



THE ACE SCORE

PROVIDED BY THE FAMILY STUDY CENTER

What is it?

The Adverse Childhood Experience or "ACE" score refers to the number of adverse experiences a person had in childhood. The score is generated from a very brief survey of 10 yes or no questions about whether you have ever experienced any of the traumatic experiences listed, such as the loss of a parent or physical abuse

HOW DO ADVERSE EXPERIENCES AFFECT A PERSON'S HEALTH?



When a child is exposed to trauma one time or multiple times, the body responds by releasing hormones that can become toxic. The developing child's brain can actually be damaged by this and also alter the functioning of major organs. These changes to the body can lead to all kinds of illnesses and diseases, as well as mental health and behavioral issues.

ACES can include:

- Physical abuse
- Sexual abuse
- Emotional abuse
- Neglect
- Household violence
- Family substance abuse
- Family mental illness
- Bullying
- Parents incarcerated



Direct Link

ACES can lead to:

- Heart disease
- Liver disease
- Depression
- Suicide
- Alcohol abuse
- Drug abuse
- Domestic violence
- Smoking
- Unplanned pregnancy
- STD's



How does exposure to trauma affect a child?

When a child is experiencing or has experienced trauma, her body responds by going into survival mode. This increases blood pressure, heart rate, muscle responses and makes thinking and focus very difficult. Children who are in Survival Mode may appear to be hyperactive or shut down emotionally because they are too busy focusing on managing their body's responses to do much else.

How can we respond to children?



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How can we respond to adults?

Adults who have experienced trauma in childhood may have a host of physical health problems that plague them throughout adulthood. They may also suffer from mental health issues or engage in risky behaviors like abusing drugs or being involved in violent relationships. This requires a solid understanding that people who are struggling with these issues are responding to their own childhood trauma both emotionally and physically and need to connect their early experiences with what happens to them later in life. This can set in motion a plan to intervene with mental health or medical treatment.

What are some specific interventions we can use to help children with ACES?

- Frequently provide comfort when and how a child is open to it.
- Teach children how to identify their feelings and name them instead of using behavior to express themselves.
- Join together with all of the adults in a child's life to increase the impact of support.
- Use nurturing responses; eye contact, listening, reassurance, calm reactions to upsetting events, ensure safety.
- Praise a child for every little effort they make and every small success.

- Never blame or shame a child for acting out; help them figure out their feelings and actions by talking about it.
- Never talk about a child negatively in front of them; praising good behavior has great impact.
- Never assume a child cannot overcome their negative responses to trauma.
- Never punish a child for verbalizing their emotions or acting out of trauma.
- Never ignore a child's need to build their social emotional skills; managing their emotions, sharing, expressing self.

