

The background features a gradient from light purple at the top to light blue at the bottom. Scattered throughout are several realistic water droplets of various sizes, some with highlights and shadows. A faint, large, light-colored circular graphic is centered behind the text.

# **Adverse Childhood experiences (ACES)**

# AIMS & OUTCOMES

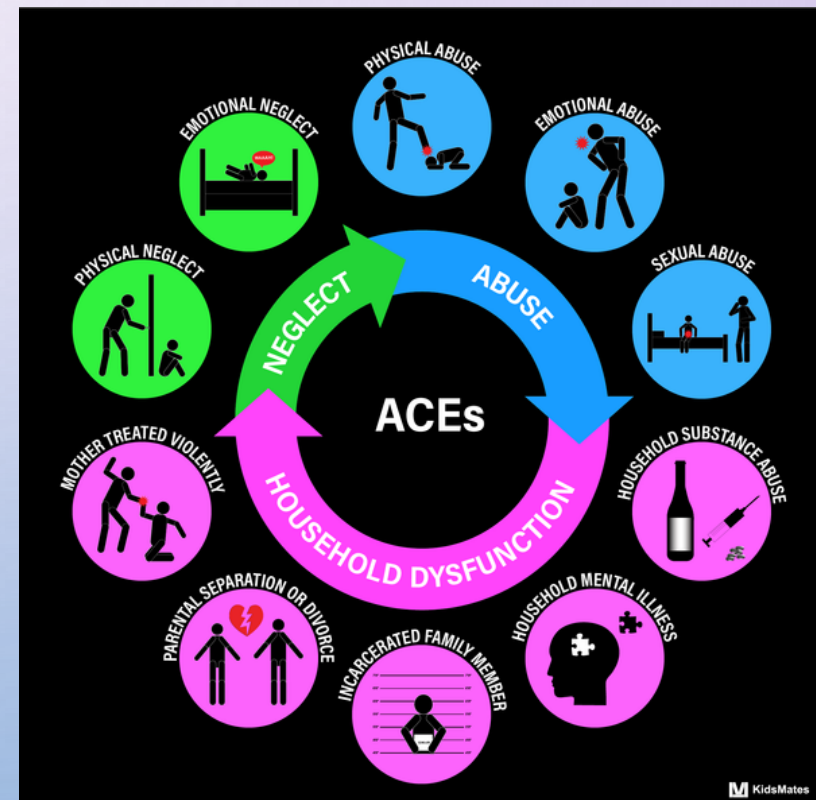
- To understand what ACES are.
- To know how ACES can impact children and adults.
- To be able to recognise own experiences and those of our children.
- To identify ways to support our children and ourselves.
- To know how to access further support if needed.

Please be aware that this workshop may raise feelings of past trauma. Please remember to take care of yourself and take a break when needed. If you need to speak to me after the workshop I will be available.

# WHAT ARE ACES?

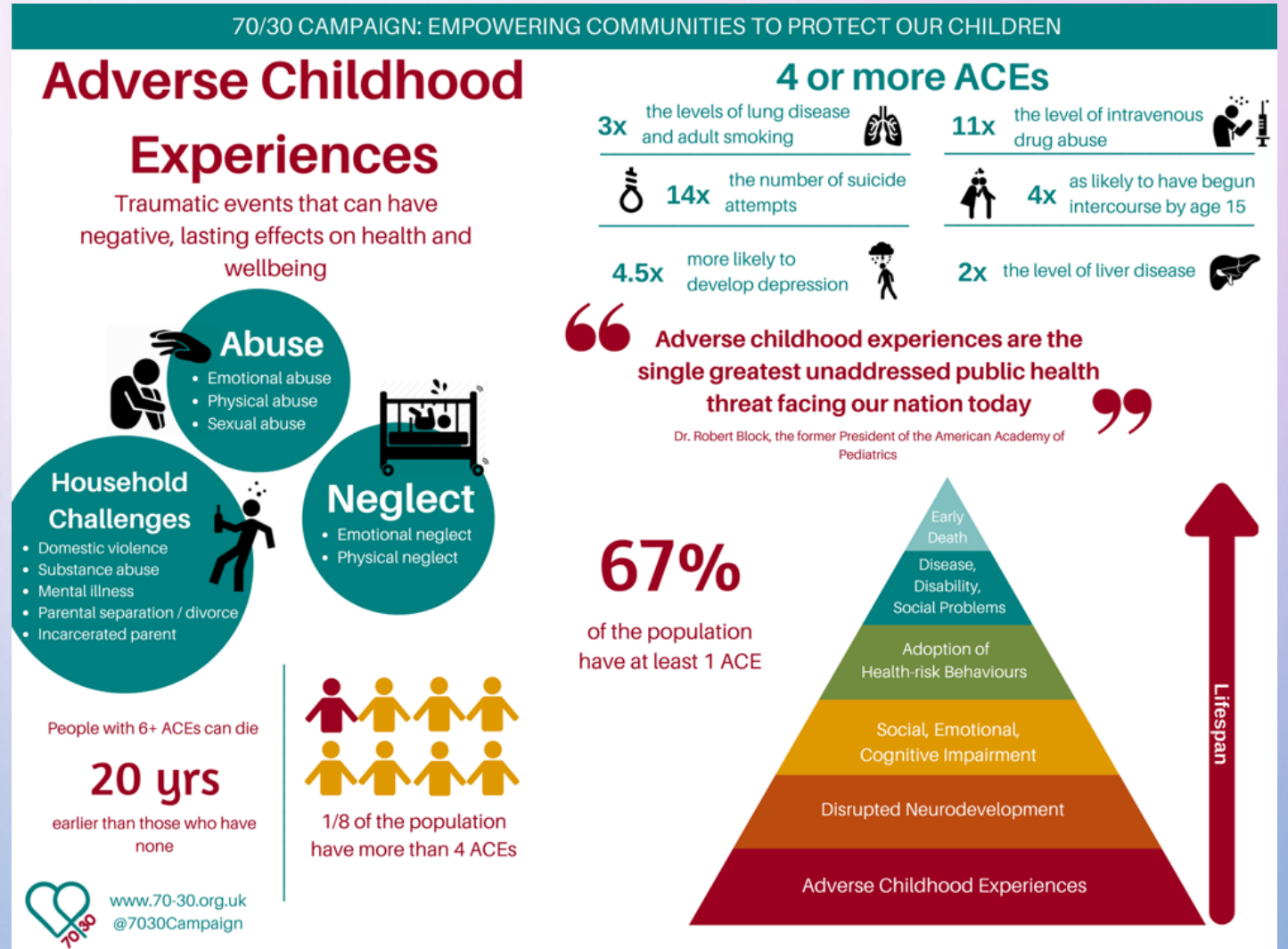
ADVERSE CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES (ACES) ARE “HIGHLY STRESSFUL, AND POTENTIALLY TRAUMATIC, EVENTS OR SITUATIONS THAT OCCUR DURING CHILDHOOD AND/OR ADOLESCENCE. THEY CAN BE A SINGLE EVENT, OR PROLONGED’ (YOUNG MINDS, 2018).

- Physical abuse
- Sexual Abuse
- Emotional Abuse
- Living with someone who abused drugs
- Living with someone who abused alcohol
- Exposure to domestic abuse
- Living with someone who has gone to prison
- Living with someone with serious mental illness
- Losing a parent through divorce, death or abandonment
- Bullying



## HOW ACES EFFECT US

- CAN CAUSE HEALTH ISSUES EARLIER IN LIFE.
- MORE LIKELY TO SUFFER FROM POOR MENTAL HEALTH.
- SKEWED VIEW OF RELATIONSHIPS AND WHAT HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS LOOK LIKE.
- INCREASES CHANCE OF RISKY BEHAVIOUR.
- POOR RELATIONSHIPS AND TRUST ISSUES.





# HOW CAN WE SUPPORT



Child

- ✓ Secure attachment experience
- ✓ Good communication skills
- ✓ Having a belief in control
- ✓ A positive attitude
- ✓ Experiences of success and achievement
- ✓ Capacity to reflect



Family

- ✓ Family harmony and stability
- ✓ Supportive parenting
- ✓ Strong family values
- ✓ Affection
- ✓ Clear, consistent discipline
- ✓ Support for education



School

- ✓ Positive school climate that enhances belonging and connectedness
- ✓ Clear policies on behaviour and bullying
- ✓ 'Open door' policy for children to raise problems
- ✓ A whole-school approach to promoting good mental health

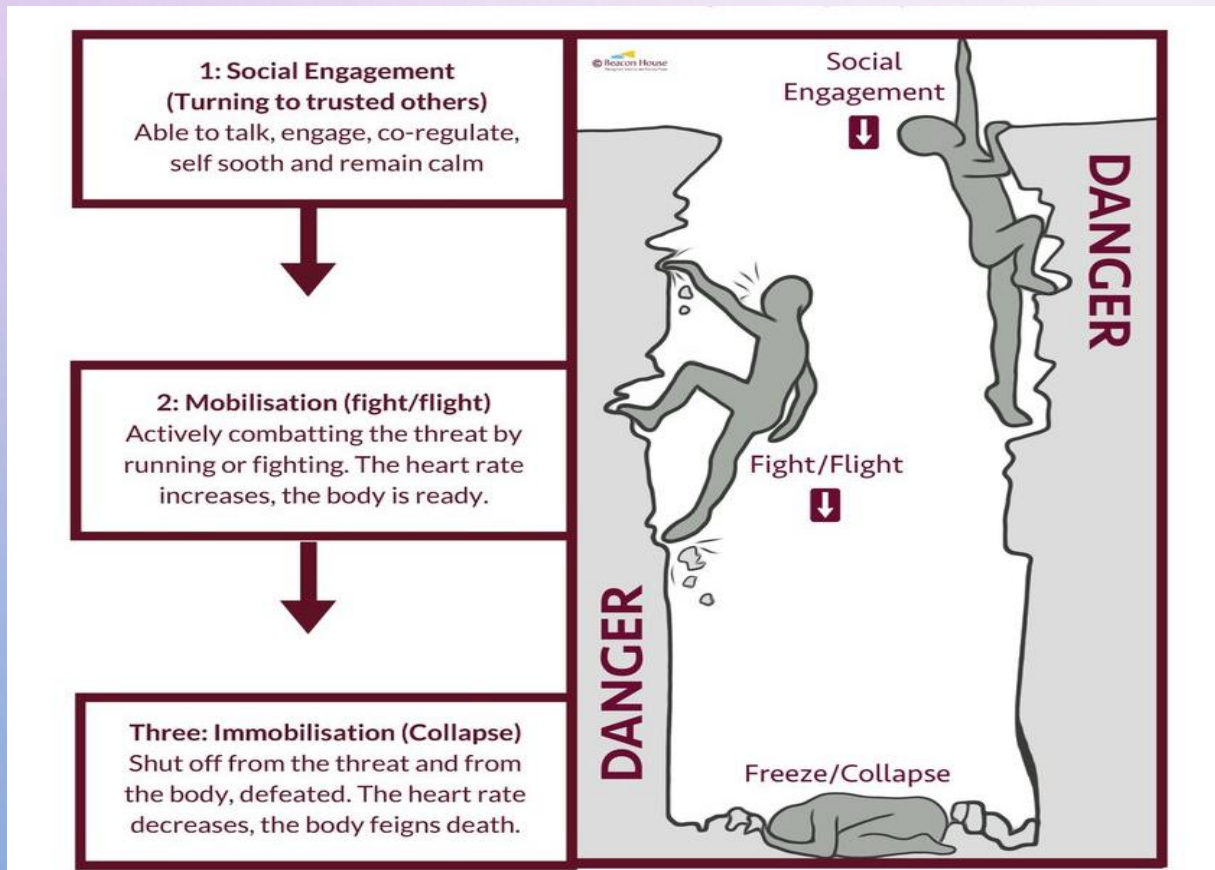


Community

- ✓ Wider supportive network
- ✓ Good housing
- ✓ High standard of living
- ✓ Opportunities for valued social roles
- ✓ Range of sport/leisure activities

## PROTECTIVE FACTORS

# SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

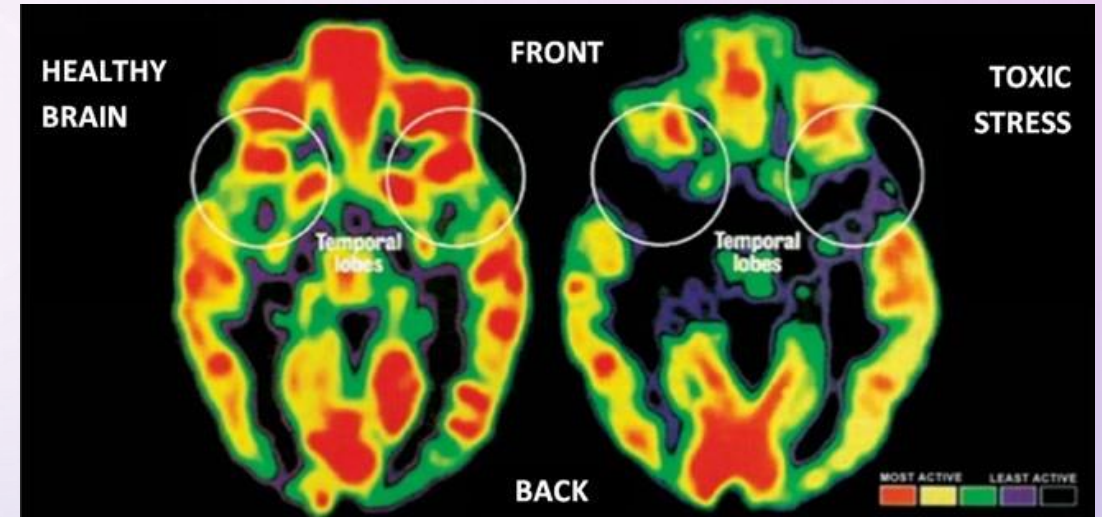


## The Polyvagal Theory

Stephen Porges' innovative research into the autonomic nervous system has shown us how we have evolved to cope with threat. His Polyvagal Theory shows us that when faced with threat or danger, we first turn to our social engagement system to re-establish safety (we turn to trusted others). If that does not bring us into safety or if the danger is severe and immediate, we turn to our fight/flight response. If that does not bring us safety then our mind and body move into collapse and shut down.

People who experience social engagement as repeatedly unsuccessful at keeping them safe become 'hardwired' to move straight into fight/flight or collapse.

# TOXIC STRESS



- CAUSES CHILDREN TO LIVE IN FIGHT, FLIGHT OR FRIGHT (FREEZE) MODE.
- SHORT ATTENTION SPAN
- STRUGGLE LEARNING; FALL BEHIND IN SCHOOL
- RESPOND TO WORLD AS CONSTANT DANGER
- DISTRUSTFUL OF ADULTS
- UNABLE TO DEVELOP HEALTHY PEER RELATIONSHIPS
- FEEL FAILURE, DESPAIR, SHAME AND FRUSTRATION



## REDUCING IMPACT OF ACES



- STICK TO DAILY ROUTINES. THEY HELP CHILDREN KNOW WHAT'S HAPPENING NEXT, WHICH CAN REDUCE STRESS.
- HAVE YOUR CHILD EXERCISE REGULARLY. MAKE SURE YOUR CHILD IS GETTING AT LEAST AN HOUR PER DAY OF ACTIVE PLAY.
- HELP YOUR CHILD EAT WELL. GOOD NUTRITION BUILDS BRAIN HEALTH AND PROTECTS THE BODY.
- TURN TO SUPPORTIVE RELATIONSHIPS IN YOUR FAMILY AND COMMUNITY.
- ENSURE YOUR CHILD GETS ADEQUATE SLEEP.
- SEEK MENTAL HEALTH CARE IF NEEDED.
- PRACTICE BEING IN THE MOMENT; TRY BREATHING AND MEDITATION.
- TALK TO YOUR HEALTH CARE PROVIDER ABOUT YOUR CHILD'S ACES.



# ACCESSING FURTHER SUPPORT

<https://www.sheffieldmentalhealth.co.uk/services/napac-national-association-of-people-abused-in-childhood>

<https://www.havenorg.uk/>

<https://www.acesonlinelearning.com/>