

ACTIVITY

Understanding My ACE Score



This tool is created for MN Correctional Case Managers and those they serve to reflect on how ACEs may impact their lives. The Adverse Childhood Experiences study was first conducted in 1991 and has been replicated many times. On a population level, the studies have shown that ACEs lead to health and social problems. It is important to note that an ACE score does not predict anything on an individual level. Part of the reason ACEs don't predict anything on the individual level is that positive childhood experiences also have a strong impact on your lifelong health and wellbeing. If we are ignoring the positive, we are not seeing the whole picture.

So, why even think about your individual ACE score? Many people find it helpful to reflect on their own childhood to move toward healing. This activity is one way to do that.

The ACE score calculator is not a “quiz” or a test. It is an awareness tool for adults that provides you an opportunity to reflect on your experiences in childhood, and also helps you gain insight into adult health, mental health and social experiences that may have been impacted by childhood adversities.

Before you calculate your ACE score, please review step #1 What the ACE Score Is (and Isn't) and #2 Why Learning About ACEs Matters. Once you calculate your ACE score as part of step #3, we encourage you to review the reflection prompts in step #4 - on your own, or with another person who you feel comfortable with, such as a friend, family member, mental health provider, or colleague.

Step 1: Review what the ACE score is (and isn't)

The ACE Score DOES NOT:

- Act as a diagnostic tool or a screening tool that you can use to predict your future (ACEs are not destiny) While it can predict increased likelihood of many health and social problems at a population level, it does not predict anything at the individual level.
- Provide the full picture of your childhood experiences
- Reflect the frequency or intensity of adversities in your childhood
- Encompass all types of adversity or trauma that children experience, such as racism, community violence, the death of a family member, etc.
- Reflect the positive supports, resilience, or protective factors that were present in your childhood

The ACE Score DOES:

- Serve as an awareness tool for adults
- Provide an opportunity to reflect on our own experiences in childhood
- Help guide conversations with others about their life experiences
- Offer a gateway to empathy, compassion and healing



Step 2: Why learning about ACEs mattersⁱⁱ

- **At the individual level**, learning about ACEs helps us understand why we behave the way we do, and that our coping behavior is normal - a normal response to abnormal circumstances. This understanding can give us hope.
- **At the organizational level**, staff and leaders are using this information to create healing-centered work environments and programs.
- **At the community level**, educating the public about ACEs and related research (which we refer to as NEAR science) can provide hope and foster the development of innovative ideas about how to support families, organizations and communities. Communities can use this new lens to create mindful, healing-centered, research-informed approaches to prevent adversity and encourage connection and healing.

Step 3: Calculate Your ACE Scoreⁱⁱⁱ

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?
No ___ If Yes, enter 1 ___
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?
No ___ If Yes, enter 1 ___
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?
No ___ If Yes, enter 1 ___
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?
No ___ If Yes, enter 1 ___
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?
No ___ If Yes, enter 1 ___
6. Were your parents ever separated or divorced?
No ___ If Yes, enter 1 ___
7. Was your mother or stepmother (or other caregiver):
Often or very often pushed, grabbed, slapped, or had something thrown at them? 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 ___ If Yes, enter 1 ___
8. Did you live with anyone who was a problem drinker or alcoholic, or who used street drugs?
No ___ If Yes, enter 1 ___
9. Was a household member depressed or mentally ill, or did a household member attempt suicide?
No ___ If Yes, enter 1 ___
10. Was a household member ever incarcerated in jail or prison?
No ___ If Yes, enter 1 ___

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

Step 4: Reflect on your ACE score

- What emotions and/or thoughts emerged while you were calculating your ACE Score?
- Did reviewing your score make you appreciate anything about your childhood?
- What are some of the positive experiences and/or supports that you experienced in childhood that are not reflected in your ACE score?
- How does knowing your score change the way you think about your own life (if at all)? Your family life?
- What are you inspired to do, after calculating your ACE score?

Want to learn more?

Check out our NEAR science resources on the FamilyWise Services website

<https://familywiseservices.org/child-abuse-prevention/resources-for-communities/>

ⁱ Adapted from *ACE Interface*

ⁱⁱ Adapted from *What ACEs/PCEs do you have?* <https://acestoohigh.com/got-your-ace-score/>

ⁱⁱⁱ Adapted from *PACEs Connection* (<https://www.pacesconnection.com/blog/got-your-ace-resilience-scores>)