



Positive Childhood Experiences

WHAT ARE POSITIVE CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES?

Positive Childhood Experiences (PCEs) are the supportive, nurturing experiences that help children develop resilience. Research shows that PCEs can buffer the effects of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), improving mental and physical health outcomes and fostering emotional well-being. By creating environments where children feel safe, supported, and connected, we can help them grow into thriving adults.

Key Research Findings on PCEs

PCEs REDUCE THE IMPACT OF ACEs ON MENTAL HEALTH:



2019 study in *JAMA Pediatrics* found that adults who reported more PCEs—such as feeling supported by family, having caring relationships, and feeling a sense of belonging—were significantly less likely to experience depression or poor mental health, even if they had high ACE scores.

PCEs IMPROVE LONG-TERM PHYSICAL AND EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING:



Research from the *Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University* highlights how supportive relationships and stable environments help shape positive brain development, reducing the risk of stress-related illnesses in adulthood.

PCEs FOSTER RESILIENCE AND HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS:



Studies have shown that children who experience consistent emotional support, positive school environments, and strong community connections develop better coping skills, emotional regulation, and social relationships later in life.

PCEs ARE LINKED TO BETTER ADULT SOCIAL AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT:



A 2021 study in *Child Abuse & Neglect* found that individuals with high PCEs were more likely to form strong personal relationships, be engaged in their communities, and experience higher overall life satisfaction.

**Trauma is a fact of life. It does not,
however, have to be a life sentence.**

– Peter A. Levine

7

Key Positive Childhood Experiences & Real-World Examples



FEELING ABLE TO TALK TO FAMILY ABOUT FEELINGS

- A child knows they can express sadness, frustration, or joy with a parent or caregiver without fear of being dismissed.
- A parent regularly asks, "How was your day?" and listens without judgment.



FEELING THEIR FAMILY STOOD BY THEM DURING DIFFICULT TIMES

- A child going through a tough time at school feels supported because their parents attend meetings with teachers to help solve problems.
- During a family crisis, such as a job loss, caregivers reassure the child that they will get through it together.



FEELING SAFE AND PROTECTED BY AN ADULT AT HOME

- A child trusts that their caregiver will provide food, shelter, and protection from harm.
- A parent monitors their child's online activity, sets up parental controls, and has open conversations about internet safety to protect them from cyberbullying or inappropriate content.



HAVING AT LEAST TWO NON-PARENT ADULTS WHO GENUINELY CARE

- A teacher takes extra time to encourage a struggling student, helping them believe in their abilities.
- A coach or mentor provides consistent support and guidance, acting as a positive role model.



FEELING SUPPORTED BY FRIENDS

- A child has a best friend who listens and sticks by their side during tough times.
- A group of friends includes and encourages each other rather than leaving someone out.



FEELING A SENSE OF BELONGING AT SCHOOL

- A student feels welcomed and included in class, knowing their teachers care about them.
- A school club, sports team, or after-school program helps a child feel like part of a community.



HAVING POSITIVE CHILDHOOD ROUTINES AND TRADITIONS

- A family eats dinner together most nights, talking about their day.
- A child looks forward to weekend game nights, bedtime stories, or holiday traditions that create a sense of stability.

The more PCEs a child has, the more likely they are to be healthy and resilient.