard
• Teach the child a vocabulary for articulating how they feel
• Reduce whining, anger and frustration

Basic Skills?

• Listening before speaking
• Deal with personal specifics, not impersonal generalities
• Decipher the emotions behind the words, to create a better understanding of the message
• Restate and clarify how you understand the message
• Understand the speaker’s frame of reference and avoid responding based only on your own perception
• Respond with acceptance and empathy

From http://cultureofempathy.com