



THE IMPACT OF EXPERIENCES

Melissa Doyle, LCSW  
February 8, 2023

Maine Resilience Building Network

[www.maineresilience.org](http://www.maineresilience.org)

1

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**The Maine Resilience Building Network's Mission**

is to promote resilience in all people by increasing the understanding of the impacts of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and the importance of building resilience through protective factors such as positive relationships.

We aim for a comprehensive, cross-sector, and systematic approach to foster education, awareness, and action.

[info@maineresilience.org](mailto:info@maineresilience.org)

[www.maineresilience.org](http://www.maineresilience.org)



2

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**TRAINING GOALS**

---

- Learn about brain development
- Describe the role that positive and adverse experiences have on brain development
- Describe the importance and opportunities to create positive childhood experiences



3

---

---

---

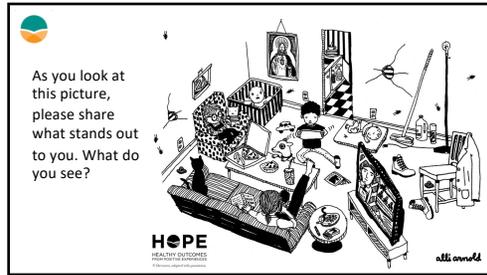
---

---

---

---

---



5

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

### TYPE 1 VERSUS TYPE 2 THINKING

<b>Type 1 thinking</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>✓ Fast, intuitive, unconscious thought</li><li>✓ Everyday activities</li><li>✓ Effortless</li><li>✓ Training and experience</li><li>✓ <b>Implicit bias</b></li></ul>		<b>Type 2 thinking</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>✓ Slow, calculating, conscious</li><li>✓ Solving a problem</li><li>✓ Takes more effort!</li><li>✓ Something novel</li><li>✓ <b>Perceiving variability</b></li><li>✓ <b>Perspective taking</b></li></ul>
---	---	--

HOPE logo and small text at the bottom right.

7

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Brain Development

www.mindresilience.org



9

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

### EXPERIENCE MATTERS



- Genes set the stage.
- Experience provides direction. **EXPERIENCES MATTER**
- Early experiences are uniquely important in establishing how the brain works.
- Sensitive periods of brain development – at least until 27.

www.usabraincenter.org

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

10

### BRAINS ARE EXPERIENCE DEPENDENT

#### Synaptic Density

At Birth	6 Years Old	14 Years Old
		

SARRGA, 2024

---

---

---

---

---

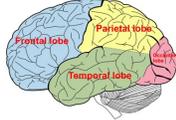
---

---

---

11

### BRAIN STRUCTURES



- Starts in the earliest years of life—In the first 3 years a child's brain develops **1 million neural connections per second**.
- Brains are built over time – back to front and middle to the sides, simple to complex
- A strong foundation in the early years improves the odds for positive outcomes and a weak foundation increases the odds of later difficulties.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

12



13

---

---

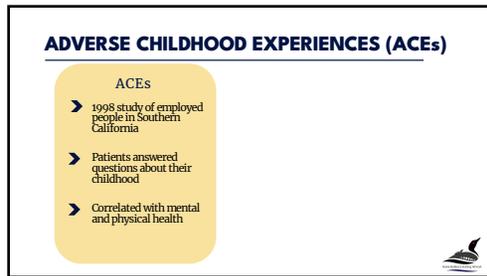
---

---

---

---

---



14

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



15

---

---

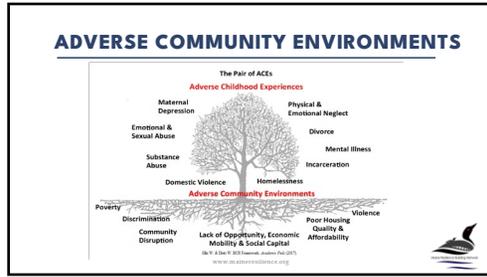
---

---

---

---

---




---

---

---

---

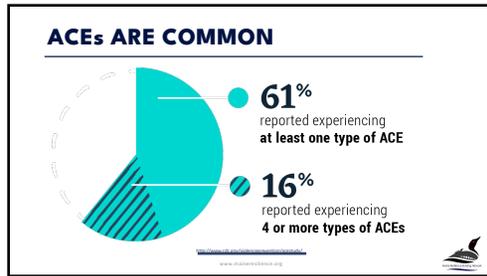
---

---

---

---

16




---

---

---

---

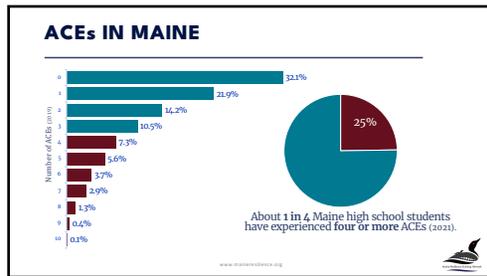
---

---

---

---

17




---

---

---

---

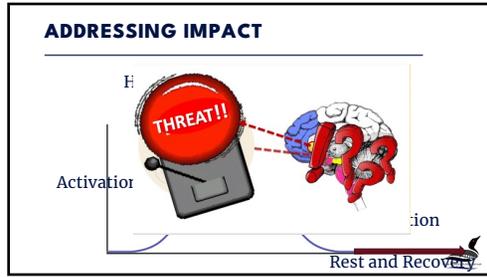
---

---

---

---

18



19

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



20

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



22

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

### POSITIVE CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES (PCEs)

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>ACES</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ 1998 study of employed people in Southern California</li> <li>➤ Patients answered questions about their childhood</li> <li>➤ Correlated with mental and physical health</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>PCEs</b> <span style="color: red; font-weight: bold; font-size: small;">NEW</span></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ 2015 population study Wisconsin</li> <li>➤ Part of the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance Survey</li> <li>➤ Asked about ACES AND Positive Childhood experiences</li> <li>➤ Correlated with mental health</li> </ul>
--	--

23

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

### POSITIVE CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES (PCEs)

**Positive Childhood Experiences Scale**

1. Felt able to talk to their family about feelings
2. Felt their family stood by them during difficult times
3. Enjoyed participating in community traditions
4. Felt a sense of belonging in high school
5. Felt supported by friends
6. Had > 1 non-parent adults who took genuine interest in them
7. Felt safe and protected by an adult in their home

Sage, Bethel, Lokenbach, Jones, Kula and Pincus. Balancing ACEs with ACEs: New insights into the role of Positive Experiences on Child and Family Development. Great Family Programs, 2007

24

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

### Positive Childhood Experiences (PCEs) Protect Adult Mental Health

<p>51% good mental health</p> <p>0-2 PCEs</p>	<p>75% good mental health</p> <p>3-5 PCEs</p>	<p>87% good mental health</p> <p>6-7 PCEs</p>
---	---	---

Good mental health – those not reporting depression or poor mental health

Bethel, C., Jones, J., Gombiger, N., Lokenbach, C., Sage, K. Positive Childhood Experiences and Adult Mental and Relational Health in a Diverse Sample: Associations Across Adversity Childhood Experiences Levels. JAMA Pediatr. 2018; 182(4): e180007

25

---

---

---

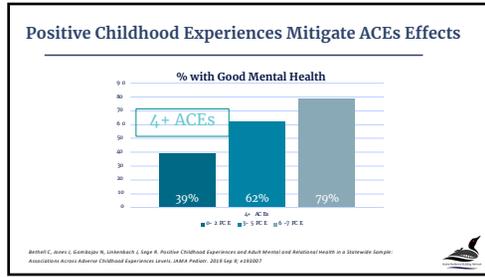
---

---

---

---

---




---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

26

### PCEs AND THE BRAIN

- Disrupting the toxic stress cycle
- Promote healing and rewiring
- Promote positive family health
- Build a more “resilient” brain – the capacity to adapt

© 2014 Resilience.org

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

27

Research indicates that the absence of PCEs may be more damaging to long-term health outcomes than the presence of ACEs.

PCEs protect adult mental health...even in the face of ACEs.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

28

Let that sink in...

PCEs protect adult mental health...even in the face of ACEs.

Adults also benefit from positive experiences: key learning moments and sensitive periods of brain development



29

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**Opportunities to Promote PCEs: HOPE Model**



[www.resilience.org](http://www.resilience.org)



30

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



**HOPE**  
HEALTHY OUTCOMES FROM POSITIVE EXPERIENCES

**Why HOPE Exists**

Positive experiences help children grow into more resilient, healthier adults. HOPE aims to better understand and support these key experiences.

31

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**Core assumption**  
from the Science of the Positive:

The **positive** exists, it is real and worth growing.

**Positive experiences:**

- Promote children's **health and well-being**
- Allow children to form **strong relationships** and connections
- Cultivate positive **self-image and self-worth**
- Provide a sense of **belonging**
- Build skills that promote **resilience**



Lisakorbach, J. (2007, 2010). The Science of the Positive: The Seven Core Principles Workbook. A Publication of The Business Institute, LLC.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

32

**POSITIVE CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES (PCEs)**

**Benevolent Childhood Experiences Scale**

**Positive Childhood Experiences Scale**

1. Felt able to talk to their family about feelings
2. Felt their family stood by them during difficult times
3. Enjoyed participating in community traditions
4. Felt a sense of belonging in high school
5. Felt supported by friends
6. Had > 1 non-parent adults who took genuine interest in them
7. Felt safe and protected by an adult in their home
8. Good neighbors
9. An adult (not a parent or caregiver) who could provide you with support or advice
10. Opportunities to have a good time
11. Like yourself or feel comfortable with yourself
12. Predictable home routine, like regular meals and a regular bedtime

Source: Benard, 2000; Miller and Hanson, 2010; Reference: PCEs with CPTSD. How thoughts into the world of Positive Childhood Experiences and Family Environment. Family Family Programs, 2021.





---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

33

**The Four Building Blocks of HOPE**

**RELATIONSHIPS**  
Relationships with other children and with other adults through interpersonal activities

**ENVIRONMENT**  
Safe, equitable, stable environments for living, playing, learning at home and in school

**ENGAGEMENT**  
Social and civic engagement to develop a sense of belonging and connectedness

**EMOTIONAL HEALTH**  
Emotional growth through playing and interacting with peers for self-awareness and self-regulation





---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

34

**RELATIONSHIPS**

---

The Four Building Blocks of HOPE



Relationships with other children and adults through interpersonal activities.

Siga and Brown. Responding to ACEs with HOPE: Health Outcomes from Positive Experiences. Academic Pediatrics 2017; 17(2):161



35

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**ENVIRONMENT**

---

The Four Building Blocks of HOPE



Safe, equitable, stable environments for living, playing, learning at home and in school.

Siga and Brown. Responding to ACEs with HOPE: Health Outcomes from Positive Experiences. Academic Pediatrics 2017; 17(2):161



36

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**ENGAGEMENT**

---

The Four Building Blocks of HOPE



Social and civic engagement to develop a sense of belonging and connectedness.

Siga and Brown. Responding to ACEs with HOPE: Health Outcomes from Positive Experiences. Academic Pediatrics 2017; 17(2):161



37

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**EMOTIONAL GROWTH**

---

**The Four Building Blocks of HOPE**



Emotional growth through playing and interacting with peers for self-awareness and self regulation.

Sege and Brown. Responding to ACEs with HOPE: Health Outcomes from Positive Experiences. Academic Pediatrics 2017; 17(2):61



38

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**ADVERSITY AND THE BUILDING BLOCKS OF HOPE**



**Child Abuse & Neglect...**

- Disrupts foundational *relationships*
- Disrupts safe home *environments*

**Family Disruption...**

- Disrupts safe *environments* (home and social determinants of health)

**Adverse Community Environments...**

- Reduce *engagement*
- Reduce opportunities for *emotional growth* (peer play)



40

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**HOPE**  
HEALTHY OUTCOMES FROM POSITIVE EXPERIENCES

Strengths-based, Child-centered, Family-led innovating around promoting access to the Four Building Blocks



41

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



42

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



43

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



44

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



45

---

---

---

---

---

---

---