

Adverse Childhood Experiences

Information for Teens

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

51% of Oregon youth have experienced at least one ACE. ACEs can not only affect current health by way of bruises, broken bones, cuts and burns, but also physical and mental health later in life.



WHAT ARE ACEs?

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) are stressful or traumatic events that occur before your 18th birthday. ACEs can include things such as: physical or sexual abuse, discrimination or bullying, homelessness, living in a single parent household, witnessing violence at home or in your community, living with an adult who abuses drugs or alcohol or living through a natural disaster. Basically anything that can make you feel unsafe, vulnerable or helpless is considered an ACE.



FACTs ABOUT ACEs

ACEs cause toxic stress. Toxic stress can affect the way your brain and body develop, which can have an effect on the way you learn and behave.

Repeated exposure to ACEs can lead to:

- Problems with thinking and responding
- Problems with learning and memory
- Difficulty making and keeping friends
- Difficulty problem-solving or making decisions
- Fighting or rebellious behaviors





I HAVE ACEs, WHAT CAN I DO?

- Stay positive!
- Spend quality time with friends or family.
- Express yourself through art, journaling or music.
- Embrace change.
- Create a hassle-free zone.
- Cut yourself some slack.
- Get at least 9 hours of sleep when possible.
- Exercise with friends.
- Volunteer in your community or at your school.
- Get involved with a local Boys and Girls Club, church youth group or after-school activity.
- Encourage and support your friends and family.
- Take care of yourself mentally and spiritually.

FACTs ABOUT ACEs

ACEs increase the likelihood of engaging in risky behaviors that can lead to negative health outcomes. The more ACEs you experience the more at risk you are for:

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| • Abusing drugs | • STDs |
| • Smoking | • Heart disease |
| • Drinking alcohol | • Liver disease |
| • Depression | • Violence |
| • Attempting suicide | • Teen pregnancy |
| • Obesity | • Lung cancer |

THERE IS HOPE

Not everyone who has experienced an ACE will have poor health. Having access to safe environments and having supportive people in your life can help you “bounce back” or return to being healthy and happy after something bad has happened.



- **DIAL 1-877-968-8491** or **TEXT “teen2teen”** to **839863** for free, confidential peer counseling.
- **CALL 211** if you need help accessing basic needs such as health care, food, shelter and safety.

Resources:

Washington County Educational Resources

<http://www.co.washington.or.us/HHS/ChildrenYouthFamilies/>

National Child Traumatic Stress Network

<http://www.nctsnet.org/>

Resilience Trumps ACEs

www.resiliencetrumpsaces.org/

The Adverse Childhood Experiences Study

<http://www.cdc.gov/ace/>

The Data Resource Center for Child and Adolescent Health

<http://www.childhealthdata.org/home/>

American Psychological Association

<http://www.apa.org/>

