



Appendix A: Terms to Know

- ✔ **Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs):** The term Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) describes 10 categories of adversities that happen in childhood. ACEs include physical, emotional, and sexual abuse; physical and emotional neglect; and growing up in a household with incarceration, mental illness, substance misuse or dependence, absence due to parental separation or divorce, or intimate partner violence.¹⁻³
- ✔ **Adversities and other stressors:** It is important to note that other life experiences and adversities may activate a toxic stress response such as racism and discrimination, experiencing war, witnessing community violence, and more.⁴
- ✔ **Behavioral health:** The term “behavioral health” is often used interchangeably with “mental health.” Behavioral health is related to how we respond and react to our emotions in various situations. Examples of behavioral health issues include substance abuse, addiction, self-harm, and eating disorders.⁵
- ✔ **Chronic inflammation:** This involves increased activity of the immune system often in response to a problem like environmental toxins or chemicals, a lingering virus, or ongoing stress. Inflammation is when all parts of the immune system join forces to help the body heal, but sometimes it is overactive and is counterproductive.⁶
- ✔ **Intergenerational trauma:** Intergenerational transmission (from one generation to the next) of toxic stress occurs when adverse experiences change a parent or caregiver’s biology or behavior in ways that affect the development and health of their children.⁷
- ✔ **Meditation:** Meditation is a practice where an individual uses a technique – such as mindfulness or focusing the mind on a particular object, thought, or activity – to train attention and awareness, and achieve a mentally clear and emotionally calm and stable state.⁸ Meditation is one way to practice mindfulness.
- ✔ **Mental health:** How we act, feel, and think on a day-to-day basis; the thoughts and feelings that contribute to our capacity to cope with stressors, engage with others, be part of our community, and thrive.⁹
- ✔ **Mental illness:** Mental health conditions that compromise our ability to function and require extra supportive care, such as Generalized Anxiety Disorder, Major Depressive Disorder, and bipolar disorder.⁹

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- ✔ **Mindfulness:** Nonjudgmental, moment-to-moment awareness that involves attention, intention, and a kind attitude.^{8,10-12} Mindfulness is a way of being in the moment.
- ✔ **Nature:** For the purpose of this toolkit, nature is defined as an organic environment that can include wilderness areas, parks, farms, gardens, indoor green spaces and plants, and even viewing natural scenes.¹³⁻¹⁵
- ✔ **Neuroplasticity:** The brain's ability to adapt and change over time by forming new connections and pathways.¹⁶
- ✔ **Nutrition:** The process of providing or obtaining the food necessary for health and growth.¹⁷
- ✔ **Relational health:** A developed state of health, well-being, and connectedness in which a person has the opportunity and capacity to develop, maintain, receive, and perceive safe, stable, and nurturing relationships with other individuals and participate in a broad range of social relationships, including active engagement in a variety of social activities and social support.¹⁸⁻²⁵
- ✔ **Resilience/resiliency:** Resilience is the ability to withstand or recover, both physically and mentally, from stressors.⁴
- ✔ **Sleep health:** Sleep health includes a combination of sleep duration, continuity, timing, and quality all occurring on a consistent basis. Symptoms of disordered sleep include trouble falling asleep, trouble staying asleep, nightmares, tossing and turning, and sweating. Sleep disorders include disordered breathing, chronic insomnia, and circadian rhythm disorder.²⁶
- ✔ **Toxic stress:** The long-term disruptions of brain development, hormonal, immune, and metabolic systems and even how our genes are read that may occur after experiencing prolonged or repeated activation of the stress response especially during critical and sensitive periods of early life development and without sufficient protections of safe, stable, and nurturing relationships and environments.²⁷

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