

2. ACEs & Resilience

What are ACEs?

Adverse Childhood Experiences and Resilience

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) are potentially traumatic or stressful experiences that happen in a person's life before the age of 18. These experiences can have lasting effects on an individual's health and well-being.

ACEs can increase the risk of negative health behaviours and outcomes later in life.

Types of ACEs¹

Abuse

- Physical abuse
- Emotional abuse
- Sexual abuse

Neglect

- Physical neglect
- Emotional neglect

Household Dysfunction

- Household member struggling with a mental illness
- Parent treated violently
- Parental separation or divorce
- Incarcerated household member
- Substance abuse by a household member

¹This is the list of ACEs that were studied by Felitti and Anda et al (1998). This is not an exhaustive list of all experiences that may be considered adverse in a child's life.

ACEs are associated with an increased risk of:²

- Injury (e.g., fractures and burns)
- Disrupted brain development
- Mental illness (e.g., depression, anxiety, suicide, PTSD)
- Maternal health outcomes (e.g., unintended pregnancy, pregnancy complications, fetal death)
- Chronic diseases (e.g., cancer, diabetes)
- Risky behaviours (e.g., alcohol and drug abuse, unsafe sex)
- Lack of opportunities (e.g., education, occupation, income)

Resilience

Experiencing persistent adversity can hinder positive development and well-being. Resilience is the ability to adapt to or rebound from adversity.³

Resilience helps us to understand why some individuals do better than others when faced with significant challenges or severe adversity.

Childhood is the best time to build resilience, but it can be strengthened at any stage of life.

² Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2019, March 27). *Adverse Childhood Experiences Presentation Graphics*. <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/childabuseandneglect/acestudy/ace-graphics.html>

³ Masten, A.S., Gewirtz, A.H., & Sapienza, J.K. (2013). Resilience in development: the importance of early childhood. Retrieved March 15, 2018.

