

What's my ACE score?
(How to find children and youth at risk for childhood trauma)

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?
Yes 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?
Yes 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?
Yes 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?
Yes 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?
Yes No If yes enter 1 _____

6. Was a biological parent **ever** lost to you through divorced, abandonment, or other reason ?
Yes No If yes enter 1 _____

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 No If yes enter 1 _____

8. Did you live with anyone who was a problem drinker or alcoholic or who used street drugs?
Yes No If yes enter 1 _____

9. Was a household member depressed or mentally ill or did a household member attempt suicide?
Yes No If yes enter 1 _____

10. Did a household member go to prison?
Yes No If yes enter 1 _____

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

How to help children and youth with childhood trauma

Any time you work with children and youth, there is the possibility that one or more may be dealing with childhood trauma. It makes no difference to the child whether you are a teacher, counselor, therapist, scout leader, basketball coach or any number of other roles adults may play in a child's life. If you remember the following four s's, you can help the children you may be working with that may also have a childhood trauma.

The four s's:

1. Safety

Make sure the child feels safe whenever s/he is around you.

Can the child see what is happening all around them in the space where you meet? This child may not do well with his/her back to the doorway.

Be predictable. Keep a routine when working with this child and work hard with the child ahead of time, if the routine is going to change.

Be the adult protective shield.

2. Self-soothing

Children and youth dealing with trauma often have two speeds, high and low, and can go from one to the other in a matter of seconds. They have not learned how to help themselves stay calm. It is important for you to stay calm when they overreact and to be there for them. It is even more important for you to help them identify (through your observations) what seems to help them stay calm or get calm.

3. Support

Be the adult protective shield, but maintain appropriate boundaries. These are kids who need a cheerleader and often times you can fulfill that role. Some of these youngsters may be particularly sensitive about being touched because of what they have experienced.

4. Strengths

Children and youth dealing with trauma can be very challenging and it may take a little time and observation, but it is important that they know they have strengths and what some of those strengths are. You might start by focusing on what seem like easy or general things (It's great that you arrived on time) before moving on to more individual strengths.