

Abbreviated* Screening Sample Scripts for Pediatric Clinic Teams

Lower risk of toxic stress (0 ACEs)

Step 1: “Thank you for completing the form that asked about certain events your child has experienced. It gives us information that helps us to better care for your child.”

Step 2: “From what I see on the form, your child has not experienced any of the things listed here. Is that correct?”

Step 3: “We know that ACEs may occur at different points in life, so if you do experience any of these, don’t hesitate to check in with us because the science tells us that early intervention can help prevent negative physical and mental health outcomes. These things may include having healthy relationships with family and friends, eating healthy foods, getting regular exercise, spending time outside in nature, having a regular bedtime and getting enough sleep.”

Intermediate Risk of Toxic Stress (1-3 ACEs)

Step 1: “I see from this form that your child has experienced some of the things listed here. We now understand that exposure to stressful or traumatic experiences may alter the amount of stress hormones that your child’s body makes, and this can increase the risk for health and developmental problems.”

Step 2: “The good news is that we also have strategies that have been shown to help children and adults calm the stress response. These include things like good nutrition, healthy sleep, spending time in nature, regular exercise, mental health support, mindfulness, and healthy relationships.”

Step 3: Review [pediatric self-care tool](#)

Step 4: “Which of these strategies would you be interested in trying to help manage stress? Let’s make a plan for how you can try these strategies during your day.”

High Risk of Toxic Stress (1-3 ACEs with ACE-Associated Health Conditions [AAHC] OR 4+ ACEs with/without ACE-Associated Health Conditions)

Step 1: Upon review of the questionnaire you just filled out, I see that you answered “yes” to a number of questions. These experiences may be contributing to your child’s [poor growth/ asthma/ diabetes/other AAHC].”

Step 2: “It is possible that because of what your child has experienced or is experiencing, their body is making more stress hormones than it should. This could be what’s affecting their [fill in based on health condition i.e., growth]. I want to refer you to a specialist [i.e., mental health therapist] that can help you learn how to support the two of you and reduce the amount of stress hormones that their body is making.”

OPTIONAL: “We also know that a healthy caregiver is one of the most important ingredients for healthy children so an important part of helping your child will involve managing your own stress level and practicing taking care of yourself.”



Prevention-Focused Questions

For patients:

- “How do you cope with stressful situations?”
- “Which of these [stress buster] strategies would you be interested in trying to help manage stress?”
- “Let’s make a plan for how you can try these strategies during your day.”

For parents:

- “ACEs Aware has put together a self-care tool [show [pediatric self-care tool](#)]. We can look at some of these activities together and discuss what you think would be best for your routine. You may be doing some of these strategies already.”

Adolescent Assessment

Assessing safety

- Do you feel safe now?
- Where do you feel the safest?
- Please know that we are here to help if you ever feel scared or unsafe at home, at school, or anywhere.

Reviewing coping

- When things get hard for you, where do you draw your strength?
- How does this help you?
- How do your family or friends support you?
- When you are stressed or worried, what is most helpful?

Examining stress busters

- Is there an adult, like a mom, dad, aunt, uncle, grandparent, or mentor in your life who is there for you, no matter what?
- Who do you rely on?
- Practicing mindfulness for 10-12 minutes a day can be helpful in calming down some of the stress you might be feeling. Are there apps you have on your phone you can use?
- Have you taken a mindful walk before?

Referrals and Establishing a Follow-Up Plan

- Make a referral if need be: “I would like to refer you/[child’s name] to some resources or services that could be helpful.”
- Following up: “I [or someone from my team] will contact you in ____ weeks/months to check in on whether [treatment(s) selected] are helping you/[child’s name].”

*For the non-abbreviated ACE Screening Sample Scripts, visit here: [ACE Screening Sample Scripts for Pediatric Clinical Teams \(acesaware.org\)](https://www.acesaware.org/ace-screening-sample-scripts-for-pediatric-clinical-teams)

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