

Adverse Childhood Experience (ACE) Study

What is an Adverse Childhood Experience? They are experiences in childhood that are stressful and traumatic events, including abuse, neglect, and violence, prior to the age of 18.

These events have been shown to be an important factor in health concerns throughout a person's lifetime. Many studies have examined the close relationship between ACEs and a variety of disease risk factors. The study showed that as the ACE score increased, the higher the risk for developing chronic disease, such as; autoimmune disease, cancer, heart disease, addictions, depression, risky behaviors, obesity, suicide, and social issues. They have also been linked to low life potential and early death.



The ACE study was conducted by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and Kaiser Permanente between 1995 and 1997.

The ACE Study originated in an obesity clinic in the 1980's. It started with a physician named Dr. Vincent Felitti. He was the chief of Kaiser Permanente's Department of Preventable Medicine in San Diego. He was running an obesity clinic and was having trouble understanding why each year, for the last 5 years, more than half the study dropped out of the program. All of the participants were successfully losing weight when they left the program.

Dr. Felitti was baffled why someone would choose to drop out of a program when they were having success. He began to dig deeply into the medical records of the dropouts and started interviewing the participants that left. He found that of the 286 people he and his colleagues interviewed, most had been sexually abused as children. One female that dropped out of the program, admitted to Dr. Felitti, that she had been raped and in the year after her attack, she gained 105 lbs. She believed that if she was overweight, no one would notice her, and thought of her excess weight as a shield of protection.

The conversations he had with these individuals led him to realize that weight gain should be looked at, as more than just food and hunger. It should be recognized that it is usually more about coping with fear, anxiety, and depression.

The stress of childhood trauma releases hormones that can physically and mentally change a child's developing brain. Children with overwhelming stress live much of their life in fight or flight mode, which can alter and stress their mental and emotional development. Being in this mode also puts an individual in sympathetic dominance, which stresses their endocrine glands and immune function. Most children that have endured and experienced trauma see the world as a place of constant danger. If not dealt with and properly healed from these traumas, children take these fears and anxieties into their adulthood.

I want to emphasize how important these ACEs can be to your physical, emotional, and mental well-being. When clients tell me that they self-sabotage, even when they are doing well on a program,

or they are having slow progress in healing, then ACEs should be acknowledged and dealt with for optimal healing.

Please feel free to take the ACE test below and see what your score is. Remember, your score is not meant to scare or worry you. It is meant to be a helpful piece of important information about your story.

ACE (Finding your score)

Prior to the age of 18:

1. Did a parent or other adult in your household, often or very often, swear at you, insult you, put you down, or humiliate you...or did you feel afraid that you may be physically hurt? **If Yes, add 1 point**
2. Did a parent or other adult in your household, often or very often, push, grab, slap, or throw something at you...or have you ever been hit so hard, that you had marks or were injured? **If Yes, add 1 point**
3. Did an adult or a person at least 5 years older than you, ever touch or fondle you or have you touch them in a sexual way...or attempt or actually have oral, anal, or vaginal intercourse with you? **If Yes, add 1 point**
4. Did you often or very often feel that no one on your family loved you, or thought you were important or special...or your family didn't look out for each other, or support each other? **If Yes, add 1 point**
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? **If Yes, add 1 point**
6. Were your parents ever separated or divorced? **If Yes, add 1 point**
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? Was she ever repeatedly hit for a few minutes or threatened with a gun or a knife? **If Yes, add 1 point**
8. Did you live with anyone who was a problem drinker, alcoholic, or used street drugs? **If Yes, add 1 point**
9. Was a household member depressed or mentally ill, or did a household member attempt suicide? **If Yes, add 1 point**
10. Did a household member go to prison? **If Yes, add 1 point**

Add up your Yes answers, this is your ACE Score

Healing from your ACEs can come in many ways.

1. Emotion Code is a form of emotional release. It was founded by Dr. Bradley Nelson. This process releases old past trapped emotions that can be altering your physical and emotional health. These past trapped emotions found in childhood will usually be found around an ACE event. You can read more in depth about the Emotion Code and what it entails on my website.
2. Healing Code- The Healing Code was developed by Dr. Alexander Lloyd and Dr. Ben Johnson. It is a 6 minute healing "meditation" or quiet time using special hand sequences around specific healing

centers of the body. It should be done 3 times daily, for the best results, but even 1 time daily is healing. The Healing Code heals cellular memories (such as ACEs) and addresses the source of illness in the body.

3. EFT- Emotional Freedom Technique - EFT is a physiological acupressure technique that helps to remove negative emotions, reduce food cravings, reduce or eliminate pain, and implementation of positive affirmations and goals. It is also a very effective technique to emotional and mental health and freedom.
4. Journaling, Prayer, Meditation, Art , Music, and Dance have all been shown to be powerful ways of self-expression and a “purging” of emotions and feelings. These healing tools also encourage creativity, happiness, healing and a sense of well-being.

*If you would like to read more in depth about the ACE Study and how to heal from emotional trauma, I have some great resources listed below for more information. You should be able to purchase most or all of them from amazon.com.

References:

The Emotion Code by Dr. Bradley Nelson

The Healing Code by Dr. Alexander Lloyd and Dr. Ben Johnson

Impact of Early Life Trauma on Health and Disease-The Hidden Epidemic by Ruth A. Lanius, Eric Vermetten, and Clare Pain

Feelings Buried Alive Never Die by Karol K. Truman

Healing Feelings From Your Heart by Karol K. Truman

The Artist’s Way by Julia Cameron

The Body Keeps the Score (Brain, Mind, and Body in the Healing of Trauma) by Dr. Bessel Van Der Kolk

Rewriting Your Broken Story by Kenneth Boa

In An Unspoken Voice-How the Body Releases Trauma and Restores Goodness by Dr. Peter A. Levine

Emotional Freedom: Liberate Yourself from Negative Emotions and Transform Your Life by Judith Orloff

<http://www.ncifci.org/sites/defaultfiles/FindingYourACEScore.pdf>

<https://acestoohigh.com/2012/10/03/the-adverse-childhood-experiences-study-the-largest-most-important-public-health-study>

<http://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/acestudy/index.html>

<http://www.samhsa.gov/capt./practicing-effective.../adverse-childhood-experiences>

www.acestudy.org/index.html