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ADVERSE CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES



GET THE FACTS: ADVERSE CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES (ACES)



WHAT ARE ACES?

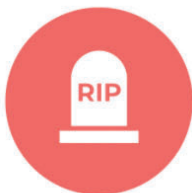
Adverse Childhood experiences (ACES) are potentially traumatic events in a child's life that can have negative and lasting effects on health and well-being.

These experiences occur before the age of 18 and are remembered by that child as an adult.

Such traumatic events may include: psychological, emotional, physical, or sexual abuse; violence against mother; or living with household members who were substance abusers, mentally ill, suicidal, criminal or imprisoned.

Maltreatment (child abuse, sexual abuse, neglect, bullying, etc.) causes chronic stress that can disrupt early brain development, and the development of the nervous and immune systems.

EFFECTS OF ACES



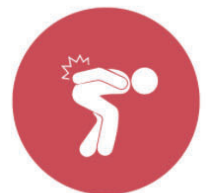
EARLY DEATH



RISKY HEALTH BEHAVIORS



LOW LIFE POTENTIAL



CHRONIC HEALTH CONDITIONS



EFFECTS & LIFE OUTCOMES FROM ADVERSE CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES

Adverse Childhood Experiences have a strong and cumulative impact on the health and functioning of adults. Children who are abused or neglected are at higher risk for health and social problems as adults.

The toxic levels of stress or trauma experienced by a child is linked to poor physical and mental health throughout life.

These problems include lower educational achievement, lower economic success, impaired social success in adulthood, alcoholism, depression, drug abuse, eating disorders, obesity, high-risk sexual behaviors, smoking, suicide, and certain chronic diseases.

HOW DO ACES RELATE TO TOXIC STRESS?

ACEs research shows the correlation between early adversity and poor outcomes later in life. Toxic stress explains how ACEs “get under the skin” and trigger biological reactions that lead to those outcomes. In the early 2000s, the National Scientific Council on the Developing Child coined the term “toxic stress” to describe extensive, scientific knowledge about the effects of excessive activation of stress response systems on a child’s developing brain, as well as the immune system, metabolic regulatory systems, and cardiovascular system.

Experiencing ACEs triggers all of these interacting stress response systems. When a child experiences multiple ACEs over time—especially without supportive relationships with adults to provide buffering protection—the experiences will trigger an excessive and long-lasting stress response, which can have a wear-and-tear effect on the body, like revving a car engine for days or weeks at a time.

Importantly, the Council also expanded its definition of adversity beyond the categories that were the focus of the initial ACE study to include community and systemic causes—such as violence in the child’s community and experiences with racism and chronic poverty—because the body’s stress response does not distinguish between overt threats from inside or outside the home environment, it just recognizes when there is a threat, and goes on high alert.

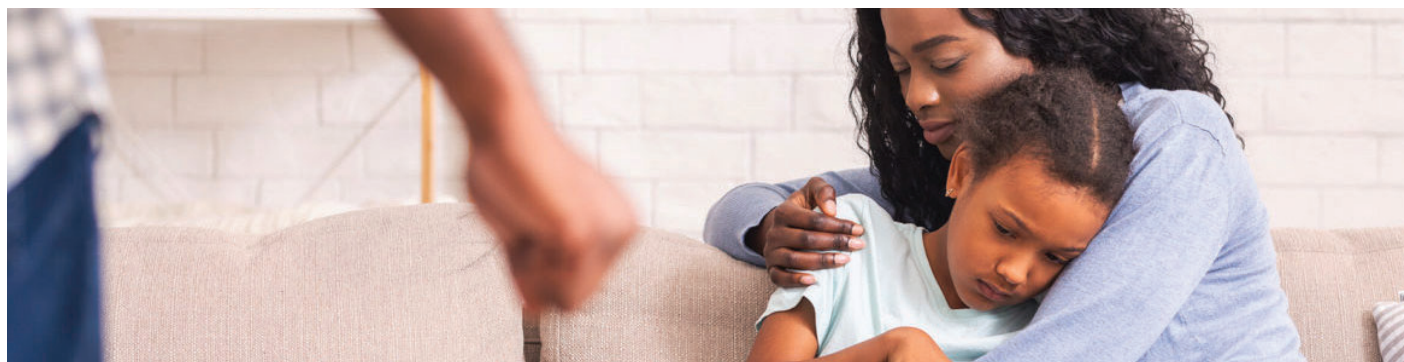
WHAT CAN WE DO TO HELP MITIGATE THE EFFECTS OF ACES?

For those who have experienced ACEs, there are a range of possible responses that can help, including therapeutic sessions with mental health professionals, meditation, physical exercise, spending time in nature, and many others.

The ideal approach, however, is to prevent the need for these responses by reducing the sources of stress in people’s lives. This can happen by helping to meet their basic needs or providing other services.

Likewise, fostering strong, responsive relationships between children and their caregivers, and helping children and adults build core life skills, can help to buffer a child from the effects of toxic stress.

TAKE THE ACES QUIZ



THE ACES QUIZ

The Adverse Childhood Experiences, or “ACEs,” quiz asks a series of 10 questions (see below) about common traumatic experiences that occur in early life. Since higher numbers of ACEs often correlate to challenges later in life, including higher risk of certain health problems, the quiz is intended as an indicator of how likely a person might be to face these challenges.

THINGS TO CONSIDER BEFORE TAKING THE QUIZ

FIRST

The quiz is a helpful tool for raising awareness about the potential impact of ACEs. But it’s important to remember all the things this quiz doesn’t take into account. First, there are many experiences that could be traumatic for children that the quiz doesn’t ask about—community violence, racism, other forms of discrimination, natural disasters, housing insecurity. That means answering all the questions on the ACE quiz will not give a full picture of the adversity a child has faced – and thus would not be a true indicator of possible risk—nor a full picture of the possible solutions communities should consider.

SECOND

Second, everyone is different, and adverse experiences in childhood affect each child differently. Just because a person has experienced several ACEs does not mean that later social, emotional, or health problems are inevitable. Some children develop resilience – the ability to overcome serious hardship – while others do not. Genetic factors also play a role, in that some children are predisposed to be more sensitive to adversity than others. And the most common factor among children who show resilience is at least one stable and responsive relationship with a supportive adult.

WHAT ISN’T ACCOUNTED FOR:

- **Stressors outside the household** (e.g., violence, poverty, racism, other forms of discrimination, isolation, chaotic environment, lack of services)
- **Protective factors** (e.g., supportive relationships, community services, skill-building opportunities)
- **Individual differences** (i.e., not all children who experience multiple ACEs will have poor outcomes and not all children who experience no ACEs will avoid poor outcomes—a high ACEs score is simply an indicator of greater risk)

The ACEs quiz gives no insight into whether an individual child might be more or less sensitive to adversity and asks no questions about whether there may have been any protective relationships in place to help buffer the child from stress. So the ACEs quiz can only give insight into who might be at risk—not who is at risk—for certain later-life challenges. In this series of three short videos, you can learn more about what resilience is, the science behind it, and how it’s built.

TAKE THE QUIZ

For each “yes” answer, add 1. The total number at the end is your cumulative number of ACEs.

BEFORE YOUR 18TH BIRTHDAY:

#1. Did a parent or other adult in the household often or very often... a) Swear at you, insult you, put you down, or humiliate you? or b) Act in a way that made you afraid that you might be physically hurt?

- Yes
 No

#2. Did a parent or other adult in the household often or very often... a) Push, grab, slap, or throw something at you? or b) Ever hit you so hard that you had marks or were injured?

- Yes
 No

#3. Did an adult or person at least 5 years older than you ever... a) Touch or fondle you or have you touch their body in a sexual way? or b) Attempt or actually have oral, anal, or vaginal intercourse with you?

- Yes
 No

#4. Did you often or very often feel that ... a) No one in your family loved you or thought you were important or special? or b) Your family didn't look out for each other, feel close to each other, or support each other?

- Yes
 No

#5. Did you often or very often feel that ... a) You didn't have enough to eat, had to wear dirty clothes, and had no one to protect you? or b) Your parents were too drunk or high to take care of you or take you to the doctor if you needed it?

- Yes
 No

#6. Were your parents ever separated or divorced?

- Yes
 No

#7. Was your mother or stepmother: a) Often or very often pushed, grabbed, slapped or had something thrown at her? or b) Sometimes, often, or very often kicked, bitten, hit with something hard? or c) Ever repeatedly hit over at least a few minutes or threatened with a gun or knife?

- Yes
 No

#8. Did you live with anyone who was a problem drinker or alcoholic, or who used street drugs?

- Yes
 No

#9. Was a household member depressed or mentally ill, or did a household member attempt suicide?

- Yes
 No

#10. Did a household member go to prison?

- Yes
 No

WHAT DOES YOUR SCORE MEAN?

THE QUIZ SCORE IS BASED ON TEN TYPES OF CHILDHOOD TRAUMA MEASURED IN THE ACE STUDY.

Five are personal – physical abuse, verbal abuse, sexual abuse, physical neglect, and emotional neglect.

Five are related to other family members: a parent who's an alcoholic, a mother who's a victim of domestic violence, a family member in jail, a family member diagnosed with a mental illness, and the disappearance of a parent through divorce, death or abandonment.

You get one point for each type of trauma. The higher your ACE score, the higher your risk of health and social problems.

AS YOUR ACE SCORE INCREASES, SO DOES THE RISK OF DISEASE, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL PROBLEMS.

WITH AN ACE SCORE OF 4 OR MORE, THINGS START GETTING SERIOUS. THE LIKELIHOOD OF CHRONIC PULMONARY LUNG DISEASE INCREASES 390 PERCENT; HEPATITIS, 240 PERCENT; DEPRESSION 460 PERCENT; SUICIDE, 1,220 PERCENT.

The most important thing to remember is that the ACE score is meant as a guideline: If you experienced other types of toxic stress over months or years, then those would likely increase your risk of health consequences.

Fortunately, our brains and lives are somewhat plastic, which means our mental and physical health can improve. The appropriate integration of resilience factors born out of ACE concepts – such as asking for help, developing trusting relationships, forming a positive attitude, listening to feelings – can help people improve their lives.

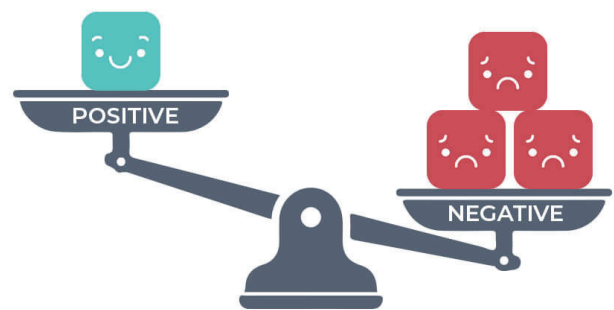
RESILIENCE: TIPPING THE BALANCE TOWARD GOOD HEALTH

To promote a good standard of health and help prevent mental health and addiction problems in our communities, we need to support all individuals in building the foundations of resilience—the skills and abilities that develop through experience and allow us to adapt and stay healthy even in circumstances of severe stress or hardship.

The resilience scale is a metaphor to explain why some people seem more resilient than others and to help visualize how to improve resilience: the ability to respond positively in the face of adversity.

LOADING THE SCALE

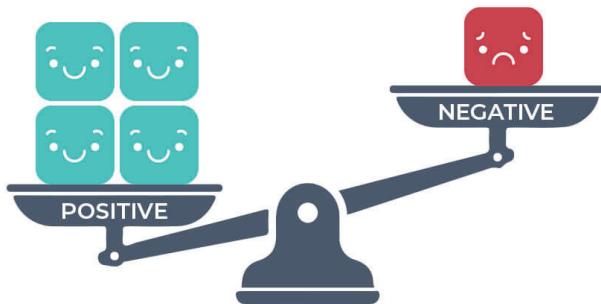
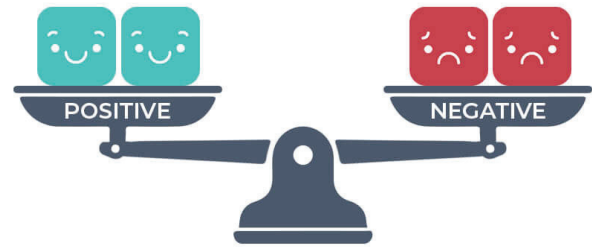
Think of a scale where a person's good and bad experiences get stacked over the course of development. The positive experiences that get stacked on one end are called protective factors and include things like attentive caregivers and available social supports that provide things like good prenatal health, nutrition, health care, and a childhood rich in Serve and Return interactions. The other end of the scale gets loaded up with bad experiences—what scientists call risk factors. These are experiences that cause Toxic Stress and tip the scale in a negative direction. Toxic stress occurs when no caring adults are present to buffer the effects of experiences such as abuse, neglect, or parental addiction.



SETTING THE FULCRUM

Most of us know of people who seem to thrive in spite of difficult childhoods, or those who struggle in life even though good caregivers and strong communities loaded their scales with predominantly positive experiences.

Experiences alone are only half of the story; genes also play a role. A person's genetic inheritance is like the starting position of the fulcrum, or the balance point, of the scale: some of us are born highly sensitive to the effects of toxic stress, while others can withstand significant amounts of stress without experiencing lasting harm to brain architecture. On the scale, we see that the position of the fulcrum affects how much leverage positive or negative experiences have in shaping our life outcomes.



HOW DO WE BUILD RESILIENCE?

Research into epigenetics has revealed that, remarkably, the position of the fulcrum is not set in stone. Experiences at critical stages of development modify how our genes are expressed. Over time, supportive relationships and serve-and-return experiences can shift the fulcrum in a more resilient direction, strengthening brain architecture so that a person is better prepared to bounce back from significant life stresses.

Because life events aren't always in our control, it's important to help all children build the foundations of resilience so that they can better meet the challenges they may face during development and later in life. For older children, adolescents, and adults, it is never too late to build resilience; though the required effort increases with age, we can always improve skills that enable better outcomes.



THE
HAPPY CHILD
PARENTING APP



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Backed by cutting-edge research from top parenting experts in the field, The Happy Child is a new kind of parenting app to help families forge deeper bonds with their children.

Years of ground-breaking research and findings in Psychology, Neuroscience and Pediatrics have been curated into one easy-to-use app (no in-app purchases!)

REFERENCES & SOURCES

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Harvard Center on the Developing Child

<https://developingchild.harvard.edu/resources/aces-and-toxic-stress-frequently-asked-questions/>

**A BETTER
FUTURE
STARTS
HERE!**



American SPCC is the voice for children in America. We are determined to harness the power of education to end child abuse and give all children the chance to flourish as adults.

Through the generosity of our donors, we make life-saving educational resources available to all through our Learning Center and The Happy Child app. A Better Future Starts Here!

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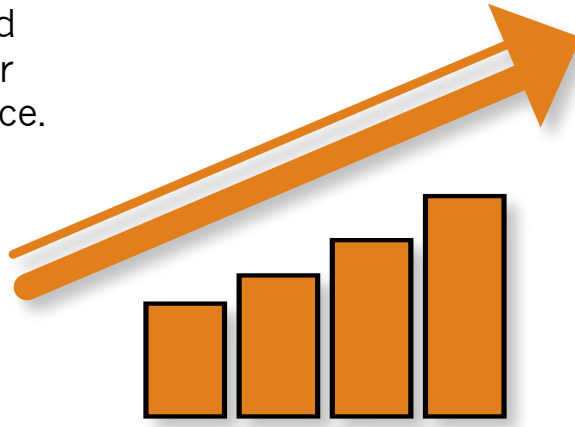
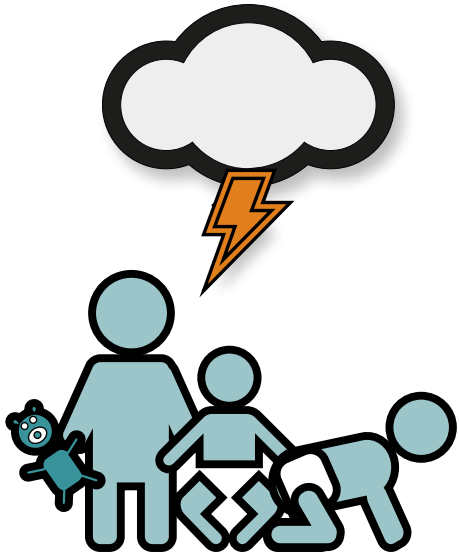
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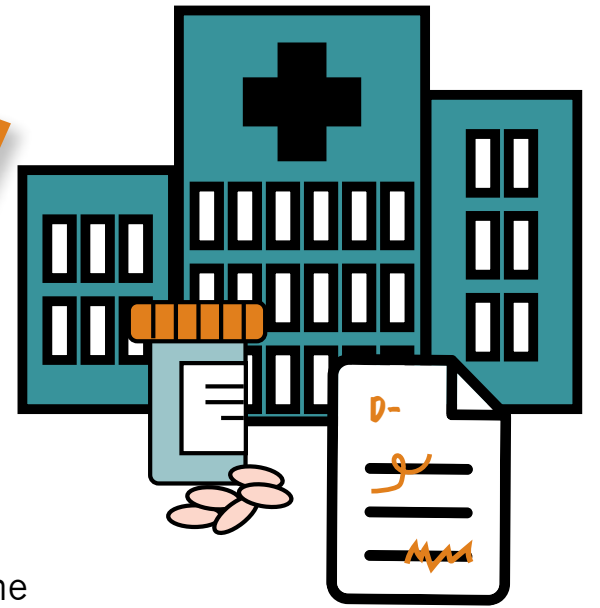
WHAT ARE ACES?

AND HOW DO THEY RELATE TO TOXIC STRESS?

“ACEs” stands for “Adverse Childhood Experiences.” These experiences can include things like physical and emotional abuse, neglect, caregiver mental illness, and household violence.

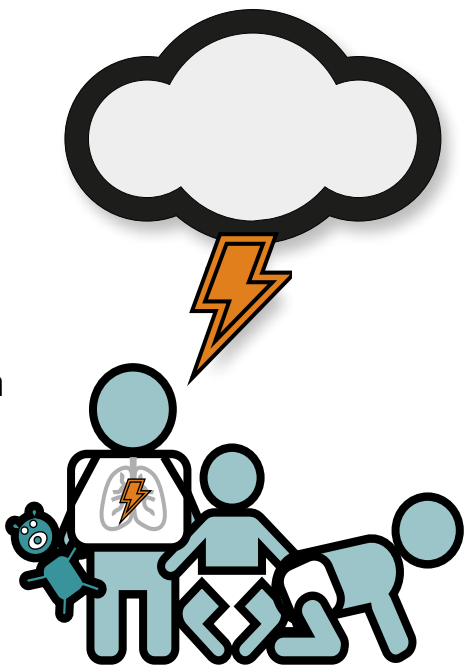


The more ACEs a child experiences, the more likely he or she is to suffer from things like heart disease and diabetes, poor academic achievement, and substance abuse later in life.



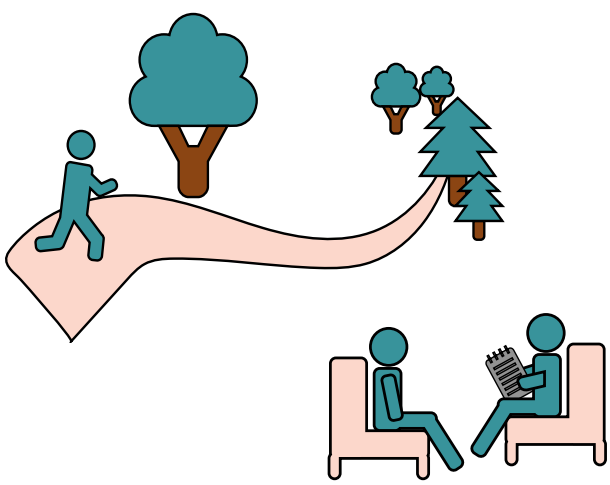
TOXIC STRESS EXPLAINS HOW ACES “GET UNDER THE SKIN.”

Experiencing many ACEs, as well as things like racism and community violence, without supportive adults, can cause what’s known as **toxic stress**. This excessive activation of the stress-response system can lead to long-lasting wear-and-tear on the body and brain.



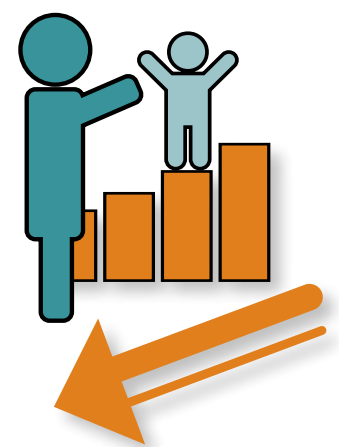
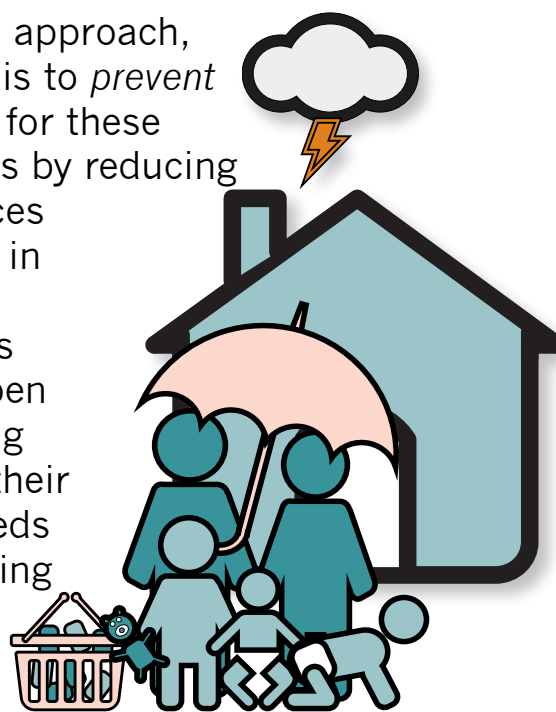
The effect would be similar to revving a car engine for days or weeks at a time.

WE CAN REDUCE THE EFFECTS OF ACES AND TOXIC STRESS.



For those who have experienced ACEs, there are a range of possible responses that can help, including therapeutic sessions with mental health professionals, meditation, physical exercise, spending time in nature, and many others.

The ideal approach, however, is to *prevent* the need for these responses by reducing the sources of stress in people’s lives. This can happen by helping to meet their basic needs or providing other services.



Likewise, fostering strong, **responsive relationships** between children and their caregivers, and helping children and adults build **core life skills**, can help to buffer a child from the effects of **toxic stress**.

ACEs affect people at all income and social levels, and can have serious, costly impact across the lifespan. **No one who’s experienced significant adversity (or many ACEs) is irreparably damaged**, though we need to acknowledge trauma’s effects on their lives. By reducing families’ sources of stress, providing children and adults with responsive relationships, and strengthening the core life skills we all need to adapt and thrive, **we can prevent and counteract lasting harm**.

Building the Skills Adults Need for Life

A Guide for Practitioners



We all need a set of **core life skills** to manage work, family, and relationships successfully. **These include:**

PLANNING	Being able to make plans, carry them out, and set and meet goals
FOCUS	Concentrating on what's most important at any given time
SELF-CONTROL	Having the ability to control how we respond to our emotions and stressful situations
AWARENESS	Noticing people and situations around us and how we all fit into the picture
FLEXIBILITY	Being able to adapt to changing situations

No one is born with these skills, but we can *all* learn them over time. The brain's architecture begins developing before birth, and the experiences and relationships we have in the first few years of life affect how well the different parts of the brain connect and communicate. Positive, healthy experiences and responsive, “serve and return” interactions with caregivers help build strong connections in the brain that serve as a sturdy foundation for all the health, learning, and behavior that follow.

Although it's much easier to learn core life skills when you've had a strong foundation early in life, it's also never too late. **Brains continue to develop into our teen and adult years, which means adults can still learn and strengthen skills.**

How Can We Help?

Our core life skills develop over many years, which means adults can continue to build and strengthen them through **coaching** and **practice**.

NEXT:

5 Ways to Help Adults Build Their Core Life Skills

How Stress Affects Our Core Life Skills

4 Ways to Deliver Services That Reduce Stress

5 Ways to Help Adults Build Their Core Life Skills

Tips for Practitioners



Practice with real-life situations.

Encourage adults to imagine and prepare for relatable stressful situations (for instance, trying to cook dinner while a toddler is demanding attention and the phone is ringing).

WHY? Adults see how the skills are relevant to their lives and learn simple, everyday ways to practice them.

SKILLS: Focus, Flexibility



Spot and stop triggers.

Help adults recognize what triggers their intense emotions (for example, a baby crying, a supervisor shouting) and learn to take preventative actions—taking a deep breath, stopping to think, focusing on long-term goals—when those triggers come up.

WHY? This empowers adults to become more self-aware and develop coping strategies for the heat of the moment.

SKILLS: Focus, Self-Control



Take a second look at stressors.

Prompt adults to think of someone they admire and imagine how that person would handle a stressful situation. Or, have them practice looking at challenging tasks in a different light. As one example, the daily battle over getting dressed for school could be turned into a chance for the child to play “grown up” or “dress up.”

WHY? Viewing things in a new way diffuses anger, frustration, and fear. Adults learn to avoid responses that are out of proportion to the situation.

SKILLS: Awareness, Self-Control



Focus on personally motivating goals.

Ask adults, “What type of job would *you* like to have and how can we help you get it?” Once they can imagine themselves achieving a goal, they’ll begin to see potential for the future. They’ll also find it easier to create steps for reaching their goals—and a plan for dealing with obstacles.

WHY? This makes your relationship one of collaboration and support and empowers adults to think long-term.

SKILLS: Planning, Flexibility



Recall positive memories and build on small successes.

Adults who have experienced adversity may believe they lack control over their lives. Help them recall positive memories (such as a proud parenting moment when they or their children did something well) to see that their actions—even the smallest ones—can make a difference.

WHY? This gives adults a positive place to start from to change their self-image, view challenges as less threatening, and plan for the future.

SKILLS: Planning, Awareness

Learn More

This material is derived from the Center on the Developing Child’s report, *Building Core Capabilities for Life*.

For more information on the science behind core life skills, what affects their development, and how practitioners can support adults, please see the full report on our website at <http://developingchild.harvard.edu>

How Stress Affects Our Core Life Skills

Insight for Practitioners

Some stress in life can be positive, but **extreme, ongoing stress can wreak havoc with our health, behavior, and ability to use our core life skills.**

WHY? Stress and adversity trigger automatic self-regulation in the brain—the immediate (and at times necessary) “fight or flight” response that spurs us to act first and think later. When that response is triggered repeatedly by extreme stress, however, it can overload the brain’s capacity for more reflective, intentional responses. If this occurs during early childhood, the brain actually overdevelops the ability to perceive and respond quickly to threats, instead of the ability to assess and respond to situations thoughtfully.

That’s why experiencing a pile-up of adversity—such as violence, illness, unemployment, homelessness, addiction, or abuse—can cause adults to struggle to keep track of the problems in their lives, find solutions for dealing with them, and follow a plan for moving ahead. And why, **despite our best intentions, the programs and services we provide—with their complicated forms, multiple appointments, and chaotic environments—can further undermine adults’ core life skills.**



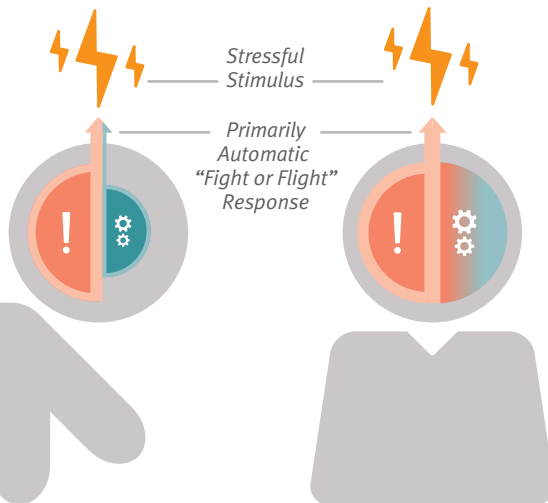
How Can We Help?

To help adults use their core life skills, practitioners can **make sure that accessing services does not unintentionally add more stress to adults’ lives.**

NEXT:

4 Ways to Deliver Services That Reduce Stress

Excessive stress affects how well we develop and use core life skills.



Early Childhood

Extreme stress redirects brain development away from core life skills toward automatic rapid threat responses.

Adulthood

Excessive stress overloads our ability to use core life skills, leaving us to rely primarily on automatic responses.

4 Ways to Deliver Services That Reduce Stress

Tips for Practitioners & Systems Leaders



1

Meet basic needs first.

Reduce the burden of stress caused by what ever is scarce in people's lives—child care, transportation, or crucial staples like food and diapers. A mother who has no clean diapers for her baby won't be able to focus on her own mental health, for example.

WHY? This enables adults to shift their focus from basic survival to longer-term programs like education and training, budgeting, and goal-setting.



2

Streamline and simplify.

Streamline applications, forms, and processes within and—whenever possible—across agencies. Make materials widely accessible by producing them in a variety of formats (printed, online, mobile-friendly), using clear language, providing multiple translations, and breaking down required tasks into simple steps.

WHY? This ensures that services designed to help adults do not inadvertently become additional sources of stress, which may cause adults to give up accessing them altogether.

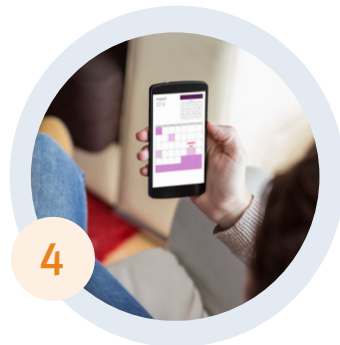


3

Be a coach, not a boss.

Use your understanding of the effects of stress to approach adults with respect, truly listen to them, and build on what they do *already* that's positive. Also, create a consistent format for your interactions to provide them with predictability.

WHY? This will reduce the stress and potential threat of your interactions and avoid triggering adults' threat response system. Providing feedback in positive ways also helps adults become more open to new opportunities.



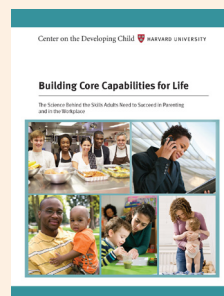
4

Use accessible, familiar tools.

Ask adults what helps them stay organized. Checklists, apps, and other tools may help them manage life's many demands and break down tasks into incremental steps. Let adults sign up for text message reminders about upcoming appointments, deadlines, or classes.

WHY? This puts the power to solve problems back into adults' own hands and gives them the familiarity of tools (for example, a cell phone) that they already rely on.

Learn More



This material is derived from the Center on the Developing Child's report, *Building Core Capabilities for Life*.

For more information on the science behind core life skills, how stress affects their development, and how practitioners can help reduce stress for adults, please see the full report on our website at <http://developingchild.harvard.edu>

Executive Function Activities for Adolescents

During adolescence, executive function skills are not yet at adult levels, but the demands placed on these skills often are. Teenagers need to communicate effectively in multiple contexts, manage their own school and extracurricular assignments, and successfully complete more abstract and complicated projects. Here are some suggestions for helping teens practice better self-regulation throughout the daily challenges they face.

Goal setting, planning and monitoring

Self-regulation is necessary in any goal-directed activity. Identifying goals, planning, monitoring progress, and adjusting behavior are important skills to practice.

■ **To focus the planning process**, encourage teens to identify something specific that they want to accomplish. Most important is that the goals are meaningful to the teen and not established by others. For some teens, planning the college application process may be self-motivating, but for others, planning a social event may be more important. Start with something fairly simple and achievable, such as getting a driver's license or saving money to buy a computer, before moving on to longer-term goals like buying a car or applying to colleges.

■ **Help teens develop plans** for steps to reach these goals. They should identify short- and long-term goals and think about what has to be done to achieve them. For example: If teens want their team to win the sports championship, what skills do they need to learn? How might they practice them? Identify some problems that might arise, and encourage the teen to plan ahead for them.

Tools for self-monitoring

■ **Self-talk is a powerful way** to bring thoughts and actions into consciousness. Examples include having teenagers talk themselves through the steps of a difficult activity or periodically pausing for a mental play-by-play narrative of what is happening. When occasions



■ **Taking on large social issues**, such as homelessness, domestic violence, or bullying can be both appealing and overwhelming to teens. *DoSomething.org* and *Volunteer-Match.org* can help identify concrete actions.

■ **Remind adolescents to periodically monitor their behavior** and consider whether they are doing the things they planned and whether these plans are achieving the goals they identified. “Is this part of the plan? If not, why am I doing it? Has something changed?” Monitoring in this way can identify counter-productive habitual and impulsive actions and maintain focused attention and conscious control.

arise that provoke strong negative emotions or feelings of failure, self-talk can help adolescents identify potentially problematic thinking and behavior patterns.

■ **Encourage self-talk that focuses on growth.** Help teens recognize that an experience—particularly a failure—can offer lessons, and need

continued

not be interpreted as a final judgment on one's abilities. For example, when a sports team loses a game, help a discouraged team member to consider what went wrong and what he or she might do to improve next time—rather than simply deciding the team lacks any skills. The same thinking can be helpful for school assignments. Carol S. Dweck, a professor at Stanford University who researches mindsets, has developed a website with more suggestions.

■ **Help adolescents be mindful of interruptions** (particularly from electronic communication such as email and cell phones). Multitasking may feel good, but there is strong evidence that it saps attention and impedes performance. If two (or more) tasks are competing for attention, discuss ways to prioritize and sequence.

■ **Understanding the motivations of others** can be challenging, particularly when people are driven by different perspectives. Encourage teens to identify their hypotheses about others' motivations and then consider alternatives. "Why do you think she bumped into you? Can you think of another explanation?" Teens who are not used to this kind of thinking may need you to model the process: "Could it be that she didn't see you?"

■ **Writing a personal journal** can foster self-reflection by providing teens a means with which to explore thoughts, feelings, actions, beliefs, and decisions. There are many ways to approach journaling, but all encourage self-awareness, reflection, and planning (see websites at end of this section).

Activities

There are many activities that teens may enjoy that draw on a range of self-regulation skills. The key is a focus on continual improvement and increasing challenge. Some examples follow, below:

■ **Sports** — The focused attention and skill development inherent in competitive sports draw on the ability to monitor one's own and others' actions, make quick decisions, and respond flexibly to play. Ongoing, challenging aerobic activity can also improve executive function.

■ **Yoga and meditation** — Activities that support a state of mindfulness, or a nonjudgmental awareness of moment-to-moment experiences, may help teens develop sustained attention, reduce stress, and promote less reactive, more reflective decision-making and behavior.

■ **Music** — Working memory, selective attention, cognitive flexibility, and inhibition are challenged while developing skills in playing a musical instrument, singing, or dancing—particularly when dealing with complicated pieces that involve multiple parts, sophisticated rhythms, and improvisation.

■ **Theater** — A performance is carefully choreographed and requires all participants, on stage and backstage, to remember their jobs, attend to their timing, and manage their behavior. For actors, learning the lines and actions of a role draw heavily on attention and working memory.

■ **Strategy games and logic puzzles** — Classic games like *chess*, as well as computer-based training programs like *Cogmed* and *Lumosity*, exercise aspects of working memory, planning,



and attention. Mensa, the high IQ society, holds a yearly competition testing new games and has an interesting list of strategy games.

■ **Computer games** can also be valuable, as long as time limits are established and observed. Games that require constant monitoring of the environment and fast reaction times challenge selective attention, monitoring, and inhibition. Moving through complicated imaginary worlds, such as those found in many computer games, also challenges working memory. Common Sense Media, a non-partisan media information source, provides some good reviews of popular games.

Study skills

In school, adolescents are expected to be increasingly independent and organized in their work. These expectations can place a large load on all aspects of executive function. Basic organization skills can be very helpful in this regard. The list below can serve as a guide for teens to use.

■ **Break a project down** into manageable pieces.

■ **Identify reasonable plans** (with timelines) for completing each piece. Be sure that all steps have been explicitly identified and ensure that the completion of each step is recognized and celebrated.

■ **Self-monitor while working.** Set a timer to go off periodically as a reminder to check on whether one is paying attention and understanding. When you don't understand, what might be the problem? Are there words you don't know? Do you know what the directions are? Is there someone you can ask for help? Would looking back at your notes help? If you have stopped paying attention, what distracted you? What might you do to refocus? Identify key

times to self-monitor (e.g., before handing in an assignment, when leaving the house, etc.).

■ **Be aware of critical times for focused attention.** Multitasking impedes learning. Identify ways to reduce distractions (e.g., turn off electronics, find a quiet room).

■ **Use memory supports for organizing tasks.** Mnemonic devices can be powerful tools for remembering information. Developing the habit of writing things down also helps.

■ **Keep a calendar** of project deadlines and steps along the way.

■ **After completing an assignment,** reflect on what did and did not work well. Develop a list of things that have supported focused and sustained attention as well as good organization, memory and project completion. Think about ways to ensure that these supports are in place for other projects.

■ **Think about what was learned** from assignments that were not completed well. Was this due to a lack of information, a need to improve certain skills, bad time management, etc.? What would you do differently next time?

Resources

Journaling with teens – some supports

- extension.missouri.edu/p/GH6150
- www.cedu.niu.edu/~shumow/iit/doc/journal-writing.pdf

Carol S. Dweck's work on mindsets

- mindsetonline.com/changeyourmindset/firststeps/index.html

Common Sense Media

- www.commonsensemedia.org
- www.commonsensemedia.org/game-reviews

List of winning games from American Mensa's Mind Games competitions

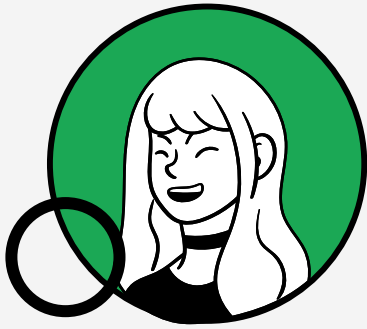
- mindgames.us.mensa.org/about/winning-games/

Other programs

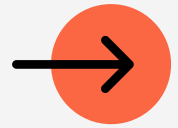
- www.cogmed.com
- www.lumosity.com

Stress management suggestions

- www.mindinthemaking.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/PFL-school-age-stress-management.pdf



self-care plan



GOALS FOR MY MIND

- ▶
- ▶
- ▶
- ▶

GOALS FOR MY BODY

- ▶
- ▶
- ▶
- ▶

MIND

Mental health

Mindfulness and self knowledge

Soul

Stimulation and fulfillment

BODY

Self-care

Basic hygiene and body care

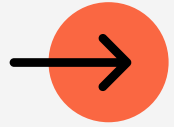
Improvement

Exercise, sleep and healthy food

GOOD RULES & HABITS I WANT TO LIVE BY



soul stuff notes



Instruction

Fill these space with your favorite activities & things to fall back on when you're in a bad mood and having a not-so-good day.

MY FAVORITE

Favorite Movies

- ▶
- ▶
- ▶

Favorite Books

- ▶
- ▶
- ▶

Favorite Games

- ▶
- ▶
- ▶

THINGS I DO WHEN I'M SAD

.....

.....

.....

THINGS I DO WHEN I'M BORED

.....

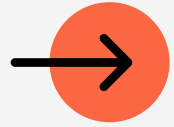
.....

.....

THIS YEAR I'M LOOKING FORWARD TO

.....

30 self-care challenges



<input type="checkbox"/> Stretch all your muscles	<input type="checkbox"/> Drink more water	<input type="checkbox"/> Go for a walk in nature	<input type="checkbox"/> Indulge in your favorite treat	<input type="checkbox"/> Go to bed earlier
<input type="checkbox"/> Listen to favorite song	<input type="checkbox"/> Eat vegetarian meals	<input type="checkbox"/> Take a nice bubble bath	<input type="checkbox"/> Cook your favorite meal	<input type="checkbox"/> Practice yoga
<input type="checkbox"/> Go on a solo date	<input type="checkbox"/> Journaling	<input type="checkbox"/> Give yourself a facial	<input type="checkbox"/> Practice gratitude	<input type="checkbox"/> Try a DIY Project
<input type="checkbox"/> Watch the sunrise	<input type="checkbox"/> Read a book	<input type="checkbox"/> Explore a new city	<input type="checkbox"/> Watch your favorite movie	<input type="checkbox"/> Give yourself a manicure
<input type="checkbox"/> Get some sunlight	<input type="checkbox"/> Start a new hobby	<input type="checkbox"/> Write out your goals	<input type="checkbox"/> Organize your closet	<input type="checkbox"/> Watch the sunset
<input type="checkbox"/> Give yourself a break	<input type="checkbox"/> Learn a new skill	<input type="checkbox"/> Create your ideal future	<input type="checkbox"/> Surround yourself with positivity	<input type="checkbox"/> Drink plenty of water



A TEEN'S

GUIDE TO SAFETY PLANNING

If you have questions about dating in general or a specific relationship, or if you are in an unhealthy or abusive relationship, you deserve support and resources to help you with your situation. You are not alone; our peer advocates are here for you 24/7.

Loveisrespect advocates are trained on issues related to dating abuse and healthy relationships, as well as crisis intervention. This means that when you contact a loveisrespect advocate, they will listen to your situation, assess how you're feeling in the moment, and help you figure out the next best steps for you. You might brainstorm a safety plan together, or the advocate may be able to find some local resources for you, whether it's a counselor, support group, legal service or whatever you might need.



CALL

1-866-331-9474

(1-866-331-8453 TTY for Deaf/hard of hearing individuals)



CHAT

Start a live chat by visiting loveisrespect.org



TEXT

Text* "loveis" to 22522

Message & Data Rates apply on text for help services.



love is respect **Org**



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WHAT IS A SAFETY PLAN?

A safety plan is a practical guide that helps lower your risk of being hurt by your abusive partner. It includes information specific to you and your life that will help keep you safe. A good safety plan helps you think through lifestyle changes that will help keep you as safe as possible on campus, in the dorms and other places that you go on a daily basis.



WHY DO I NEED A SAFETY PLAN?

Everyone deserves a relationship that is healthy, safe and supportive. If you are in a relationship that is hurting you, it is important for you to know that the abuse is not your fault. It is also important for you to start thinking of ways to keep yourself safe from the abuse, whether you decide to end the relationship or not. While you can't control your partner's abusive behavior, you can take action to keep yourself as safe as possible.



HOW DO I MAKE A SAFETY PLAN?

Take some time for yourself to go through each section of this safety plan. You can complete this guide on your own, or you can work through it with someone else that you trust.



Keep in Mind

In order for this safety plan to work for you, you'll need to fill in personalized answers, so you can use the information when you most need it.

Once you complete your safety plan, be sure to keep it in an accessible but secure location. You might also consider giving a copy of your safety plan to someone that you trust.

Getting support from someone who has experience working with college students in abusive relationships can be very useful.

MY SAFETY PLAN

I could talk to the following people at school if I need to rearrange my schedule in order to avoid my abusive partner, or if I need help staying safe at school:

- School Counselor
- Coach
- Teachers:

- Principal Assistant/Vice principal
- School security
- Other:

If I live with my abusive partner, I will have a bag ready with these important items in case I need to leave quickly (check all that apply):

- CELL PHONE & CHARGER SPARE MONEY
- KEYS
- DRIVER'S LICENSE OR OTHER FORM OF ID
- COPY OF RESTRAINING ORDER
- BIRTH CERTIFICATE, SOCIAL SECURITY CARD, IMMIGRATION PAPERS AND OTHER IMPORTANT DOCUMENTS
- CHANGE OF CLOTHES MEDICATIONS
- SPECIAL PHOTOS OR OTHER VALUABLE ITEMS
- IF I HAVE CHILDREN— ANYTHING THEY MAY NEED (IMPORTANT PAPERS, FORMULA, DIAPERS)

Staying Safe at School:

The safest way for me to get to and from school is:

If I need to leave school in an emergency, I can get home safely by:

I can make sure that a friend can walk with me between classes. I will ask:

_____ and/or _____

I will eat lunch and spend free periods in an area where there are school staff or faculty nearby. These are some areas on campus where I feel safe:

_____, and _____

Staying Safe at Home:

I can tell this family member about what is going on in my relationship:

There may be times when no one else is home. During those times, I can have people stay with me. I will ask:

The safest way for me to leave my house in an emergency is:

If I have to leave in an emergency, I should try to go to a place that is public, safe and unknown by my abusive partner. I could go here:

and/or here: _____

I will use a code word so I can alert my family, friends, and neighbors to call for help without my abusive partner knowing about it. My code word is:



love is respect .org

WE ARE HERE TO HELP

CHAT: 24/7/365

CALL: 1.866.331.9474

TEXT: LOVEIS TO 22522

MY SAFETY PLAN

Staying Safe Emotionally:

My abusive partner often tries to make me feel bad about myself by saying or doing this: _____

When he/she does this, I will think of these reasons why I know my abuser is wrong:

_____,
_____ and
_____.

I will do things I enjoy, like:

_____,
_____ and
_____.

I will join clubs or organizations that interest me, like:

_____ or _____.

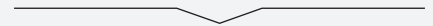
If I feel down, depressed or scared, I can call the following friends or family members:

Name: _____
Phone #: _____

Name: _____
Phone #: _____

Name: _____
Phone #: _____

Name: _____
Phone #: _____



During an emergency, I can call the following friends, family members or residential life staff at any time of day or night:

Name: _____
Phone #: _____

Name: _____
Phone #: _____

Name: _____
Phone #: _____

Name: _____
Phone #: _____

Getting Help in Your Community:

For emergencies: 911

loveisrespect: 1-866-331-9474

Campus police station:

Phone #: _____

Location: _____

Campus Health Center:

Phone #: _____

Location: _____

Campus Women's or LGBTQ Center:

Phone #: _____

Location: _____

Local Free Legal Assistance:

Phone #: _____

Address: _____



MY SAFETY PLAN

These are things I can do to help keep myself safe everyday:

- I will carry my cell phone and important telephone numbers with me at all times.
- I will keep in touch with someone I trust about where I am or what I am doing.
- I will stay out of isolated places and try to never walk around alone.
- If possible, I will alert dorm or campus security about what is happening in my relationship so that my abuser is not allowed in my building.
- I will avoid places where my abuser or his/her friends and family are likely to be. I will keep the doors and windows locked where I live, especially if I am alone.
- I will avoid speaking to my abuser. If it is unavoidable, I will make sure there are people around in case the situation becomes dangerous.
- I will call 911 if I feel my safety is at risk.
- I can look into getting a protective order so that I'll have legal support in keeping my abuser away. I can see if there are any self-defense classes available at my college or university.
- I will remember that the abuse is not my fault and that I deserve a safe and healthy relationship.

These are things I can do to help keep myself safe in my social life:

- I will ask my friends to keep their cell phones with them while they are with me in case we get separated and I need help.
- If possible, I will go to different malls, bars, banks, parties, grocery stores, movie theaters, dining halls, etc. than the ones my abusive partner goes to or knows about.
- I will avoid going out alone, especially at night.
- No matter where I go, I will be aware of how to leave safely in case of an emergency. I will leave if I feel uncomfortable in a situation, no matter what my friends are doing.
- If I plan on drinking, I will be sure to have a sober driver who is not my abusive partner.
- I will spend time with people who make me feel safe, supported and good about myself.

These are things I can do to stay safe online and with my cell phone:

- I will not say or do anything online that I wouldn't in person.
- I will set all my online profiles to be as private as they can be.
- I will save and keep track of any abusive, threatening or harassing comments, posts, or texts. I will never give my password to anyone.
- If the abuse and harassment does not stop, I will change my usernames, email addresses, and/or cell phone number.
- I will not answer calls from unknown, blocked or private numbers.
- I can see if my phone company can block my abuser's phone number from calling my phone.
- I will not communicate with my abuser using any type of technology if unnecessary, since any form of communication can be recorded and possibly used against me in the future.

Patient Safety Plan Template

Step 1: Warning signs (thoughts, images, mood, situation, behavior) that a crisis may be developing:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Step 2: Internal coping strategies – Things I can do to take my mind off my problems without contacting another person (relaxation technique, physical activity):

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Step 3: People and social settings that provide distraction:

1. Name _____ Phone _____
2. Name _____ Phone _____
3. Place _____ 4. Place _____

Step 4: People whom I can ask for help:

1. Name _____ Phone _____
2. Name _____ Phone _____
3. Name _____ Phone _____

Step 5: Professionals or agencies I can contact during a crisis:

1. Clinician Name _____ Phone _____
Clinician Pager or Emergency Contact # _____
2. Clinician Name _____ Phone _____
Clinician Pager or Emergency Contact # _____
3. Local Urgent Care Services _____
Urgent Care Services Address _____
Urgent Care Services Phone _____
4. Suicide Prevention Lifeline Phone: 1-800-273-TALK (8255)

Step 6: Making the environment safe:

1. _____
2. _____

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The one thing that is most important to me and worth living for is:

MY PERSONAL CRISIS PLAN

I know I'm
triggered when
I notice:

Some good ways to distract myself are:

Things that help
me when I feel
this way are:

Ways to keep
myself and my
space safe:

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Some safe people
I can reach
out to are:

- 1 _____
- 2 _____
- 3 _____

Other resources I can
use to get myself care:

- 1
- 2
- 3

CRISIS TEXT LINE:
text HOME to 741741

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HOW TO PREPARE FOR A MENTAL HEALTH EMERGENCY

If you suffer from severe and persistent mental illness, you must create a safety plan of action in case of an emergency. This safety plan should be created with the person who is ill, family members/caregivers, and guidance from a mental health professional. When a mental health emergency arises, please contact your local mental health mobile crisis team. Once your plan is finalized, it should be visible and readily available.

1 RESEARCH AND WRITE DOWN ALL IMPORTANT PHONE NUMBERS

At times it can be nearly impossible to forecast when a mental health emergency will arise; knowing who to contact in the event of an emergency will save a life. During an emergency, things can get out of hand in an instant, so you must be prepared to execute your action plan.



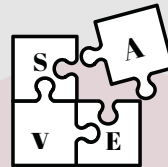
4 ASSESS THE PROBLEM AND DEVELOP A SOLUTION

You will need to use reflective, active, and empathetic listening in order to provide support and trauma informed care. Repeat the person's point of view, this lets them know that they are being heard. People want to be heard, not victimized.

2 CREATE A SAFE SPACE

Remove the agitator or trigger, it will deescalate things rather quickly and give you time to assess the problem. Relocate or use items and information from the safety plan that are effective in deescalating the individual in crisis.

Avoid threatening activities such as cornering/crowding, *threatening language (i.e. "I am calling your doctor), and humiliations (i.e being recorded.)



5 EXECUTE THE SOLUTION

Implement the safety strategy and discuss the plan with the mental health professional. Each plan will be individualized. Let them know what was discussed and what you will need them to do to help you during this mental health emergency.

6 FOLLOW UP AND REGROUP WITH LIFE OUTSIDE THE STREETS & ON-DEMAND RESOURCING

Congratulations you have successfully executed your mental health emergency safety plan. Now it is time to provide support to your loved one in their time of need. If you are the patient, you will need to be open to allowing others to help you manage your trauma. After the emergency is over, follow-up with us and a medical professional, caregivers to prepare for the next emergency.

3 CREATE A COMPREHENSIVE OF LIST OF MEDICATIONS AND DOSES

Some mental health conditions are stabilized with prescribed medication by a mental health professional. Make sure you are familiar with side effects related to medications. DO NOT mix other medications that are not prescribed to you, due to the adverse reaction they may have.



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