Raising Resilient Kids

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FORMED FAMILIES FORWARD

Formed Families Forward - who we are…

- A family-led resource center in Northern Virginia supporting foster, adoptive and kinship families who are raising children, youth & young adults with special needs, and professionals who work with our families.
- We offer free training, consultations to families, events, resources, and systems navigation. Also - peer support groups; webinars; virtual trainings; child care program; videos and other resources.
- Family partner to Virginia Tiered Systems of Supports (VTSS; a VDOE project)

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Who is here?

- Foster Parent
- Adoptive Parent
- Kinship Caregiver
- Birth Parent
- Professional
- Other

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Agenda:

- Trauma
  - Definition
  - Understanding Trauma Video
  - ACEs Study
- Protective Factors & Resilience
  - Responding to Trauma Video
  - ARC Approach
  - Fostering Resilience
- Resilience Trumps ACES Game

Trauma Defined

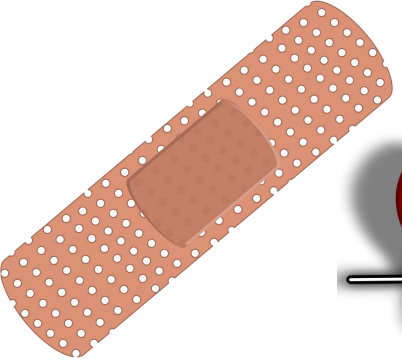
Trauma refers to experiences that cause intense physical and psychological stress reactions. It can refer to a single **event**, multiple events, or a set of circumstances that is **experienced** by an individual as physically and emotionally harmful or threatening and that has lasting adverse **effects** on the individual's physical, social, emotional, or spiritual well-being.

A Normal Reaction to a Horrific Situation

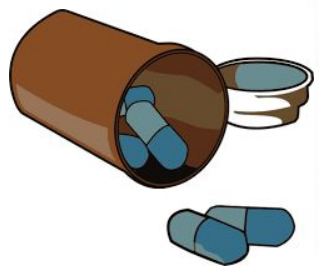
SAMHSA 2014

Trauma Training Videos

Understanding Trauma



Causes/Kinds of Trauma



- Violence
- Witness/exposure to violence
- Abuse
- Neglect
- War zone & Refugee experiences
- Military Experiences

- Traumatic Grief
- Terrorism
- Immigration Experiences
- Medical Trauma
- Natural Disasters
- Loss of parent/caregiver

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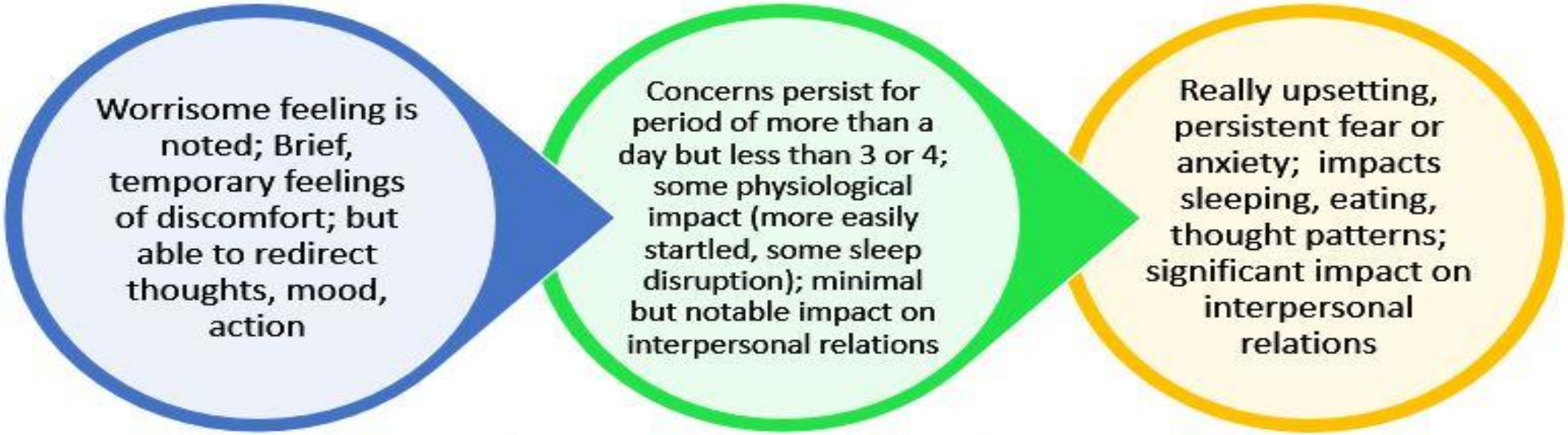
Sibling/partner yells at you for leaving dirty dishes in sink

Death of parent or primary caregiver

Got ill the day of a big work or homework deadline and couldn't finish on time

Wildfire threatens your home

Your place of worship was vandalized



Got in fender bender accident

Were given a book to read that was hard to read or understand

Cut your toe open

Plan for an outing was changed at last minute

What is Traumatic Stress?

- Reactions resulting from one or more traumas
- Reactions persist and affect daily life even after the events have ended
- May overwhelm the ability to cope with daily demands
- Responses and symptoms vary

Signs of Trauma

- loss of appetite or overeating
- unexplained irritability or anger
- school avoidance
- fixation of certain events
- problems focusing on projects, school work
- regression or loss of skills
- too much or too little sleep; nightmares
- high levels of worry, trouble with change
- angry outbursts, high levels of emotion
- disruptive, disrespectful, sullen, withdrawn
- physical aches and pains
- risky behavior; abuse of alcohol/drugs

THE IMPACT OF CHILDHOOD TRAUMA

COGNITION & LEARNING

PHYSICAL HEALTH

EMOTIONS

BRAIN DEVELOPMENT

BEHAVIOR

RELATIONSHIPS

MENTAL HEALTH

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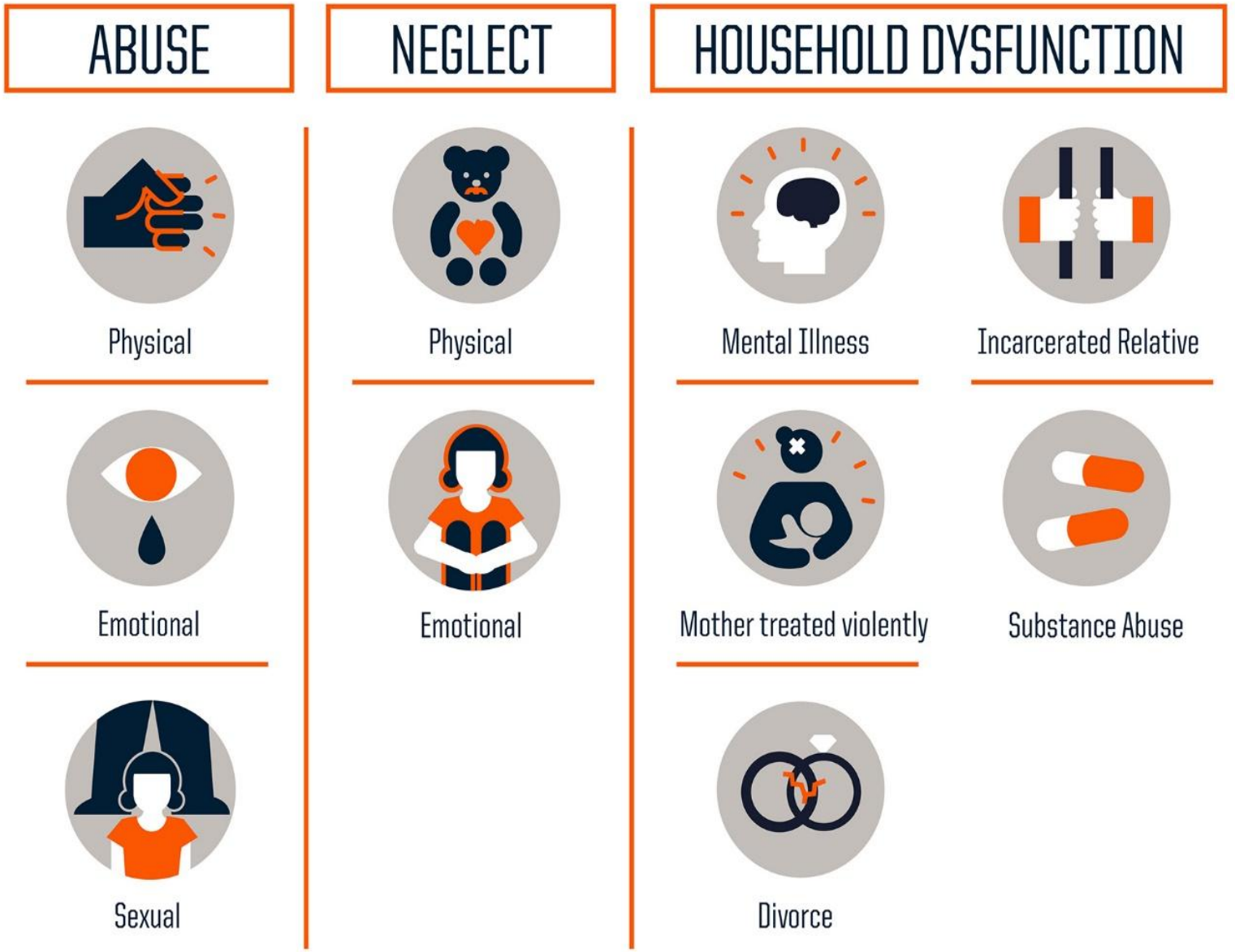
The Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) Study



Robert Wood Johnson Foundation
www.rwjf.org/aces

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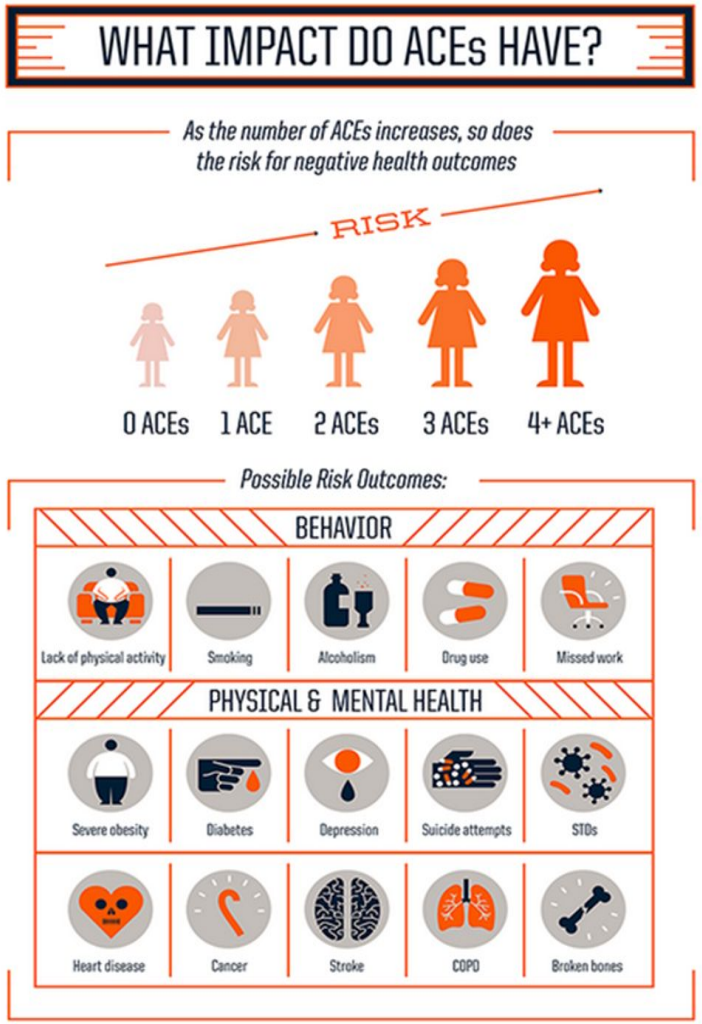
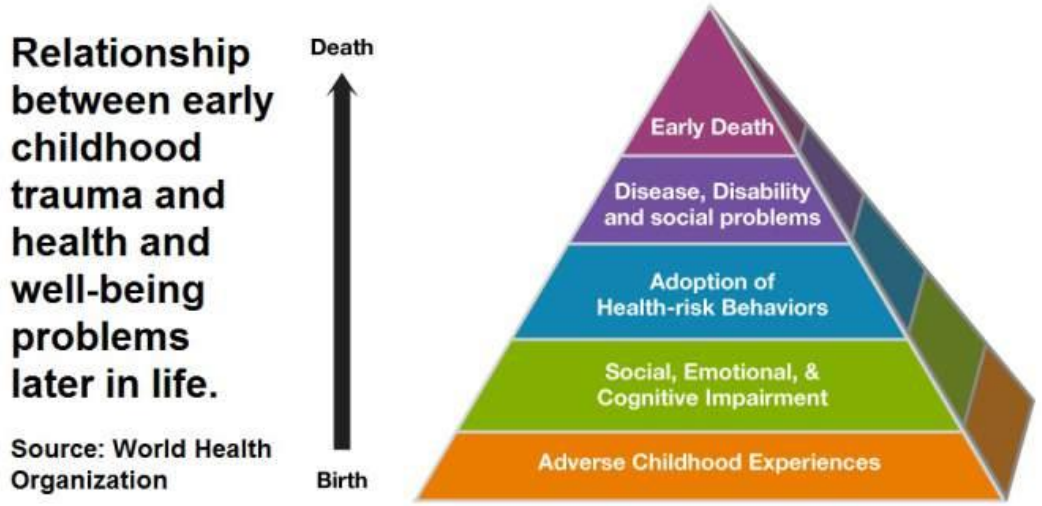
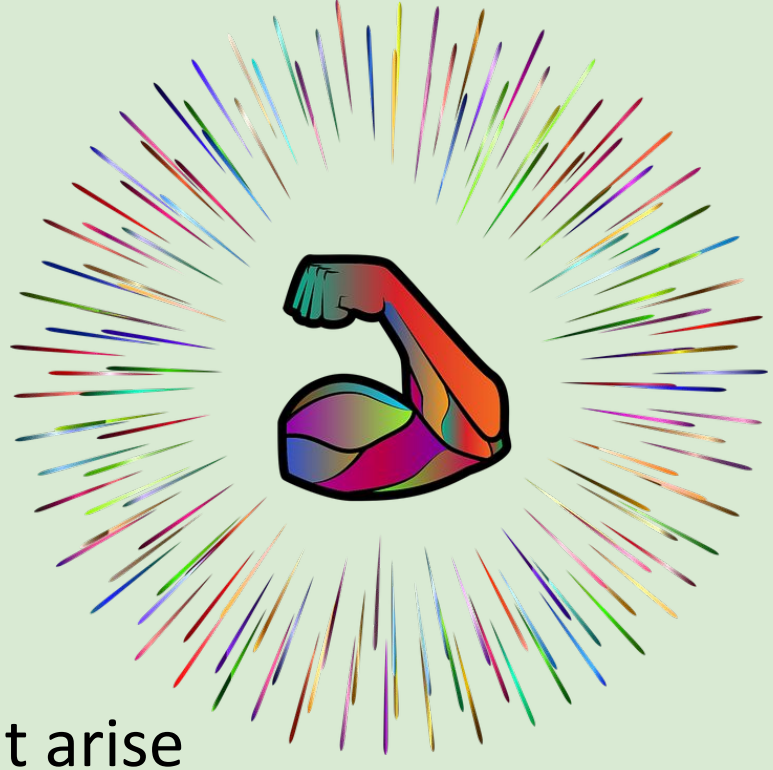




ACEs = Adverse Childhood Experiences

Trauma-Informed Community Network
Part of the Partnership for a Healthier Fairfax

RESILIENCE



the ability to adapt and thrive despite challenges that arise from adversity, trauma, tragedy, threats, or significant stress

RESILIENCE TRUMPS ACES!

Responding to Trauma

Building Resiliency

- People who have experienced trauma need the following in order to recover:
  - Sense of safety (physical and emotional)
  - Information
  - Healthy coping skills
  - Hope and optimism
  - Sense of connection, supportive relationships
- People need to feel ***safe, capable, and lovable***

ARC Framework for Addressing Trauma Impact

Attachment: Building a trusting relationship between a child and caring adult

Self-Regulation: Identifying emotions and learning how to express and cope with them

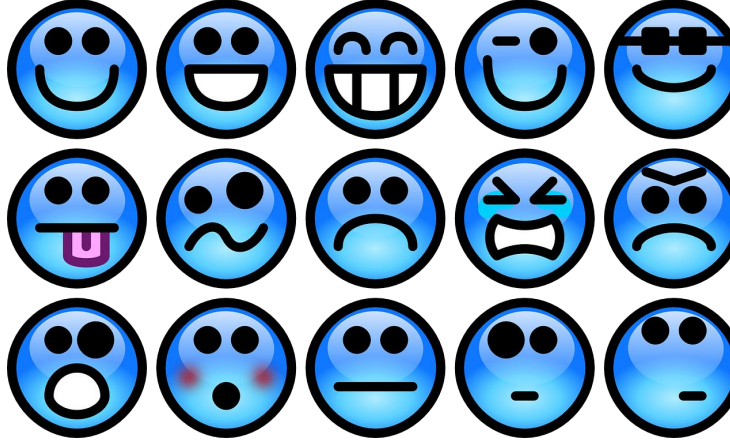
Competency: Strengthening resilience by building skills to help children cope with trauma and change

Source: Blaustein & Kinniburgh

ARC Framework: Attachment

Create safe, predictable, consistent relationships

- recognize own emotional responses
- use active listening and reciprocity in conversation
- use gentle, affirming language & gestures
- avoid power struggles
- develop predictable routines
- clear and consistent rules/expectations and consequences
- follow through with your word and promises



ARC Framework: Self-Regulation

Identify emotions and learn how to express & cope with them

- help children identify their emotions and triggers
- practice coping strategies
- model and support problem solving skills
- increase opportunities for choice and building decision making skills

ARC Framework: Competency

Build skills to help children and youth cope with trauma and change

- help kids set and achieve personal goals
- assign chores or responsibilities
- focus on problem-solving, not punishment
- provide opportunities to help others
- provide age appropriate opportunities to have fun and “be a kid”

Look Behind the Behaviors

Behaviors may not seem logical or proportional to the situation

Ask? What is the child trying to gain or avoid?

What is the underlying need?

Examples: a child who is aggressive; a teen who runs away

A need is what drives a behavior

Think: lack of skill, **not** intentional misbehavior

Think: building missing skills, **not** shaming for lack of skills

Think: nurture, **not** criticize

Think: teach, **not** blame

Think: discipline, **not** punishment

Linda Taylor, New River Valley Community Services, Virginia

The Good News is Resilience Skills can be Learned

Model and teach resilience strategies and practice, practice, practice!

Attachment to a Caring Adult

- provides stability, support,and consistency

The number one protective factor in a child's life is: the presence of a stable adult figure; a close, positive bond with at least one adult in a caring role.

Source: Linda Taylor, New River Valley CSB

It's all about the relationship!!

Recognize and Name Feelings

- recognize when they feel an emotion stirring
- label the emotion
- act to manage and express the emotion appropriately

How can we help?

➔ **listen empathetically**

➔ **validate and label feelings**

➔ **model this skill**

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Ability to Calm Oneself

- regulate behavior based on setting

Practice Self-Regulation Activities

- drink a glass of water/juice
- count backwards from 20
- push your arms against the wall & notice changes in your muscles
- imagine your body becoming soft like a noodle
- belly breathing

Give Choices

- gives the child a sense of ownership and responsibility
- builds decision making skills
- learn that every choice has a consequence

How can you help?

- ➔ **give choices anytime you can**
- ➔ **help child analyze problem**
- ➔ **talk through choices, pros and cons**
- ➔ **be a role model - if we react in anger or frustration, so will our child**

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Mastering a Skill

- Learn it takes time to develop and master skills
- Teaches competence, perseverance, and commitment
- Experience success
- Builds self-esteem, empowerment, sense of mastery

Make Connections

- Provides social support
- Sense of belonging

How can you help?

- family meals, meetings, gatherings
- show/express affection
- unstructured activities: park, informal get-togethers
- structured activities: sports teams, scouts, clubs

Giving Back

- Ask for assistance with household tasks: setting the table, washing windows, helping in the garden
- Volunteer as a family
  - Organize a drive for food or toiletries
  - Make blankets for an animal shelter
  - Park or Stream Clean-up
  - Charity Fun Run or Walk
  - Lay wreaths at Arlington National Cemetery

https://www.volunteerfairfax.org/individuals-groups/individuals-groups-get-involved/youth-family-volunteering/

Instilling Hope

Create a sense of positive future

- Offer opportunities for success and restored feelings of competence
- Focus on strengths
- Practice gratitude
- Talk about past challenges and what they can learn from them
- Reframe situations

More ways to foster resilience

- create predictable routines
- have clear expectations, rules, and consequences
- avoid unnecessary power struggles
- maintain neutral, calm tone of voice and body language
- let your child know you are available to help
- acknowledge when you are wrong
- know your own triggers and have a plan of retreat

Resilience Trumps ACEs Game

10 ACEs Cards

42 Resilience Cards

Modeled after the popular game “Apples to Apples”

Rules of Play: Players are dealt 5 cards. Highest roll is the first judge. Judge picks an ACE card from the pile and reads it aloud. Each player picks a Resilience card from his hand that they feel the judge will choose and they lay it face down. The judge then reviews the selected cards and reads each one aloud. The judge picks the card he feels best buffers the ACE card and explains why. The person who played the chosen card keeps the card in a separate pile; all others are returned to the deck. Players refresh their hands and the player to the judge’s left, becomes the new judge. The player with the most chosen resilience cards wins the game.

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