



It's Up to Us to Create a Healthy and Supportive San Diego

Shine a Light On: Toxic Stress

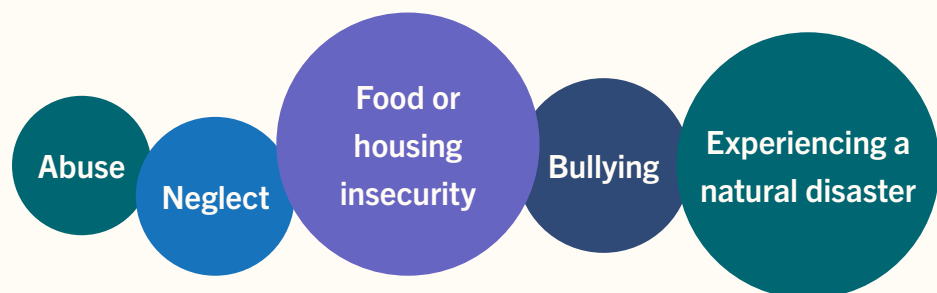
Not all stress is bad. But certain types of stress experienced as a child can lead to health problems later in life. Stress becomes toxic for our bodies when it is severe and prolonged.

About 30 years ago, researchers found a connection between adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) and long-term health problems. Experiencing many ACEs without supportive adults can cause toxic stress to build up in children's bodies. Over time, toxic stress can lead to health issues like substance use disorder, depression, anxiety, and even heart disease and diabetes.

ACEs are very common—in fact, two-thirds of US adults have at least one. The good news is that these experiences don't automatically impact our health. We can manage toxic stress and the effects of ACEs with safe, secure, nurturing relationships and environments.

What Is an Adverse Childhood Experience?

An adverse experience that could lead to health problems is more serious than everyday stress. ACEs can include things like:



ACEs—Adverse Childhood Experiences



Systemic issues like racism and poverty can also be an adverse experience—and also make other ACEs worse.

Read Up: Protecting Kids From Toxic Stress

Studies have shown that safe, secure, nurturing relationships and environments (SSNREs) are the best protection from toxic stress. When traumatic events or ongoing sources of stress are balanced by positive relationships with caregivers, children's brains are better able to process stress. ACEs can be passed down, especially if your parent(s) also experienced ACEs. The good news is that you can still retrain your brain and heal. A professional can guide you and help you learn new behaviors.

Safe

Secure

Nurturing

Relationships

& Environments

How to Create SSNREs for Kids

SSNREs can help protect against tough situations from turning into toxic stress for kids. Any caregiver or adult can help create a safe space. Schools, churches, and the larger community can all help kids too.

Be There

Playing, reading, and talking with kids helps them feel connected with you.

Show Affection

Expressing your love verbally and physically can help kids build resilience.

Stay Steady

A steady and dependable routine can help kids better handle unexpected events.

How to Heal as an Adult

Our past doesn't define us, but it does shape us. It's important to remember that ACEs are not your fault. The first step is to understand how they may be showing up in your life. Then you can start healing. Learn more at: LiveBeyondCA.org

Sources

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