

"COVID 19 and Current Events: Impact on the Mental Health of Youth and How Tuning in and Engaging Families Promotes Healing"



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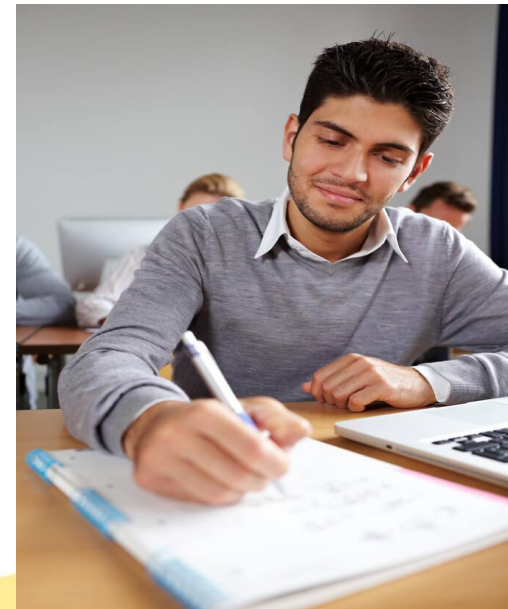
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MASE CONFERENCE
October 27-29 , 2021

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE's)

Ten **Adverse Childhood Experiences** were identified in the Kaiser Permanente - CDC Study (1997).

If you haven't attended an ACE's training, venture a guess as to what a couple of those experiences might be.



There Are Ten ACE's

Adverse Childhood Experiences **ARE COMMON**

Household Dysfunction

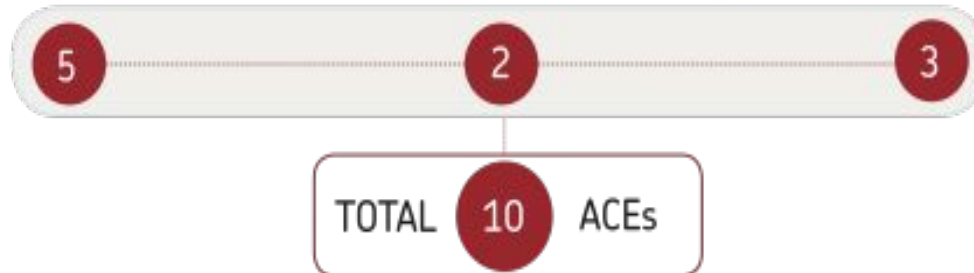
Substance Abuse	27%
Parental Sep/Divorce	23%
Mental Illness	17%
Battered Mothers	13%
Criminal Behavior	6%

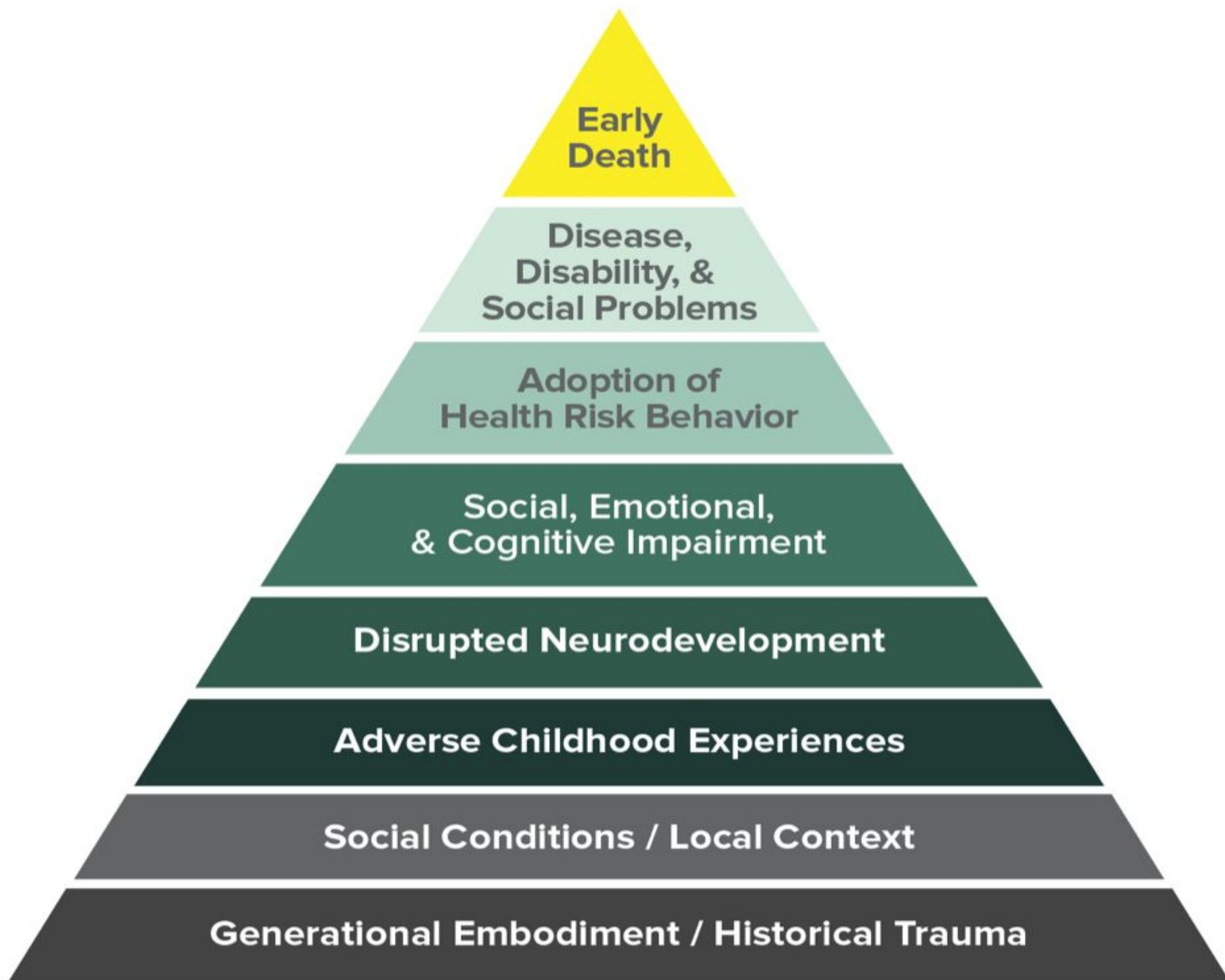
Neglect

Emotional	15%
Physical	10%

Abuse

Emotional	11%
Physical	28%
Sexual	21%



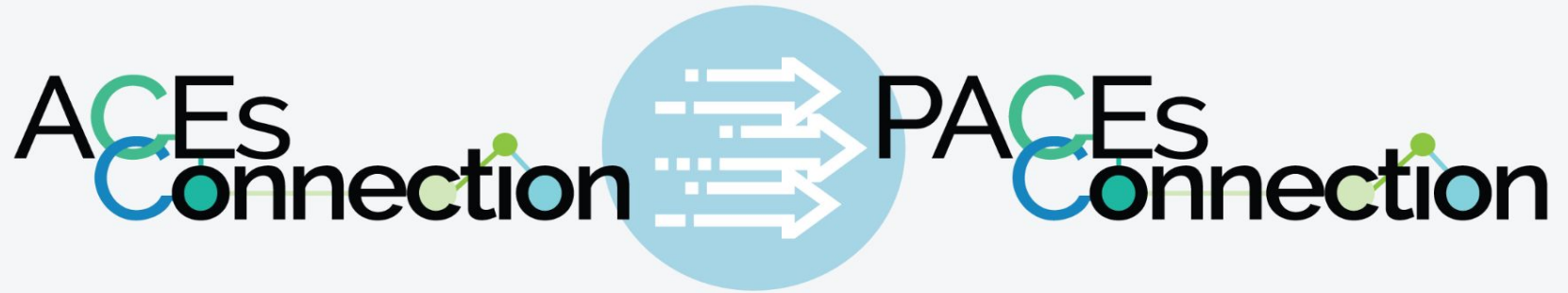


Mechanism by which Adverse Childhood Experiences Influence Health and Well-being Throughout the Lifespan

Death

Concept

<https://www.pacesconnection.com>



PACEs = **P**ositive & **A**dverse **C**hildhood **E**xperiences

Impact of Coronavirus on Youth Mental Health



Impact on Children's Mental Health



More “Covid Suicides” than Covid Deaths in Kids

- Preliminary data suggest Covid accounted for barely 1.2% of all deaths in the under-25 age group.
- Biggest increase in youth deaths occurred in the 15-24 age bracket — the age group most susceptible to committing suicide
- In July 2020 — just four months into the pandemic — CDC Director Robert Redfield remarked that “We’re seeing, sadly, far greater suicides now than we are deaths from COVID. We’re seeing far greater deaths from drug overdose.”

Recent Updates About Suicidality

- Reports of suicidal ideation have increased for all grade levels in the last six years.
- In 2013, 20% of 11th-grade students surveyed reported seriously considering suicide at some point, compared to 24% in 2019.
- 52% of students surveyed reported having been exposed to one or more adverse childhood experiences.
- Adverse childhood experiences, mental health disorders, and/or substance use disorders are the most significant risk factors for suicidal behaviors.
- Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) reported Minnesota has a higher suicide rate than the U.S. average for 11 to 18-year-olds.

National Suicide Data Available in 2020

- Claim is supported by the increase in calls and emails to mental illness hotlines.
- Between March and August 2020, the National Alliance on Mental Illness HelpLine reported a 65% increase in calls and emails.
- Trevor Project — suicide prevention among LGBTQ plus youth — saw double its usual call volume.
- November 2020 - Crisis Text Line received 180,000 calls; its highest volume ever, and an increase of 30,000 from the previous month.
- Over 90% of those were from people under 35.

Fair Health Study

FAIR Health Study:

- database of 32 billion U.S. health insurance claims
- focused on the two billion from 2019 to 2020
- calculated the numbers filed for health services in the **pediatric age group**, which they defined as ages 0 to 22. (Source: J. Kluger, Time March 4, 2021)

Worse than Experts Feared

- Initially, children and teens were spared **most of the physical impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.**
- In the Spring of 2020, mental health professionals began to worry about the impact of COVID 19 on children and youth.
 - **closed schools**
 - **lack of contact** with friends and extended family
 - **loss of milestones** like birthday parties, graduations
 - excessive **screen time**
 - **less** adult **supervision**
- The numbers are in—and they're in some ways **worse than the experts feared.**

Focus on Emotionally Turbulent Years from 13 to 18

- Focused to a somewhat lesser extent on claims filed by those ages 19 to 22.
- Both groups had **sharp spikes from pre-pandemic 2019 to 2020 in a range of psychological conditions.**
- **Major depression, Generalized Anxiety Disorder, Adjustment Disorder, self-harm, substance abuse, overdoses, OCD, ADHD and tic disorders.**

Numbers are **Startling**

- **334% spike** in intentional self-harm **among 13 to 18-year-olds** in the Northeast U.S. in August of 2020 compared to the same month in 2019.
- **49.6% increase** in depression and **67.5% increase** in generalized anxiety disorder among 19 to 22-year-olds across the U.S.

Expanded Measure of ACEs

- Original ACE studies focused on adversities in the home like abuse, neglect, and other household challenges.
- Scholars now agree that child adversity includes other experiences, and an expanded measure set of ACEs is needed.
- Exposure to racism (i.e., discrimination; stigma; minority stress; historical trauma) is one expanding area of research that is being considered for an “enhanced” ACE measure.


Are There Other Adverse Childhood Experiences that Should be Included in ACE Measures? Yes!

- This **research is underdeveloped** but several studies have revised and expanded the ACE calculator.
- All **other types of discrimination** and stigma that children experience should be considered including **classism, historical trauma, homophobia, xenophobia, sexism, transphobia, heterosexism, ableism**, etc.
- There are **other types of adverse childhood experiences** known to create toxic stress for children including **bullying, migration, war, PANDEMIC, famine, family separation**, etc. that should be included in future research.

Worst Spikes in March and April of 2020

- **During first phase** of the pandemic in the U.S., claims for any mental health disorder **increased by about 100% for the 13-18 group.**
- **Down to 50% in May, 30% in the summer and about 20% from then until the survey ended** in November—still a significant increase from the previous year.
- The **19-22** age group hit highs of 70% in March and April and settled at just under 20% in November.
- **More prevalent in girls than boys, accounting for 66% of all mental health claims** in both age groups pre-pandemic and 71% since.

The Big Three

- **Most common conditions affecting the 13 to 22 group in both years were Anxiety, Depression and Adjustment Disorders.**
 - **Exploded in Spring of 2020, increasing 80% to 90% year over year for the 13-18 group, and 45% to 65% for the 19-22 cohort.**
 - **All three conditions have receded some in both groups, but still remain up to 25% more common than they were at the end of 2019.**
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Adolescents Experience Mental Health Disorders “On Steroids”

“We see **[increased] depression and anxiety in all age groups**, but in adolescence it’s on steroids. When kids look into the future now, they’re looking at one that wasn’t what they envisioned before.”

A high school student commented, **“I used to be able to hang with my friends, and now that’s gone. I was looking forward to going to college** but my dad just got laid off and can’t afford it.”

(Robin Gurwitch, psychologist and professor at Duke University Medical Center).

Loss of Control Over Their Lives

“We absolutely foresaw this last year. **Kids feel like they don’t have much control over their lives and now there’s even more uncertainty**, with [regular school] and peer groups—who play such a big role in the sense of self—unavailable. Their developmental process has been interfered with.”

“Their **trajectory has been interrupted.**”

(Mary Alvord, Psychologist, 2021).

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Substance Abuse

- Emotional pain and **self-medicating**.
- In the 13 to 18-year-old group, claims for **drug overdoses increased 95% in March and 119% in April**.
- Where substance abuse stopped short of overdosing, the numbers were 65% and 63% in those months.
- 19-22 group: peak increase for overdoses was a 65% jump in May; **substance abuse in general peaked at a 27% increase** in April 2020.
- **FAIR Health findings are mirrored** by U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, which reported the **highest annual number of U.S. overdose deaths ever in the year ending May 2020**.

Emotional Blowback of Pandemic

- **Can't be vaccinated away** like COVID-19.
- Long-haulers require treatment for the physical symptoms of the disease months after being infected.
- So will youth needing care for psychic pain.
- The pandemic that began in the spring of 2020 will not be leaving us anytime soon.

Current Events Such as Violence, Political and Racial Rhetoric, Coverage of Pandemic



Talking with Children About Current Events

- Given **recent tragic and racially-charged current events**, many adults are wrestling with their own feelings, the hopes they have for children, and the challenge of helping children thrive in a world full of disagreement and bias.



Understanding How Media's Depiction of Racial Bias Impacts Children

Children learn about racial differences and racial bias from an **early age** and learn from their first teachers: parents, caregivers, early childhood educators, and social media about **how to deal with and react to these differences.**

Process is Like **Learning a New Language**

- Example: Child is raised bilingual vs. child who starts learning Spanish in junior high. Biology determines a critical early learning period as well as a later window where learning is much harder.
- As early as **6 months**, a baby's brain can **notice race-based differences**.


Ages and Stages

- **By ages 2 to 4**, children can internalize racial bias.
- **By age 12**, many children become set in their beliefs—so there is over a decade to decrease racial bias and improve cultural understanding.
- Like language immersion, **children exposed to society will gain fluency in racial bias** even if their parents and teachers do nothing.

Strategies to Help Children Deal with Bias

- **Talk to children and acknowledge** that all kinds of racial, cultural, economic, disability, and gender orientation differences and biases exist.
- **Confront your own biases** and **model** how you want children to respond to others who may be different from them.
- Encourage children to challenge stereotypes and bias by **being kind and compassionate** when interacting with all people.

How Adults Can Confront Their Own Biases

- **Be a role model.** Identify and correct your own biased thoughts, feelings, and actions. **Exhibit the behavior you want children to emulate** as well. Everyday comments and actions will speak volumes.
 - **Have a wide and diverse social network.** Encourage **children to have diverse circles of friends**, as well. This lends itself to engagement in multi-faceted activities and experiences.
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Tips for Talking About Differences

- **Talking about racial diversity, political perspectives, gender orientation, ableism etc.** is more than OK—and important.
- **Children will have questions** about differences - parents and teachers must be prepared to answer them.
- Keep child's **developmental readiness** in mind.



Responding to Questions

- If a child makes comments or asks you questions about school incidents or something they read or watched, **further the discussion** with questions such as, "**How do you feel about that?**" and "**Why do you believe that?**"
- This is also helpful if a child heard something insensitive or experienced bias themselves.
- **Before responding** to his or her statement or question, figure out where it came from and **what it means from his or her perspective**.

Worth Remembering

We all must look at and **acknowledge our biases**, so we can do something about the ones that are unfair or cause harm to others.

Understanding the way people feel about and behave toward those outside their own group can help communities heal after a tragedy, as well as prevent future ones.



RESILIENCE IS...

- **The process of adapting well** in the face of adversity, trauma, tragedy, threats or significant sources of stress.
- Resilience **is NOT a trait** that individuals either have or do not have.
- **Resilience involves behaviors, thoughts and accompanying feelings** that can be nurtured, developed and learned.

What is Attunement?

Attunement is the reactivity we have to another person and is the process by which we form relationships.


Dr. Dan Siegel: "When we attune with others, we allow our own internal state to shift, to come to resonate with the inner world of another. This resonance is at the heart of the important sense of "feeling felt" that emerges in close relationships.

Children need attunement to feel secure and to develop well, and throughout our lives we need attunement to feel close and connected."

Think About a Baby Crying

Attunement might look like an adult seeing a baby crying, recognizing that the baby is hungry, and then picking up the baby to feed her/him.

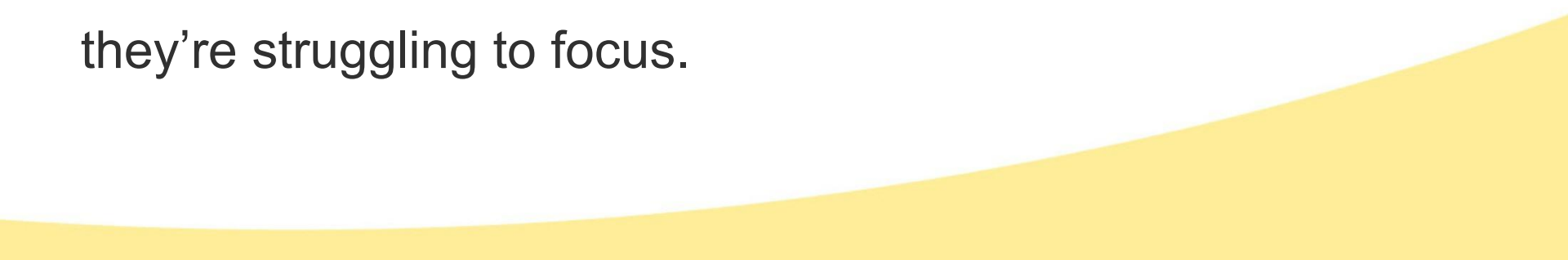
In an adult relationship, attunement might be represented as an adult who knows that a glib “I’m fine” from a transition-age student doesn’t actually mean that, and digs a little deeper to find out what’s going on.

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More About Attunement

When working with kids, attunement comes across as genuinely caring about them. It's not just asking about their day as a courtesy, but truly listening and caring about their response.

It's about noticing when a youth comes into the room in a bad mood, or when they're unusually quiet, or when they're struggling to focus.

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Personal Story

Rocko, a former student at Spring Lake Park High School, was a non reader at the age of 17. One day, he asked me if I could help him figure out how to repair the timing chain on his old Chevy. I told him that I didn't know much about cars and he exclaimed, "And you call yourself a teacher?"

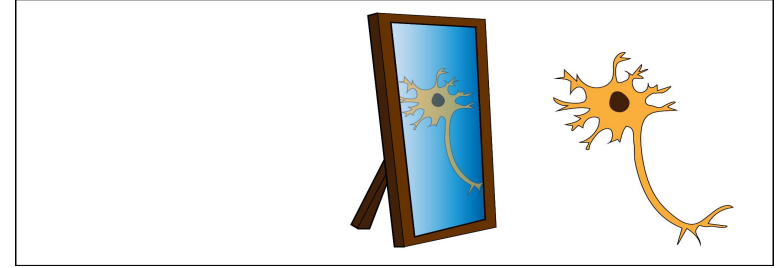
His comment gave me pause to consider how to reach him. The next day, we went to the Sears Automotive Store over the lunch period and we found a repair manual for the make and model of his car.

The manual became the textbook that I used to help Rocko learn how to read. I didn't know it at the time, but that was an example of ATTUNEMENT!

10 year old “Doodle Boy”




Mirror Neurons



- The mirror neuron system plays a key role in our ability to empathize and socialize with others.
- We communicate our emotions mostly through facial expressions.
- If someone with whom we are interacting smiles, we tend to enjoy our time with them. The converse is true when someone has a “crabby face.”
- Youth with Autism appear to have an interrupted or underactive mirror neuron system.
- Imitative behavior can be taught to help counter this challenge.

All young people have strengths!

Think of a young person ...

- What resiliency strengths do they have?
 - What's one area you think is not as strong?
 - What could you do to help strengthen that area?
 - Do you see the child as attention seeking or connection seeking? Maybe “slow to warm up” rather than “disconnected from others”?
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Building A Positive View in Yourself and Youth

- Deliberate Acts of Kindness
- Most powerful and simple way to momentarily increase well-being daily is to engage in one deliberate act of kindness for someone else.
- Even small children benefit from these actions.
- Cultivating Gratitude: For 1-2 weeks before bed, write down 3 good things that happened to you that day and what your role was in them.
- This gives us a mental boost for 6-12 months!


Building A Positive View

- To offset negative bias, which we all have as a survival mechanism, we must experience three good things for every negative experience for our mood to “break even.”
- To cultivate greater positive emotion, we should have a 6:1 ratio; for every bad experience, we need 6 positive experiences.

Belly Breathe with Elmo




Building Self-Regulation

- Yoga, exercise, sleep, healthy eating
 - Sesame Street: Common and Colbie Caillat - "Belly Breathe" with Elmo
 - Actively work to protect and enhance physical wellness.
 - Plan for and engage in enjoyable physical activity
 - Use Zones of Regulation
 - Teach Social Emotional Learning skills
- 

Building Self-Efficacy

- Set mini-goals (too small to fail).
- When we reach a goal, it increases our sense of self-efficacy, the belief that we can perform a task or manage a situation.
- It also gives brains a dopamine hit.
- **Example:** I will eat a piece of fruit today.

Building Self-Efficacy

- Nurture realistic self-efficacy in children.
 - They face new challenges at every age and stage—that's why it's so important to continuously help them build the skills they need to become resilient.
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Caring & Competent Relationships

- Emotions can transfer, so **check your mood! Be intentional.** What do we want to pass along to our children?
- **Positive touch can go a long way** - Holding a handshake or a hug for at least **6 seconds releases oxytocin**, the neurochemical that helps us feel connected and loved.



The **Value of Having A Caring Adult** in a Youth's Life

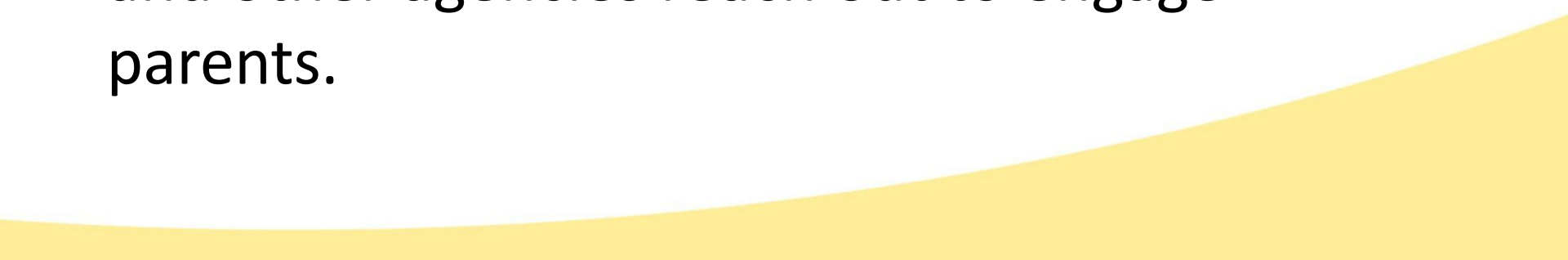
- Developmental research shows increases in the likelihood that they will flourish, and become productive adults themselves.
- L. Alan Sroufe, U of M 2017 longitudinal research

Parent Engagement with Schools

What is parent engagement?

Schools and parent working together through the school experience and advocating for the children and the effectiveness of the school experience.

It is a shared responsibility in which schools and other agencies reach out to engage parents.

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Parent Engagement with Schools


And . . . parents and caregivers actively support child, adolescent, or young adult's learning and development.




Why is Parent Engagement so Important?

- Can promote positive health behaviors in student. Youth are less likely to:
 - experience emotional distress
 - practice unhealthy eating behaviors
 - consider or attempt suicide
 - disengage from school and learning
 - start smoking
 - disengage from exercise

Parent Engagement Should be a Part of a Coordinated School Framework

- Positive calls home
 - Home visits before school starts
 - Interview about child's strengths
 - School needs to communicate a want and expectation that parents are involved
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Connect, Engage, and Sustain

- Should be the mantra for all schools.
 - Needs to be in mission statement of school and district.
 - Official program and expectations need to be developed.
 - Policies and procedures in place to maximize parental involvement.
 - Friendly, welcoming environment for parents and caregivers. Special reading lounge?
 - Regular communication and volunteer opportunities.
 - Invite parents to be teaching assistants or story readers for the day - could be in another classroom.
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A Promise to Yourself and Others

Take a moment to **jot down one strategy that you intend to use to promote resilience** in a young person.

Share your intention with a friend or relative today or tomorrow.



I wish you well . . .



*Best,
Char*