

KID CONNECTS WEEKLY NEWSLETTER: ACES AND RESILIENCE

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FOR ADDITIONAL SUPPORT:

Contact our warm line at, (303) 245-4418, to talk directly to an Early Childhood Mental Health Consultant.



Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) refers to three specific kinds of childhood experiences that were studied by the Center for Disease Control and Kaiser Permanente from 1995-1997. The three types were: different forms of physical and emotional abuse, neglect, and general household dysfunction (caregiver mental illness, domestic violence, community violence, substance abuse, grief and loss, unemployment, medical issues, etc.)¹. Some major results from the 17,000-person study found that ACEs are common amongst ALL populations and nearly two-thirds of those participating in the study reported at least ONE ACE, with nearly one in five participants reporting THREE or more ACEs². The study further found that as the reported number of ACE's increased, the more likely the participant was to be at risk for negative health effects and negative wellbeing outcomes. New research has emerged suggesting that the negative health outcomes of

ACEs can be mitigated by the presence of counter-ACEs or protective factors. In this newsletter we hope to shed light on various protective factors for adults and children that support resilience and buffer against the negative effects of ACEs.

Resilience

Resilience can be thought of as positive adaptations to adversity, or the ability to “bounce back” and recover from adverse or traumatic events³. Building and strengthening resilience is ongoing and important for both children and adults on the individual, family, caregiving, and community level⁴. Children are not born being resilient; it is a skill they learn through their environment and depends greatly on the protective factors in their lives. According to the CDC, “Protective factors are individual or environmental characteristics, conditions, or behaviors that reduce the effects of stressful life events. These factors also increase an individual’s ability to avoid risks or hazards, and promote social and emotional



¹ ACEs and Toxic Stress: Frequently Asked Questions. Center on the Developing Child. Harvard University. Retrieved from: <https://developingchild.harvard.edu/resources/aces-and-toxic-stress-frequently-asked-questions/#graphic-text>

² Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2020). About the CDC-Kaiser ACE Study. Retrieved from: https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/acestudy/about.html?CDC_AA_refVal=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.cdc.gov%2Fviolenceprevention%2Fchildabuseandneglect%2Facestudy%2Findex.html

³Bartlett, J.D. and Vivrette, R.(2020). Ways to Promote Children’s Resilience to the COVID-19 Pandemic. Retrieved from:

⁴ Beardslee, W., Watson, A.M., Ayoub, C.C., and Watts, CL. (2010). Zero to Three. Building Resilience The Power to Cope With Adversity. Retrieved from: <https://www.zerotothree.org/resources/357-building-resilience>

competence to thrive in all aspects of life, now and in the future.”⁵ Protective factors are key in building resilience in both children and parents.

Key Components for Fostering Resiliency in Children:



and thrive.

2. Teaching Children How to Cope with Manageable Stress:

Not all stress is harmful and “positive” forms of stress that are part of everyday life (such as disagreements with a sibling, doing an activity that is challenging, or short-term separation from caregivers) can promote growth. By helping children learn how to cope with manageable stress, adults can build children’s capacity to navigate adversity. ⁸ Part of this process is helping children understand their emotional landscape by listening to them, naming and validating their feelings, helping them strategize and problem solve, and modeling self- regulation skills.

3. Mobilizing Sources of Faith, Hope, and/ or Cultural Traditions:

We all benefit from feeling a part of something bigger than ourselves.⁹ Community will look different from family to family. It is challenging right now with physical distancing to feel a part of a community. There are still ways to keep kids, and yourself, feeling connected. Some ideas include virtual events, writing letter/ drawing pictures for people in your community, and creating some new family rituals that are compatible with our new normal.

⁵ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2018). Adolescent and School Health. Retrieved from: <https://www.cdc.gov/healthyouth/protective/index.htm>.

⁶ Preventing and Addressing Toxic Stress, Resilience. (2020). *Center on the Developing Child*. <https://developingchild.harvard.edu/science/key-concepts/resilience/>

⁷ Preventing and Addressing Toxic Stress, Resilience. (2020). *Center on the Developing Child*. <https://developingchild.harvard.edu/science/key-concepts/resilience/>

⁸ McCarthy, C. (2017). “Resilience: A skill your child really needs to learn (and what you can do to help).” *Harvard Health Publishing*. <https://www.health.harvard.edu/blog/resilience-a-skill-your-child-really-needs-to-learn-and-what-you-can-do-to-help-2017061311899>

⁹ McCarthy, C. (2017). “Resilience: A skill your child really needs to learn (and what you can do to help).” *Harvard Health Publishing*. <https://www.health.harvard.edu/blog/resilience-a-skill-your-child-really-needs-to-learn-and-what-you-can-do-to-help-2017061311899>

1. The Presences of at Least One Nurturing Caregiver:

“The single most common factor for children who develop resilience is at least one stable and committed relationship with a supportive parent, caregiver, or other adult.” ⁶ Adults have the power to provide children with personalized responses, scaffolding, and protection that buffer children from developmental disruption.⁷ Adults can also support a child’s development of their executive functioning and self-regulation capacities, helping them respond to adversity

4. Pulling from Family and Community Stories of Resilience:

Hearing accounts of how others have built resilience during times of adversity can provide helpful models for children.¹⁰ Our country and communities have made it through difficult times before, including wars, financial hardship, and civil unrest. Consider telling children stories about you or your families/ communities experiences living through difficult times or read picture books about people who persevered.

*“Do not judge me by my success, judge me by how many times I fell down
and got back up again” – Nelson Mandela*



Adult Resilience

Building resilience as an adult is equally vital as children building resilience. Promoting resilience involves **reducing risk factors** and **strengthening protective factors** within yourself, in your external environment and family. For example, a risk factor could be lack of support from family and friends versus the protective factor of having supportive friends and family that make you feel safe and cared for. As a result of building greater resiliency, you can better cope with the adversity and stressors in your lives.

To assist in determining your own risk and protective factors that may hinder or build resiliency, attached below is the Devereux Adult Resiliency Survey (DARS) and Action Plan. These tools examine **relationships, internal beliefs, initiative and self-control**. The survey is meant to bring awareness of personal strengths and areas of need. The action plan in addition to the survey, allows for reflection, identifying goals and creating specific action steps.¹¹

¹⁰ Giraud, M. & Grant-Thomas, A. (2020, April 20). How We Can Help Our Children Be “Disaster- Resilient” & Why We Must. [Webinar]. *Embrace Race*. Retrieved from <https://www.embracerace.org/resources/how-we-can-help-our-children-to-be-disaster-resilient-and-why-we-must>.

¹¹ Devereux Center For Resilient Children. (2013). Devereux Adult Resilience Survey (DARS): An Introduction. Retrieved From <<https://centerforresilientchildren.org/wp-content/uploads/DARS-Full-Version.pdf>>



Devereux Adult Resilience Survey (DARS): AN INTRODUCTION

Thank you for your interest in the Devereux Adult Resilience Survey!

Authored by Mary Mackrain, the DARS is a 23-item reflective checklist that provides adults with information about their personal strengths. The information can be used to help individuals build on these strengths, such as creativity and setting limits, so that they can better cope with adversity and the stresses of daily life.

Statistical analysis shows that the DARS is an excellent tool for providing adults with an opportunity to gain valuable insights, particularly in these four areas:

- **Relationships**
 - The mutual, long-lasting, back-and-forth bond we have with another person in our lives.
- **Internal Beliefs**
 - The feelings and thoughts we have about ourselves and our lives, and how effective we think we are at taking action in life.
- **Initiative**
 - The ability to make positive choices and decisions, and act upon them.
- **Self-Control**
 - The ability to experience a range of feelings, and express them using the words and actions society considers appropriate.

The purpose of the DARS is not to compare individuals' scores to the population, but to give adults, more specifically those caring for young children, the opportunity to become aware of personal strengths and areas of need. Upon completion of the Devereux Adult Resilience Survey, individuals are encouraged to use the *Building Your Bounce: Simple Strategies for a Resilient You* adult resilience journal. This journal provides suggested strategies for strengthening adults' protective factors shown to support resilience.

It takes a fair amount of reflection and practice to change any negative thoughts we might have and to integrate new behaviors that are good for us. You are worth it! Even if you are already a strong, happy person, you will want to continue building yourself up to maintain or increase your level of well-being.

Best wishes on your personal journey!

Devereux Adult Resilience Survey (DARS)

By Mary Mackrain, M.Ed.

This survey was created to support adults as they reflect on how to promote the capacity for resilience in themselves. Take time to reflect on and complete each item on the survey below. There are no right answers! Once you have finished, reflect on your strengths and then start small and plan for one or two things that you feel are important to improve. For fun and practical ideas on how to strengthen your protective factors, use the chapters of *Building Your Bounce: Simple Strategies for a Resilient You*.

Items	Almost Always	Sometimes	Not Yet
Relationships			
1. I have good friends who support me.			
2. I have a mentor or someone who shows me the way.			
3. I provide support to others.			
4. I am empathetic to others.			
5. I trust my close friends.			
Internal Beliefs			
1. My role as a caregiver is important.			
2. I have personal strengths.			
3. I am creative.			
4. I have strong beliefs.			
5. I am hopeful about the future.			
6. I am lovable.			
Initiative			
1. I communicate effectively with those around me.			
2. I try many different ways to solve a problem.			
3. I have a hobby that I engage in.			
4. I seek out new knowledge.			
5. I am open to new ideas.			
6. I laugh often.			
7. I am able to say no.			
8. I can ask for help.			
Self-Control			
1. I express my emotions.			
2. I set limits for myself.			
3. I am flexible.			
4. I can calm myself down.			

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Examples and Reflection

Devereux Adult Resilience Survey (DARS)

Please use the extra space provided to further reflect on examples for each DARS item.

Relationships	EXAMPLES
1. I have good friends who support me.	
2. I have a mentor or someone who shows me the way.	
3. I provide support to others.	
4. I am empathetic to others.	
5. I trust my close friends.	
Internal Beliefs	EXAMPLES
1. My role as a caregiver is important.	
2. I have personal strengths.	
3. I am creative.	
4. I have strong beliefs.	
5. I am hopeful about the future.	
6. I am lovable.	
Initiative	EXAMPLES
1. I communicate effectively with those around me.	
2. I try many different ways to solve a problem.	
3. I have a hobby that I engage in.	
4. I seek out new knowledge.	
5. I am open to new ideas.	
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Self-Control	EXAMPLES
1. I express my emotions.	
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Action Plan

Once you have completed the survey, reflect on your strengths and identify some goals. Make a simple plan, with specific action steps, for one or two items that you feel are important to improve. Regularly check in on your progress and then revisit the DARS.

<p>Strengths</p> <p>Highlight some of your almost always responses here. Recognize and celebrate the ways that you are already being resilient.</p>	
<p>Goals</p> <p>Review your DARS responses and decide on the one or two goals you would like to set. Your goals can be items under the category of "Sometimes" or "Not Yet" that you would like to strengthen.</p>	
<p>Strategies</p> <p>Decide on strategies that can help you meet your goals. Feel free to identify strategies from various sources.</p>	

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