

# What are Adverse childhood experiences (ACEs)?

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Adverse Childhood Experiences or ACEs is the term that is used to describe traumatic experiences that a person experiences before the age of 18. These experiences can lead to lifelong negative emotional and physical outcomes. When these experiences are severe and prolonged for a child and they are unable to process them, they can experience "toxic stress." This stress alters the functioning of the brain and has a long-lasting impact upon a developing mind, which is called "trauma."

## **8 examples of Adverse Childhood Experiences:**

1. Physical and emotional Abuse
2. Physical, emotional and/ or material neglect
3. A parent living with poor mental health
4. A parent in prison
5. A mother who experiences domestic violence
6. Parental separation or divorce
7. A parent with substance abuse problems
8. Experiencing discrimination- Racism, sexism, homophobia

## What is the ACE score?

Experiencing one of the above ACEs is counted as one point, with each ACE measured equally. Points were then totalled for a final ACE score, for example, a person who experienced physical abuse, witnessed domestic violence and whose parents separated would have an ACE of 3.

## Why do we count the ACEs?

It is important to note that the ACE score does not capture the frequency or severity of any given ACE in a person's life. As the number of ACEs a person has experienced increases, so does the risk for the following:

Alcoholism and alcohol abuse, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, depression, illicit drug use, heart disease, Liver disease, poor work performance, financial stress, risk for intimate partner violence, sexually transmitted diseases, smoking, suicide attempts, unintended pregnancies, poor academic performance.

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## About ADHD Foundation

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