

Positive Childhood Experiences: Powerful Ways to Help Strengthen Families



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Positive Childhood Experiences: Powerful Ways to Help Strengthen Families

Introduction:

Supervised visitation providers can help increase families' strengths. One way to accomplish this is to be sure that staff understand the power of positive childhood experiences. When staff can provide parents with coaching about positive childhood experiences, parents have crucial new knowledge about the importance of building these protective factors in their families. This training provides the supervised visitation community with new knowledge and skills to use during interactions with families referred by the court.

In the past, the Clearinghouse on Supervised Visitation has provided professionals with multiple opportunities to learn about adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) and their significant impact on health, behavior, and development across the lifespan. See, for example, the training on our website <https://itrs.csw.fsu.edu/sites/g/files/upcbnu1886/files/ACE-Training.pdf>.

In our new training, we shift the focus to positive childhood experiences. While ACEs highlight the challenges and adversities that can shape a child's life, positive childhood experiences emphasize the factors that foster resilience and help children thrive. By exploring positive childhood experiences, we'll uncover how they can buffer the effects of adversity and create a foundation for lifelong well-being.

Objectives

After completing this training, supervised visitation staff will be able to:

- Analyze the relationship between ACEs and positive childhood experiences
- Understand that a promotion of positive childhood experiences are part of a strength-based approach to serving families
- Describe the evidence-based beneficial impact of positive childhood experiences on children's resilience, even in the presence of adversity
- Articulate supervised visitation's role facilitating positive childhood experiences in families

- Discuss the evidence supporting the benefits of implementing positive childhood experiences and protective factor interventions

A Review of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)

Adversity is a part of life. However, certain kinds of adversity can have a lasting negative impact. ACEs are Adverse Childhood Experiences and refer to potentially traumatic events that occur in childhood. Commonly accepted general ACEs are the following, however, it is important to note this list does not fully encompass all ACEs:

- Abuse
 - Physical abuse
 - Emotional abuse
 - Sexual abuse
- Neglect
 - Physical neglect
 - Emotional neglect
- Household Dysfunction
 - Mental illness
 - Mother treated violently
 - Divorce
 - Incarcerated relative
 - Substance abuse/misuse

(Joining Forces for Children, 2024).

Research-based Impacts of Trauma

It's important to learn about ACEs because experts acknowledge that trauma, unless it is resolved, **increases a person's risk** of a range of mental and physical health problems, including:

- Psychological Responses
 - Flashbacks and intrusive memories
 - Anxiety and panic attacks
 - Depression

- Dissociation
- Nightmares and sleep disturbances
- Emotional numbness or heightened reactivity
- Cognitive Responses
 - Impaired concentration and memory
 - Difficulty making decisions
 - Negative self-perception and distorted beliefs
 - Hypervigilance and constant alertness
- Behavioral Responses
 - Avoidance of reminders or triggers
 - Increased aggression or irritability
 - Social withdrawal and isolation
 - Self-destructive behaviors (e.g., substance abuse, self-harm)
 - Lack of flexibility and a struggle to be open to change
- Interpersonal Responses
 - Difficulty forming and maintaining relationships
 - Trust issues and fear of intimacy
 - Attachment difficulties
 - Challenges in communication and expression of emotions

(SAMHSA, 2014a; SAMHSA, 2014b; National Center for PTSD, n.d.; DCF, 2021; Department of Communities, n.d.)

Activity 3.4: Video

Video:

[What are ACES and Why are They Important | Mary Gruman & Alison Arnold | TEDxTraverseCity](#)

Mary King Gruman, MS, LPC, NCC, discusses Adverse Childhood Experiences. ACEs are hyper-stressful, traumatic events experienced in a child's or adolescent's life. ACEs very common and most Americans have at least one, they can happen to anyone. The experiences and environments during our childhood and developing years have a tremendous, lifelong impact on our health, ability to learn and the quality of our lives – as they can alter the architecture of our developing brain and body. The ACE Study showed dramatic links between adverse childhood experiences and risky behavior, psychological issues, serious illness and the leading causes of death.

Consider the following questions:

1. What does recent research suggest is a strong predictor of health across a person's life?
2. What study has produced a groundbreaking understanding of how early life experiences impact health over a lifetime?

Possible Answers:

1. Supportive and caring relationships
2. The Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) Study

What are positive childhood experiences?

Let's begin with the basics. Positive childhood experiences are experiences that focus on positive interactions and environments which promote healthy development and wellbeing (Ohio Center of Excellence, 2024).

These positive experiences depend on supportive relationships and safe environments, and are associated with improved health outcomes and resilience (Ohio Center of Excellence).

More specifically, positive childhood experiences are activities that support a child's physical, mental, social, and emotional health and wellbeing. As supervised visitation professionals, it is likely that you can easily describe what a positive childhood experience looks like. Researchers have identified seven commonly-accepted positive childhood experiences. They are:

- The ability to talk with friends and family about feelings
- The sense that family is supportive during difficult times
- The enjoyment of participation in community traditions

- Feeling a sense of belonging in school
- Feeling supported by friends
- Having at least two non-parent adults who care
- Feeling safe and protected by an adult in the home

Positive childhood experiences play an integral role in reducing the impact of ACEs (adverse childhood experiences). The more positive childhood experiences a child develops, the more resilience they can build to mitigate the effects of ACEs.

Research tells us:

- Building strong and meaningful relationships, engaging in activities, and the feeling of safety in the home and community promote the development of positive childhood experiences (Mass.gov, 2024).
- Practicing positive childhood experiences is not only done on an individual level or in an education setting, but is important in policy, too. Promoting positive childhood experiences at the governmental or organizational level provides opportunities for children and families to build resilience through widespread support in systems and strength-based environments (Gallant, 2024).
- Positive childhood experiences help cultivate a positive self-image and self-worth, provide a sense of belonging, and build skills to cope with stress in healthy ways (Center on Child Wellbeing & Trauma, n.d.).
- Positive childhood experiences can serve as a protective factor to reduce ACEs and have shown to build resilience to adult depression and poor mental health (Center on Child Health & Wellbeing, n.d.).

POSITIVE CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES



BENEFITS:

- Provides buffer to the effect of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs)
- Provides children with a sense of self
- Improves a child's self esteem
- Strengthens skills to cope with stress
- Builds resilience against future adversity

IMPORTANT EXPERIENCES:

- Feeling safe and protected by an adult in the home
- The sense that family is supportive during difficult times
- The ability to talk with friends and family about feelings
- The enjoyment of participation in community tradition
- Feeling a sense of belonging in school
- Having at least two non-parent adults who care



Activity - Connect the 7 Positive Childhood Experiences!

Fill in the blank on the left by choosing the appropriate term from the word bank below.

1. The ability to talk with “blank” about feelings
2. The sense that family is “blank” during difficult times
3. The enjoyment of participation in “blank” traditions
4. Feeling a sense of belonging in “blank”
5. Feeling “blank” by friends
6. Having at least two “blank” adults who care
7. Feeling “blank” and protected by an adult in the home

Word Bank		
friends and family	community	school
safe	non-parents	supportive
supported		

Answers:

1. Friends and family
2. Supportive
3. Community
4. School
5. Supported
6. Non-parents
7. Safe

Looking closer: Why positive childhood experiences are important

Looking at ACEs and positive childhood experiences *together* helps professionals better understand what children need and can thus create effective family support strategies (Bethell et al., 2019). Here’s why:

- Remember, research shows that having four or more ACEs is harmful to adult health. When considered without positive childhood experiences, higher ACEs are associated with lower social and emotional health, available health resources, and healthy lifestyles. When positive childhood experiences are considered, the negative impact of ACEs may be reduced (Daines et al, 2021).

- Positive childhood experiences are positively linked to all aspects of family health and can help improve family health (Daines et al, 2021).
- The promotion of positive childhood experiences for children can reduce risk for adult depression and/or poor mental health (D/PMH) and promote adult relational health (Bethell et al., 2019).
- Having more positive childhood experiences is linked to lower rates of adult distress and better social support (Bethell et al., 2019).
- Positive childhood experiences, particularly ones related to school and neighborhood environments, demonstrate protective associations with adult health conditions, such as adult mental illness, even for those who have experienced ACEs (Charite et al, 2023).
- Positive childhood experiences can lead to better health outcomes later in life. These studies emphasize the importance of nurturing safe and stable environments for children (Bethell et al., 2019).

How can supervised visitation staff promote positive childhood experiences

Promoting positive childhood experiences is essential in creating resilience and positive habits in a child's development. Below are ways to promote positive childhood experiences at visits:

- **Encourage communication between parent and child.** Parent-child relationships can develop trust by listening, sharing, showing interest, and asking questions, which are essential in building a high-quality relationship (Ratliff et al., 2020).
 - Use a Clearinghouse tool: Watch the Clearinghouse's video "Talking is Caring" at <https://vimeo.com/646086240>. It is also available in the Videos section of the website:

<https://itrs.csw.fsu.edu/supervised-visitation/training-manuals-materials>

- **Provide emotional guidance.** When parents provide emotional guidance to their children, they help prepare their children to navigate the world. Staff can help parents coach their children in identifying and labeling their emotions, respond with empathy, and work to solve problems. When children learn to do this, they are also increasing their own emotional regulation. Emotional regulation is an important social skill. Remember: that children with ACEs may have more difficulty learning to regulate emotions (Ratliff et al, 2020).

- Use a Clearinghouse tool to help parents teach children how to name their emotions.

https://itrs.csw.fsu.edu/sites/g/files/upcbnu1886/files/How%20am%20I%20feeling%20today_.pdf

- Give parents a way to help their children manage their emotions.https://itrs.csw.fsu.edu/sites/g/files/upcbnu1886/files/How%20I%20stay%20Calm_DCFPoster1.pdf
- **Use discipline appropriately.** Discipline as a consequence for inappropriate behavior may be necessary, but it is important that the child understand why they are being disciplined and the discipline is not overly harsh. When a parent clearly explains the unwanted behavior, sets reasonable consequences, and allows the child a chance to fix their mistake or apologize, it helps the child learn and grow. Research indicates that simply shaming the child does not promote positive childhood experiences and instead promotes distress (Ratliff et al., 2020).
- **Provide fair rules and limitations.** Providing clear rules and limits for children is important, and these rules should evolve as children enter new development stages. As children grow, asking for input when setting fair rules helps increase their sense of control. The behavior a parent expects from their children should be modeled by the parent (Ratliff et al., 2020).
- **Create and maintain healthy routines.** Creating regular and healthy routines helps promote positive childhood experiences and reduce stress. Routines such as eating meals together as a family unit, reading at bedtime, and sharing in other family activities are related to increasing childhood positive childhood experiences (Ratliff et al., 2020).
- **Promote participation and strong relationships.** The development of strong relationships can increase social skills and decrease loneliness. Having a mentor outside of a family setting can increase success in school and increase positive behaviors (Ratliff et al., 2020). Feeling safe and protected by an adult in the home or out of the home is crucial. Encouraging friendships and interactions provides emotional and social support. Establishing connections where children can be themselves without fear promotes positive childhood experiences (Ohio Center of Excellence, 2024).
- **Create safe environments.** Supportive relationships and environments are strongly associated with positive and improved health outcomes. The ability to be open with friends or family changes helps create a safe environment for children. This includes providing support in difficult times, community traditions, a sense of

belonging in school, and having at least two non-parent adults in the child's life who cares for the child (Ohio Center of Excellence, 2024).

- **Teach life skills.** To promote positive childhood experiences, it is important for parents to educate children on skills that promote positive interactions, resilience, respect, and civility.

How to Promote Positive Childhood Experiences

Suggestions	<i>Examples</i>
Encourage communication and ask for input	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Listen ● Share ● Ask Questions
Provide emotional guidance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Coach children how to identify and label their emotions ● Respond with empathy ● Work to solve the problem patiently
Use discipline appropriately	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Clearly state the unwanted behavior displayed by the child to help them understand why it's unwanted ● Set reasonable consequences ● Allowing the child a chance to fix their mistake or apologize
Provide fair rules and limitations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Provide clear rules and limits for children ● Allow and welcome children to ask for input when setting rules
Create and maintain healthy routines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Create regular and healthy routines ● Eat meals together as a family unit ● Read at bedtime ● Share in other family activities
Promote participation and strong relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Have a mentor outside of a family setting ● Create a safe home environment ● Encourage friendships and interactions ● Establish connections where children can be themselves without fear

Create safe environments	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Friends and family can help offer a safe environment for children● Be supportive with children difficult times,● Participate in community traditions
Teach life skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Educate children on skills that promote positive interactions, resilience, respect, and civility.● Understand what adversity looks like and how to overcome it

Stakeholders in the development of positive childhood experiences

Which adults are considered stakeholders involved in the development of positive childhood experiences? Research indicates that many adults can help promote positive childhood experiences, but that parents are the most crucial adults for children.

Important adults include:

- Parents/Caregivers
- Relatives
- Healthcare providers
- Teachers/Child Care Providers
- Lawmakers/Policy makers
- Community members
- Supervised visitation Providers
- Government Health Departments

(American SPCC, n.d.; CDC, 2024b)



This information is available as a handout below.



STAKEHOLDERS IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF POSITIVE CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES

Research indicates that many adults can help promote positive childhood experiences, but that parents are the most crucial adults for children. Important adults can include:

- PARENTS/CAREGIVERS
- RELATIVES
- HEALTHCARE PROVIDERS
- TEACHERS/CHILD CARE PROVIDERS
- LAWMAKERS/POLICYMAKERS
- COMMUNITY MEMBERS
- SUPERVISED VISITATION PROVIDERS
- GOVERNMENT HEALTH DEPARTMENTS

Creating positive childhood experiences at each stage of development

Positive experiences during childhood create the foundation for growth and development, and have a role in shaping adult mental health (Clements et al., 2024). These experiences can build resilience and protect against the negative impact of ACEs. They may even have a role in breaking the intergenerational cycle of child maltreatment. (Morris & Hays-Grudo, 2023; as cited in Clements et al., 2024). Next we address the questions: What are some examples of positive childhood experiences? and “What helps families build them at each stage of development?”

Infants, ages 0 to 1



- During this stage of development, it is important for parents and caregivers to:
 - **Talk, sing, read, and play with the baby.** This helps them learn language feelings, and emotions.
 - **Cuddle and hold the baby.** Babies feel loved and secure when held and comforted by the parent or caregiver. A baby shows their discomfort and needs by crying. Holding and creating contact between the parent and child helps provide comfort and strengthens the bond.

- **Prioritize health and wellbeing, and practice self-care.** Practicing self-care as a parent is essential for the well-being of the entire family. Parents deserve and need self-care and it is not selfish to prioritize their needs. Caring for oneself is essential in caring for the wellbeing of an infant.
- What helps caregivers? During this stage of development, it is important to encourage parents to engage with the community:
 - **Reach out to friends and family & share experiences with other parents and caregivers.** Remember asking for help does not make someone weak. Building a strong support system of friends and family not only helps the parent or caregiver, but also helps build positive childhood experiences in the child.
 - **Talk to the child's healthcare provider.** Concerns and questions about a child's development can be brought to the healthcare provider of the child. They can provide guidance and resources on how to build positive childhood experiences and minimize the impact of ACEs in a child.

Toddlers, ages 1 to 3



During early childhood, children need: secure attachments, positive interactions, nurturing environments, consistent routines, and the ability to explore and be curious.

- During this stage of development, it is important for parents and caregivers to:
 - **Read to the toddler.** Reading to children helps them learn vocabulary, listen, and communicate.
 - **Create routines.** Creating routines throughout the day helps children increase their life skills and overall positive childhood experiences.
 - **Spend quality time together.** Spending quality time as a family helps build resilience and positive childhood experiences. Going to the park, drawing together, or having play time can help mitigate ACEs in the future.
- What helps caregivers achieve those goals? During this stage of development, it is important to engage with the community:
 - **Make time for play groups.** Play groups help toddlers learn how to appropriately play with peers and can grow their social and emotional skills.
 - **Reach out to friends and family & share experiences with other parents and caregivers.** Reaching out to family and friends helps build resilience in the parent or caregiver and also helps the child grow in their relationships with adults outside of the parent-child connection.

Young children, ages 4 to 12



- During this stage of development, children need family connection, positive school experiences, and as they grow, a sense of accomplishment.
- During this stage of development, it is important for parents and caregivers to:
 - **Create responsibilities and goals with the child(ren).** Children helping appropriately with chores or responsibilities in the home helps them become more capable and can build resilience to ACEs in the future. Setting goals can help build confidence and independence.
 - **Spend quality time together.** It is important to continue building the parent-child relationship as they grow older. Once they reach this age of development, letting the child choose an activity helps them feel in control and responsible.
- What helps caregivers achieve those goals? During this stage of development, it is important to engage with the community:
 - **Engage with child(ren)'s education.** Parents and caregivers should discuss what the child did in school and what they learned, and assist in homework if capable. Be in the loop in the child's standing in school and know their academic needs.

- **Discuss friendships with child.** Ensure the child has stable and healthy friendships to grow positive childhood experiences with.

Teenagers, ages 13 to 18



During this stage of development, teenagers need meaningful relationships with adults, positive self-esteem, healthy coping mechanisms, civic engagement, and identity development.

(Mass.gov, 2024).

- During this stage of development, it is important for parents and caregivers to:
 - **Talk to the teenager.** As teenagers grow in their independence, finding times to talk and spend time together may be more difficult. Support, love, and respect the teenager and spend time together.
 - **Engage with their school staff and community.** Though the teenager may have more independence in their education, staying informed on how they are performing in school and where their plans for their future lie is important.
 - What helps caregivers achieve those goals? During this stage of development, it is important to engage with the community:

- **Help connect with communities. Remind parents to help the teenager be connected with their community and family in things they are passionate about - such as sports, school activities, volunteering, religion, part-time job, etc.**

The Clearinghouse has created a Family Skill Builder to help supervised visitation providers support parenting skills and stronger parent-child bonds. It is available here:

https://itrs.csw.fsu.edu/sites/g/files/upcbnu1886/files/Family%20Skill%20Builder_2022.pdf

What Positive Experiences do Children Need?

Positive childhood experiences lay a strong foundation for growth and healthy adult mental health. PCEs can help build resilience and counterbalance the harmful effects of ACEs.

Children aged 0 to 3 need:

- Secure attachments with parents and non-parent adults
- Positive interactions
- Nurturing environments
- Consistent routines
- The ability to explore and be curious



Children aged 4 to 12 need and develop:

- Family connections
- Strong peer relationships
- Positive school environments
- Community Involvement
- A sense of accomplishment



Teenagers aged 13 to 18 develop:

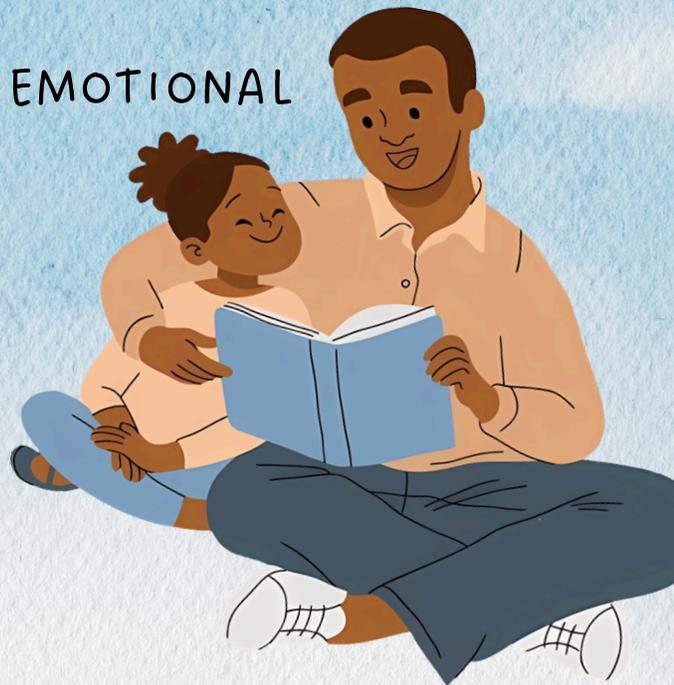
- Meaningful relationships with adults
- Positive self-esteem
- Healthy coping mechanisms
- Civic engagement with the community
- Identity development



Reading Together Is Always Better

A FEW BENEFITS OF READING WITH YOUR CHILD INCLUDE:

- MORE PARENT/CHILD BONDING
- IMPROVED LISTENING SKILLS
- EXPANDED VOCABULARY
- INCREASED ATTENTION SPAN
- INCREASED CREATIVITY
- ENHANCED SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT



Protective Factors Decrease the **Likelihood** of ACEs

While positive childhood experiences help buffer the impact of ACEs, protective factors have the potential to decrease the likelihood of experiencing ACEs

- Examples of protective factors include (CDC, 2024b):
 - **Individual and family protective factors**
 - Children with positive friendships and peer networks
 - Children who do well in school
 - Families where caregivers can meet basic needs for children
 - Families where caregivers have steady employment
 - **Community protective factors**
 - Communities where families have access to medical and mental health care and services
 - Communities with access to safe and stable housing
 - Communities where families have access to high-quality preschool
 - Communities where residents feel connected to each other and are involved in the community
- Protective factors and positive childhood experiences both help build resilience and can buffer the negative effects of adversity (Schmitz et al., 2024).
- While identifying an individual's protective factors is important, understanding ACEs and positive childhood experiences can provide a more extensive and holistic view of an individual's development and challenges (Schmitz et al., 2024).

Knowledge Check:

1. Why are the protective factors important?
 - a. Because they can help prevent ACEs
 - b. Because they are the same as ACEs
 - c. Because they help medical doctors decide on appropriate treatment medications
 - d. Because they often lead to ACEs
2. Why are positive childhood experiences important?

- a. They are mostly aimed at adolescents experiencing behavioral challenges
- b. They help build resilience and buffer the impact of ACEs
- c. They were created by medical staff for routine visits
- d. They are not important for healthy child development.

Answers:

1. a.
2. b.

Activity: Watch the Video on Protective Factors Here:

<https://vimeo.com/407600351>

Optional: You may review the Protective Factors with these E Books that focus on small (“micro-doses”) of actions that can build protective factors.

<https://itrs.csw.fsu.edu/supervised-visitation/training-manuals-materials/e-books>

Additional Resources

- Video: [Adverse Childhood Experiences: What's it got to do with me? | Rachel Symmons | TEDxUoChester](#)
- Video: [The effect of positive experiences on adolescents: Dannyella Glasgow at TEDxWhitehallWomen](#)



GOOD NEWS FOR FAMILIES

- 1. Protective factors can help prevent Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACES).**
- 2. When adversity does occur, positive childhood experiences can buffer the impact.**
- 3. Parents, caregivers, teachers, and other supportive adults can help build protective factors and create more positive childhood experiences.**

Quiz

Quiz answers appear after references

1. Which of the following are one of the seven commonly accepted positive childhood experiences?
 - a. The sense that family is supportive during difficult times
 - b. Feeling a sense of belonging in school
 - c. Having at least two non-parents who care
 - d. All of the above

2. Positive childhood experiences can help reduce the impact of what?
 - a. positive childhood experiences
 - b. Protective Factors
 - c. ACEs
 - d. Positive childhood experiences

3. True or False? Having more positive childhood experiences can lead to better health outcomes later in life and have an impact on adult depression.
 - a. True
 - b. False

4. What are protective factors?
 - a. Characteristics that have the potential to decrease the likelihood of experiencing ACEs
 - b. Childhood experiences that mitigate the effect of adversity
 - c. Positive and compensatory experiences that need to be promoted to buffer negative effects of ACEs
 - d. Factors that build vulnerability to adversity

5. True or False: Increasing understanding of protective factors does not have an impact in shaping resiliency-building treatments
 - a. True
 - b. False

6. Who are the stakeholders involved in developing and promoting positive childhood experiences?
 - a. Parents/Caregivers
 - b. Healthcare providers

- c. Teachers/Child Care Providers
 - d. All of the above
7. Which statement below is true?
- a. Understanding positive childhood experiences and ACEs help provide an extensive and holistic view of an individual's development
 - b. ACEs and protective factors are the same thing
 - c. ACEs can be prevented entirely by protective factors
 - d. Positive childhood experiences can only be provided by parents
8. Exposure to ACEs between birth and 18 years increases the likelihood of...
- a. Emotional regulation stability
 - b. Lack of impulse control and attention
 - c. Ability to easily form social attachments
 - d. None of the above
9. True or False: Practicing positive childhood experiences is not only done on an individual level or in an education setting, but is important in agency and governmental efforts, too.
- a. True
 - b. False
10. What is **not** true about positive childhood experiences?
- a. Promoting positive childhood experiences at the governmental or organizational level provides opportunities for children and families to build resilience
 - b. Positive childhood experiences help cultivate a positive self-image and self-worth
 - c. Positive childhood experiences provide a sense of belonging
 - d. Positive childhood experiences help children build skills to cope with stress in unhealthy ways

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- Schmitz N., Aafjes-van Doorn K., Békés V. (2024). *Current Uses and Contributions of the Protective and Compensatory Experiences (positive childhood experiences) Measure: A Scoping Review*. *Trauma Care*. 4(3):229-248. <https://doi.org/10.3390/traumacare4030021>

Quiz Answers

1. d
2. c
3. a
4. a
5. b
6. d
7. a
8. b
9. a
10. d

Annotated Bibliography

American Society for the Positive Care of Children (SPCC). (n.d.) *Positive Childhood Experiences*. <https://americanspcc.org/positive-childhood-experience/>

There is a growing body of research that states positive childhood experiences can be statistically linked to good emotional and mental health in adults. Increasing positive childhood experiences builds resilience in kids who have experienced trauma, and those who may in the future. The relationship between positive childhood experiences in childhood and good mental health in adults is dose-responsive, meaning the more positive experiences that individuals had, the more likely they were to report few or no issues of adult mental health challenges.

Bethel, C., Jones, J., Gombojav, N., Linkenbach, J., & Sege, R. (2019). *Positive Childhood Experiences and Adult Mental and Relational Health in a Statewide Sample: Associations Across Adverse Childhood Experiences*. *JAMA Pediatrics*. 173(11):e193007. doi: 10.21001/jamapediatrics.2019.3007.

This study investigates how positive childhood experiences (positive childhood experiences) relate to adult depression, poor mental health (D/PMH), and social and emotional support, particularly in the context of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs). Using data from the 2015 Wisconsin Behavioral Risk Factor Survey involving 6,188 adults, the researchers found that individuals reporting more positive childhood experiences (6 to 7) had significantly lower odds (72% reduction) of D/PMH compared to those with fewer positive childhood experiences (0 to 2). Similar trends were observed across varying levels of ACEs. Additionally, those with more positive childhood experiences were more likely to report high levels of social and emotional support. The study concludes

that fostering positive experiences during childhood can help reduce risks for adult mental health issues and improve relational health, emphasizing the importance of assessing both positive childhood experiences and ACEs to enhance well-being and guide interventions.

- CDC. (2024a). *Program: Essentials for Childhood: Preventing Adverse Childhood Experiences through Data to Action*. Center for Disease Control and Prevention. <https://www.cdc.gov/aces/programs/index.html>

CDC funds recipients to prevent adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) and promote positive childhood experiences (positive childhood experiences). Preventing ACEs and promoting positive childhood experiences has the potential to reduce leading causes of death and mental health challenges, health risk behaviors such as substance use, and verified reports of child abuse and neglect.

- CDC. (2024b). *Risk and Protective Factors. Adverse Childhood Experiences*. Center for Disease Control and Prevention. <https://www.cdc.gov/aces/risk-factors/index.html>

This source explains the risk and protective factors associated with Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and their impact on children. Risk factors increase the likelihood of ACEs and include caregiving challenges, family conflict, low-income, lack of parental support, and high-crime communities. Conversely, protective factors decrease the likelihood of ACEs or mitigate their effects, including nurturing family environments, supportive peer networks, access to education, and community resources such as healthcare and childcare. The document emphasizes the importance of fostering protective factors to build resilience and reduce the risk of violence and adversity in children. This source is useful for understanding the various influences on childhood adversity and how communities and families can intervene to promote healthier development.

- Charite, J.L., Khan, M., Dudovitz, R., Nuckols, T., Sastry, N., Huang, C., Lei, Y., & Schickedanz, A. (2023). *Specific domains of positive childhood experiences (positive childhood experiences) associated with improved adult health: A nationally representative study*. SSM - Population Health. 24L101558. doi: 10.1016/j.ssmph.2023.101558

This study investigates the relationship between positive childhood experiences (positive childhood experiences) and adult health outcomes, particularly in the context of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs). The sample comprised 7,105 adults, revealing that higher scores in the domains of peer support and neighborhood safety were significantly linked to better mental health outcomes, even among those with ACE exposure. The findings suggest that fostering

positive childhood experiences, particularly in school and community settings, may mitigate health risks associated with adverse childhood experiences, highlighting the importance of interventions aimed at enhancing supportive childhood environments for improved public health outcomes for all.

Center on Child Wellbeing & Trauma. (n.d.). Massachusetts Office of the Child Advocate.

<https://childwellbeingandtrauma.org/healing-and-prevention/positive-childhood-experiences/>

Positive childhood experiences drive healthy development and mitigate the long-term effects of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs). Research shows that these experiences promote children's long-term health and wellbeing, enable children to form strong relationships and meaningful connections, cultivate positive self-image and self-worth, provide a sense of belonging, and build skills to cope with stress in healthy ways.

Clements, P.T, Evenson, N., and Helmbrecht, L. (2024). *Remember the ACEs and positive childhood experiences*. Journal of the Academy of Forensic Nursing. 2(1):3-11. Doi. 10.29173/jafn732

While Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) are well-established risk factors for mental illness, the protective factors that promote resilience are often less well-known nor, at times, highlighted at all. Protective and Compensatory Experiences (positive childhood experiences) are positive experiences that can increase resilience and protect against mental and physical illness risk. Positive childhood experiences are powerful elements of everyday life that already exist or can be engineered to occur routinely and frequently and can be leveraged to support treatment goals and activities. Although it might never be possible to prevent ACEs from occurring in the lives of children, nurses can emphasize the value of positive childhood experiences, healthy relationships, and resources to directly minimize the line between adverse childhood experiences and the sequelae of physical and psychological effects into adulthood. Positive childhood experiences are often-overlooked but powerful tools that can support therapeutic interventions and mental health throughout the life course.

Daines, C., Hansen, D., Novilla, M.L.B., & Crandall, A. (2021). *Effects of positive and negative childhood experiences on adult family health*. BMC Public Health. 21, 651. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-021-10732-w>

This study examines the relationship between adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) and positive childhood experiences (positive childhood experiences) with family health in adulthood. While prior research has established the impact of

ACEs and positive childhood experiences on individual physical and mental health, their influence on family health remains less understood. Recognizing that families often operate through intergenerational patterns, the study suggests that early experiences can significantly affect familial well-being. A survey conducted with 1,030 U.S. adults assessed their childhood experiences and four domains of family health: social and emotional processes, healthy lifestyle, health resources, and external social supports. Data analysis through structural equation modeling revealed that, after controlling for variables such as marriage, education, and other factors, ACEs negatively impacted family social and emotional health and resources, while positive childhood experiences positively influenced all four family health domains. Ultimately, the findings indicate that childhood experiences, whether adverse or positive, play a crucial role in shaping family health in adulthood, suggesting that positive experiences can mitigate the effects of early adversity.

Flynn, S. (2022). Child Protection and Welfare During the COVID 19 Pandemic: Revisiting the Value of Resilience-Building, Systems Theory, Adverse Childhood Experiences and Trauma-Informed Approaches. *Child Care in Practice*, 29(4), 371–388. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13575279.2022.2118673>

As the utility of the systemic perspective for child protection work is already well established, the paper considers how this perspective can be extended to assist in work with children and young people in the pandemic who have Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs). In this paper, exploration of the detail of that extension lies in resilience building and trauma-informed practice.

Gallant, L. (2024). *Why positive childhood experiences are important for all children and families*. Healthy Outcomes from Positive Experiences (HOPE). <https://positiveexperience.org/blog/why-pces-are-important-for-all-children-and-families/> This article from the HOPE National Resource Center provides an in-depth explanation of Positive Childhood Experiences (positive childhood experiences) and their role in countering the effects of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs). The authors, including Dr. Robert Sege and Dr. Christina Bethell, explore how positive childhood experiences help promote resilience and healing by fostering supportive relationships, safe environments, engagement opportunities, and emotional growth. They categorize positive childhood experiences within the "Four Building Blocks of HOPE" framework, established to create protective factors that enhance mental health outcomes. This source is valuable for its practical guidance on promoting resilience in children through policy and community initiatives, making it essential for research on strengths-based childhood development and trauma-informed care approaches.

Joining Forces for Children. (2024). *What are ACEs?*

<https://www.joiningforcesforchildren.org/what-are-aces/>

This article discusses the concept of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), highlighting their long-term physical and mental health consequences. Originating from the 1998 CDC-Kaiser Permanente study, ACEs include various forms of childhood trauma such as abuse, neglect, and household dysfunction. The study found that individuals with higher ACE scores were more likely to develop health issues like heart disease, depression, and diabetes. The article also addresses how ACEs create toxic stress, which can disrupt brain development, impact emotional regulation, and influence behavior. It emphasizes the importance of nurturing environments, resilience-building, and interventions to reduce ACE exposure and mitigate their effects. Lastly, the article suggests fostering resilience in children through competence, confidence, coping mechanisms, and connection, helping them adapt to adversity and achieve healthier outcomes.

Mass.gov. (2024). *Creating positive experiences for children*. Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

<https://www.mass.gov/info-details/creating-positive-experiences-for-children#:~:text=Every%20parent%2C%20caregiver%2C%20and%20member,home%20and%20in%20their%20community.>

This comprehensive resource outlines the importance of Positive Childhood Experiences (positive childhood experiences) in promoting a child's physical, mental, social, and emotional health. It provides detailed strategies for caregivers to foster positive childhood experiences across different developmental stages, from infancy through adolescence, focusing on activities such as quality time, building routines, and creating supportive environments. The article underscores the role of positive childhood experiences in mitigating the negative effects of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) by helping children build resilience and coping skills. This source is valuable for its actionable, age-specific guidance on integrating positive childhood experiences into family and community life, making it beneficial for research on childhood development and trauma-informed care.

Morris, A., and Hays-Grudo, J., Ratliff, E. (2020). *Positive childhood experiences for Children: Overcoming Adversity and Building Resilience*. Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service. <https://extension.okstate.edu/fact-sheets/positive-childhood-experiences-for-children-overcoming-adversity-and-building-resilience.html>

This fact sheet explores Protective and Compensatory Experiences (positive childhood experiences) and their role in reducing the negative effects of Adverse

Childhood Experiences (ACEs) in children. It emphasizes strategies parents can use to promote positive childhood experiences, such as emotional guidance, positive communication, and establishing routines, which foster resilience and healthy development. The fact sheet also highlights the importance of social support systems and activities that strengthen children's coping abilities. This resource is valuable for parents, educators, and caregivers focused on supporting children facing adversity through positive interventions.

Morris AS, Hays-Grudo J. (2023). *Protective and compensatory childhood experiences and their impact on adult mental health*. *World Psychiatry*. (1):150-151. doi: 10.1002/wps.21042. PMID: 36640391; PMCID: PMC9840496.

This article discusses the impact of childhood experiences on adult mental health, emphasizing the dual roles of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and Protective and Compensatory Experiences (positive childhood experiences). The ACE study identifies ten types of adversity (e.g., abuse, neglect, parental divorce) that significantly correlate with physical and mental health issues in adulthood. The research highlights that a cumulative ACE score of four or more substantially increases the risk of conditions like depression and anxiety. Conversely, positive childhood experiences—characterized by supportive relationships and enriching resources—are identified as critical factors that can mitigate the effects of ACEs. The article proposes that positive childhood experiences can enhance resilience and promote better mental health outcomes, suggesting that adults with more positive childhood experiences report fewer mental health issues. It further posits that positive childhood experiences can influence parenting styles, thereby affecting future generations. The authors advocate for integrating positive childhood experiences into therapeutic practices, emphasizing their importance in promoting mental well-being throughout life.

Ohio Center of Excellence for Behavioral Health & Promotion. (2024). *ACEs, protective childhood experiences, and positive childhood experiences*. State of Ohio. <https://preventioncoe.ohio.gov/learn-and-grow/center-blog/184-aces-positive-childhood-experiences-pces>

This article outlines the importance of addressing Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), Protective and Compensatory Experiences (positive childhood experiences), and Positive Childhood Experiences (positive childhood experiences) to improve child well-being. ACEs include traumatic events like abuse, neglect, and household dysfunction, which have lasting effects on health and behavior. Positive childhood experiences serve as buffers to mitigate the negative impact of ACEs, while positive childhood experiences promote healthy

development. The article advocates for holistic, community-based interventions that involve stakeholders like healthcare providers and policymakers to create safe, nurturing environments for children. Emphasizing equity and access to resources, the article highlights the need for comprehensive prevention strategies to promote resilience and optimal health outcomes.

Pinetree Institute. (n.d.) *Positive Childhood Experiences (positive childhood experiences)*. ACEs and Trauma.

<https://pinetreeinstitute.org/positive-childhood-experiences/>

This article discusses the 2019 study led by Dr. Christina Bethell at Johns Hopkins, which identifies seven Positive Childhood Experiences (positive childhood experiences) that contribute to resilience and healthy mental health outcomes in adulthood, particularly for those with high Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) scores. These positive childhood experiences include family support, safe environments, community involvement, and supportive relationships outside of the family. The research highlights a "dose-responsive" relationship between the number of positive childhood experiences and positive adult mental health, offering a framework for fostering resilience in children facing trauma. This source is essential for understanding the potential of positive childhood experiences to mitigate the long-term impacts of ACEs and promote better mental health outcomes, making it highly relevant to studies in childhood development and trauma-informed practices.

Ratliff, E. L., Jespersen, J. E., Addante, S., Watrous, J. N. H., Morris, M., Beasley, L. O., Ciciolla, L., Hays-Grudo, J., & Morris, A. S. (2024). *Promotive and Buffering Effects of Protective and Compensatory Experiences on Mental Health and Adjustment in Young Adults*. *Emerging Adulthood*, 12(3), 447-455.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/21676968241237558>

Adverse childhood Experiences (ACEs) are considered a major public health crisis. Protective and Compensatory Experiences (positive childhood experiences) may help to ameliorate the effects of ACEs on young adult well-being. This study examined the moderating role of childhood positive childhood experiences on the effects of ACEs on depression, anxiety, substance use, and emotion regulation (ER) difficulties in a sample of 550 (73% female, *m* age = 20 yrs.) undergraduate students. ACEs were associated with greater symptoms of anxiety and depression, substance use, and ER difficulties whereas positive childhood experiences were associated with fewer symptoms of depression and anxiety, substance use, and ER difficulties. Protective and compensatory experiences significantly moderated the relationship between ACEs and depression, such that greater positive childhood experiences

weakened the relationship between ACES and depression. Protective and compensatory experiences did not significantly moderate relationships between ACEs and anxiety, substance use, or ER difficulties. These findings suggest positive childhood experiences promote adjustment in young adults and can buffer the deleterious effects of ACEs.

Schmitz N., Aafjes-van Doorn K., Békés V. (2024). *Current Uses and Contributions of the Protective and Compensatory Experiences (positive childhood experiences) Measure: A Scoping Review*. *Trauma Care*. 4(3):229-248.
<https://doi.org/10.3390/traumacare4030021>

This article reviews the Protective and Compensatory Experiences (positive childhood experiences) questionnaire, developed in 2016 to be used alongside the Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) questionnaire, to assess protective factors that mitigate the effects of childhood adversity. The review identifies 17 studies employing positive childhood experiences in various populations, including children, sexual and racial minorities, veterans, and healthcare providers. The findings suggest that positive childhood experiences enhance resilience in individuals exposed to adversity, though research remains limited. The authors call for further investigation into how positive childhood experiences can inform understanding of resilience and protective factors across different demographics. This article is valuable for researchers exploring resilience and intervention strategies for at-risk populations.