



What are ACEs?

ACEs are Adverse Childhood Experiences – situations where a child faces some sort of trauma or intense, sustained stress. ACEs typically fall into three categories:

- Abuse – physical, emotional, or sexual
- Neglect – physical or emotional
- Household dysfunction

The most common ACEs children face come from:

- Financial hardship
- Issues around divorce
- Seeing or being a victim of violence (including domestic violence)
- Living with someone who has a mental illness
- Living with someone who abuses drugs or alcohol
- Having a parent or caregiver in prison

ACEs can change or damage a child's developing brain. The harm can be so bad that it only shows up decades later. ACEs can cause mental illness and physical diseases. ACEs are at the root of most violence.

Sadly, it is not rare for a child to experience these situations. It's estimated that nearly half of U.S. children (45%) have experienced at least one ACE, while 10% have experienced at least three of these traumatic events.

Center for Child Counseling is a Resource for You.

Our services focus on preventing and healing the effects of adverse experiences, trauma, and toxic stress on children and their caregivers. Promoting resiliency and building healthy family, school, and community relationships is at the core of our mission.

We support children, families, and caregivers through direct services and support. Our expert therapists use Play Therapy and an array of best-practice interventions to help children understand their experiences and cope with their emotions.

To build caregiver and community capacity to address the impact of trauma, we offer training on trauma, ACEs, and mental health to caregivers and professionals.

Our Mission

Center for Child Counseling is building the foundation for playful, healthful, and hopeful living for children, families, and communities.

Our Vision

Healthy, resilient children and families through ACEs-aware and trauma-informed communities.



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ADVERSE CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES What Everyone Needs to Know



What the Science Shows

This information is based on many studies that show a direct link between difficulties experienced in childhood and poor mental and physical health in adulthood. In other words, in the absence of positive influences to counteract the stress, bad experiences affect people's health for their whole lives.

The original study identified ten ACEs and developed a survey to help people get their ACE score.

Most people score 1 or 2 on the survey. Many people score higher. An ACE score of 6 or more needs to be urgently addressed with professional help.

Issues associated with an ACE score of 4 or more:

- 2 X more likely to have a stroke
- 3 X more likely to develop heart disease
- 5 X more likely to have depression
- 7 X more likely to develop alcoholism
- 12 X more likely to attempt suicide

People with high ACE scores have higher rates of:

- Divorce
- Unwanted pregnancies
- Prescription drug abuse
- Broken bones
- Obesity

Damage From ACEs

In the absence of buffering relationships, a young child who lives with violence, abuse, and neglect is exposed to what is called "toxic stress". This may put them at high risk for problems that lead to poor health and poor behavioral choices for their whole lives.

Toxic stress caused by ACEs can:

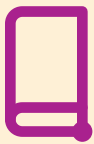
- Interfere with a child's healthy brain development which can lead to learning difficulties
- Cause a child to adopt negative ways of coping like violence, overeating, or abusing alcohol and other drugs
- Alter a child's body functioning, increasing the risk of cancer, heart disease, arthritis, and many other conditions
- Change how a child's genes are coded which can be passed from generation to generation

There is Hope

The good news is that children are generally adaptable and resilient. Studies show that the presence of just one positive adult influence in a child's life can buffer against toxic stress and reduce the effects of ACEs. Childhood trauma isn't something you just "get over" as you grow up but the effects of ACEs can be lessened or even prevented.

As someone who loves a child, there are ways to help. Choose to be a positive influence in a child's life.

Healthy Ways to Fight ACEs



Educate Yourself About ACEs

It is important to understand that the experiences a child has can affect their whole life. The more you understand ACEs and their results, the more you'll be able to fight back against them.



Become Trauma-Informed

Being trauma-informed really means changing the way you respond to a child's behavior. Instead of asking "What's wrong with you?" the question should be: "What happened to you?" This helps to create a safe space where a child can ask for help without fear of being punishment or not being believed.



Be Understanding & Supportive

Science shows that a child with ACEs may not find it easy to understand another person's point of view. They may need extra help to work through their problems and gain independence.



Be a Buffer

Supportive, loving people can create a barrier against toxic stress. They can be what's called a buffer, like a shield. Studies show that a positive, caring relationship with an adult can help a child cope with negative experiences.



Be a Good Listener

All children, especially those with ACEs, need to feel as if they are really being heard. It helps them feel safe and valued.



Inspire Someone

Children need constant support to reach their full potential. You can encourage them to do their best by being a good example. You can inspire them with your words and actions.



Stay Aware

Pay attention to any child you interact with. Are they in a bad situation? Do they need help? Everyone is required to report suspected child abuse to the authorities.



Celebrate Children

When you make a big deal about a child's achievements, no matter how small, you remind them that they are important, special, and loved.



Provide Comfort

Children who have experienced trauma or toxic stress need love and care. Often, they need help to manage their emotions and to calm themselves down.

