



Understanding Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) for Teens and How to Build Resilience

When we're young, our parents, relatives, and others play significant roles in our lives. Most of us have positive memories of people who cared for us and helped us feel confident. However, when young people don't have safe, stable nurturing relationships (SSNR), they can suffer emotional and physical harm. These adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) can continue to impact them as adults.

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)		
Abuse	Neglect	Household Stressors
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Emotional• Physical• Sexual	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Emotional• Physical	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Child is separated from parent or caregiver due to divorce or parent imprisonment, for example• Child sees parent, brother, or sister being abused• Member of the household has a mental illness or misuses alcohol or drugs• Family or child experiences homelessness

ACEs are very common. Two of every three adults have had at least one ACE, and many have had several. A person with four or more ACEs is at a higher risk for emotional or physical health problems in adulthood. These stressful experiences can have long-term impacts, including:

- Heart, liver, and lung disease
- Stroke and cancer
- Mental health, substance use, and disordered eating
- Social, occupational, and emotional challenges
- Unhealthy sexual practices, such as unprotected sex
- Other chronic health conditions, such as diabetes, asthma, and obesity

People can be affected by traumatic experiences as children or teens. This can include bullying, racism, sexism, and other experiences that limit a person's opportunity and self-confidence. Living through war, neighborhood violence, and natural disasters can also be traumatic.

You're more than your ACEs

It's important to know that if you've had ACEs, you can take action to recover. Start by:

- **Understanding resilience.** It's the ability to bounce back from tough times. Studies show that resilience is key to sustaining health and happiness and overcoming the impacts of ACEs. You can begin building resilience at any point in life.
- **Remembering an adult—a teacher or another person—who cared about you during childhood.** Today, that relationship continues to help protect you from the health impacts of ACEs.

You can learn to build resilience

Becoming resilient means finding ways to be strong, healthy, and successful. You can do this even if your life is still impacted by ACEs and traumatic experiences.

Here are some ways to build resilience. Your first step is any step in a healthy direction. Try some of these tips (even if you don't feel like it) and find what works for you.

- Connect with others. Get in touch with your friends online or by phone. Meet up with friends and family to do things you all enjoy.
- Get some exercise on most days, to relieve stress and feel better.
- Sleep 9 to 11 hours every night. Teens need extra sleep.
- Eat healthier foods.
- Get creative with music, art, writing, or whatever interests you.

Your emotions and moods matter. Talk about how you feel with friends, family, and adults you trust. To understand and express yourself, it can also help to:

- Be in touch with your body to help you feel grounded. Learning mindfulness and relaxation breathing can help.

- Limit time on social media to about an hour a day. Stop using sites that make you feel bad.
- Join groups and activities that help you feel hopeful. Support groups or faith communities can help.
- When you need it, seek counseling or mental health care. Don't put this off.

You'll feel better, calmer, and healthier as you gradually include these things in your life.

What's next

For advice on getting started or support as you build resilience, you can:

- Talk to your doctor or other clinician. Ask about referrals to counseling and other Kaiser Permanente resources.
- Contact your local Health Education Department. Ask about classes, wellness coaching, support groups, and community services.

Other resources

ACEs 101: acestoohigh.com/aces-101/

Resilience Trumps ACEs: resiliencetrumpsACEs.org

Calm app: kp.org/selfcareapps

CDC-Kaiser Adverse Childhood Experiences Study: cdc.gov/violenceprevention/aces/about.html

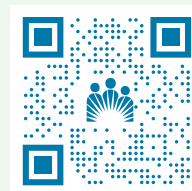
CDC Parenting information page: cdc.gov/parents/index.html

Child Help: 1-800-4A-CHILD (422-4453)
(available 24/7)

Healthy Children: healthychildren.org/English/Pages/default.aspx

Mental Health information and care: kp.org/mentalhealth

KP ACEs: kpdoc.org/aces



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