

Positive Childhood Experiences: PCEs, BCEs and CounterACEs

PCE's, Counter-ACEs and PCE's:

Positive Childhood Experiences and Adult Mental and Relational Health
Bethell, et al: *JAMA Pediatrics*. September 9, 2019

Benevolent Childhood Experiences (BCEs) in Homeless Parents
Merrick, Narayan, Masten, *J Fam Psychol*. June, 2019

ACEs and Counter-ACEs: How Positive and Negative Childhood Experiences Influence Adult Health.
Crandall PhD, AliceAnn, et al, *Child Abuse and Neglect*, July 27, 2019

I am going to quickly review the next three studies, which address some of the things our CHA Resilience-building subcommittee has been looking at recently.

These article all talk about protective factors: positive childhood experiences which lead to improved health over a lifespan.

The measurement of these factors may be something that our CHA Resilience Committee might look into for surveys to measure resilience.

Recent Article on Resilience

Positive Childhood Experiences and Adult Mental and Relational Health

Bethell, et al: *JAMA Pediatrics*. September 9, 2019

Positive Childhood Experiences (PCE's):

PCEs Survey:

Before the age of 18, I was able to:

- Talk with family members about their feelings
- Feel that their families stood by them during difficult times
- Enjoy participating in community traditions
- Have beliefs that give them comfort
- Feel a sense of belonging in high school or enjoy school
- Feel supported by friends or have at least one good friend
- Have at least two non-parent adults who take genuine interest in them (teachers, neighbors, Scoutmasters, etc.)
- Feel safe and protected by an adult in their home



This next study, out of Johns Hopkins by Christina Bethel et al, designed, tested, and used a new survey of positive childhood experiences (PCEs) as shown here.

Positive Childhood Experiences and Adult Mental and Relational Health

Bethell, et al: *JAMA Pediatrics*. September 9, 2019

Methods:

A total of 6,188 women and men over the age of 18 participated in this survey.

- ACEs Survey
- PCEs Survey
- Self-reported mental health history
- ARSES survey of Social and Emotional Support

Results:

- Shown a dose-response relationship between PCE's and:**
 - Improved mental health
 - Healthier relationships in adulthood

Summary:

Findings suggest that PCEs may have lifelong beneficial consequences for mental and relational health despite co-occurring adversities such as ACEs.



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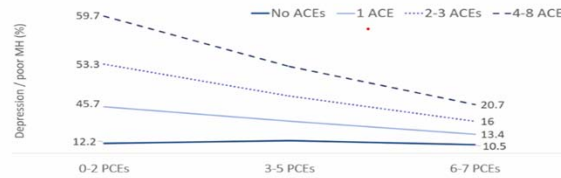
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Positive Childhood Experiences and Adult Mental and Relational Health

Bethell, et al: *JAMA Pediatrics*. September 9, 2019

Positive Childhood Experiences Mitigate ACEs Effects



Bethell, Jones, Gombojav Linkenbach and Sege. *Positive Childhood Experiences*. . . *JAMA Pediatrics* 2019

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 - Improved mental health
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CHILDREN'S HEALTH *alliance*  CHILDREN'S HEALTH *foundation*

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Benevolent Childhood Experiences (BCEs) in Homeless Parents

Merrick, Narayan, Masten, *J Fam Psychol.* June, 2019

Benevolent Childhood Experiences Scale:

- The BCE Scale assesses 10 favorable childhood experiences, yielding a total score comparable to the Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) scale.

BCE Scale:

"Growing up, did you have..."

- At least one caregiver with whom you felt safe
- At least one good friend
- Beliefs that gave you comfort
- Enjoyment at school
- At least one teacher that cared
- Good neighbors
- An adult (not a parent/caregiver or person from #1) who could provide you with support or advice
- Opportunities to have a good time
- Ability to like yourself or feel comfortable with yourself
- Predictable home routine, such as regular meals and a regular bedtime

This study from the University of Minnesota came up with a scale that is now evidence-based.

- **They call in the Benevolent Childhood Experience scale, or BCE scale.**
- **The BCE scale assesses 10 favorable childhood experiences, listed here: safe and caring caregiver or adult, friendship, faith, etc.**

Benevolent Childhood Experiences (BCEs) in Homeless Parents

Merrick, Narayan, Masten, *J Fam Psychol.* June, 2019

Methods:

- 50 Ethnically diverse, homeless parents
- Parents completed:
 - BCEs scale
 - ACEs scales
 - Instruments measuring:
 - Psychological distress,
 - Sociodemographic risk
 - Parenting stress.

Results:

- Higher levels of ACEs predicted higher sociodemographic risk.
- Higher levels of BCEs predicted lower odds of psychological distress
- BCEs and ACEs were only modestly negatively associated, underscoring the independence of adverse and positive early experiences.



The researchers studied:

- 50 Ethnically diverse, homeless parents
- Parents completed the
 - **BCEs scale**
 - **ACEs scales**
 - **As well as instruments on psychological distress, sociodemographic risk, and parenting stress.**

Here is a summary of the results:

- **As expected, higher levels of ACEs predicted higher sociodemographic risk.**

But the authors also found that

- **Higher levels of BCEs predicted lower odds of psychological distress**

In addition:

- **BCEs and ACEs were only modestly negatively associated, underscoring the independence of adverse and positive early experiences.**

ACEs and Counter-ACEs:

How Positive and Negative Childhood Experiences Influence Adult Health.

Crandall PhD, AliceAnn, et al, *Child Abuse and Neglect*, July 27, 2019

Methods:

- Cohort of 246 participants (ages 19-57) who filled out online surveys to acquire ACE scores and rate what the researchers call "counter-ACE" factors
- Used 10-item Benevolent Childhood Experiences (BCEs) scale
- Conducted a series of regression analyses to examine how counter-ACEs and ACEs predicted adult health

Summary of Results:

- The findings suggest that counter-ACEs protect against poor adult health and lead to better adult wellness.
- Ultimately, the results demonstrate that a public health approach to promoting positive childhood experiences may promote better lifelong health."



So . . . While the Minnesota group was coining the term BCE's, another group out of BYU coined the term "Counter-ACEs": but they are talking about the same thing.

Crandall surveyed 246 adults online and used the ACEs and the 10 item BCEs questionnaires.

- They then conducted a series of regression analyses to examine how counter-ACEs and ACEs predicted adult health and wellness

The findings suggest that counter-ACEs (i.e. BCEs) protect against poor adult health and lead to better adult wellness.

In summary:

- The BCEs scale is a promising, brief, and culturally sensitive index of childhood experiences linked to long-term resilience.
- To date, this tool has not been studied enough to recommend, but it demonstrates some of the recent research that is going in.

*ACEs and Counter-ACEs:
How Positive and Negative Childhood Experiences Influence Adult Health.*

Crandall PhD, AliceAnn, et al, *Child Abuse and Neglect*, July 27, 2019

Comment from the author:

*“As much as we don’t want kids to experience ACEs,
the absence of positive things (i.e., the absence of
counter-ACEs) may be more harmful than the
presence of the negative ACEs.”*

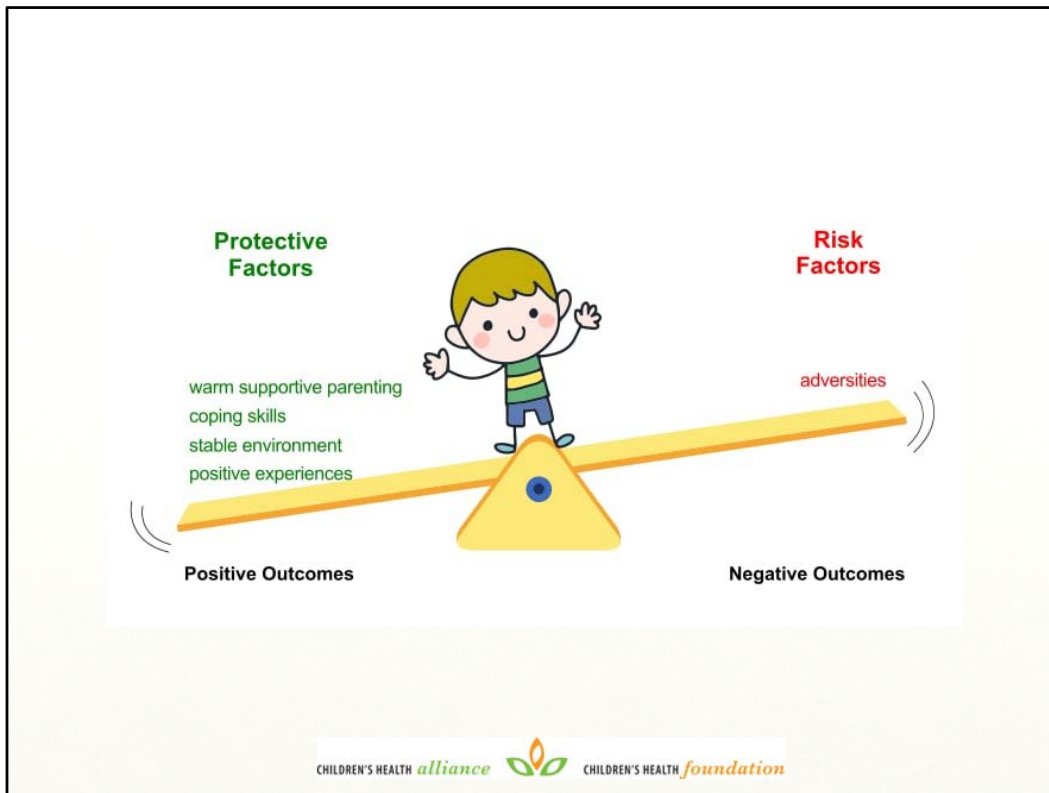
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- *“As much as we don’t want kids to experience ACEs,*
- *the absence of positive things*
- *(i.e., the absence of counter-ACEs)*
- *may be more harmful than the presence of the negative ACEs.*

Ali Crandall, PhD



So, how do we summarize these studies? Here is one person's picture.

It is a balancing act:

- Between Risk Factors on the right side of the see-saw: Where more adversities lead to more negative outcome
- And Protective Factors on the left: Where more BCEs, PCEs and Counter-ACEs lead to more positive outcomes.