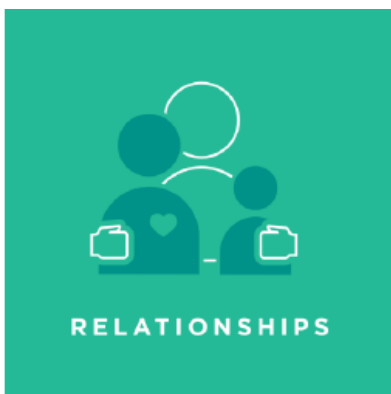# HOPE
Healthy Outcomes
from Positive Experiences

Four building blocks of HOPE

Research has shown that positive childhood experiences (PCEs) can help protect against the poor health outcomes associated with adverse childhood experiences (ACEs). These PCEs can be categorized by four building blocks.

RELATIONSHIPS

Relationships within the family and with other children and adults through interpersonal activities.

Being in nurturing, supportive relationships are critical for children to develop into healthy, resilient adults. Individuals that recall having these types of relationships during childhood relationships during childhood experience significantly lower rates of depression and poor mental health during adulthood. What kinds of relationships are we talking about?

- Foundational relationships with parents who respond to a child's needs and offer warm, responsive reactions
- Adults outside of the family who take a genuine interest in a child and support their growth and development
- Healthy, close, and positive relationships with peers

What can you do to promote access to the four building blocks?

- Be a supportive relationship! Take the time to connect with the children around you
- Share information about after school activities where they might connect with coaches, mentors, or peers
- Ask parents about the positive experiences they remember from childhood and

what made those experiences good. Celebrate those with them, and encourage them to think about which of these components of those relationships they want to offer their children

- Share information about parent-child attachment. Validate and reflect back when you see warm reactions between parent and child.
- Ask about other positive adults in the child's life - coaches, teachers, pastors, mentors. Celebrate those relationships and encourage and consistent connection with those individuals.
- Play and connect with your children regularly! Be silly, move your bodies together, read a book, watch a movie. The options are endless!

It takes a village, and the larger village, the more opportunities a child has for connection and support.

ENVIRONMENT

Safe, equitable, stable environments **for living, playing, and learning at home and in school.**

Children who live, learn, and play in safe, stable, and equitable environments are less likely to experience poor mental and physical health as adults. What do we mean by safe, stable, and equitable environments?

- A safe, stable environment secure in meeting a child's basic needs, including adequate food, shelter, and health care.
- A nurturing home where a child is emotionally secure.
- A stable school environment where children feel valued and receive high-quality education
- A community environment to play and interact with other children safely and equitably

How can you promote access to safe, stable, equitable environments?

- Make sure schools are safe spaces for all students! Address bullying and teasing, and encourage students to be upstanders, not bystanders.
- Make sure that children and families feel represented. Look at any books, posters, curricula, or handouts. Are all kinds of families, all genders, all races, and people with disabilities represented?
- If your school does not provide food on the weekends and over breaks, see if you can start a program.
- Know the community resources! If children are hungry, without secure housing, or having witnessed violence, connect families to resources.
- Check for safety issues around you, including access to guns, medications, alcohol, and drugs. Make a plan to take care of any risks you see.

- Listen to children when they talk about school. Do they feel safe there? Are they treated well by their peers or school staff? If not, children, families, and schools can work together on solutions
- Help children find safe places to play outside. Is there a backyard, local park, and recess time where they can play with siblings and friends?
- If families are living in a home that does not meet safety or health codes, try working with a local legal aid clinic to draft a template letter that families can give their landlords.
- Get information on local subsidized preschools, Early Head Start, and Head Start programs.

How can you promote access to safe, stable, equitable environments?

- Schools must be a safe space for all students! Address bullying and teasing in the moment, and encourage students to be upstanders, not bystanders.
- Make sure that children and families feel represented. Look at any books, posters on the wall, or handouts. Are all kinds of families, all genders, all races, people with disabilities represented?
- If your school does not provide food on the weekends and over breaks, see if you can start a program.
- Know the community resources! More students than you think come to school hungry, without secure housing, or having witnessed violence. Be the person who connects families to resources.
- Check for safety issues around you, including access to guns, medications, alcohol, and drugs. Make a plan to take care of any risks you see.

Safe, equitable, stable environments to develop a sense of belonging and connectedness.

Children need to feel connected to their communities, loved, and appreciated. Involvement in social institutions and environments, awareness of cultural customs and traditions, and a sense that they matter and belong helps them develop into secure and resilient adults/ What are some examples of social and civic engagement?

- Being involved in projects, peer mentoring, or community service through one's school or religious organization
- Participating in family cultural traditions
- Joining a music, art, or sports group.

How can you promote access to social and civic engagement?

- Ask children about the activities they do outside of school, and delight with them in those activities.
- Work on creative projects about sharing their favorite activities with their friends.

- Have fliers available for Community Centers, after school activities, and mentoring programs in your community.
- Families can volunteer in the community together
- Create new after school activities
- Get involved in a place of worship, if that feels supportive. Many spiritual and religious institutions have youth groups or classes for children and youth.

Opportunities for social and emotional growth.

Children need to have a lot of opportunities to develop their sense of self-awareness and social cognition, learn how to self-regulate emotions and behavior, and acquire skills needed to respond functionally and productively to challenges. Many of these skills arise during child-centered play. Some children will pick-up these skills naturally, but others may need adults to help them name and understand their own feelings. Either way, these skills are critical for children to be able to become resilient, emotionally-healthy adults. What do we mean by opportunities for social and emotional growth?

- Developing a sense of emotional and behavioral self-regulation
- Having the ability to respond to challenges in a productive way
- Developing key social and culturally-appropriate communication and interpersonal skills

How can you support social and emotional growth?

- Help children to name their feelings as they talk about them and what they feel like
- Remember that disagreements in peer groups are normal and show children how to disagree respectively and productively
- Schools can implement social and emotional learning (SEL) curriculum
- Make time for open play with friends and siblings that the children lead on their own
- Encourage social connection the same way you encourage eating healthy foods or exercising

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