

# Pediatric ACEs and Related Life Events Screener (PEARLS)

CHILD - To be completed by: **Caregiver**

At any point in time since your child was born, has your child seen or been present when the following experiences happened? Please include past and present experiences.

*Please note, some questions have more than one part separated by “OR.” If any part of the question is answered “Yes,” then the answer to the entire question is “Yes.”*

## PART 1:

1. Has your child ever lived with a parent/caregiver who went to jail/prison?
2. Do you think your child ever felt unsupported, unloved and/or unprotected?
3. Has your child ever lived with a parent/caregiver who had mental health issues?  
(for example, depression, schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, PTSD, or an anxiety disorder)
4. Has a parent/caregiver ever insulted, humiliated, or put down your child?
5. Has the child's biological parent or any caregiver ever had, or currently has a problem with too much alcohol, street drugs or prescription medications use?
6. Has your child ever lacked appropriate care by any caregiver?  
(for example, not being protected from unsafe situations, or not cared for when sick or injured even when the resources were available)
7. Has your child ever seen or heard a parent/caregiver being screamed at, sworn at, insulted or humiliated by another adult?  
Or has your child ever seen or heard a parent/caregiver being slapped, kicked, punched beaten up or hurt with a weapon?
8. Has any adult in the household often or very often pushed, grabbed, slapped or thrown something at your child?  
Or has any adult in the household ever hit your child so hard that your child had marks or was injured?  
Or has any adult in the household ever threatened your child or acted in a way that made your child afraid that they might be hurt?
9. Has your child ever experienced sexual abuse?  
(for example, anyone touched your child or asked your child to touch that person in a way that was unwanted, or made your child feel uncomfortable, or anyone ever attempted or actually had oral, anal, or vaginal sex with your child)
10. Have there ever been significant changes in the relationship status of the child's caregiver(s)?  
(for example, a parent/caregiver got a divorce or separated, or a romantic partner moved in or out)



Add up the “yes” answers for this first section:

Please continue to the other side for the rest of questionnaire →

## PART 2:

1. Has your child ever seen, heard, or been a victim of violence in your neighborhood, community or school?  
*(for example, targeted bullying, assault or other violent actions, war or terrorism)*

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2. Has your child experienced discrimination?  
*(for example, being hassled or made to feel inferior or excluded because of their race, ethnicity, gender identity, sexual orientation, religion, learning differences, or disabilities)*

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3. Has your child ever had problems with housing?  
*(for example, being homeless, not having a stable place to live, moved more than two times in a six-month period, faced eviction or foreclosure, or had to live with multiple families or family members)*

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4. Have you ever worried that your child did not have enough food to eat or that the food for your child would run out before you could buy more?

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5. Has your child ever been separated from their parent or caregiver due to foster care, or immigration?

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6. Has your child ever lived with a parent/caregiver who had a serious physical illness or disability?

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7. Has your child ever lived with a parent or caregiver who died?

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Add up the “yes” answers for the second section:

# STRESS & EARLY BRAIN GROWTH

## Understanding Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)

### 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.

#### 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

#### 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

### 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.

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

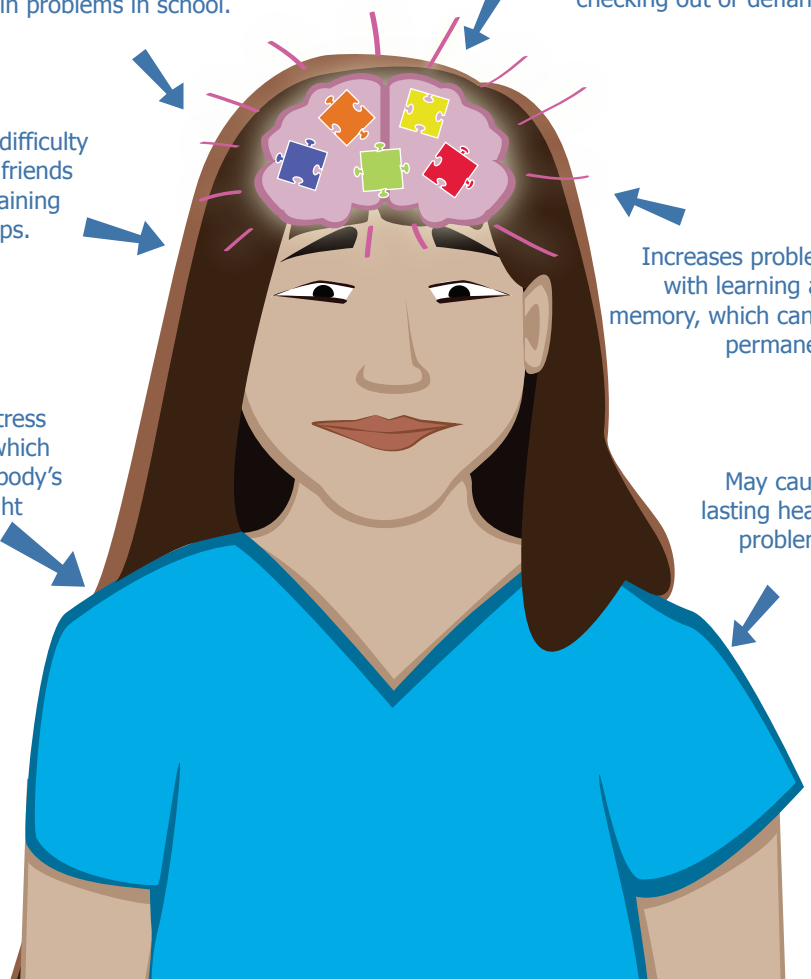
Lowers tolerance for stress, which can result in behaviors such as fighting, checking out or defiance.

Increases difficulty in making friends and maintaining relationships.

Increases problems with learning and memory, which can be permanent.

Increases stress hormones which affects the body's ability to fight infection.

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!"**

# 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/](http://www.triplep-parenting.net/glo-en/home/)

### Resilience Trumps ACEs

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

### CDC-Kaiser Adverse Childhood Experiences Study

[www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/acestudy/](http://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/acestudy/)

### Zero to Three Guides for Parents

<http://www.zerotothree.org/about-us/areas-of-expertise/free-parent-brochures-and-guides/>