

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) are defined as situations that lead to an elevated risk of children and young people experiencing damaging impacts on their health and other social outcomes across the life course.

# Building Resilience

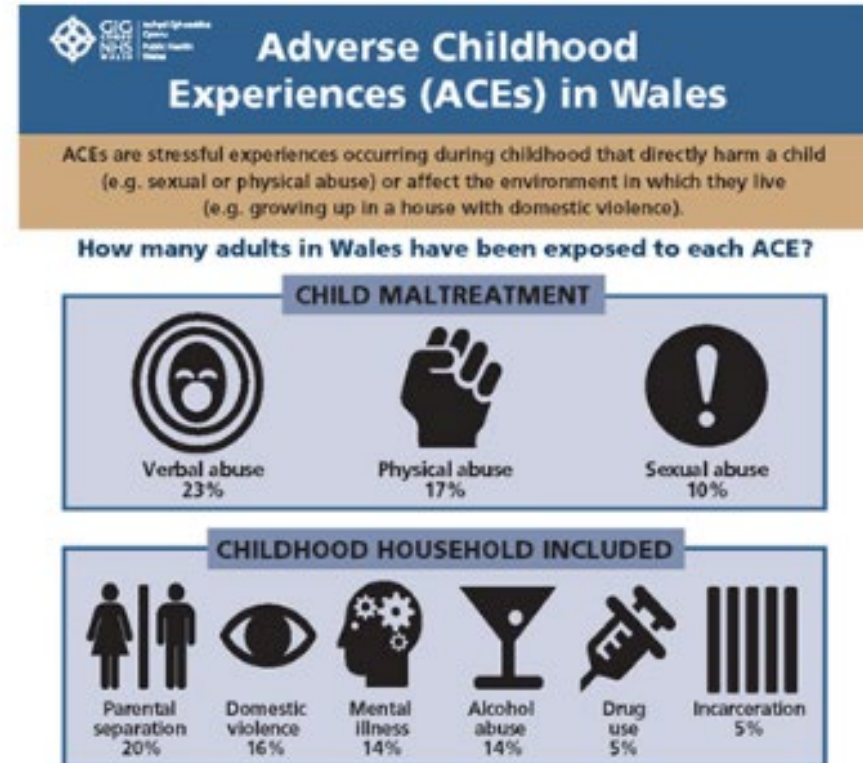
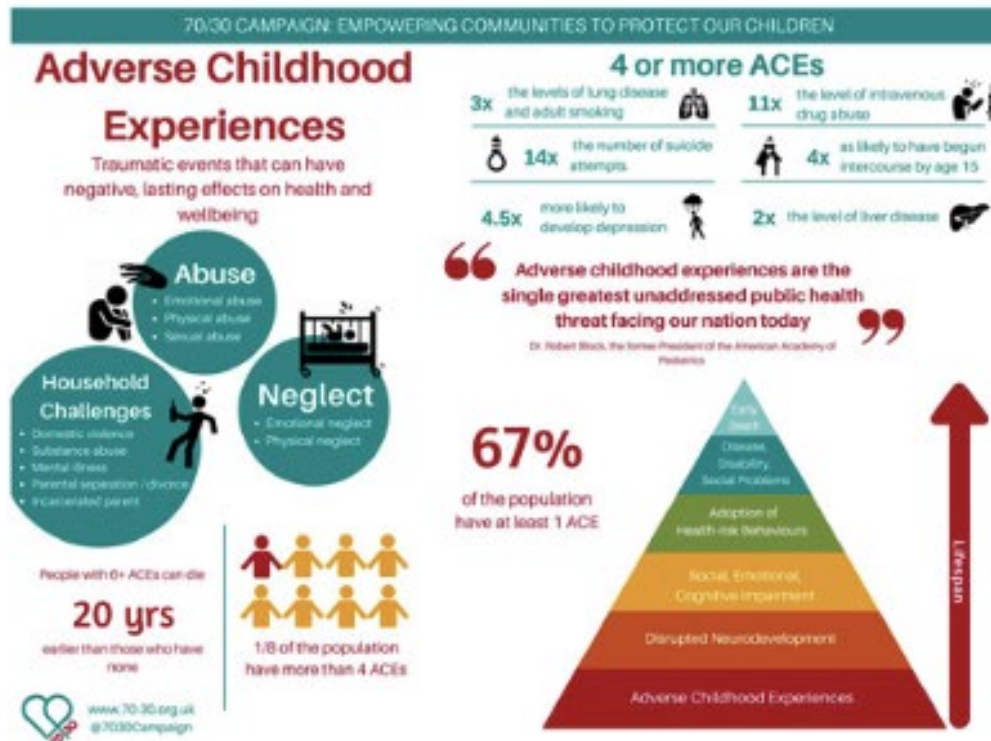
## Description:

- All children and young people have difficulties and struggles in life, however some face multiple more serious Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) which could affect them into adulthood. It is important that they are helped to build coping strategies that enable them to overcome these challenges and build resilience as they are growing up. This session covers information that will help with this.

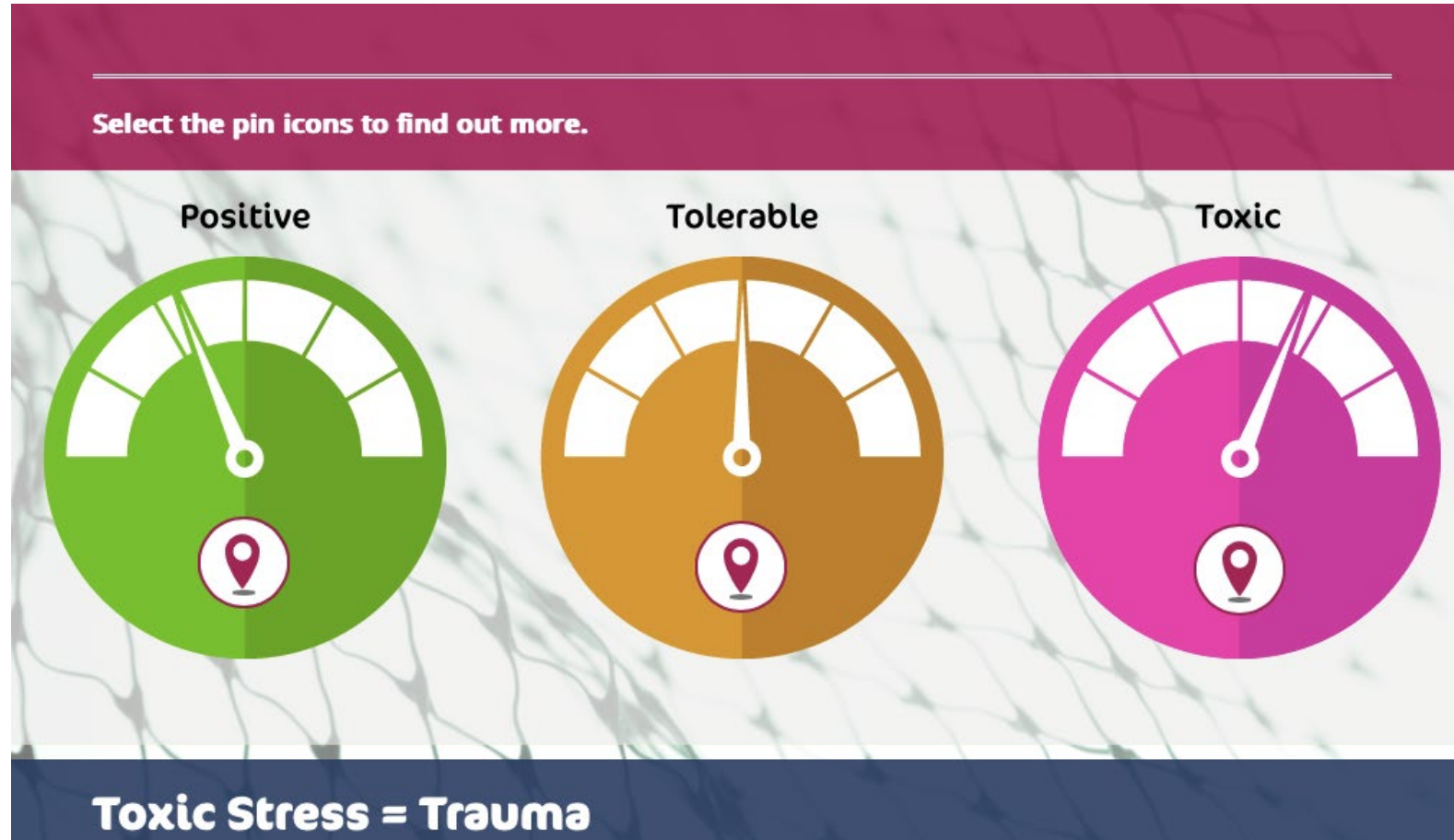
# What?

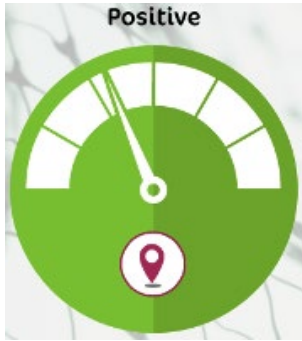
Let's begin with what is meant by ACEs.

Select the two images to find out more.



# Stress and Trauma

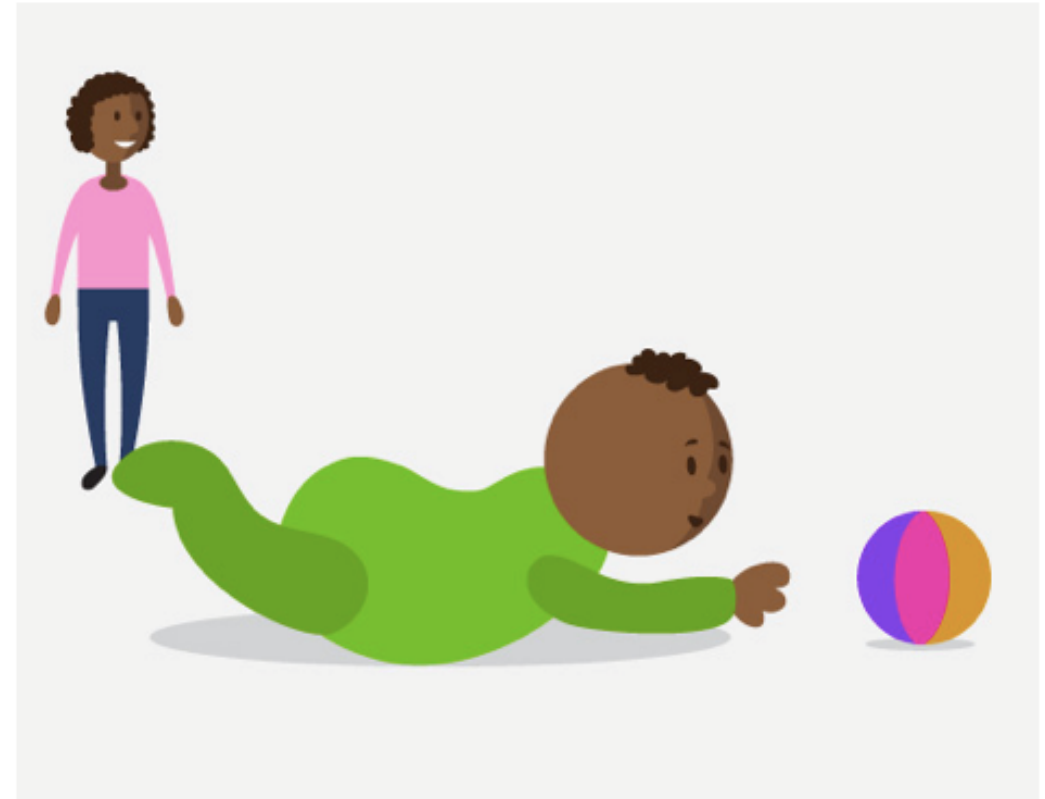


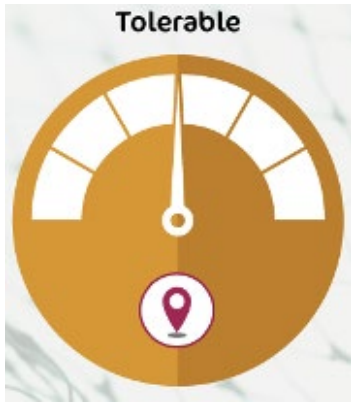


## Positive stress

Not all stress is bad, some is necessary for healthy development. Children and young people need some stretch and challenge to move to the next stage of development. A nurturing parent may place a toy just out of reach of their baby. This encourages the baby to crawl. The baby may be frustrated about not being able to reach the toy. Yet, with gentle encouragement, the baby is able to manage the frustration. He or she works out how to crawl towards the toy. **This is positive stress.**

NB: A child cannot develop resilience if they are over-protected and never allowed to be stressed, challenged or frustrated.





## Tolerable stress

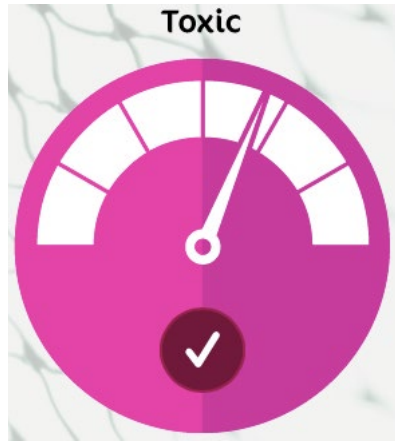
Some young people have many more difficult and extreme experiences. If they are lucky, key adults around them can:

- Help them to make sense of their experiences
- Ensure they stay safe
- Remain consistent and reliable
- Ensure the child or young person receives help and comfort when they need it

This is **tolerable stress**. People who have received such help in childhood can be resilient as adults. They may be even more resilient than those who have never had such stress.







## Toxic stress

There are other children who have experienced multiple ACEs. They may not have had anyone in their lives to help them or protect them. These young people experience extremely high levels of stress. They are in a perpetual state of fear and anxiety. They are constantly flooded with stress hormones. They have no way of calming themselves. Such stress makes it very hard for them to build resilience. **This is toxic stress.**



# A Trauma-informed Approach in Schools: three aspects:

## 1) Relational Safety

..build trust with adults.

...may be for the first time.

Children need at least one warm, secure and consistent relationship with a bigger, stronger, wiser, kind adult.

..important relationships can help a child find strategies to help them stay calm and functional in the face of challenge.



# A Trauma-informed Approach in Schools: three aspects:

## 2) Making sense of the past

- Supporting children and young people to remember and tell a coherent, meaningful story about bad experiences
- They gain mastery over the past.
- Those experiences can then be used positively to build resilience.
- If a child or young person cannot make their experiences comprehensible, manageable and meaningful, they will experience chronic stress.
- Drama, Music, Dance and Art ..offer a chance to explore extreme life experiences at a safe distance.

# A Trauma-informed Approach in Schools: three aspects:

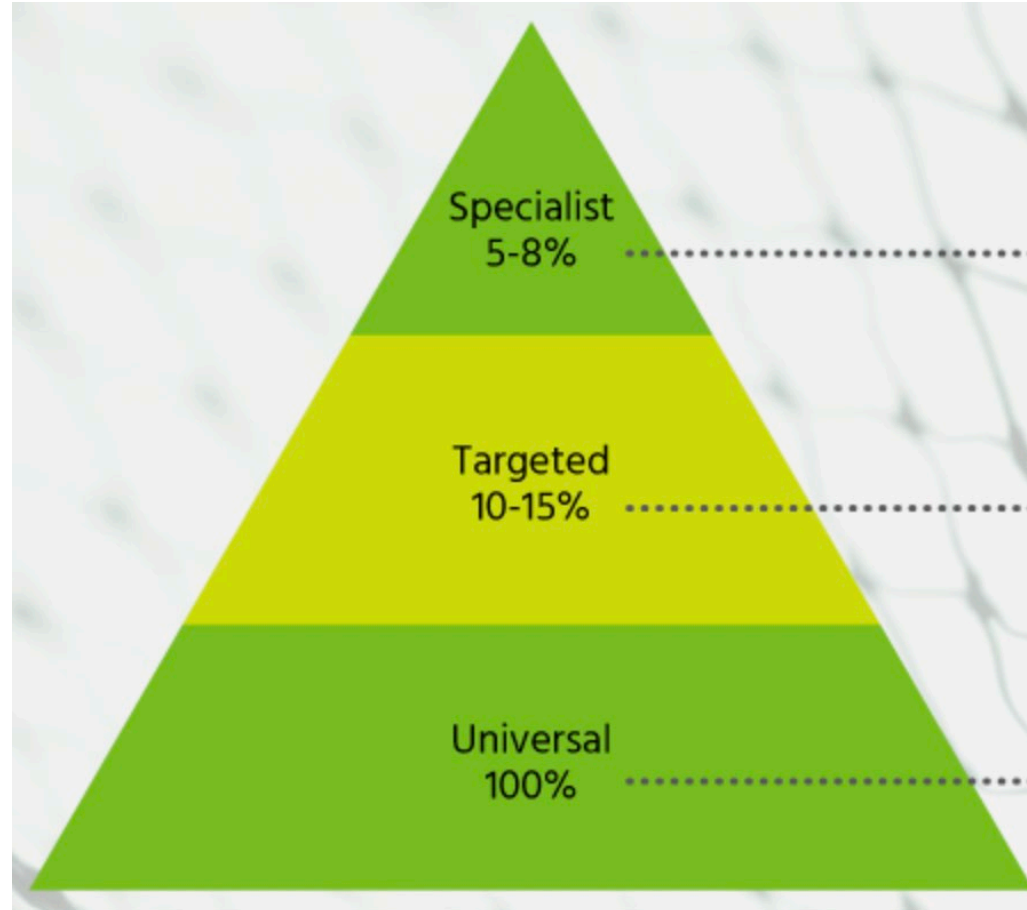
## 3) Reconnecting with ordinary life

- Once a child or young person has been helped to tell their story (directly or indirectly), they are able to fit this into a bigger picture
- To know who they are
- Once the child or young person has the full story, they can reconnect. They may connect with ordinary life for the first time.
- People who have been able to overcome their traumatic experiences may end up being the most resilient.

# Five characteristics of a Trauma-Informed School

Concept	Mantra	Strategy
1. The stress if coming from outside the school	It's all about me	Drop your personal mirror
2. Allow the student to de-escalate and regulate before solving the issue at hand	Problem solving and solutions can't be worked through while 'in the moment'	Designate a quiet place(s) where students can feel safe and regulate
3. It's rarely about the issue at hand. It often goes much deeper	What's really driving this child's behaviour?	Be the one who listens and values the student's voice. Ask how you can help. Explore the what's underneath the behaviour
4. It's a brain issue not a behavioural issue	My job is to help this child regulate, not just behave	Make regulatory activities part of the classroom culture. Help children learn how to self regulate
5. Discipline is to teach, not to punish	Discipline should happen in the context of a trusting relationship	Use consequences that keep children in school and that foster trust and safety with caring adults

# Tiered responses in schools

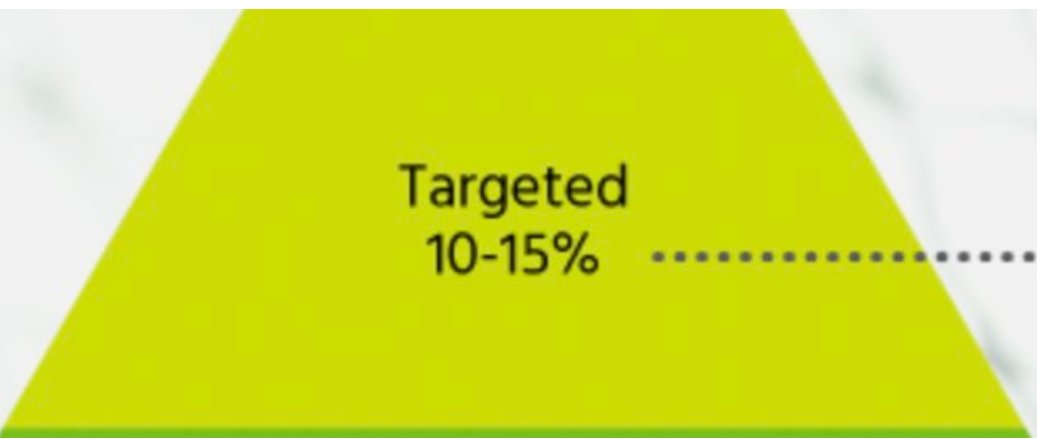




## Specialist services

For example:

- Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS)-school mental health liaison
- Social Care
- Educational Psychology




Targeted  
10-15%

## Targeted services

For example:

- Mentoring
- SEND provision
- Counselling
- Nurture groups
- Social Skills groups



Universal  
100%

# Universal

- **In the classroom e.g.**
  - Consistency, firmness with kindness...
  - Marking work
  - Routines (e.g. start and end of lessons)
  - Teacher attendance and punctuality
  - Genuine pleasure in and celebration of student success
- **Whole School e.g.**
  - policies, for example, clear school-wide mental health strategy including:
  - Strength-based approach. Focus on protective factors of individual children
  - Rights-based model as a whole school approach
- Consistent and supported behaviour policy
- Clear boundaries
- Strong leadership
- High expectations
- Support for teachers, (facilitated thinking time)
- Teachers' training
- Working with parents
- Community events
- Extended school provision (breakfast club, sports and arts activities)



# Resilience and Intervention Levels

- In the school setting, developing resilience using a trauma-aware approach is all about relationships
- Children and young people who have experienced trauma need to feel safe before they can connect with helpful adults
- The school environment needs to be orderly and consistent with clear rules and expectations
- Resilience grows out of warm, boundaried relationships within this environment
- Schools need a clear Mental Health Strategy. This outlines what the school offers. It is structured in terms of Universal, Targeted and Specialised tiers of support for children and young people who have experienced multiple ACEs
- Resilient children and young people need resilient school staff. Training and support, in particular thinking time, can help staff to stay that way

The learning derived from this session will be most effective when assimilated with the rest of the linked learning in this MindEd module on ACEs for schools (Science of ACEs, Classroom management, Behaviour problems, Anxiety and Distress and Multiagency working). You will find links under related sessions.

# Science Behind Adverse Childhood Experiences

## What Protects Young People From ACEs?

Not all young people who face childhood adversity or trauma go on to develop a mental health problem.

There are personal, structural and environmental factors that can protect against adverse outcomes, as shown in the protection wheel.







# General Classroom Management

Date published: 31 July 2020 Deadline for review: 1 August 2023

This session looks at how the needs of children with Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) are expressed through behaviours that affect their learning. You will consider how these behaviours affect other children and adults in the classroom and reflect on the range of strategies you could use in order to address them.

Select the information icon  for more project information or to use the search function.

Select the accessibility icon  to switch on the accessibility function, select the icon again to switch it off.



**Health Education England**

# Why?

Reflect on why should ACEs result in difficult behaviour in the classroom?

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Select the arrow icon to find the answer.

ACEs make it harder for children to see the world as nurturing. They may see it as unpredictable and harmful. These perceptions grow stronger with the number, frequency and persistence of the ACEs.

Change can be felt as threatening. Yet the classroom is a place to change, a place to learn. That might be how the more fortunate child sees it. Not so the child whose essential emotional, physical and social needs aren't met.



Consider how a child or young person with ACEs might see the classroom?  
They may:

- Be highly aware of any perceived threat
- Be more prone to a flight, fright or freeze response. Things that can seem quite benign to others, they see as menacing
- Need to constantly check; hypervigilance becomes habitual. It gets in the way of anything else
- Experience 'toxic stress'. They find everyday challenges overwhelming (see the MindEd session Building Resilience (449-002) for more information)
- Have negative expectations of any relationships
- See other pupils as risks rather than as friends
- Lack trust in the teacher. After all, their past experiences showed them repeatedly broken trust





The lack of self-worth, lack of control, misery and bubbling-just-below-the-surface emotions can be infectious. Sometimes we 'catch' these feelings. They make us uncomfortable and can affect how we feel about the child.

Reflect a little that this may be how that child is feeling.



Well, that sounds very negative. What's good about any classroom for children with ACEs? Unlike a seemingly unsafe and random world, the well-functioning classroom can be a refuge. It:

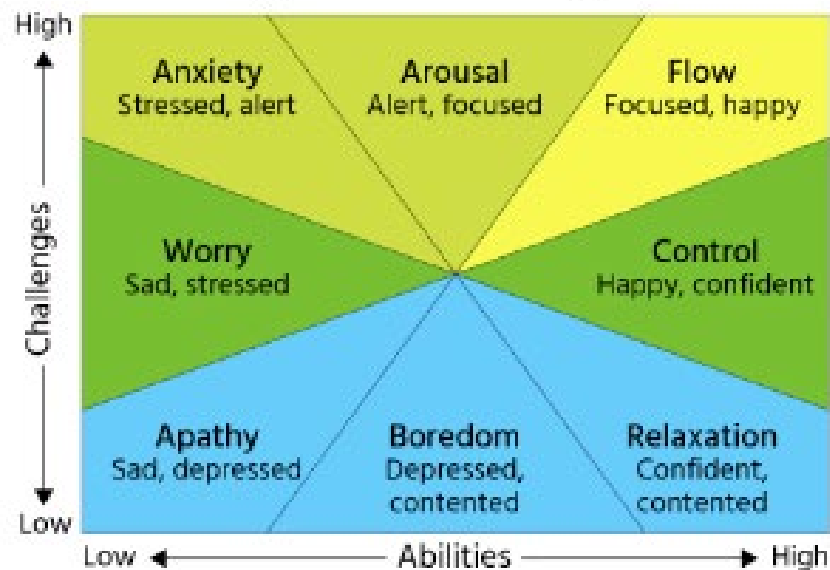
- Is predictable
- Has routines
- Is familiar
- Starts and stops at reliable times
- Has clear and fair rules that are consistently applied (but not rigidly)
- Has someone who knows what I can do and who wants me to succeed
- Has someone who is kind

# What are the Different Theories?

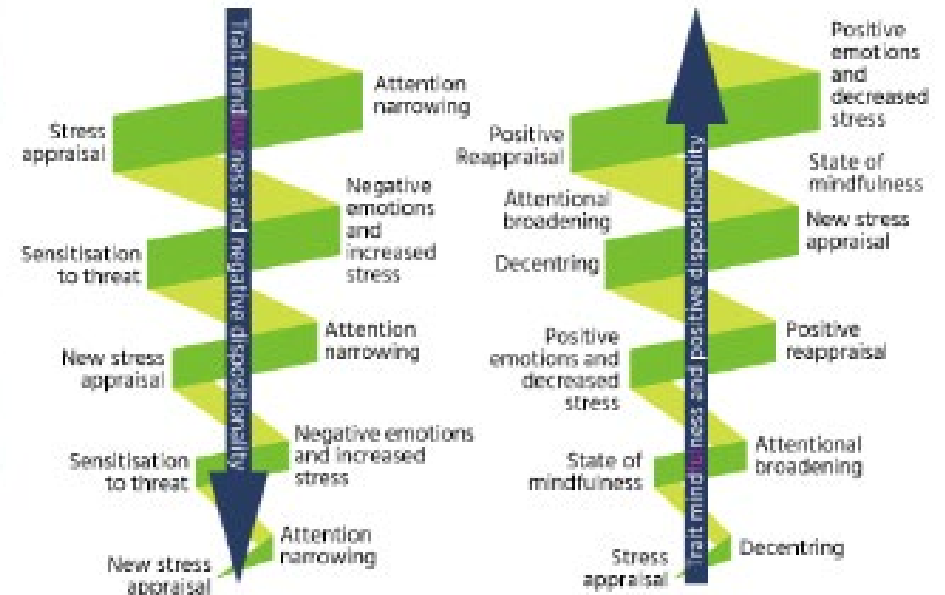
For all children and especially the ACEs-affected child, the well-functioning classroom is a personal laboratory of change. You come out of each lesson having changed a little. You've grown in a small way. Learning and teaching that presents tasks in a manageable way, shows the child that growth can take place.

Select the two images to find out more.

Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi - 'flow'



Barbara Fredrickson - 'broaden and build'





# What strategies can you use?

Your classroom can be a highly supportive environment. The sense of routine, stability and safety can offer a safe haven for learning and personal progress.

Select the four images to find out more.

## Consistency

- Maintain a safe, predictable, calm environment. Prioritise relationships and consistency.
- Aim for clarity, consistency, predictability
- Give the student opportunity to make choices
- Reduce avoidable distress: loud voices, abrupt sounds

## Talking

- Talk about safety and what steps you will take to help the student be and feel safe
- Offer self-calming techniques, such as mindfulness, breathing exercises, positive memories
- Teach positive self-talk to students and practice it before you need it

## Listening and reward systems

- Practice active listening with students and demonstrate empathy, 10:1 (Ratio of positive to negative statements for traumatised children) active ignoring of negative behaviour. They need a higher ratio of positive comments than children without ACEs
- Consistent expectations and behaviour plans that are based on rewards systems, not punishment and collaborative problem-solving with students

## Laughter and safe places

- Use music, exercise, movement, stretching and incorporate more opportunities for humour and laughter in the curriculum (laughter reduces the traumatic response in the brain)
- Establish a quiet, safe place in the classroom for students to go to when they need it

# Supportive Whole School Environment

There is a role for the whole school in supporting the needs of those living with the effects of ACEs. The ACE-aware, attachment-aware, trauma-informed school assumes complexity.



It approaches situations with empathy;

The school:

- Connects with the whole family: it involves them in the educational process
- Understands behaviour as a symptom of the problem, not the problem itself
- Introduces a whole-school mentally healthy culture.
- Liaises with external agencies

The children:

- Feel listened to
- Feel understood
- Engage in "thoughts and feelings" talk with an empathic adult

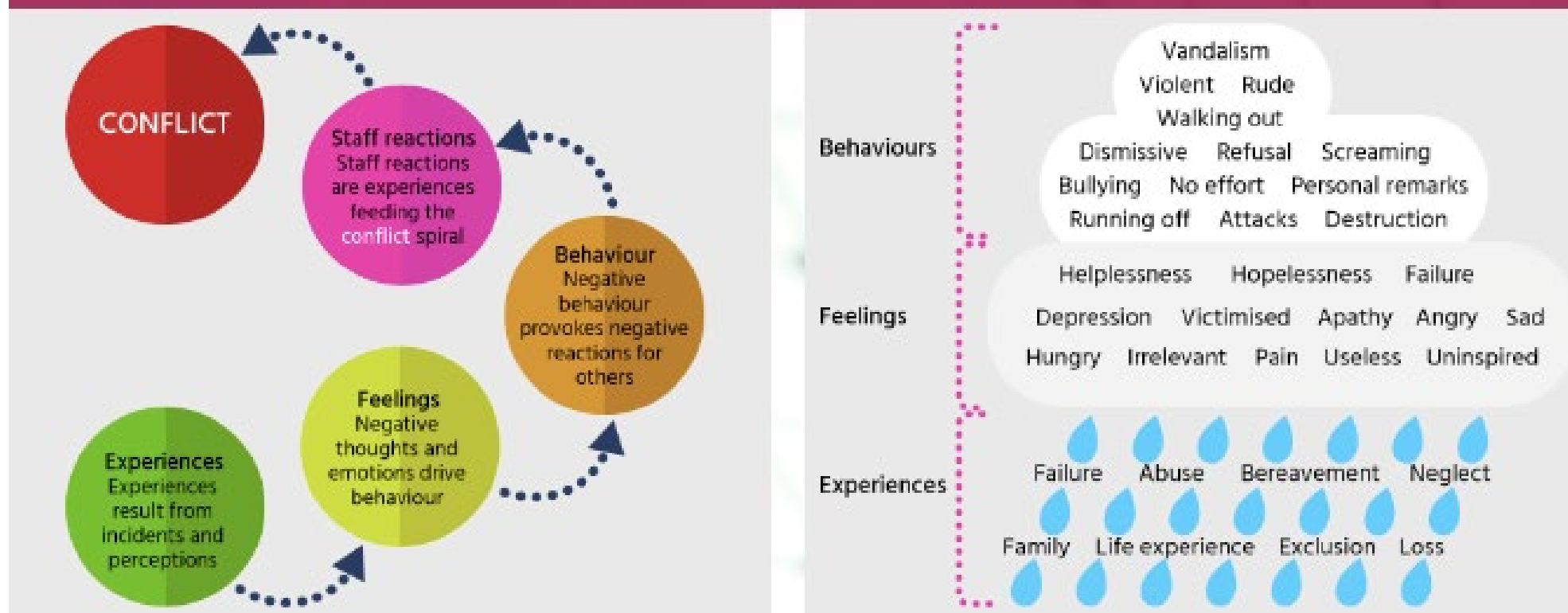
The staff:

- Help children and teenagers to correctly label their feelings
- Use emotion coaching: They validate the child's feelings

Here is a [list of strategies](#) that forms the backbone of sound behaviour management for all children and not just those suffering from ACEs, especially when bad things happen. Things can go wrong in busy classrooms when supporting the needs of all pupils as well as those with ACEs. It is important to know how to rebuild after a crisis.

Select the two images to find out more.

Here is a  
list of  
strategies:  
See next  
2 slides



# General Classroom Management Toolkit

This list of strategies forms the backbone of sound behaviour management for all children and not just those suffering from ACEs:

- Maintain usual routines. This will communicate the message that the child is safe and life will go on
- Give children choices. ACEs involves loss of control. Provide choices or control
- Increase the level of support and encouragement given
- Designate an adult who can provide additional support if needed
- Set clear, firm limits for inappropriate behaviour and develop logical-rather than punitive-consequences
- Take up time: Simply, 'Michael ....(pause to gain attention) ... come up here a sec please. Then deliberately look away ... talk to someone else. Michael will come. He just will

# General Classroom Management Toolkit

- Catching them 'being good': good classroom management starts with preventing acting out before it occurs
- Solution-focused techniques
- Rules and bending them when needed
- Individual support programmes/individual behaviour plan
- Teach pupils to self-regulate and to calm their stress response system
- Goal setting
- Break things into small steps
- Provide opportunities to catch up with lost learning
- No quick solution. It takes repeated effort to manage feelings

# General Classroom Management Toolkit

## **What you say and how you say it**

As an adult in charge, you have great power to influence the atmosphere in your classroom:

- Slow yourself down: talk slower, use a lower pitch for your voice, don't use complex sentences, don't use lots of body movements
- Use positive statements rather than negative ones: 'Assume the best about me'
- Use a kind, frank tone. Students learn that they can trust you
- Convey faith in students' abilities and intentions
- Take the time to notice and comment on positive behaviour. Be specific. 'You're trying lots of different ideas for solving that problem. That takes persistence'
- Pointing out desired behaviours

## General Classroom Management Toolkit




- Avoid labelling the learner's attitude
- Choice direction e.g. 'James, you can go next door to work with Mr Anderson or you can work sensibly with Andy as I've asked'.<sup>2</sup>
- 'When...then', such as., 'When you have finished tidying up your area... then you can sit wherever you want...'
- 'Pause direction': 'Just because you start talking, doesn't mean they hear you. Make a deliberate pause between gaining a student's attention and a direction to ensure they have had sufficient "take up" time. E.g. "Michael (*pause*)... David (*pause*)... could you face this way and listen, thanks".'<sup>3</sup>
- Take an interest in the pupils. They need to know you care
- Focus on the positive. Communicate pupils' successes to them. Tell their families too
- the 'invisible contract'. Whenever students walk into the classroom, assume they hold an invisible contract in their hands. This states, 'Please teach me appropriate behaviour in a safe and structured environment.' The teacher also has a contract. This states, 'I will do my best to teach you appropriate behaviour in a safe and structured environment'<sup>4</sup>
- soft, yet firm. The bottom line is that when students test us, they want us to pass the test. They are on our side
- use volume, tone, and posture. Face the student squarely, use a softened voice and lowered tone.
- keep it brief. Students understand more when we speak less.
- know when to be silent. The skilful use of silence can be just as powerful as the skilful use of words. When teachers use silence, we open a space for students to think. They can rehearse what to say. and gather the courage to speak



# Key Points and Further Information

- All behaviour communicates a message
- Half the class are likely to experience at least one ACE
- Understanding of what motivates poor behaviour
- You can be a rare island of consistency
- Develop a wider emotional vocabulary
- Don't expect your strategies to work all the time
- Your wellbeing matters too

# Related MindEd modules

 **Panel View**

Full catalogue

Full catalogue > MindEd Adverse Childhood Experiences > MindEd Adverse Childhood Experiences for Schools

Full catalogue

MindEd Adverse Childhood Experiences

**MindEd Adverse Childhood Experiences for Schools**

MindEd Blue Light Services

MindEd Combining Therapies

MindEd Core Content (Universal)

MindEd Counselling

MindEd for Education Settings

MindEd for Families

MindEd Healthy Child Mental Health Framework

MindEd Improving Workforce Wellbeing, Resilience and Population Mental Health

MindEd Learning Disability

MindEd Learning Paths

MindEd School and Cyber Bullying

MindEd Stopping Over Medication of People with a Learning Disability and Autistic People

MindEd Suicide and Self-harm Prevention

MindEd Targeted & Specialist CAMHS

Science Behind Adverse Childhood Experiences


Building Resilience


General Classroom Management


Multi-agency Working


Anxiety and Distress in the Classroom: Internalising Difficulties


Behavioural Issues in the Classroom


 **Play**

 **Play**

 **Play**

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 **Play**