

The ACEs Insight Tool: Understanding & Addressing Childhood Toxic Stress

Developed with Insights from Pamela Wood, National Active Parenting Trainer

What are ACEs?

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) are stressful or traumatic events that occur during childhood, such as neglect, abuse, or household dysfunction. When children are exposed to these experiences without the buffer of a supportive adult, it can lead to "toxic stress" that can adversely affect a child's brain. Research shows that a high ACE score can significantly increase the risk of serious health, mental health, and behavioral consequences later in life.

Expert Resource: For a deeper dive into the science of toxic stress, [click here to watch Dr. Nadine Burke Harris](#) (California's First Surgeon General and Founder of the Center for Youth Wellness) explain how childhood trauma impacts lifelong health.

From Awareness to Action: While ACEs identify potential risks, **Active Parenting** programs provide the specific "Protective Factors" needed to build resilience and improve outcomes for children and families.

The Expanded ACE Questionnaire

This assessment includes the original 10 core ACE questions plus 7 additional indicators of childhood stress identified by our National Active Parenting Trainer, Pamela Wood.

Adverse Experience	Yes
Were your parents or guardians ever divorced or separated?	<input type="checkbox"/>
Did a parent or guardian ever serve time in jail or prison?	<input type="checkbox"/>
Was a household member depressed, mentally ill, or suicidal?	<input type="checkbox"/>
Did you ever witness household members hurt or threaten to hurt each other?	<input type="checkbox"/>
Did a household member frequently insult, humiliate, or put you down?	<input type="checkbox"/>
Did you ever feel afraid that a household member might physically hurt you?	<input type="checkbox"/>
Did someone ever touch your private parts or ask you to touch theirs in a sexual way?	<input type="checkbox"/>
Did you often go without food, clean clothing, or a safe place to live?	<input type="checkbox"/>



Adverse Experience	Yes
Did you feel you lacked someone to protect you or keep you safe?	<input type="checkbox"/>
Did a household member ever push, grab, or slap you hard enough to leave a mark?	<input type="checkbox"/>
Did you live with someone who struggled with alcohol or drug use?	<input type="checkbox"/>
Did you often feel unprotected, unloved, or that your family wasn't close?	<input type="checkbox"/>
Were you ever placed in the foster care system?	<input type="checkbox"/>
Were you frequently harassed or bullied in school or your community?	<input type="checkbox"/>
Did you experience the death of a close family member?	<input type="checkbox"/>
Were you separated from a parent due to deportation or long-term absence?	<input type="checkbox"/>
Did a parent suffer from a life-threatening illness or permanent injury?	<input type="checkbox"/>
Did you see or hear violence in your neighborhood or school?	<input type="checkbox"/>
Were you treated differently because of race, gender, or sexual orientation?	<input type="checkbox"/>

Building Resilience with Active Parenting

National Trainer Pamela Wood utilizes this questionnaire to help families identify where they may need additional support. Once these stressors are identified, our evidence-backed programs help caregivers move from "managing behavior" to building the **Protective Factors** that foster long-term health:

- **Parental Resilience:** Learning to manage stress and function well through challenges.
- **Knowledge of Development:** Understanding how trauma impacts a child's brain and behavior.
- **Social & Emotional Competence:** Teaching children the regulation skills they need to succeed.

Next Steps for Professionals

- **Explore Our Curricula:** Discover our range of [evidence-based programs](#) designed to build resilience and strengthen families across all developmental stages, from the first five years through the teen years
- **Deepen Your Impact:** Join a [Leader Training Workshop](#) available via—[Live Webinar](#) or [Self-Paced Online Study](#))—to learn master these concepts for the *First Five Years* and

beyond. Gain the certification and confidence to lead high-impact parenting classes in your community.

- **Professional Certification:** Register for our July [Training of Trainers \(TOT\)](#) in Atlanta. Master the curriculum and join our network of National Trainers to train Parent Educators to lead parenting classes.