



DART Prevention Coalition

Taking Aim at Substance Use in Ocean County



Positive Childhood Experiences (PCEs)

What are Adverse Childhood Experiences?

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) are traumatic or stressful events, such as abuse, neglect or household dysfunction, that negatively impact a child's development. These experiences can lead to long-term physical, emotional and behavioral challenges and influence health outcomes over time.

What are Positive Childhood Experiences?

Positive Childhood Experiences (PCEs) are supportive and nurturing interactions and environments that promote healthy emotional and cognitive development for children. These experiences can help buffer the harmful effects of adverse childhood experiences by fostering resilience, building strong relationships and providing a foundation for positive mental health and coping skills.

The Four Building Blocks of Positive Childhood Experiences

A 2017 paper, "Responding to ACEs With HOPE: Health Outcomes From Positive Experiences," written by Dr. Robert Sege and Dr. Charlyn Harper Brown, established four building blocks of positive childhood experiences:

1. **Relationships:** Positive relationships in a child's life such as a healthy bond between parent and baby, positive relationships with other trusted adults and relationships with peers.
2. **Environment:** Having a safe, stable and protective environment in which children can live, learn and play. This includes adequate housing, access to nutritious foods and access to quality education.
3. **Engagement:** Having a connection to the community is important. Children should feel that they belong and that they matter to the people and community around them.
4. **Opportunities for social and emotional growth:** Children need to have the space to develop social and emotional competencies, which allows them to navigate adversity and challenges.

Source: Responding to ACEs With HOPE: Health Outcomes from Positive Experiences - PubMed

Positive Childhood Experiences as Protective Factors

Protective factors are conditions that help individuals cope with stress and adversity, reducing the impact of risks, challenges or negative behaviors.

Steps to Help Build Positive Childhood Experiences

- Form strong relationships and meaningful connections
- Cultivate positive self-image and self-worth
- Create a sense of belonging
- Share information about after-school activities where children can connect with coaches, mentors or peers
- Teach skills to cope with stress in healthy ways
- Talk, sing, read and play with your children to help them learn
- Establish routines and structure
- Engage children in family tasks and social connections

To learn more about strengthening protective factors in your community, email dart@rwjbh.org.

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