

## ACE's—Adverse Childhood Experiences

An ACE is a negative or potentially traumatic event that occurs before a person reaches 18 years of age. ACEs can damage a child's sense of safety, stability, or bonding.

Examples:

- abuse, which can be emotional, physical, or sexual
- neglect, either physical or emotional
- domestic violence
- substance misuse by a member of the household
- divorce or separation of parents or caregivers
- mental illness of a member of the household
- having a member of the household go to prison

Associated risk factors:

- living in under-resourced or racially segregated neighborhoods
- frequently moving to new homes or areas
- food insecurity

The prolonged stress from ACEs can affect:

- attention
- decision making
- learning
- stress management

Childhood trauma places people at a significantly higher risk of the effects of future trauma. Individuals can also pass on these effects to their children.

Research has linked ACES to various health consequences, such as:

- physical health issues
  - psychological conditions
  - risky behaviors
  - developmental disruption
  - increased use of healthcare services
  - challenges with learning
  - problems in jobs
  - relationship development
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- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimate that the prevention of ACEs could have reduced the number of cases of depression by up to 21 million.