

What is ACE?

- Adverse childhood experiences (ACE's) can be defined as the stressful or potentially traumatic experiences that an individual experiences as a child. These experiences directly affect the child and the environment around them [\[1\]](#).
- Adverse childhood experiences (ACE's) can include physical illnesses, having parents who emotionally, physically, sexually and verbally abuse children, parents who take substances and those who neglect their children. It can also include experiences such as bullying, assault, imprisonment and parental separation [\[2\]](#).

What is a support system?

- A support system entails those individuals who provide those materials and resources to the person to cope with the stress in addition to providing them with emotional and practical support [\[3,4\]](#).
- A support system can include one's friends, family or colleagues.

Why is it important to have a support system?

- Being a part of social groups helps them to follow a healthy diet, encourages them to exercise and prevents them from intaking substances [\[5\]](#).
- Research indicates that having a strong support system helps a person cope with the consequences of post traumatic stress disorder which often occurs when a person encounters adverse childhood experiences [\[6\]](#).
- Having a strong support system helps them to have a quality life with better coping strategies and greater well being [\[7\]](#).
- Having a support system often helps them to get help. Humans live in a socially connected world and sometimes they may not be aware of the necessary resources, a friend can help access these resources. [\[8\]](#)

→ Finally, a support system is a healthy distraction that helps them gain quality habits like playing sports, going for a hike or practising yoga or zumba together [\[9\]](#).

How to support someone who has had ACE?

1. Being aware of Adverse childhood experiences (ACE's)- The first step in supporting someone with Adverse childhood experiences (ACE's) is to be aware of Adverse childhood experiences (ACE's). Learn about Adverse childhood experiences (ACE's), what constitutes Adverse childhood experiences (ACE's), how does it affect a person, how to identify someone who has experienced Adverse childhood experiences (ACE's). Being aware of Adverse childhood experiences (ACE's) gives the supporter an upper hand in being empathetic and understanding what their friend or family member may require [\[10\]](#).
2. Creating a safe space- Individuals who have experienced Adverse childhood experiences (ACE's) may feel threatened or uncomfortable easily even when they are in a safe environment. Keeping this in mind, you should ensure that they don't get startled by slamming doors or by putting on very loud music that will make them uncomfortable [\[11\]](#). Maintaining a very safe, calm and predictable environment [\[12\]](#).
3. Being non judgemental- Being non judgemental helps the person to open up and helps them to clarify their thoughts and feelings. It also builds healthy relationships and forms attachments [\[13\]](#).
4. Active listening- Active listening not only helps the person to identify their problems, but it builds more knowledge and brings out missing information. Provide non verbal cues to the speaker like, "hmmm", "I see", "what happened after that?" etc [\[14\]](#).
5. Not taking things personally- An individual who has had Adverse childhood experiences (ACE's) may often have anger outbursts or may become emotional and may feel unsafe. Know that it is because of their experiences and has nothing to do

with you. Understand that their behaviour is an aspect of the problem and not the problem itself [\[15\]](#).

6. Checking in with them- People with Adverse childhood experiences (ACE's) may withdraw at times and may feel lonely. Even if they are present with you, check in with them. Ask them how they are doing today and is there something that they want [\[16\]](#).
7. Positive affirmations- Tell your friends what a wonderful job they are doing, tell them they are worth it and show them through your actions as well [\[17\]](#).
8. Offering professional support- Sometimes, your friend or relative may be finding it difficult to cope or their experiences might be interfering with their everyday life. In such a case, offer professional support to them and tell the advantages of it [\[18\]](#).
9. Being a positive influence- Encourage your friend to have healthy meals, follow through with their routine check ups, practice exercises [\[19\]](#).
10. Providing practical support- Practical support can be provided by helping them or giving them tips to manage their daily chores or routine or attending school or college [\[20\]](#).