

ACEs



ADVERSE CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES

Toxic Stress

Stress, like the first day of school or a challenging new creative task, is a part of growing up. But when events, people or a child's environment are repeatedly threatening or harmful, putting kids on "red alert" over time, that's toxic stress. Stress is more harmful when kids don't have caring adults to help them recover and develop coping strategies.



Toxic stress can alter our biology, passing on problems from generation to generation. Parents of kids who experience toxic stress may themselves have multiple ACE's, which can affect how they are able to support their children. Intervening with families across generations is essential in combating the effects of toxic stress.

ACEs are toxic stress experiences in childhood and can include:

- Physical, emotional or sexual abuse
- Loss of parent through divorce, incarceration or death
- Physical or emotional neglect
- Witnessing violence
- Inadequate housing or lack of food
- Serious or repeated medical needs
- Living with a parent who abuses substances or has untreated mental illness

Instead of asking: **"What's wrong with you?"**

We ask: **"What's happened to you?"**



A strong relationship with a responsive, caring adult is the most important protective factor for kids.

Understanding toxic stress can help us understand behavior.

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