

# Introduction to ACEs

## What are ACEs?

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) are traumatic events that took place during our childhood (Age 0 to 17), and they're very important to look at and address, as they can potentially impact us in our day to day lives, all the way from our adolescence to our late adulthood.<sup>(1)</sup> ACEs also comes in many forms, such as:

- Experiencing abuse, neglect or violence (personally)
- Seeing violence at home or in the community
- Having a family member that has died by or attempted suicide

Some ACEs that commonly take place in households are:

- Substance abuse (either by the child or their family)
- Mental health problems (either by the child or their family)
- Instability as a result of separation from family members

This, of course, is not an exhaustive list. There are many other traumatic experiences that can take place which can impact our health and wellbeing.

## Why is it important to address ACEs?

ACEs are extremely common, with as many as 1 in every 2 children having gone through an ACE in one study on 9010 children in India.<sup>(2)</sup> Some of the areas that ACEs can impact both short and long term are:

- Severely increased chances of substance abuse (mostly, but not limited to, tobacco use in India)<sup>(3)(4)</sup>
- Resulting in complex clinical psychology cases with mental disorders such as Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), depression and Borderline Personality Disorder (BPD)<sup>(5)</sup>
- Changes in the size and functionality some parts of the brain, making it more difficult to process or understand emotions, and more difficult to memorise and remember information.<sup>(5)</sup>
- Lower performances in academics.<sup>(8)</sup>
- Having difficulty with socialising with other people.<sup>(9)</sup>

## How to prevent ACEs:

Here are a few ways to prevent ACEs from occurring:<sup>(1)</sup>

- Maintaining strong bonds with family:

Your family is your primary contact if an ACE is to occur, and staying in contact with them can make it easier to have open conversations with them if you are wary of an ACE that might occur.

- Building resilience:<sup>(6)</sup>

Resilience refers to one's capacity to adapt to traumatic experiences in healthy ways. Resilience can be nurtured through cultivating skills such as emotional intelligence, coping mechanisms and choosing healthy lifestyle choices.

- Being informed about trauma:

On a societal level, you can prevent ACEs by making sure that you have a proper level of information on how trauma works, how it can affect you, and what coping mechanisms could be adapted to help out. One resource that goes in depth into trauma is linked [here](#).<sup>(7)</sup>

Over the coming days, we're going to also be talking about how to overcome ACEs that have already happened.

## References:

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4. <https://www.cdc.gov/vitalsigns/aces/index.html#:~:text=ACEs%20can%20include%20violence%2C%20abuse.and%20substance%20misuse%20in%20adulthood>.

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