

7 Positive Childhood Experiences (PCE) Shape Health and Resiliency

1. Ability to talk with family about feelings.

Thoughts, feelings, and experiences are shared in an open and honest way, and dialogue around feelings is welcomed. This could be through a parent checking-in every so often, or even sharing their own feelings (in an appropriate way) to encourage the child to share. Sharing emotions also promotes emotional intelligence in growing minds by identifying and expressing a felt experience.

2. Felt experience that family is supportive in difficult times.

When a difficult experience occurs in a child's life, a parent offers support through presence and/or expresses support through words. Taking the time to notice and be with the child through this helps them to feel as though the parent is by their side and on their side. It doesn't have to be much, but even just a little moment can go a long way in teaching the child that they matter.

3. Enjoyment in participation in community traditions.

Traditions, in general, allow us to feel part of a greater whole. Having traditions in childhood creates a rhythm that both binds us to the greater whole, and also connects us to our families. Celebrating traditions allow for meaningful moments to be had within families and among communities. This can help a child feel connected, garner a greater sense of community, and promote life-long (positive) memories.

4. Feeling of belonging in high school.

High school can be a tough experience, but belonging can be found in many places. This sense of belonging can come from participation in extracurricular activities, through joining clubs or groups that share a similar interest, or through simply finding peers to connect with in a meaningful way. Feeling connected and having positive relationships is key to feeling as though they belong.

5. Feeling of being supported by friends.

Similar to feeling supported by family – it is important that children feel that support from their friends. A parent is essential here because they are the model for a child's first understanding of relationships. A parent can model what it looks like to have healthy, supportive relationships with friends, and encourage their children to find the same qualities in friends they choose.

6. Having at least two non-parent adults who genuinely care.

While it is important for a child to feel supported by their family, it is also important that they have supportive adults outside the home. These adults could be teachers, counselors, coaches, mentors, a friend's parent, etc. It is an adult who is a positive influence with whom they have a healthy attachment; a person they feel they can talk to or turn to besides their parent(s).

7. Feeling safe and protected by an adult at home.

Feeling safe and protected can look like many different things: It can look like being physically cared for – protected from physical danger. It can also look like being kept safe from overwhelming experiences. Whatever it may be, it is crucial that a child feels as though the parent(s) in their life are available and

doing what they can to keep the child safe and healthy. This allows the child to focus on things beyond basic needs being met.

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TIPS FOR NUTURING PCE'S

- Don't assume that a child is doing fine just because he or she is not showing obvious signs of distress. Check in. Ask the child to share their thoughts, feelings and concerns about what is going on. If the child gives a superficial response like "I'm fine" share some of your own thoughts, feelings and concerns to show that it is acceptable to talk openly about these things.
- Listen carefully. Put the electronics down. Give your full attention.
- Some children and most teenagers aren't comfortable maintaining eye contact when talking about their innermost fears and hurts. They're more likely to bring these things up at times when they don't have to look directly at you, like when riding in the car. Don't dismiss the topic because it is not a good time. Make time, even if it means you have to drive extra laps around the block while you do.
- Offer compassionate empathy rather than solutions. Many of us are uncomfortable hearing another person's fears, especially if we don't know how to fix the situation that is causing them. Showing that the child's emotions aren't too frightening for you to handle helps the child to feel safer, less out of control and genuinely connected.
- Breathing in the same room is not the same as connecting. Do something together – play a game, do a craft or look at pictures and share memories.
- Let the child's questions guide you. Children will let you know what is on their mind and what concerns them most through the questions they ask. A great way to start a conversation with the child is to ask, "What questions do you have about what is happening?"
- As much as possible, keep your traditions and rituals going. This can be elaborate and formal as decorating for and making traditional foods for a holiday. It can be as simple and informal as greeting each other with a certain phrase or making up a secret handshake.
- Say the words. Don't assume they know you care. Every human being needs to hear that he or she is loved. Everyone deserves to hear it when they do a good job. It won't give them a swelled head if you tell them that you proud of them. It helps them feel connected and appreciated.

From: <https://www.childandadolescent.org/positive-childhood-experiences/>