

# Understanding ACEs

ACEs (Adverse Childhood Experiences) are serious childhood traumas that can result in toxic stress. Prolonged exposure to ACEs can create toxic stress, which can damage the developing brain and body of children and affect overall health. Toxic stress may prevent a child from learning or playing in a healthy way with other children, and can cause long-term health problems.

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 affect the body's ability to fight infection.

May cause lasting health problems.



Increases problems with learning and memory.

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

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

### Exposure to childhood 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 (Adverse Childhood Experiences) can include:

- Abuse: Emotional / physical / sexual
- Bullying / violence of / by another child, sibling, or adult
- Homelessness
- Household: Substance abuse / mental illness / domestic violence / incarceration / parental abandonment, divorce, loss
- Involvement in child welfare system
- Medical trauma
- Natural disasters and war
- Neglect: Emotional / physical
- Racism, sexism, or any other form of discrimination
- Violence in community

### **! SURVIVAL MODE RESPONSE**

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.

Parents and caregivers can help. **Turn over to learn about resilience.**



Help children identify, express and manage emotions.



Create safe physical and emotional environments. (home, school, community, systems).



Understand, prevent and respond to ACEs.



*“...One of the biggest myths that we have to bust is that if you have experienced childhood adversity, there’s nothing we can do about it.”*

– Nadine Burke Harris, MD, MPH, FAAP, Surgeon General of California

## What is resilience?

Research shows that if caregivers provide a safe environment for children and teach them how to be resilient, that helps reduce the effects of ACEs.

## What does resilience look like?

Having resilient parents and caregivers who know how to solve problems, have healthy relationships with other adults, and build healthy relationships with children.

## 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.

## Building social connections.

Having family, friends, neighbors, community members who support, help and listen to children.

## Meeting basic needs:

Provide children with safe housing, nutritious food, appropriate clothing, and access to health care and good education, when possible. Make sure children get enough sleep, rest, and play.

## Learning about parenting, caregiving and how children grow:

Understand how caregivers can help children grow in a healthy way, and what to expect from children as they grow.

## Building social and emotional skills:

Help children interact in a healthy way with others, manage emotions, communicate their feelings and needs, and rebound after loss and pain.

## Resources:

[www.nationalparenthelpline.org/](http://www.nationalparenthelpline.org/) [acestoohigh.com/](http://acestoohigh.com/)

1-855-4A PARENT

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

(1-855-427-2736)

[www.pacesconnection.com/](http://www.pacesconnection.com/)



# Resilience: The ability to “bounce back”

## What can I do as a parent to build resilience in my child?

### 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 (babies, too). 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 20-SECOND HUGS

There’s a reason we hug when things are hard. Safe touch is healing. Longer hugs are most helpful.



### 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 kids in pain. We can feel helpless. Simply being present with our kids is doing something. It shows them we are in their corner.

### HELP KIDS TO EXPRESS MAD, SAD & HARD FEELINGS

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



### KEEP LEARNING

Understand how ACEs impact you and your parenting.

*For more ways to build resilience please talk with your medical provider.*

## Here is a list of things you could do with child that could build resilience. Which could you do with your son or daughter?

- Hug them.
- Sing with them.
- Greet each of them by name, if you can.
- Ask for their help.
- Play games with them at home.
- Listen to them.
- Set goals with them.
- Do things their way sometimes.
- Hang up their artwork.
- Surprise them.
- Go for walks together.
- Exercise together.
- Give them specific compliments.
- Be consistent with them.
- Notice them.
- Praise their efforts.
- Tell them you love them.
- Be open with your feelings.
- Celebrate their birthdays.
- Create a pleasant home.
- Be spontaneous and silly sometimes.
- Handle bad days with grace.
- Say thank you.
- Explain your reasons to them.
- Be optimistic.
- Offer options when they ask for your help.
- Always tell them the truth.
- Make them a good breakfast.
- Offer your home to their friends.
- Give them something special that belongs to you.
- Attend their games, performances, events.
- Encourage them.
- Joke with them.
- Be with them when they are afraid.
- Put notes in their lunchbox or backpack.
- Celebrate new discoveries in them and with them.
- Give them space when they need it.
- Discuss their dream and fears.
- Create a tradition with them and keep it.
- Tell them what you like about them.
- Take on new challenges together.
- Welcome their suggestions.
- Expect their best, not perfection.
- Honor who they are.

## Parenting Support Resources at WCHC

- Behavioral Health Family Counseling and Pediatric Counseling 707-823-3166
- Parent support group-meets every Friday (please ask for flyer)
- Forestville Wellness Center Services (please ask for flyer)

## Parenting Support Resources in Sonoma County

- **Child Parent Institute**
  - Parenting classes (at their site, at home, or virtual)
  - Counseling services for children and families including low-cost/sliding scale
  - Free diaper program for those who qualify
  - Postpartum Mood Disorder Program
  - [www.calparents.org](http://www.calparents.org) , (707) 585-6108
- **River to Coast Children's Services**
  - Serving West County; services available in both Spanish and English
  - Childcare subsidies for low-income families, Emergency Resources Program provides food, formula, diapers and other emergency supplies to families with young children, Kindergym in Forestville and a low cost Child Safety Seat Program, and car seat safety checks
  - <https://rccservices.org/index.html> , (707) 869-3613
- **Hand in Hand Parenting**
  - Support group for parents in Sebastopol, Santa Rosa and Petaluma
  - <https://www.handinhandparenting.org/event-category/local-in-person-classes-talks-and-events/usa/california/>
- **Social Advocates for Youth**
  - Offers counseling services for patients ages 0-25 and their families
  - <https://www.saysc.org/counseling/> , 707-544-3299
- **Early Learning Institute**
  - Therapeutic, supportive community playgroups for children 0-5
  - One-on-One Parent Support Services
  - <https://www.earlylearninginstitute.com/about>, (707) 591-0170
- **Sonoma County Library**
  - Ongoing FREE classes, activities for youth of all ages
  - <https://sonomalibrary.org>, (707)308-3020
- **Community Supported Postpartum**
  - Early postpartum support group
  - <https://communitysupportedpostpartum.com/>

- **Resilient Postpartum**
  - Online support through 8-week series to provide parent with support they need to step into the role of caregiver with confidence and innate knowing.
  - <https://www.resilientpostpartum.com/>
- **Community Action Partnership of Sonoma County**
  - Playgroups for children age 0-4, child development and activity building support. Headstart programs for children ages infant-5.
  - Pasitos Play Group: Weekly parent-child group meetings for ages 3-4 year with songs, reading and activities; Program is in Spanish
  - <https://www.capsonoma.org/> , (707) 544-6911
- **Sonoma County Behavioral Health - Access Line**
  - Sonoma County Residents with MediCal can call to access mental health screening, evaluations, and services.
  - <https://sonomacounty.ca.gov/health-and-human-services/health-services/divisions/behavioral-health/services/adult-services> , (707)565-6900
- **Corazon Healdsburg**
  - One time financial support for emergencies, self-help center (peer support groups, shower laundry facilities), resource navigation, housing and rental assistance,
  - [corazonhealdsburg.org](http://corazonhealdsburg.org) , (707)395-0938
- **Petaluma Mothers' Club**
  - Volunteer-run non-profit organization made up of caregivers with children through age five in Petaluma and surrounding cities
  - <https://petalumamothersclub.org/>
- **Women's Recovery Services**
  - Residential treatment program for pregnant and parenting women providing treatment for the mother and structure and guidance for children whose mothers are impacted by substance misuse
  - <https://www.womensrecoveryservices.org/> , (707)527-0412
- **Matrix Parent Network**
  - Supporting families of parents with special needs through parent-to-parent support, and mental health resources.
  - <https://www.matrixparents.org/> , (415) 884-3535
- **Facebook Support Groups:**
  - West County Milkin' Mamas
  - Sebastopol Parents Group
  - Sonoma County Mindful Parents Group
  - Sonoma County Babies Born Summer 2014- Summer 2015