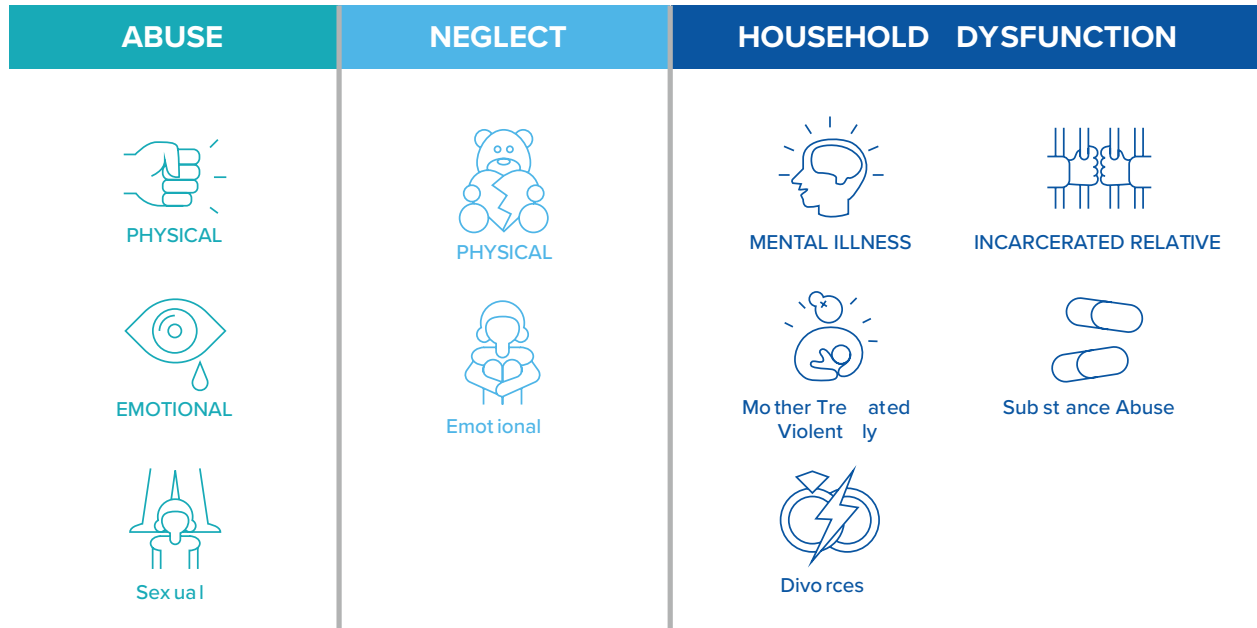


ADVERSE CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES (ACES)

ACEs come in many forms, from physical and mental abuse to neglect and household instability. In 1998, CDC-Kaiser Permanente published a groundbreaking study that investigated the impact of ACEs on physical and mental health problems in over 17,000 adults. During the study, the adults were given a survey asking about 10 different types of ACEs and if they had experienced them prior to the age of 18. The study showed a direct correlation between ACEs and future health complications.¹



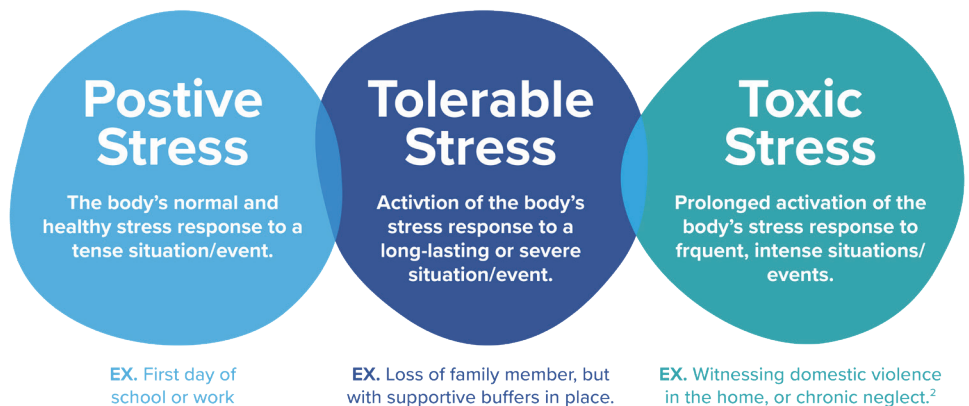
Graphic used with permission from The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.

Since this study, more has been learned more about the psychological effects of ACEs on young minds, but also the long-term health complications that can come from recurring exposure to ACEs. Now that we understand how toxic stress affects the minds and bodies of children, we can interrupt these changes by providing safe, stable, nurturing environments, while helping children build social-emotional skills and resilience.

What is Toxic Stress?

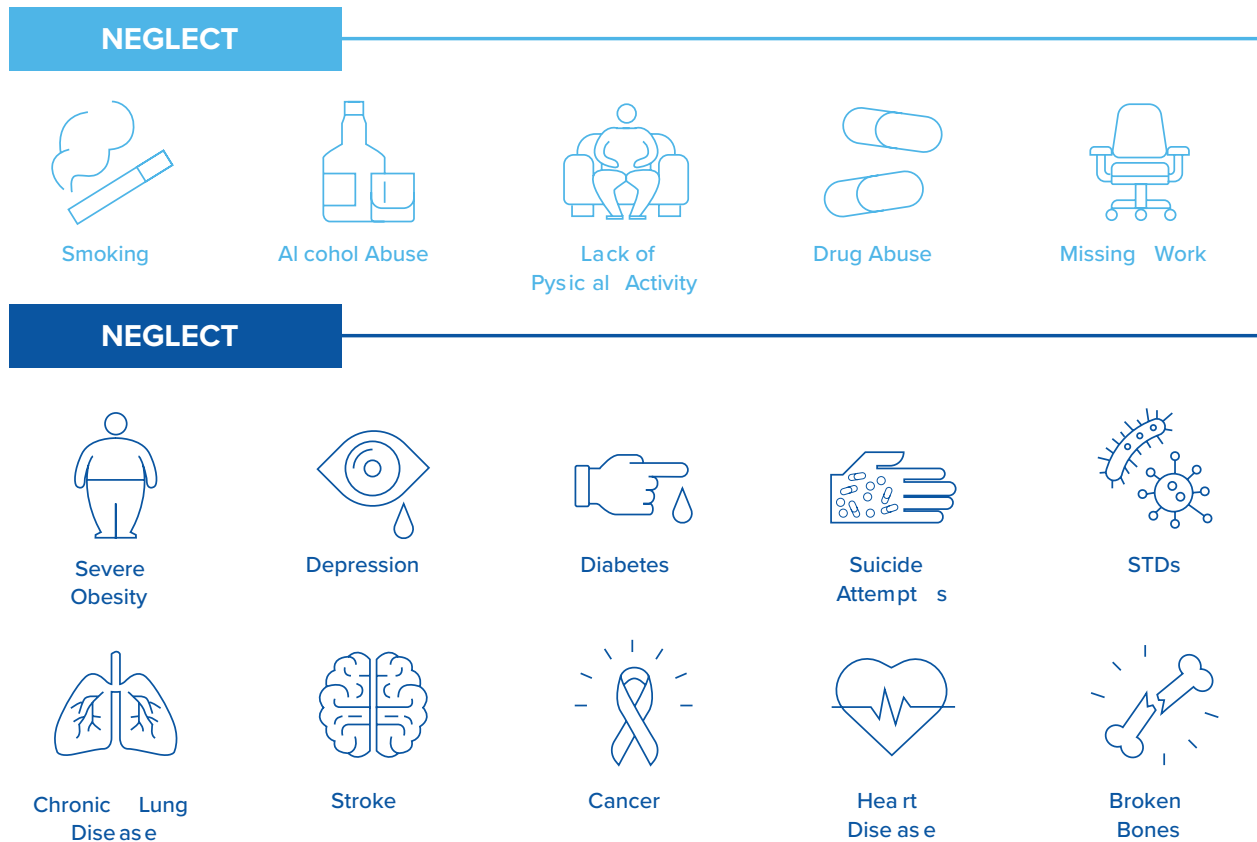
Not all stress is bad. Some stress is healthy and positive because it prepares us to respond to temporary challenges in our lives, such as running a race, public speaking, or starting a new job. Our stress response activates and then quickly returns to baseline. More intense or longer lasting stressors can be tolerable if we have support systems in our lives to help us cope. If we don't have supports, severe or frequent exposure to certain types of stress can have a 'toxic' effect on the body and brain.

It is this toxic stress that, when not properly addressed and reduced, can lead to long-term behavior issues, health complications, and diseases that are caused by ACEs.



The Lifelong and Generational Impacts of Toxic Stress.

Toxic stress also affects children as they grow older, and leads to many common health and behavioral issues later in life.⁴ The CDC-Kasler ACE study found that adults with an ACE score of 4 or more were at significantly greater risk for many behavioral, physical, and mental health issues later in life.



What Can Be Done to Address ACES and Toxic Stress?

- Provide a nurturing, safe and stable environment.
- Help children learn to cope with adversity.
- Reduce a child's ACE exposure.

ACEs work through experience, not just exposure. Exposure alone doesn't necessarily mean a child is affected. If the ACE is prevented from causing toxic stress, the harm should not occur. With a caring and nurturing environment, we can build children with the resilience to protect them from ACEs.