

Understanding PCEs

Positive Childhood Experiences

What are PCEs?

Positive Childhood Experiences (PCEs) are the kinds of activities and experiences that enrich a child's life. According to a recent study *positive childhood experiences counter the damaging effects of adverse experiences*. PCEs are what make childhood a time of growth, change, exploration, and happiness. According to a study from Johns Hopkins University, there are seven PCEs that could have lifelong effects on mental and relationship health.

In the home children...

talk with family members about their feelings

feel safe and protected by an adult in their home

feel that their families stood by them during difficult times



In the community children...

feel supported by friends

have at least two non-parent adults who take genuine interest in them

feel a sense of belonging in school

enjoy participating in community traditions

Image credit: pngwave.com and nounproject.com

Some children live in homes where they don't feel emotionally and physically safe. The good news is that friends and communities can be sources of PCEs as well. "If your child has experienced trauma and you're worried about the long-term impact it could have on them, these findings show that the positive experiences in childhood lead to better adult physical and mental health, no matter what they have faced," said Ali Crandall, assistant professor of public health at Brigham Young University.

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The types of experiences that have the most healing effects are not things that can be bought or that cost a lot of money. We need experiences that help children learn to trust others even when life is uncertain, difficult or frightening. Positive things happen when we talk honestly about things that are hard to understand, scary, embarrassing or painful.

Tips for Nurturing PCEs at Home

Talking with Family Members about Feelings

- Encourage your child to share their thoughts, feelings, and concerns
- Help your child learn to identify feelings using pictures, books, videos, or apps
- Explore the wide range and vocabulary of feelings. Instead of just “happy,” were you content, pleased, cheerful, delighted, thrilled, excited, or overjoyed?
- Give your child your full attention when they are trying to communicate with you
- Look at family pictures and share memories together
- Talk about and celebrate your child’s strengths (and do so in front of others)



Feeling Family Stands By You in Difficulty

- Acknowledge when situations are stressful to your child
- Ask what they’re most concerned about and listen without judgement
- Ask if they have ideas about what might help
- Express that you believe in their ability to learn and grow
- Express pride in them when they take responsibility and follow through on correcting an error



Feeling Safe and Protected

- Prioritize time to connect with your child
- Be clear about your expectations
- Speak in warm expressive tones
- Model appropriate apologies
- Remember to smile, give hugs, and say “I Love You”
- Keep your word
- Set routines that provide consistency and nurture good habits
- Notice what soothes your child: rocking, warm voice, a song, a story



Promoting Community PCEs

- Support your school’s social emotional learning efforts
- Give your child opportunities to learn and practice social and emotional skills through playdates and community events
- Connect your child with trusted adults who care and are positive influences on them
- Share traditions that create a sense of belonging in the school and community



Resources:

Positive Childhood Experiences and Play

www.centerforchildcounseling.org/positive-childhood-experiences-pces-and-play

Positive Childhood Experiences

www.childandadolescent.org/positive-childhood-experiences