

HEALTHY MIND PSYCHOLOGY UK

A **FREE GUIDE** TO UNDERSTANDING & IDENTIFYING ACE'S



By Dr Amber Johnston

WHAT ARE ACE'S?

Adverse Childhood Experiences, commonly known as ACEs, refer to traumatic events that occur in an individual's life before the age of 18.

These experiences range from physical, emotional, or sexual abuse to household challenges like living with a family member addicted to substances, experiencing divorce, or facing mental illness within the home.

It's crucial to understand that these experiences are not just difficulties or challenges; they are profound traumas that can have lasting impacts on a person's physical and mental well-being.

The repercussions of these childhood traumas are far-reaching. Studies show that individuals with high ACE scores are at a greater risk for health issues like heart disease, diabetes, depression, and substance abuse later in life.

People often ask, why do they need to consider their past when it's long gone? The research behind ACE's suggests that those experiences may still affect our minds and bodies today, and for that reason, understanding our past can help us manage our now!

THE ACE'S QUIZ

The ACEs Quiz is a simple yet powerful tool designed to help you reframe any adverse childhood experiences you might have faced. This may sound odd, but not everyone recognises how difficult their childhood experiences were, often because they lived them without knowing any differently. The purpose of this quiz is to help you identify and become more aware of some of the hard things you may have had to cope with!

Comprising straightforward questions, this quiz serves as a starting point to understand the potential impact of your early years on your current health and well-being.

Remember, **this quiz is not a diagnostic tool** but a means to provide insight and encourage further exploration, ideally with professional support.

How to use the quiz?

On the next page are the questions that make up the ACEs quiz. Answer them with a simple "Yes" or "No." Remember, your responses are personal and should be answered honestly for the most insightful results.

THE ACE'S QUIZ

AS YOU READ EACH QUESTION, SIMPLY TICK "YES" OR "NO".

-
- | | | | |
|-----------|---|--|---------------------------------------|
| 01 | Before your 18th birthday, did a parent or adult in the household often swear at you, insult you, put you down, or humiliate you? | YES
<input type="checkbox"/> | NO
<input type="checkbox"/> |
|-----------|---|--|---------------------------------------|
-
- | | | | |
|-----------|---|--|---------------------------------------|
| 02 | Before your 18th birthday, did a parent or adult in the household push, grab, slap, or throw something, or ever hit you so hard that you had marks or were injured? | YES
<input type="checkbox"/> | NO
<input type="checkbox"/> |
|-----------|---|--|---------------------------------------|
-
- | | | | |
|-----------|---|--|---------------------------------------|
| 03 | Before your 18th birthday, did an adult or person 5+ years older than you ever touch you in a sexual way, or have you touch their body in a sexual way? | YES
<input type="checkbox"/> | NO
<input type="checkbox"/> |
|-----------|---|--|---------------------------------------|
-
- | | | | |
|-----------|--|--|---------------------------------------|
| 04 | Did you often feel that no one in your family loved you, thought you were important or special, or didn't look out for, feel close, or support each other? | YES
<input type="checkbox"/> | NO
<input type="checkbox"/> |
|-----------|--|--|---------------------------------------|
-
- | | | | |
|-----------|--|--|---------------------------------------|
| 05 | Before your 18th birthday, did you feel you didn't have enough to eat, wore dirty clothes, or your parents were unable to take care of you / protect you if you needed it? | YES
<input type="checkbox"/> | NO
<input type="checkbox"/> |
|-----------|--|--|---------------------------------------|
-
- | | | | |
|-----------|---|--|---------------------------------------|
| 06 | Were your parents ever separated or divorced? | YES
<input type="checkbox"/> | NO
<input type="checkbox"/> |
|-----------|---|--|---------------------------------------|
-
- | | | | |
|-----------|---|--|---------------------------------------|
| 07 | Before your 18th birthday, was a parent often pushed, grabbed, slapped, had something thrown at, or kicked, bitten, hit, or threatened with a weapon? | YES
<input type="checkbox"/> | NO
<input type="checkbox"/> |
|-----------|---|--|---------------------------------------|
-
- | | | | |
|-----------|---|--|---------------------------------------|
| 08 | Did you live with anyone who was a problem drinker or alcoholic or who used street drugs? | YES
<input type="checkbox"/> | NO
<input type="checkbox"/> |
|-----------|---|--|---------------------------------------|
-
- | | | | |
|-----------|--|--|---------------------------------------|
| 09 | Was a household member depressed or mentally ill, or did a household member attempt suicide? | YES
<input type="checkbox"/> | NO
<input type="checkbox"/> |
|-----------|--|--|---------------------------------------|
-
- | | | | |
|-----------|--------------------------------------|--|---------------------------------------|
| 10 | Did a household member go to prison? | YES
<input type="checkbox"/> | NO
<input type="checkbox"/> |
|-----------|--------------------------------------|--|---------------------------------------|
-

SCORING THE QUIZ

For each "Yes" answer, assign yourself one point. The total number of points is your ACE score.

Interpreting Your Score:

- A score of 0 to 1 points suggests a relatively low level of childhood trauma.
- Scores between 2 to 4 indicate a moderate level, suggesting some possible impact on your health and well-being.
- Scores of 5 or higher are considered high, pointing to a significant level of childhood trauma that may have continued implications for your adult well-being .

Remember, your ACE score is not a verdict on your future. It's a starting point for understanding and healing. No matter your score, seeking professional guidance is highly recommended to explore these experiences further and their impact on your life.

INDIVIDUAL VARIABILITY

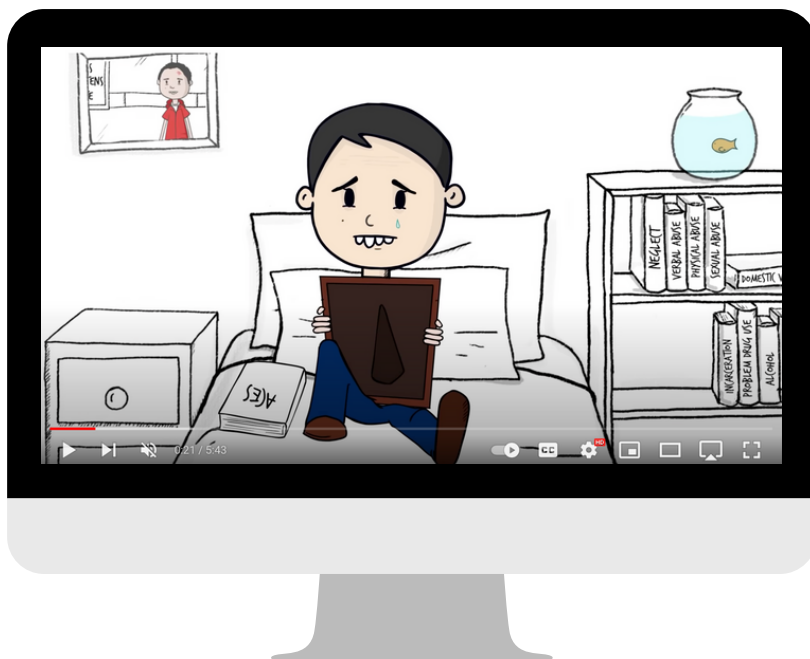
The way each person copes with their ACE's can be determined by many factors. Their access to mitigating factors such as social support, community resources, early intervention, or personal characteristics of resilience will all lessen the impact of ACE's.

For this reason, the ACE Quiz cannot be an indication of the fate of a child, as it does not capture the frequency or severity of the challenges nor the protective or mitigating factors supporting the child's wellbeing.

What it can do is help healthcare providers identify those at higher risk for health-related symptoms owing to their exposure to early adversity. It also helps the individual understand how these early traumas can impact their brain and body so they can take steps and seek professional support to build resilience, learn new emotional tools, develop better lifestyle habits and ultimately heal from the troubles of their past.

WATCH THIS VIDEO!

This short animated film was developed to raise awareness of ACEs, their potential to damage health across the life course and the roles that different agencies can play in preventing ACEs and supporting those affected by them.



[**CLICK HERE TO WATCH**](#)

REFERENCES

Felitti, V. J., Anda, R. F., Nordenberg, D., Williamson, D. F., Spitz, A. M., Edwards, V., Koss, M. P., & Marks, J. S. (1998). Relationship of childhood abuse and household dysfunction to many of the leading causes of death in adults. The Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) Study. American Journal of Preventive Medicine, 14(4), 245–258.
[https://doi.org/10.1016/s0749-3797\(98\)00017-8](https://doi.org/10.1016/s0749-3797(98)00017-8)

Emily M. Zarse, Mallory R. Neff, Rachel Yoder, Leslie Hulvershorn, Joanna E. Chambers & R. Andrew Chambers | Udo Schumacher (Reviewing editor) (2019) The adverse childhood experiences questionnaire: Two decades of research on childhood trauma as a primary cause of adult mental illness, addiction, and medical diseases, Cogent Medicine, 6:1, DOI: [10.1080/2331205X.2019.1581447](https://doi.org/10.1080/2331205X.2019.1581447)