

ACES Adverse Childhood Experiences

Childhood Trauma and the Impacts of Divorce

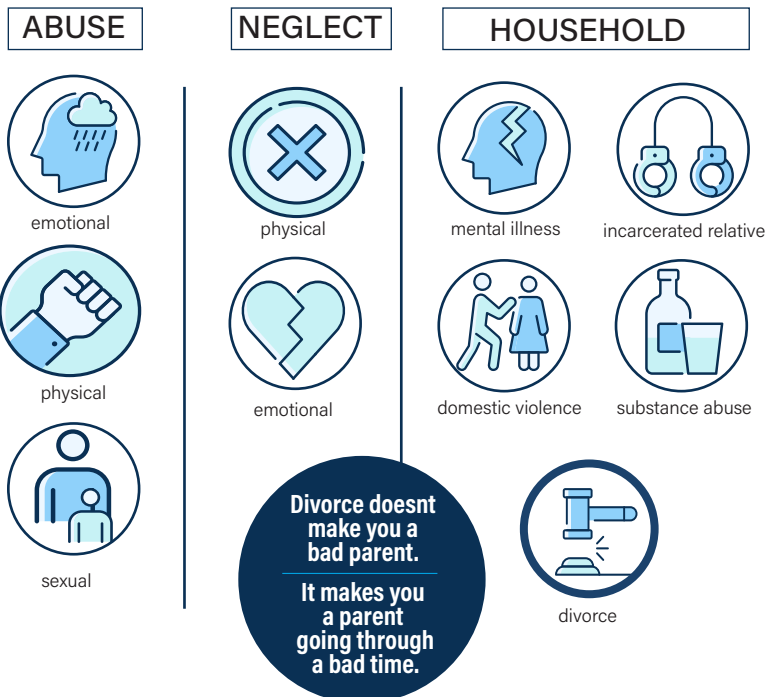
ACEs are forms of childhood trauma. Trauma for children can come in many forms.

They are common across all populations, but some populations are more vulnerable to experiencing ACEs.

Some children are more sensitive to stress and may experience stronger emotional or physical effects.

The more ACEs a child experiences in their childhood, the risk for negative impacts increases.

These traumas are known as toxic stress for children. This stress produces short term and long term consequences.



The ACE study was conducted by the CDC and Kaiser Permanente from 1995 to 1997.
For more info visit: <https://developingchild.harvard.edu/resources/infographics/aces-and-toxic-stress-frequently-asked-questions/>

The Health Effects and Impacts on Life Opportunities

CHILDHOOD HEALTH IMPACTS

Brain Development- impairs the hippocampus development

Physical Development - Weakens immune system

Educational Challenges - learning and behavioral problems, harder time with decision making and attention.

Physical Health - higher rates of childhood asthma, respiratory problems

LIFE OPPORTUNITIES IMPACTED

- Increased risk of for mental illness
- Increase the risks of injury
- Sexually transmitted infections
- Teen pregnancy
- Job instability
- Increase risk for smoking and heavy drinking
- Educational opportunities

LIFELONG HEALTH IMPACTS

- Depressive Disorder
- Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease
- Asthma
- Kidney Disease
- Stroke
- Coronary Heart Disease
- Cancer
- Diabetes
- Obesity

HOW DIVORCE CAN CONTRIBUTE TO ACES

- **Lack of Information** - kids imagine the worst, leading to anxiety.
- **Lack of Control** - children feel powerless and overwhelmed when they don't get a say in big changes.
- **Uncertainty** - Not knowing what will happen next can make it hard for kids to feel safe and secure.
- **Conflict** - Ongoing tension between parents can make children feel caught in the middle and emotionally unsafe.

DIVORCE DOESN'T HAVE TO BE AN ACE

Minimize the trauma

Create stability

Stay connected to your child

Instead of fitting your children's lives around a plan, make a plan that fits your children's lives.

TAKE YOUR ACES TEST:
WWW.AMERICANSPPC.ORG/TAKE-THE-ACES-QUIZ/





HOW TO MITIGATE THE IMPACT OF DIVORCE ON KIDS

Think of the "Divorce ACE" as an empty backpack. Each conflict parents have will add a small boulder to the backpack. The more small boulders, the harder it will be for the kids to navigate life. You get to make the choice to keep the backpack empty.

KEEP THE BOULDERS OUT OF THE BACKPACK

Keep the kids in the center (not the middle)

LANGUAGE MATTERS

- › Disengage from personal feelings about the other parent.
- › Express excitement about the child's experiences with the other parent.
- › Watch for triangulation from the child/ren.
- › Use "Parenting Time", rather than visitation, contact or custody.
- › Say "On Duty Parent" rather than primary parent or custodial parent.
- › Call the house by the name rather than primary home.
- › You don't have to swing at every pitch your co-parent throws.

CREATE CERTAINTY

- › Communicate with clear, age appropriate language to help kids understand what's happening.
- › Get a large calendar with stickers to represent parenting time.
- › Create a fun ritual with the primary parent after transitions.

CONNECTION WITHOUT JUDGEMENT

- › Create space or a special time to hear how kids are feeling. Thank them for telling you how they feel. Ask if they would like help before offering solutions.
- › Feelings are information. Not good — or bad — just information.
- › If you mess up, fess up.
- › Give gifts without strings.

APPROACH PARENTING AS THE BUSINESS OF RAISING KIDS

- › You will always be parents together. Graduations, weddings, grandkids, etc.
- › Learn how to be co-workers.
- › Shield the children from conflict
- › Keep adult issues between the adults, including scheduling, decision making, and your thoughts about the other parents' choices.
- › Focus on the problem, not the person.

WHAT KIDS NEED MOST:

Unconditional Love
Support
Guidance
Safety
Consistency
Listening
Communication
Understanding
Trust
Emotional Safety
Freedom of Expression
Solid Identity
Support of Other Adults
Time with Each Parent
Support of Feelings & Concerns
Structure & Boundaries
Consistency
Be A Parent instead of a friend
Educate them on the "Why"
Demonstration of Integrity
What Hard Work Means
Parents to Believe in Them
Parents who Respect Each Other
Peaceful and Secure Environment
Connection
Laughter - Play - Delight
Kindness

No parent gets this perfect. What matters most is being willing to learn, repair, and keep showing up for your children.

TAKE YOUR RESILIENCY TEST:
[WWW.PINETREEINSTITUTE.ORG/
RESILIENCY-TEST/](http://WWW.PINETREEINSTITUTE.ORG/RESILIENCY-TEST/)



STAY FOCUSED
ON WHAT
YOU WANT
YOUR KIDS TO
REMEMBER
ABOUT THEIR
CHILDHOOD.