

Clinical Response to ACEs and Toxic Stress: “The Stress Busters”

ACEs LA Network of Care
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The Stress Busters

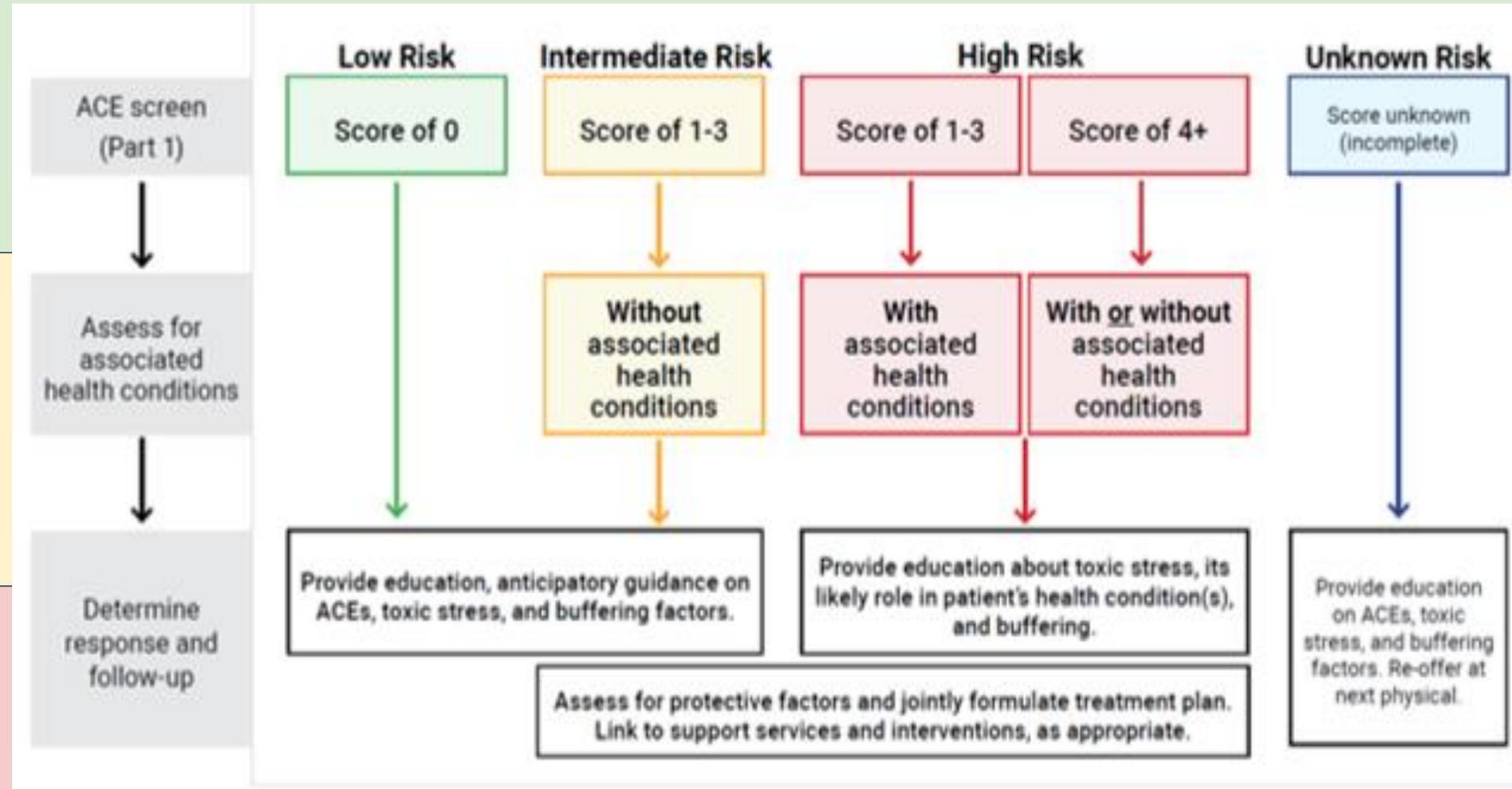


A Toxic Stress Action Plan!

Low Risk

Intermediate Risk

High Risk

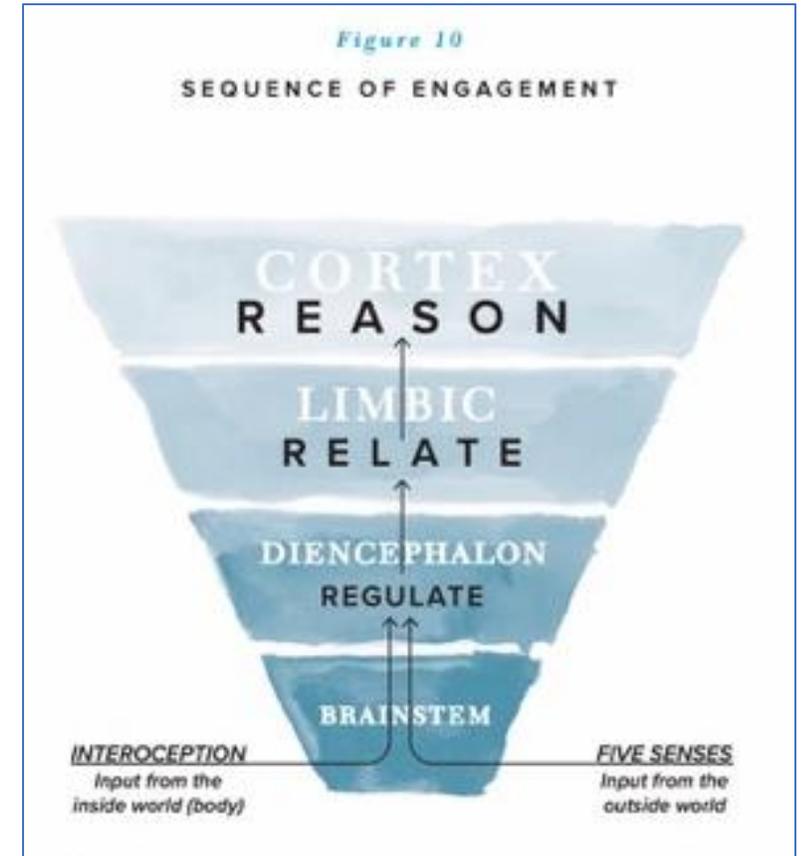


Healthy Relationships

- Anticipatory guidance:
 - We live longer!
 - Hugs are protective!
 - Talk Read Sing and Reach Out and Read
 - Encourage “time in” – with your children, friends and relatives!
 - Universal home visiting
 - Group clinic visit model
- Connect with community programs and resources on One Degree
 - Support groups
 - Parenting programs: Triple P, Video Interaction Project, Incredible Years
- Mental health, Family Therapy, and targeted dyadic interventions:
 - Attachment and Biobehavioral Catch-up (ABC), Child-Parent Psychotherapy (CPP), and Parent-Child Interaction Therapy (PCIT)

Regulate Relate Reason

1. First, **regulate** ourselves and co-regulate the other person. Help them feel safe and calm, reducing their stress responses.
2. Then **relate** to their emotions. Help them feel understood and connected.
3. Once the other person feels safe and understood, engage them to process what happened through **reason**.



- Anticipatory guidance:
 - Sleep disturbances are common.
 - Healthy sleep can improve neurological, endocrine, metabolic and immune regulation
 - Sleep hygiene

- Additional support: night light, weighted blanket, relaxation techniques, journaling, or conversations with a trusted adult/friend to address specific worries.
- Meditation, yoga, exercise during the day

- Medications
- Sleep Study and referral to sleep speciality
- Referral to mental health for cognitive-behavioral therapies.

- Anticipatory guidance:
 - Stress can INCREASE or DECREASE appetite
 - Stress can increase cravings for high-fat and high-sugar foods
 - Western diet associated with increased inflammation
 - Anti-inflammatory diet: fruit, vegetables, fish, whole grains
- Consider Omega-3 Fatty Acid supplementation
- Trauma-informed weight loss programs
- Tie into other domains - eat with family and friends, physical activity, mindful eating
- Nutritionist or Dietician support
- Referral to needed specialist (anorexia clinics, obesity clinics, Cardiology, Endocrinology, GI, etc.)

Physical Activity

- Anticipatory guidance:
 - Physical activity - improved memory, attention, cognition, mental health, immune function
 - May help promote the positive stress response, metabolize increased energy associated with anxiety or stress, and increase resilience factors
- Brief physical activity breaks to release excess energy
- Moderate-intensity aerobic activity, for longer durations, three times or more a week
- Activities that combine physical activity with self-regulation skills and breathing techniques, such as martial arts and yoga, may also be beneficial
- Low mood and stress have been identified as barriers to exercising; professional support may help patients overcome these barriers.

Mindfulness and Mind-Body Interventions

- Anticipatory guidance:
 - Nonjudgmental, moment-to-moment awareness that involves attention, intention, and a kind attitude
 - Can support trauma healing and regulation of stress
 - Improved cardiovascular and immune health
- Online and downloadable apps
- Other mind-body practices: including tai chi, yoga, acupuncture, breathing techniques, and massage therapy
- Mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR)

Nature

- Anticipatory guidance:
 - Parks, local green spaces, playgrounds, and even indoor plants.
 - Decreases diabetes, depression, heart rate, blood pressure, and mortality
 - Calms the stress response system and increases healthy behaviors such as physical activity, mindfulness, and relational health
 - Lunch and Learn: <https://youtu.be/waIUfpAe9Lw>
- Park Prescriptions! Parkrx.org
- Encourage green space.
- Providers can recognize that there may be cultural, community, and policy barriers to equal access to nature. Access to nature is a social justice health issue.
- Referral to ecotherapy or adventure-based treatment programs.

Mental Health

- Anticipatory guidance:
 - Mental health providers can help patients build skills and capacities for resilience, directly address trauma-related symptoms, provide a safe, supportive, and trusting clinical relationship
 - Behavioral and mental health programs may improve physical health and neuro-endocrine-immune-metabolic dysregulation
- Address barriers to mental health services (access, engagement, stigma)
- Consider: multidisciplinary teams, integrated behavioral and mental healthcare, care coordination, and medical home models
- Linguistic and cultural congruence between provider and patient is critical
- Referral to Developmental and Behavioral Pediatrics, Mental Health, Neurofeedback
- Medications

Trauma Therapies

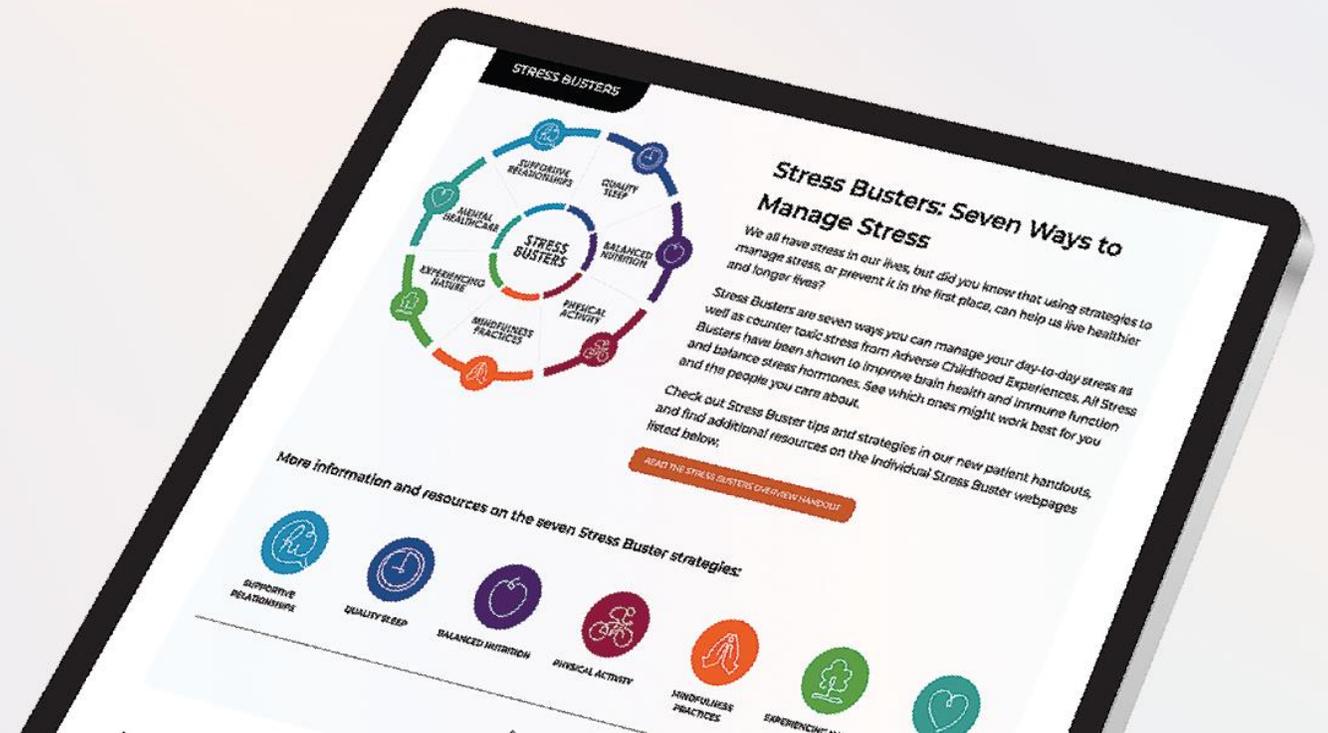
- ❖ [Child-Parent Psychotherapy](#) (ages birth to 6 years): Dyadic intervention for young children and their caregivers that supports family strengths and relationships.
- ❖ [Parent-Child Interaction Therapy](#) (2 to 12 years): Dyadic parent training treatment that emphasizes improving the quality of the parent-child relationship and pattern of parent-child interactions.
- ❖ [Attachment & Biobehavioral Catch-up \(ABC\)](#) (Birth to middle school): A strengths-based, focused, brief (10, 1-hour weekly sessions) dyadic, home-visiting program.
- ❖ [Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy \(TF-CBT\)](#) (verbal children and adults): A structured, short-term treatment model for children and adults who have experienced trauma.
- ❖ [Eye Movement Desensitization Reprocessing \(EMDR\)](#) (adolescents and adults): EMDR is focused on helping clients resolve unprocessed traumatic memories.
- ❖ [Family Systems Therapy](#) (verbal children and adults): Supports resolving family conflict or issues.
- ❖ [Cognitive Processing Therapy](#) (adolescents and adults): A type of cognitive behavioral therapy, generally 12 sessions, that helps modify maladaptive thinking related to their trauma.
- ❖ [Prolonged Exposure Therapy](#) (adolescents and adults): A cognitive behavioral therapy approach that helps clients gradually approach their memories, feelings and situations of trauma.
- ❖ [Somatic Therapy](#) (all ages): An approach that focuses on how emotions and stress appear in the body and tools to regulate the autonomic nervous system.
- ❖ [Biofeedback and Neurofeedback](#) (young children to adults): A type of therapy that allows the client to see their physiology in real-time (e.g. heart rate, coherence, brain wave patterns) to learn strategies to control their physiology.

Stress Buster Resources

- Becoming ACEs Aware in California Training: <https://training.acesaware.org>
- ACEs Aware Stress Busters Resource Page: www.acesaware.org/managestress
- Wellness Corner by the VTA and PACEs Connection: <https://vtaplus.org/continuing-education-and-support/wellness-corner/>
- Stress Busters online curriculum coming soon
- OSG Videos: “What are ACEs” and “How to Manage Stress” <https://osg.ca.gov/aces-toxic-stress/>
- SAFE Spaces: Free, on-line training for educators <https://osg.ca.gov/safespaces/>

STRESS BUSTERS

7 Ways to Manage Stress





Prevent/Address ACEs & Other Stressors (External Events and Environment)

- Provide public education about ACEs, other stressors, and toxic stress prevention
- Address current safety and unmet social needs
- Prevent and interrupt ACEs and other risk factors for toxic stress, including racism and discrimination
- Collaborate across sectors: health care, public health, early childhood, education, social services, justice, and others
- Advocate for proactive public policies and reform deleterious ones
- Implement trauma-informed care principles



Treat Toxic Stress Physiology (Internal Biology)

- Address neurologic, endocrine, immune, metabolic, and genetic disruptions
- Provide patient education about toxic stress and strategies to regulate the stress response: supportive relationships, quality sleep, balanced nutrition, physical activity, mindfulness practices, and mental health
- Train providers on clinical interventions
- Engage researchers to further develop biomarkers and therapeutic interventions



Improved health

- ✓ Physical
- ✓ Mental
- ✓ Emotional
- ✓ Developmental
- ✓ Cognitive
- ✓ Relational
- ✓ Behavioral

Gilgoff R, Schwartz T, Owen M, Bhushan D, Burke Harris N. Opportunities to Treat Toxic Stress. *Pediatrics*. 2023 Jan 1;151(1):e2021055591.