

Helping a Child Overcome Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)

Everyone has different childhood experiences.

Some kids have lots of happy moments.

For others, it's a mix of good and not so good.

But sometimes, children experience trauma or other stressful things.

When those things happen, they're sometimes called adverse childhood experiences, or ACEs.

These hardships can include many different things.

But they all usually have a lasting effect on that child's sense of safety or stability.

Unfortunately, those experiences can also impact their health.

Now, this video isn't about what to do during an emergency or crisis.

It's for children who experienced something traumatic in the past.

If your child is experiencing a crisis right now or if they're in an unsafe situation, such as being in contact with a dangerous family member, get help right away.

Talk to your family doctor or a therapist.

Or go to an emergency room.

You can also call the Suicide and Crisis Lifeline at 988.

In Canada, resources include Talk Suicide Canada.

That number is 1-833-456-4566.

Children who have been through hardships aren't broken.

And they don't have to be stuck with any problems they may have now and going forward.

It just means they may need help to overcome the effects of those stressful experiences.

There are things you can do to help your child and give them the support they need.

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Here are five things you can do that may help your child overcome their past adverse experiences.

One: Find a therapist.

If you can, find a therapist who has experience working with other children who had adverse experiences.

Two: Help your child learn how to set boundaries.

For example, if your child was sexually abused, they may feel uncomfortable when people hug them.

Or they may feel uncomfortable hugging others.

Let them know it's okay to tell people they don't want to hug.

Three: Give your child affection and encouragement.

Praise them for trying something hard.

And encourage them to keep going when something doesn't go as expected.

Four: Set up routines to make each day more calm and predictable.

For example, maybe you can choose a few nights each week where you can have dinner together as a family.

Five: You can also help make each day more calm by learning how to manage your own reactions to stress.

Try counting to 10 before you speak.

Or maybe take a short walk if you need to calm down.

Even if you do all of these things, you may still need to get more help and support.

Your community may have parenting classes you can take.

And it may help to find another adult who can be a positive role model for your child.

But make sure it's an adult you know and trust.

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Remember, it's never too late to make changes that can help your child overcome the impact of painful past experiences.

The sooner you take those steps, the sooner your child's healing can start.