

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) Score

A person's ACE score is a tally of different types of abuse, neglect, and other experiences during childhood. According to the Adverse Childhood Experiences study, people who experience a greater number of negative events during childhood have a higher risk for later health problems, including headaches, depression, diabetes, and obesity. You can calculate your ACE score by answering the following questions.

If any of the questions make you angry or tearful, that is a normal reaction. Acknowledge the feeling, name it ("That question makes me mad!" or "This makes me want to cry"), then visualize that energy passing out of you and into the earth or nearest body of water. Don't ignore the feeling, but don't get stuck in it, either.

My ACE Score

Prior to your 18th birthday:

Did a parent or other adult in the household often or very often:
Swear at you, insult you, put you down, or humiliate you? or
Act in a way that made you afraid that you might be physically hurt?
No _____ Yes _____

Did a parent or other adult in the household often or very often:
Push, grab, slap, or throw something at you? or
Ever hit you so hard that you had marks or were injured?
No _____ Yes _____

Did an adult or person at least 5 years older than you ever:
Touch or fondle you or have you touch their body in a sexual way? or
Attempt or actually have oral, anal, or vaginal intercourse with you?
No _____ Yes _____

Did you often or very often feel that:
No one in your family loved you or thought you were important or special? or
Your family didn't look out for each other, feel close to each other, or support each other?
No _____ Yes _____

Did you often or very often feel that:
You didn't have enough to eat, had to wear dirty clothes, and had no one to protect you? or
Your parents were too drunk or high to take care of you or take you to the doctor if you needed it?
No _____ Yes _____

Were your parents ever separated or divorced?
No _____ Yes _____

Was your mother or stepmother:
Often or very often pushed, grabbed, slapped, or had something thrown at her? or
Sometimes, often, or very often kicked, bitten, hit with a fist, or hit with something hard? or
Ever repeatedly hit over at least a few minutes or threatened with a gun or knife?
No _____ Yes _____

Did you live with anyone who used alcohol in a problematic way, or who used street drugs?
No _____ Yes _____

Was a household member depressed or mentally ill, or did a household member attempt suicide?

No _____ Yes _____

Did a household member go to prison?

No _____ Yes _____

Now add up all your "Yes" answers: _____

This is your ACE score.

A higher ACE score usually means a higher risk of health and social problems.

But there are some important things to remember: First, your ACE score helps you identify past factors that may be contributing to your health today. It tells you about one type of risk factor. It doesn't take into account your diet, whether you smoke or drink, your access to health care or community supports, whether you experience racism or discrimination on a daily basis, if you have a supportive family or a strong network of friendships, or any of the other things that influence health.

Second, an ACE score doesn't include the positive relationships and experiences you may have had as a child. These positive relationships and experiences can help build resilience, which can protect a child from some of the long-term effects of trauma.

There are people with high ACE scores who are healthy, happy, and lead successful lives.