

Understanding Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and Resilience

Adversity Is Not Destiny. Even though some experiences increase risk of health problems, there are other experiences that protect health. This handout describes both in order to give you the information you need to help you and your family be resilient.

What are ACEs?

ACEs are adverse childhood experiences that may prevent a child from learning and/or cause long-term health problems.

Adverse Childhood Experiences include:

- Emotional, physical, and sexual abuse
- Emotional and physical neglect
- Witnessing violence at home
- Substance abuse by an adult caregiver
- Mental illness of an adult caregiver
- Separation or divorce of parents
- Incarceration of a household member

ACEs increase risk of:

- Asthma and other chronic diseases
- Language and learning problems
- ADHD, depression, behavior disorders
- Headaches, constipation
- Tobacco, alcohol, or drug problems
- Heart disease, cancer, and obesity
- School failure and homelessness

How do ACEs affect health?

Frequent or prolonged exposure to ACEs may create toxic stress, which damages the developing brain and the body's ability to stay healthy. ACEs can also result in unhealthy habits, like poor diet and no exercise, which also increase risk of health problems.

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. Resilience trumps ACEs! Parents, relatives, teachers, coaches and mentors can help children by:

- Gaining an understanding of ACEs
- Seeking help if needed to address domestic violence, substance abuse, or mental illness
- Creating safe physical and emotional environments at home, in school, and in neighborhoods
- Communicating love and respect through words and actions
- Helping children identify feelings and manage emotions

What Builds Resilience in Your Child?

- *Meeting basic needs and expectations*
Providing children with safe housing, nutritious food, appropriate clothing, access to health care, and a good education is important for healthy development. In addition, a daily routine with consistent family rules is important for developing healthy habits and a sense of stability.
- *Having resilient caregivers*
Often parents neglect their own self-care in order to take care of their families. It is important for parents to know, and give themselves permission, to take care of their own physical and mental health needs because this is necessary to being a good parent.

- *Establishing secure and nurturing relationships*
Children need to have secure relationships with adults. Secure relationships can be built by paying attention to a child's physical and emotional needs, listening to a child's ideas and experiences, playing, showing love through hugs, kisses, affirmations, and quality time. Ideally, children have secure and nurturing relationships with their parents, but when their relationship with a parent is impaired, other adults (relatives, family friends, teachers, coaches, counselors, or clergy) can help fill the gap.
- *Building social connections*
Even when children have healthy, loving parents, it is important for them to feel that their family is connected to a broader community. Spending time with extended family, friends and/or neighbors helps children develop social connections who become resources for them and their parents.
- *Learning about parenting and social-emotional development*
Children do not come with instructions, and parenting skills are not taught in most schools. All caregivers can benefit from learning what children are capable of at different ages and how best to support their social-emotional development.

What Builds Resilience in You as the Parent?

- *Identify your circle of support*
Parenting is hard, especially when families have experienced difficult times. No one should try to do it alone. Seek support from counselors, physicians, family, friends, faith communities, and others who can help you see what you are doing well and connect you with more support when needed.
- *Self-care*
Eat healthy, exercise regularly, get enough sleep, take care of your medical needs, and give yourself some childfree time to relax such as by walking, deep breathing, talking to friends, meditating or praying.
- *Reflection*
Take time to think about what happened in your childhood and how it could be affecting you now. If this is difficult or painful, consider getting support from a counselor or simply ask someone you trust for help.

Resources for Your Family in San Bernardino County

Central San Bernardino County

Bloomington - Colton - Fontana - Grand Terrace

- Loma Linda - Rialto - San Bernardino

<http://www.bit.ly/acesbcentral>

East San Bernardino County

Highland - Mentone - Muscoy - Redlands -

Yucaipa

<http://www.bit.ly/acesbeast>

High Desert San Bernardino County

Adelanto - Apple Valley - Barstow - Hesperia -

Lenwood - Lucerne Valley - Phelan - Piñon Hills -

Victorville

<http://www.bit.ly/acesbhd>

Morongo Basin San Bernardino County

Fort Worth - Joshua Tree - Morongo Valley -

Needles - Twentynine Palms - Yucca Valley

<http://www.bit.ly/acesbmorongo>

Mountain Region San Bernardino County

Big Bear Lake - Big Bear City - Crestline - Lake Arrowhead - Running Springs - Skyforest - Wrightwood

<http://www.bit.ly/acesbmountain>

West San Bernardino County

Chino - Chino Hills - Montclair - Ontario - Rancho Cucamonga - Upland

<http://www.bit.ly/acesbwest>

Resources for Your Family in Riverside County**Mid Riverside County**

Banning – Beaumont - Calimesa – Hemet – San Jacinto

<http://bit.ly/acesmid>

Desert Riverside County

Blythe – Cathedral City – Coachella – Desert Hot Springs – Indian Wells – Indio – La Quinta – Palm Desert – Palm Springs – Rancho Mirage

<http://bit.ly/acesdesert>

Southern Riverside County

Canyon Lake - Lake Elsinore - Menifee - Murrieta Perris - Temecula – Wildomar

<http://bit.ly/acesouthern>

Western Riverside County

Corona – Eastvale – Jurupa Valley – Moreno Valley – Norco – Riverside

<http://bit.ly/aceswestern>