Children Living With Violence:

Understanding Trauma, Behavior, and Healing

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Standing together to end violence.

Our Mission:

Blackburn Center advocates for the rights of all individuals to live free from domestic and sexual violence and other types of violence in their homes and communities by eliminating the root causes of this violence and providing for the well-being and safety of survivors/victims.

Blackburn Center provides a supportive environment to all survivors regardless of their gender identity, expression, or sexual orientation.

Blackburn Center Services



Blackburn Center responds to the issues of violence or crime. Client services are available to ANYONE throughout Westmoreland County, Pennsylvania.

All client services are FREE of charge.

- 24 Hour Hotline
- Emergency Shelter
- Counseling and Therapy
- Support Groups
- Medical Accompaniment
- Legal System Support
- Education Programming
- Professional Training

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OBJECTIVES

- Recognizing that how we respond to youth will affect how they view adults, their communities and affect their future outcomes.
- Forming a collective understanding for effective community response when youth witness or perpetrate violence.

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- Taking what we know (or don't know) about a youth's circumstances and using this to craft an empathetic, trauma-informed response.
- Using art as a way to help youth build empathy, resiliency, emotional regulation, and deal with violence at home or in the community.

"Understanding the overlapping causes of violence and the things that can protect people and communities is important, and can help us better address violence in all its forms."

The CDC says, “There are experiences, particularly early in childhood, that make it extremely predictable that individuals are at substantially higher risk for involvement with violence.”

3 Realms of ACEs

Adverse childhood and community experiences (ACEs) can occur in the household, the community, or in the environment and cause toxic stress. Left unaddressed, toxic stress from ACEs harms children and families, organizations, systems and communities, and reduces the ability of individuals and entities to respond to stressful events with resiliency. Research has shown that there are many ways to reduce and heal from toxic stress and build healthy, caring communities.



Thanks to **Building Community Resilience Collaborative and Networks** and the **International Transformational Resilience Coalition** for inspiration and guidance.
Please visit **ACEsConnection.com** to learn more about the science of ACEs and join the movement to prevent ACEs, heal trauma and build resilience.

ACEs Connection

3 Realms of ACE's Expanded

1. Household

- Bullying
- Divorce
- Homelessness
- Parental mental illness
- Alcohol or drug abuse
- Emotional or sexual abuse
- Domestic violence
- Maternal depression
- Physical or emotional neglect
- Incarcerated family member

2. Community

- Discrimination
- Historical trauma
- Violence
- Lack of social capital
- Lack of jobs
- Substandard schools
- Structural racism
- Poor water or air quality
- Food scarcity
- Substandard wages
- Poverty
- Poor housing quality

3. Environment

- Climate crisis
- Record heat and droughts
- Wildfires and smoke
- Record storms, flooding, and mudslides
- Sea level rise
- Natural disasters
- Tornadoes or hurricanes
- Volcano eruptions
- Earthquakes
- Pandemic

01

Toxic stress damages the structure and function of a child's developing brain.

02

Toxic stress can be passed to the next generation.

03

It doesn't matter which of the aces a person has; the harmful consequences are the same.

04

The brain cannot distinguish one type of toxic stress from another; it's all toxic stress, with the same impact.

The good news is…

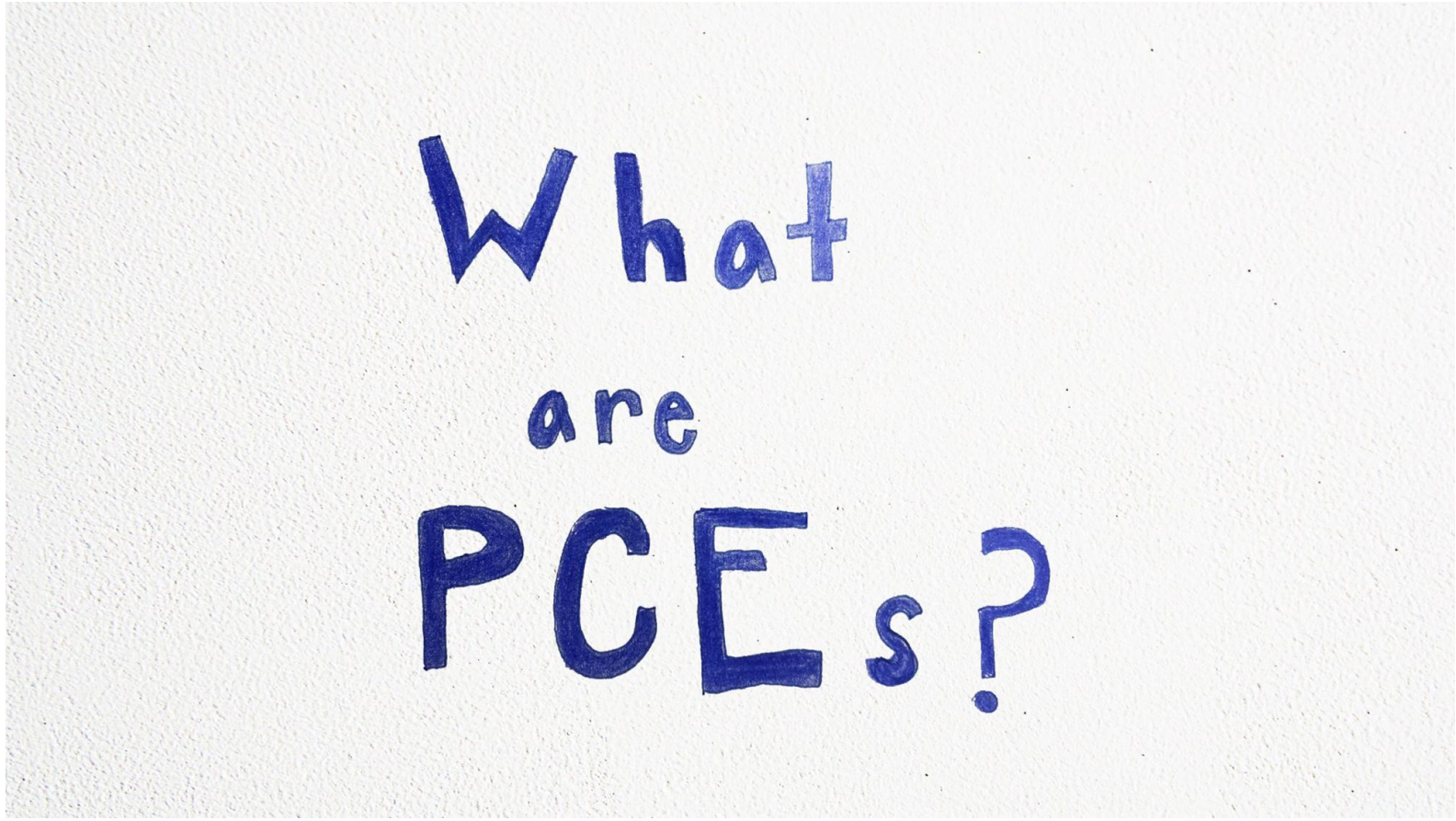
Resilience research shows that our brains are plastic and our bodies can heal.

Recent updates changed the name to PACEs – **positive and adverse childhood experiences.**

Relationships can change biology when they are safe and dependable.

Most effective were a positive adult relationship and trauma-informed therapy.




What
are
PCEs?

Building Resilience: The 7 Positive Childhood Experiences (PCEs)

How everyday moments of connection, safety, and belonging protect mental health and build strengths for life.





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SOCIETAL RISK FACTORS

		Type of Violence Perpetration							
		Child maltreat-ment	Teen Dating Violence	Intimate Partner Violence	Sexual Violence	Youth Violence	Bullying	Suicide	Elder Maltreat-ment
Risk Factors									
Social	Cultural norms that support aggression toward others	X[83,76,77]	X[78,79]	X[53]	X[31]	X[60]			X[27,81]
	Media Violence				X[37,82]	X[63]	X[37]	X[94,95]	
	Societal income inequity	X[108]		X[86]		X[87,88,89]	X[17]		
	Weak health, educational, economic, and social policies/laws	X[90]		X[53]	X[31]			X[91]	
	Harmful norms around masculinity and femininity	X[92]	X[54]	X[53]	X[31,73,74]	X[63]	X[94]		

COMMUNITY RISK FACTORS

		Type of Violence Perpetration							
		Child maltreat-ment	Teen Dating Violence	Intimate Partner Violence	Sexual Violence	Youth Violence	Bullying	Suicide	Elder Maltreat-ment
Risk Factors									
Community	Neighborhood poverty	X[42]		X[31]	X[46]			X[95]	
	High alcohol outlet density	X[42]		X[26,97]		X[58]		X[99]	
	Community violence	X[42]			X[38]	X[100]	X[37]		
	Diminished economic opportunities/high unemployment rates	X[42]		X[28,19]	X[31]	X[46]		X[29,30]	
	Poor neighborhood support and cohesion	X[42]	X[45]	X[33]		X[46,20]		X[41]	

RELATIONSHIP RISK FACTORS

		Type of Violence Perpetration							
		Child maltreat-ment	Teen Dating Violence	Intimate Partner Violence	Sexual Violence	Youth Violence	Bullying	Suicide	Elder Maltreat-ment
Risk Factors									
Relationship	Social isolation/Lack of social support	X[12]	X[15]	X[3]		X[46]	X[38]	X[11]	X[17]
	Poor parent-child relationships	X[12]	X[52,101]	X[53]	X[57,49]	X[46]	X[37]	X[55]	
	Family conflict	X[12]	X[52]	X[53]	X[31]	X[46]	X[37]		
	Economic stress	X[12]		X[53]		X[46]		X[11]	X[17]
	Associating with delinquent peers		X[55]	X[24]	X[31]	X[46]	X[37]		
	Gang Involvement		X[64]	X[64]	X[64]	X[66]			

INDIVIDUAL RISK FACTORS

		Type of Violence Perpetration							
		Child maltreat-ment	Teen Dating Violence	Intimate Partner Violence	Sexual Violence	Youth Violence	Bullying	Suicide	Elder Maltreat-ment
Risk Factors									
Individual	Low educational achievement	X[12]	X[52]	X[33]		X[46]	X[38]	X[35]	
	Lack of non-violent social problem-solving skills	X[12]	X[52,101]	X[33]	X[57,56]	X[46]	X[37]	X[55]	X[77]
	Poor behavioral control/ impulsiveness	X[12]	X[52]	X[33]	X[31]	X[46]		X[41]	
	History of violent victimization	X[12]	X[102]	X[33]	X[31]	X[46]	X[67]	X[41]	X[27]
	Witnessing violence	X[12]	X[52]	X[5]	X[31]	X[46]	X[103,37]	X[85]	
	Psychological/mental health problems	X[12]	X[52]	X[33]		X[46]		X[41]	X[27]
	Substance use	X[12]	X[52]	X[33]	X[31]	X[46]	X[58]	X[41]	X[27]

COMMUNITY PROTECTIVE FACTORS

		Type of Violence Perpetration							
		Child maltreat-ment	Teen Dating Violence	Intimate Partner Violence	Sexual Violence	Youth Violence	Bullying	Suicide	Elder Maltreat-ment
Protective Factors									
Community	Coordination of resources and services among community agencies	X[39]		X[40]				X[41]	X[27]
	Access to mental health and substance abuse services	X[42]						X[41]	
	Community support/ connected-ness	X[42]		X[19]	X[38,44]	X[43]		X[41]	X[27]

RELATIONSHIP PROTECTIVE FACTORS

		Type of Violence Perpetration							
		Child maltreat-ment	Teen Dating Violence	Intimate Partner Violence	Sexual Violence	Youth Violence	Bullying	Suicide	Elder Maltreat-ment
Protective Factors									
Relationship	Family support/ connected-ness	X[12]	X[15]			X[16]	X[17]	X[11]	X[27]
	Connection to a caring adult		X[45]			X[16]		X[11]	
	Association with pro-social peers		X[15]			X[18]	X[104]		
	Connection/commitment to school		X[45, 105]		X[49,50]	X[46]	X[37,47]	X[11]	

COMMUNITY PROTECTIVE FACTORS

		Type of Violence Perpetration							
		Child maltreat-ment	Teen Dating Violence	Intimate Partner Violence	Sexual Violence	Youth Violence	Bullying	Suicide	Elder Maltreat-ment
Protective Factors									
Individual	Skills in solving problems non-violently	X[106]	X[107]			X[46]		X[41]	

Common Warning Signs & Trauma Responses

TRAUMA RESPONSES IN YOUNGER CHILDREN



- Emotional Changes
  - Increased fear, anxiety, irritability, or frequent crying
- Sleep Problems
  - Nightmares, trouble falling or staying asleep
- Separation Anxiety
  - May have trouble being away from caregivers
- Regression
  - May return to earlier behaviors(e.g. bedwetting, thumb sucking)
- Changes in Play
  - Reenacting scary events, less interest in play, or aggressive play
- Physical Complaints
  - Stomachaches, headaches, or unexplained pain

TRAUMA RESPONSES IN SCHOOL AGE CHILDREN

- Emotional Challenges
  - Anxiety, sadness, anger, mood swings, or feeling numb
- Academic Difficulties
  - Trouble concentrating, decreased motivation, or a drop in grades
- Social Withdrawal
  - Avoiding friends, feeling lonely, or difficulty trusting others
- Behavioral Changes
  - Hyperactivity, defiance, risk-taking or acting out
- Worry and Fear
  - Feeling unsafe, constant “what if” thinking or fear of certain places or people
- Physical Symptoms
  - Headaches, stomachaches, sleep problems, or changes in appetite



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TRAUMA RESPONSES IN TEENS



- Mental Health Struggles
  - Anxiety, depression, or increased stress
- Changes in Identity
  - Low self-esteem, feeling disconnected, or increased risk-taking
- Relationship Challenges
  - Difficulty trusting others, conflict with friends and family, unhealthy relationships
- Behavioral Changes
  - Withdrawal, substance use, reckless behavior, or irritability
- Academic Issues
  - Trouble focusing, skipping school, or loss of interest in the future
- Physical Symptoms
  - Sleep problems, fatigue, headaches, or changes in appetite

Children and youth often struggle to express trauma for many reasons including:



- lack of vocabulary
- fear of consequences
- loyalty toward caregivers
- normalization of violence
- feelings of shame or confusion



There are many ways we can work to minimize ACEs and enhance Positive Childhood Experiences.

Consistent Relationships

Opportunity For Expression

Emotional Support



Trauma Informed Responses

ANY WORK WE DO ON THE INDIVIDUAL, RELATIONSHIP, OR SOCIETAL LEVEL WILL HAVE AN IMPACT.


CDC

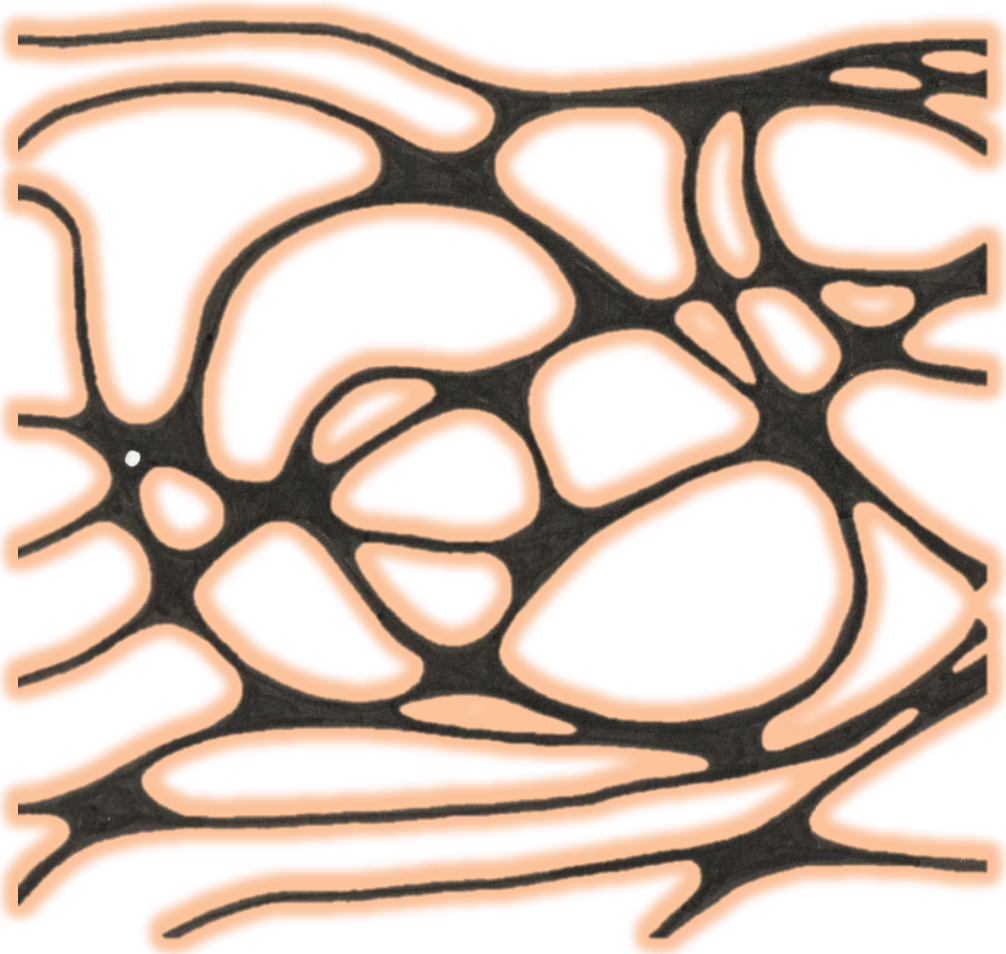
Art can be a powerful way to safely express and counteract negative experiences.



Having students describe someone else's art as though it is their own helps to deepen understanding, connect with the feelings and experiences of another, and encourages empathy.



NEUROGRAPHICA



- **Stress and Anxiety Relief**
- **Emotional Processing**
- **Enhanced Creativity**
- **Promotes Neuroplasticity**

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NEUROGRAPHICA

STEP 1: Set your Intention

STEP 2: Create the Composition

STEP 3: Conjugation aka Round the Angles

STEP 4: Integration



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REFERENCES:

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Any Questions?

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