

PREVENTING YOUTH VIOLENCE CAN BUILD RESILIENCE FROM TRAUMA

CONNECTIONS BETWEEN YOUTH VIOLENCE PREVENTION AND RESILIENCE FROM TRAUMA

Childhood experiences can shape a person's entire life course and can have significant impacts on long-term health throughout adulthood. Youth that endure adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) – traumatic and stressful events, such as abuse and neglect – can experience a host of negative impacts throughout life, including chronic health problems and low life potential. The more ACEs a person accumulates, the more health, social, and behavioral problems he or she can encounter in life.¹ Children who experienced four or more ACEs were twice as likely to have a chronic disease and nearly six times as likely to suffer from depression compared to adults with no ACEs. Several studies have found that experiencing four or more ACEs greatly increases a young person's likelihood of illicit substance use later in life and increases their odds of arrest by three times, compared to youth with no ACEs.² Given these negative consequences, it is imperative to provide youth who have experienced ACEs with the ongoing help and support that they need. **Fortunately, youth violence prevention strategies can help youth build resilience to counteract the negative outcomes of ACEs.**

SUCCESSFUL STRATEGIES & OUTCOMES

Resilience is defined as a dynamic process that involves overcoming significant adversity.^{3,4} Effective youth violence prevention strategies can empower youth by helping them gain the inner strength, confidence, and coping skills they need to successfully handle stressful events and overcome adversity.

Youth violence prevention programs can operate at individual, family, community, and societal levels.^{5,6} At the individual level, programs empower youth to make responsible decisions, enhance their self-efficacy, and develop their social and emotional skills.

The STRYVE (Striving To Reduce Youth Violence Everywhere) initiative, funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), supported local public health leadership for youth violence prevention.⁷ **One program implemented by STRYVE-supported local health departments – Youth Empowerment Solutions (YES!) – was shown to empower youth by increasing their responsible decision-making and reducing their exposure to and involvement in violence.**⁸

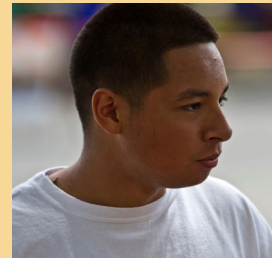
The FRIENDS program is a cognitive behavioral intervention that promotes emotional resilience to prevent or intervene with children's depression or anxiety, often related to ACEs. **The FRIENDS program has been found to reduce children's anxiety and behavioral avoidance while increasing their social-emotional strength.**⁹

The Cognitive-Behavioral Intervention for Trauma in Schools (CBITS) consists of ten group sessions designed for schools with multicultural populations. When evaluated three and six months after implementation, **the CBITS program was found to reduce rates of depression and post-traumatic stress symptoms among youth.**¹⁰

At the family level, programs can help youth develop relationships with others who have similar experiences with trauma and violence. These programs allow youth to build a network of support within

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Perspectives from Youth



"Youth violence was something I experienced almost on a weekly basis. Whether it would be a shooting while we played basketball, or people trying to rob a car, or people

robbing a store. The reason why I decided to be involved with STRYVE was because the program helped us get involved in creating something that will help us prevent youth violence, not just for our community, but for the whole Multnomah County. I also want to be a part of a change because as I work to become a school resource police officer, I feel that I would have to be a part of the change when it comes to youth violence."

David Maza,
Portland, OR



"I have been able to really see what best fits the needs of the youth in the community. The problems that we have, we want them to really be for them, we don't want them to be for us. We

want to give them a voice in the community to spread positivity. The youth have really enjoyed making a positive difference in their communities, I've had parents that come to me and say, 'This is great for them. They're awake.'"

Robert Yanez
Houston, TX



SAFE STATES

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their families and communities.¹¹ Additionally, programs that help children and their adult caregivers develop stable emotional connections and relationships often have numerous positive outcomes. Early childhood home visiting programs – where trained professionals provide guidance to new or expecting parents – have been found to have far-reaching benefits for children and their families. One home visiting program, **Nurse Family Partnership, was found to decrease child abuse and neglect and significantly reduce crime later in life among child participants.**^{12,13,14}



Nurse-Family Partnership provides low-income, first-time mothers with home visits from bachelor's-prepared, registered nurses during pregnancy and until the child reaches two years of age.

Source: Kate B. Reynolds Charitable Trust

In another program, Incredible Years, trained co-leaders work with small groups of children, parents, and teachers. As they work with each group, co-leaders convey positive strategies and skills that can promote children's social competence and reduce behavior problems. **The Incredible Years program was found to greatly decrease children's disruptive behavior and improve their social-emotional behaviors at home and at school.**¹⁵

At the community and societal levels, successful prevention strategies involve positive changes to social and physical environments, including schools, workplaces, and neighborhoods. The Michigan Youth Violence Prevention Center (MI-YVPC) is studying the impact of community engagement and neighborhood revitalization activities on violence in three U.S. cities: Flint, MI; Youngstown, OH; and Camden, NJ. With support from the CDC, MI-YVPC is engaging youth to make improvements to vacant properties in their neighborhoods, including mowing and planting gardens in deserted lots. Results from the study will provide insights into how changes in the physical environment can prevent youth violence and build community resilience.¹⁶



Incredible Years is an early childhood emotional and social health program that improves a child's school performance, reduces behavior problems, and supports caregivers through a holistic approach involving children, parents, and teachers.

Source: Invest in Kids

The [STRYVE Action Council](#) is a multi-sector consortium of organizations that work at the national level to advance youth violence prevention efforts in states and communities. Action Council member organizations represent a variety of sectors, including public health, education, city and state leadership, and law enforcement, as well as youth-serving and social service sectors. Action Council organizations represent more than 1,000 affiliates and chapters and over 1 million fans and followers, all poised to champion youth violence prevention.

LEARN MORE: REFERENCES & RESOURCES

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