



# Information to Share with Parents

## Stress, Trauma and Early Brain Development

From 1995-1997, more than 17,000 people participated in a study about the effect of “adverse childhood experiences” (ACEs). The study showed that two-thirds of the participants reported at least one and more ACE and 20 percent reported three or more. ACEs include emotional, physical and sexual abuse; emotional and physical neglect; as well as domestic violence, substance abuse, mental illness, parental separation or divorce, and incarceration. The study also showed that more ACEs in childhood increase the risk of things like alcohol and drug abuse, depression and suicide attempts later in life. Research also shows that ACEs and other traumas or stressors like accidents, war, poverty and natural disasters have a negative effect on the healthy development of a young child’s brain.

When children are very young, their brains are the most vulnerable to stress. Not all stress is bad for a developing brain, but when it lasts a long time or is extreme, it can permanently damage the brain’s “wiring.” Toxic stress (like abuse and neglect) can prevent the healthy development of the connections in the brain that are the most important for later success in school and work.

The good news is that because the brain is very “plastic” in early childhood, the bad effects of trauma and stress can be reversed with proper care and attention. If children have secure and stable relationships with their parents or caregivers, the effects of previous trauma don’t have to be permanent.

### What this means for parents and early childhood workers:

- Traumatic experiences early in life can affect a child’s development, even when the child may not remember them.
- When young children exhibit problem behaviors, it’s important to find out whether trauma occurred.
- Secure and caring relationships for young children support healthy brain development.
- Early intervention works, can help to prevent future problems, and is cost-effective. For example, a 2010 report from the PA Early Learning Council noted that high quality early childhood education, including care for the emotional well-being of young

### Resources

- Adverse Childhood Experiences study: <http://www.cdc.gov/ace/findings.htm>
- Improving the Development of Pennsylvania Infants and Toddlers: <http://tinyurl.com/3lzbxb6>
- “The Impact of Abuse and Neglect on the Developing Brain,” by Bruce Perry: <http://tinyurl.com/3usaa4h>
- “The Impact of Early Adversity on Children’s Development,” Center on the Developing Child, Harvard University: [http://developingchild.harvard.edu/library/multimedia/inbrief\\_series/](http://developingchild.harvard.edu/library/multimedia/inbrief_series/)



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2nd page is  
designed as a  
handout for

## Tips for Sun Safety



Most families with young children welcome outdoor fun and sunny days! But before you and your child take off for the parks and playgrounds, here are some sun safety tips.



### Sun facts

We all need some sunlight to stay healthy. Sun exposure helps our skin produce vitamin D, which helps us absorb calcium for healthy bones. The amount of time in sunlight needed to produce enough Vitamin D is only 10 to 15 minutes per day a few times a week, depending on skin tone.

Children of all skin tones need protection from dangerous ultraviolet (UV) rays. Too much sun exposure can cause sunburn and possibly lead to skin cancer.



### Outdoor Time

Outdoor play is essential. All children need opportunities for physical play and exploration outdoors. For safety's sake, try to avoid the sun's peak hours, generally between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. Seek shade if your shadow is shorter than you.

**Sunscreen.** Select a broad-spectrum sunscreen with a factor of SPF 30 or higher. Apply sunscreen to all exposed areas of skin, including cheeks, neck, arms, legs, behind the ears, and on the nose. Apply sunscreen 15 to 30 minutes before going out, even on cloudy days. Reapply sunscreen every two hours and after swimming.

**Clothing.** Dress your child in lightweight clothing that covers as much of the body as possible to protect against the sun's rays. Send your child to school with a hat with a brim, marked with his or her name. The best way to protect eyes is to wear sunglasses, but not all sunglasses are the same. Look for labels stating that sunglasses provide 100 percent UV protection.



### Talk to your child

Give your child a positive message about the sun. "We need the sun to build strong bones, to help our gardens grow, and to make lovely sun tea." Remind your child to use sunscreen and wear a hat and sunglasses every day.

### Be a sun safety role model

Wear a hat and sunglasses, and apply sunscreen when heading outside. Your child will follow your example.

A message from your child's teacher \_\_\_\_\_