

WE CAN IMPROVE THE LIVES OF WISCONSIN'S CHILDREN

IT'S NOT WHAT'S WRONG WITH A CHILD, IT'S WHAT'S HAPPENED TO HIM OR HER.

SCIENCE

Science now understands how chronic **toxic stress** leads to physical and emotional ill health in our community, and how we can give new hope to children.

When children experience **ACEs (adverse childhood experiences)** over and over again, without the protective effects of a nurturing parent or other close adult, their brain development is physically and negatively altered.



ACEs

ADVERSE CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES

These are experiences that can negatively impact a **child's brain development** and physical, mental and social behaviors.

ACEs that children experience include:

Abuse

- physical
- emotional
- sexual

Loss of a parent

- separation
- divorce
- incarceration
- death

Neglect

- physical
- emotional

Living with

- family members who abuse substances
- a person with an untreated mental illness
- family members who engage actively in criminal activity
- domestic violence

TOXIC STRESS

TOXIC STRESS IS CAUSED BY ACEs.

The more ACEs a child encounters, the higher the child's risk of medical, behavioral and social **problems as an adult.**

As a child experiences ACEs over and over again, his or her stress load rises to toxic levels.

These children develop defensive and/or aggressive behaviors and are less trusting of others.

It is difficult to focus on learning or build healthy relationships with others because they're more concerned with surviving.

The ACE study shows that nearly 60% of Wisconsin residents have experienced one ACE, with 14% experiencing 4 or more.

Compared to those with no ACEs, individuals with 4 or more ACEs have been shown to be:

2x

More likely to be smokers

7x

More likely to be alcoholics

10x

More likely to have injected street drugs

12x

More likely to have attempted suicide

THE SCIENCE OF HOPE

The Science of Hope and recent advances in neuroscience show us that if we interact with affected children at a young enough age, in a positive way, we can help them to build resilience. One adult can make a difference. By being a consistent, positive influence in a child's life, you can change his or her life for good.

RESILIENCE

THE ABILITY TO RECOVER

Attuned, caring, loving adults can be a positive influence in a child's life. They can help that child build resilience against negative encounters that child experiences.

When children build up resilience, they learn to **adapt positively** to changing situations and maintain a hopeful outlook. They learn to see past stressful situations and fight for a better life.



If children don't have someone in their corner to protect them against harmful influences, they lose the ability to build up resilience. They adapt to their negative environment and can fall into a downward spiral.



CHANGE YOUR PERSPECTIVE

Trauma-Informed Care offers a different perspective. It is not a therapy, intervention or specific action; it requires viewing the world through a new lens.

While professionals receive training in trauma-informed care, it is not just for service providers; it is universally applicable and **everyone has a role to play!**

TRAUMA-INFORMED CARE

CHANGE YOUR BEHAVIOR

We must change the way we see a badly behaving child. It's not what's wrong with that child, it's what has happened to him or her.

This lessens the blame we place on children who have experienced ACEs and instead acknowledges it may not be their fault they're acting this way. This shows children that you understand their past experiences may be affecting their present behavior. It's up to us to discover what a child's behavior means and respond with what he or she needs.

JOIN THE MOVEMENT

Learn how to help children heal emotionally by being aware of their situations and **becoming an agent of hope.** We can work to improve the lives of Wisconsin's children.

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