

# 16 strong project

the childhood adversity resilience project

## Impact Report



# Empowering Resilience

*to adverse  
childhood  
experiences*

The 16 Strong Project is a national nonprofit founded in 2018 as part of the Making Common Caring Project at the Harvard Graduate School of Education. Our mission is to improve the mental health and well-being of our nation's youth in middle schools, high schools, colleges, universities and communities. The 16 Strong Project is moving the needle forward in combating the youth mental health crisis through our transformative mental health and wellness programs. We empower youth through free student-led initiatives, educational workshops, school and college partnerships and community outreach. The 16 Strong Project's reach is nationwide, and we have removed all financial and availability barriers, by offering free programs, resources, services and activities to serve the needs of over 200,000 youth including those in marginalized and under-resourced communities. Through our evidence-based programs, 16 Strong educates and equips young people with the tools and resources required to take a proactive approach to their mental well-being by coping with adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) before they reach a crisis point. The 16 Strong Project uplifts youth voices and empowers young people to end the stigma, end the cycle, end the silence, and end the suffering associated with childhood adversity.



# WE ARE PUTTING SCIENCE INTO ACTION THROUGH OUR SIGNATURE 3-STEP APPROACH



## *Recognize*

provide language so that young people can recognize their situation and understand what they are experiencing

## *Resist*

provide resources and tools that young people can use to develop resilience to ACEs through positive coping skills

## *Reveal*

provide conversation starters and support system mapping to empower young people to develop strong support systems

*“Adverse childhood experiences are the single greatest unaddressed public health threat facing our nation today.”*

*- Dr. Robert Black*

# Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)

Adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) are potentially traumatic events that occur before age 18. ACEs can include experiencing abuse, food insecurity, emotional or physical neglect, homelessness, sexual abuse, mental health challenges or substance misuse in the home, and divorce. Also included are aspects of a child's or teen's environment that can undermine a sense of safety, stability, and bonding such as financial instability, gang involvement, incarcerated family members, and even the COVID-19 pandemic. ACEs can have negative long-lasting effects on the mental health and well-being in a youth's life.

*Adverse childhood experiences are the number one unaddressed public health issue facing our nation's youth.*



Adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) are the root cause of the majority of mental health challenges, with 50% of all mental health challenges starting by age 14 and 75% by age 24.



Prior to COVID-19 2/3 of all young people experienced at least one ACE before the age of 18. The most recent research on ACEs includes the pandemic which means that ALL young people have experienced at least one ACE before the age of 18.



Over 18 million young people live in a home with a person experiencing mental illness.



1/3 of mental disorders worldwide are directly attributed to ACEs.



17.1 million young people will have a mental health condition by the age of 18. That is more than the number with asthma, diabetes, AIDS, cancer, and peanut allergies combined.



ACEs- related illness accounts for an estimated \$748 billion dollars in financial costs in North America each year.

# IMPACT

Results show that 16 Strong Project provides young people with the awareness and positive coping strategies to avoid the negative effects of childhood adversity. Young people self-reported through surveys and reflective stories that they had:



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*Increased awareness about adverse childhood experiences.*

*Increased ability to distinguish between healthy and unhealthy coping mechanisms.*

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*Increased ability to utilize healthy coping mechanisms.*

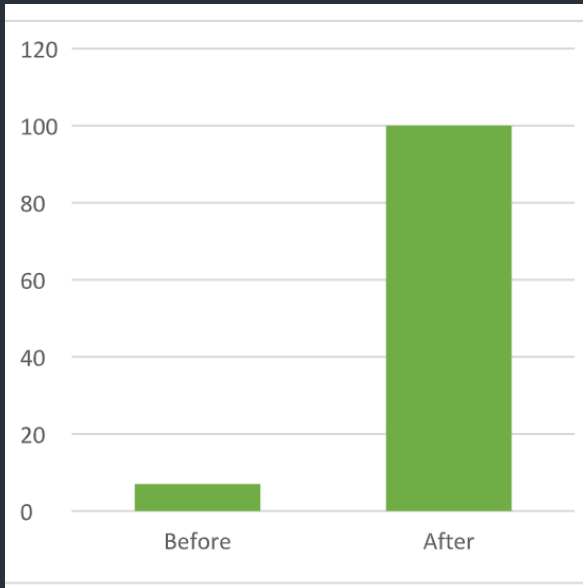
*Increased awareness they are not alone.*

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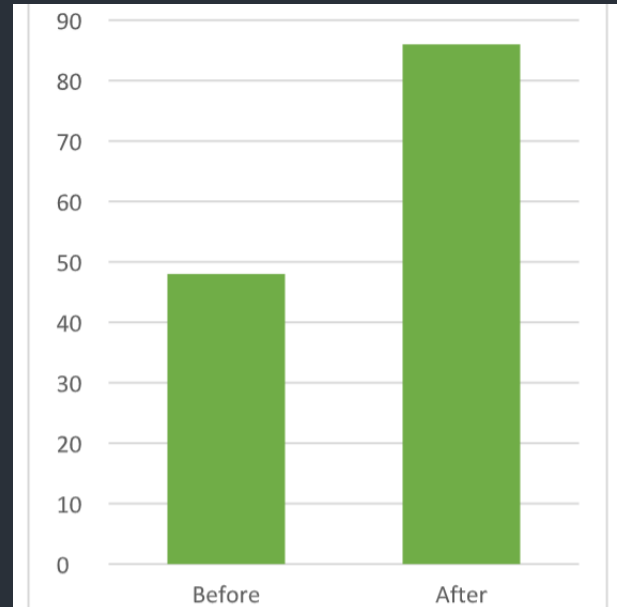
*Gained personal empowerment over adverse childhood experiences.*

*Increased understanding that other people's mental health affects them as well.*

# Our Impact



Before our programs 7% of students were familiar with adverse childhood experiences and 100% after our programs or (1428% increase).



Before our programs 48% of students were able to distinguish between healthy and unhealthy coping mechanisms and after our programs 86% or (180% increase).



Before our programs 36% of students were able to utilize healthy coping mechanisms and after our programs 70% (195% increase) or (nearly 2x or doubled).



Before our programs 56% of students made time for self-care and after our programs 80% made time or (142% increase).

# EMPOWER

16 Strong's PEACE of Mind (Personal Empowerment over Adverse Childhood Experiences) Workshop is an educational workshop designed for middle and high school students. Our curriculum offers education around ACEs and mental health along with additional support, skills, and strategies for students.



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# What our Youth are Saying...

16 Strong Project is an organization that I'm incredibly grateful for because it has given me a platform to learn and to discover other people's stories as well as my own story. I've learned so much about youth adversity and how it impacts myself and my peers alike and how it impacts the world

It was fun and I learned a lot about myself and what other people could potentially be going through

It makes you think about your life and other's lives

16 Strong has enabled me to see that experiencing certain issues doesn't make you different or strange. Rather, you are part of a supportive community that you can relate to. It has taught me that we can be the leaders and we can help our peers and get through things together