



**NAMI**

National Alliance on Mental Illness

**Mercer**

Serving the New Jersey Capital Area

# UNDERSTANDING ADVERSE CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES

A TOOLKIT FOR PARENTS



# **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

<b>What are ACEs.....</b>	<b>Pg.1</b>
<b>How Common are ACEs?.....</b>	<b>Pg. 2</b>
<b>Why are ACEs Important?.....</b>	<b>Pg. 3-4</b>
<b>Signs of ACEs.....</b>	<b>Pg. 5</b>
<b>Risk Factors.....</b>	<b>Pg. 6-7</b>
<b>What Can We Do?.....</b>	<b>Pg. 8</b>
<b>Positive Childhood Experiences.....</b>	<b>Pg. 9</b>
<b>Protective Factors.....</b>	<b>Pg. 10-11</b>
<b>Check Your ACE Score.....</b>	<b>Pg. 12</b>
<b>Parent Support Network.....</b>	<b>Pg. 13</b>
<b>Additional Resources.....</b>	<b>Pg. 14</b>

# WHAT ARE ACES?



Adverse Childhood Experiences, better known as ACEs, are events or circumstances that are experienced in childhood (0-17), that many be traumatic.

SOME EXAMPLES OF ACES ARE:

ABUSE	NEGLECT	HOUSEHOLD DYSFUNCTION	
 Physical	 Physical	 Mental Illness	 Incarcerated Relative
 Emotional	 Emotional	 Mother treated violently	 Substance Abuse
 Sexual		 Divorce	

# HOW COMMON ARE ACES?

**ACEs are very common.**

---

- ➔ **A study by the CDC found that at least one ACE was experienced in 61% of adults.**
- ➔ **16% of adults reported experiencing four or more types of ACEs.**
- ➔ **Females and minority groups are at a greater risk for experiencing four or more ACEs.**

# WHY ARE ACES IMPORTANT?

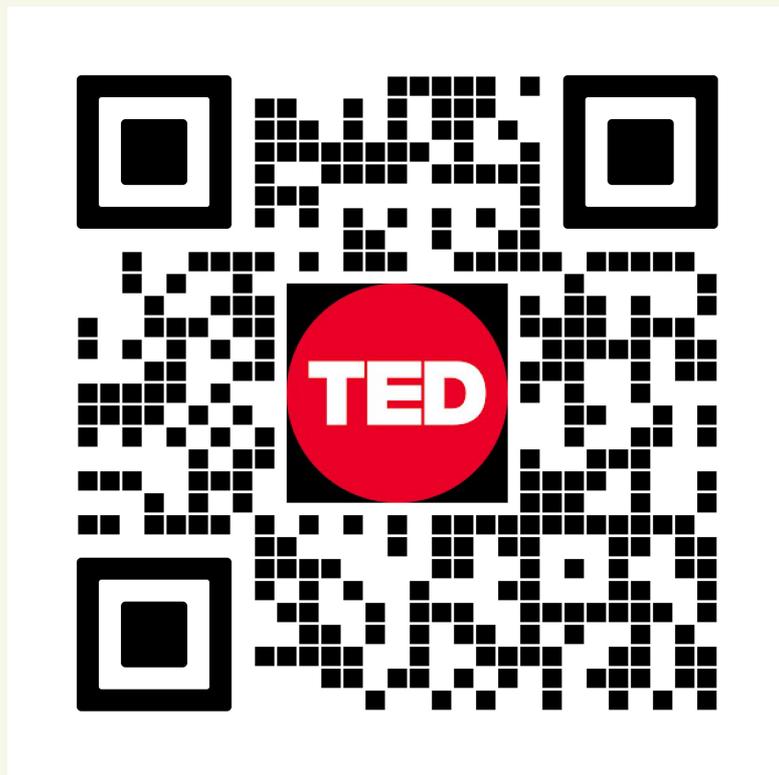
ACEs have a large impact on health, and the more ACEs a person has, the more they are at risk for multiple health problems.



This chart shows behavioral and health problems that can be caused by ACEs.

# WHY ARE ACES IMPORTANT?

In her TedTalk, pediatrician Nadine Burke Harris talks about how ACEs can have a lifetime of negative effects. To watch the TedTalk scan or double click the QR code below.



# **SIGNS OF ACES**

**What are some signs that your child may be experiencing stress?**

- fear of being alone
- bad dreams
- speech difficulties
- loss of bladder/bowel control, constipation, bed-wetting
- change in appetite
- increased temper tantrums, whining, or clinging behaviors



# FAMILY RISK FACTORS

- Children who don't feel close to their parents, or have few friends
- Youth who start dating or engaging in sexual activity early
- Young parents/caregivers or single parents and with low income
- Low education levels in families
- High stress levels related to parenting/finances
- Caregivers who use spanking and other forms of corporal punishment for discipline



# COMMUNITY RISK FACTORS

- **Communities with....**
  - **high rates of violence, crime, and poverty**
  - **limited educational and economic opportunities**
  - **high unemployment rates**
  - **easy access to drugs and alcohol**
  - **few community activities for young people**
  - **high amount of food insecurity**



# WHAT CAN WE DO?

Studies show that providing stable, responsive, and nurturing relationships for children, families, and the community is key to preventing ACEs.

It has also been proven that preschool enrichment and early childhood home visitation programs have been associated with a reduction in rates of child abuse and neglect.



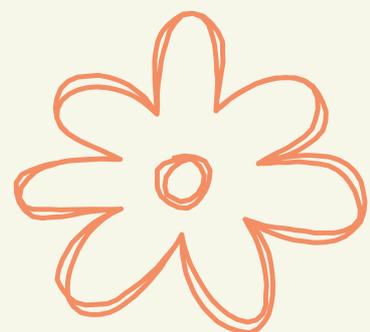
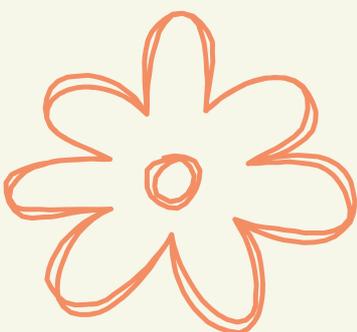
# **POSITIVE CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES (PCEs)**

## **What are PCEs?**

PCEs are experiences that stem from safe, stable, and nurturing relationships and environments. They have the ability to prevent and protect children from traumatic events, toxic stress, and Adverse Childhood Experiences.

## **What are some examples of PCEs?**

- Play
- Quality Time and Bonding
- Recognition, Praise, and Acceptance
- Predictable, and Nurturing Environments
- The Support of Other Adults and Friends



# PROTECTIVE FACTORS

Here are some more practices that can help reduce the effect of toxic stress and ACEs.

- **Supportive relationships:**
  - encourage connections to trusted adults
  - volunteer in the community together
  - spend quality family time together
  - help your children stay connected to friends and family
- **Mindfulness**
  - taking time to notice how your child is feeling
  - talk about things you and your child are grateful for each day



# PROTECTIVE FACTORS

- **Healthy sleep**

- creating a regular bedtime routine
- reading a book with your child before bed



- **Nourishment**

- practice regular meal and snack times

- **Movement**

- family dance parties or walks



- **Mental health support**

- seek help from community, or doctor if needed
- have open conversations about mental health as a family

# CHECK YOUR ACE SCORE

If you think you or someone you know might have any ACEs, take the survey below to check your score by scanning or double clicking the QR code.



# PARENT SUPPORT NETWORK

**Need additional support?**

**Visit NAMI Mercer's Parent Support Network. It is a parent-driven support group to support parents and caregivers who are concerned about their children's struggles with anxiety, depression, or emotional dysregulation.**

**Meetings are held every third Monday of each month from 7-8:30PM.**

**For more information about Parent Support Network, scan or double click the QR code below.**



# **ADDITIONAL RESOURCES**

**Perform Care is a 24/7 mobile response and stabilization service for children in crisis.**

**(877)-652-7624  
performcarenj.org**

**SPAN offers individual assistance, workshops, and resources for children and families.**

**(973)-642-8100  
spanadvocacy.org**

**For more mental health resources visit**

**namimercer.org  
(609) 799-8994  
home@namimercer.org**



**National Alliance on Mental Illness**

**nami**

**Mercer**

**Serving the New Jersey Capital Area**