

ACE Questionnaire

"ACE" is the abbreviation for 'adverse childhood experience.' There are ten types of ACEs as defined by the original and ongoing collaborative research between the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta, GA, and Kaiser Permanente in San Diego, CA. In the first [study completed in 1998 of 17,500 adults](#) ACEs included:

- Parents separating or divorce,
- Physical, sexual, or emotional abuse,
- Physical and emotional neglect,
- Domestic violence,
- Mental illness in the family,
- Substance abuse,
- Incarceration by a related family member.

The questions below cover all ten ACEs and were originally designed by the co-principal investigators of the studies, Robert F. Anda, MD, MS, with the CDC; and Vincent J. Felitti, MD, with Kaiser Permanente:

Prior to your 18th birthday:

1. 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?
If Yes, add 1 point ____
2. 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?
Yes, add 1 point ____
3. 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?
If Yes, add 1 point ____
4. 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?
If Yes, add 1 point ____
5. 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?
If Yes, add 1 point ____

6. Were your parents ever separated or divorced?
If Yes, add 1 point ____
7. 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?
Yes, add 1 point ____
8. Did you live with anyone who was a problem drinker or alcoholic, or who used street drugs?
If Yes, add 1 point ____
9. Was a household member depressed or mentally ill, or did a household member attempt suicide? If Yes, add 1 point ____
10. Did a household member go to prison?
If Yes, add 1 point ____

Now add up your "Yes" answers: _ This is your ACE Score:_____

Your total ACEs are only a guide and the original ten types of ACEs described above are certainly not an exhaustive list, they were simply mentioned the most by a group of 300 people originally interviewed at Kaiser Permanente and were well researched in the published literature.

To get your "Extended ACE Score" which covers adverse childhood experiences not included in the original research, consider the additional questions below and update your score.

Extended ACE Score

The ACEs study questionnaire is seen as too superficial to elicit the true extent of neglect, abuse and trauma that people have experienced in childhood by many experts. Many ACEs that would also qualify for post trauma stress disorder (PTSD) were also missed off the original study.

Below are additional questions inspired by questionnaires used by Professor Bessel van der Kolk (world-leading expert at trauma) at the Boston Trauma Center in the US. They are designed to elicit deeper less superficial answers than the original ACE study questionnaire.

Prior to your 18th birthday:

1. Were you bullied, taunted or shunned at school? If Yes, add 1 point____

2. Did you experience racism or homophobia or similar forms of hate abuse? If Yes, add 1 point____
3. Did you experience a serious physical trauma, illness or accident in childhood which required hospitalization? If Yes, add 1 point____
4. Did you experience a difficult or traumatic birth? If Yes, add 1 point____
5. Did you witness violence or abuse of a sibling, parent or family member? If Yes, add 1 point____
6. Did an important family member or caregiver die during your childhood? If Yes, add 1 point____
7. Did you experience homelessness during childhood? If Yes, add 1 point____
8. Did your family experience significant adverse financial events during your childhood such as loss of job, financial stability or home? If Yes, add 1 point____
9. Did you generally feel safe and cared for? If No, add 1 point____
10. Someone made sure I got up in the morning and went to school. If No, add 1 point____
11. I was really good at something (like sports, a hobby, school, work, or some creative activity). If No, add 1 point____
12. I had good friends. If No, add 1 point____
13. I felt close to at least one of my brothers or sisters. If No, add 1 point____
14. Somebody in my family had so many problems that there was little left for me. If Yes, add 1 point____
15. I felt that nobody cared whether I lived or died. If Yes, add 1 point____
16. I had someone to talk with outside my family when something was bugging me at home. If No, add 1 point____
17. My parents confided things in me that made me feel uncomfortable. If Yes, add 1 point____
18. I lived with different people at different times (like different relatives or foster families). If Yes, add 1 point____
19. Somebody close to me died. If Yes, add 1 point____
20. Someone I was close to was very sick, or in an accident for which they needed to be hospitalized. If Yes, add 1 point____
21. I received news that someone close to me had been seriously injured or violently killed during an accident, fight, or a crime. If Yes, add 1 point____
22. In my parents' eyes, nothing I did was ever good enough. If Yes, add 1 point____
23. The rules in my family were unclear and inconsistent. If Yes, add 1 point____
24. The punishments I received were unfair. If Yes, add 1 point____
25. My parents hurt each other physically when they argued and fought. If Yes, add 1 point____

26. I spent time out of the house and no one knew where I was. If Yes, add 1 point__
27. People in my family were out of control. If Yes, add 1 point__
28. Someone in my family got medical attention because of violence. If Yes, add 1 point__
29. I abused alcohol and/or drugs If Yes, add 1 point__
30. My caregivers were so into alcohol or drugs that they couldn't take care of me . If Yes, add 1 point__
31. I was in a situation in which I was convinced I would be physically injured or lose my life. If Yes, add 1 point__
32. Someone outside my family attacked me. If Yes, add 1 point__
33. I saw dead bodies. If Yes, add 1 point__
34. I was involved in a serious accident. If Yes, add 1 point__
35. I was in a natural disaster. If Yes, add 1 point__
36. I saw sexual things that scared me. If Yes, add 1 point__
37. I believed that one of my brothers or sisters was sexually molested. If Yes, add 1 point__
38. I have had another very frightening or traumatic experience where I felt intense fear, helpless, or horrified. If Yes, add 1 point__
39. Something terrible happened to me that still remains a mystery to me. If Yes, add 1 point__
40. Was it very upsetting to answer these questions? If Yes, add 1 point__

Total additional Points: _____

Grand subtotal _____

Further Considerations

There are additional sources of trauma which should also be considered as you investigate the likelihood that your health may have been affected by adverse experiences from the past. These are covered briefly below.

1. Intergenerational Trauma

Emotional Trauma has also been found to be inherited epigenetically, so for example [third generation children of the survivors of the holocaust](#) have been found to have the same physiological symptoms of trauma as their grandparents.

Also the prenatal period, the time we are in our mother's womb is a critical time when trauma experienced by our mothers can be passed on to the unborn child.

Consider the below questions in relation to your overall ACE score:

1. Was there significant trauma experienced by your mother during her pregnancy with you?
2. What are your parents or key caregivers' ACE scores (based on the above questions?)
3. Were your parents or grandparents affected by war, political upheaval or other adverse events listed above during their lifetimes?

2. "Silent ACEs:" The Hidden Epidemic of Attachment Trauma

There is a consensus among leading trauma experts that the ACEs questionnaire is inadequate when it comes to assessing specifically for attachment trauma.

Attachment trauma is a lack of emotional attunement between a baby and key caregivers between conception and age 4. A blockbusting **50%** of adults have probably experienced this trauma according to major research.

This will be covered in more depth in later lessons in the Social Module.

3. Factors which make us more likely to be impacted by ACEs

There are certain factors that can make it more likely that an adverse childhood experience will traumatize us with lasting effects on our physical and mental well-being. These include:

1. Being a Highly Sensitive Person - Some people are naturally more emotionally sensitive and aware. Their nervous system is therefore more acutely sensitive, which in turn can result in a deeper impact from ACEs. This is covered in Lesson 4 in the Mind Module.
2. Having one ACE can help - having a low level of ACEs can actually help you deal better with another one - people with no ACEs at all, or very high ACE's may have the most adverse reactions to an ACE.
3. No outside support - If, during childhood there was no outside support, or the ACEs we faced were even a family "secret," research shows the impact is worse for the child. Research shows just having

one reliable adult to speak to about their experience can help a child bounce back from an ACE.

4. How you store your memories of an event, your ability to reframe the meaning and even your beliefs about emotional stress itself will affect how an ACE impacts your health and well-being.