

Adverse Childhood Experiences and Parenting

Like any good parent, you want to show your children that they are loved. You want to give them the support they need. Doing that can be tough sometimes—especially when your own stressful childhood experiences resurface in ways that make parenting hard. These stressful childhood experiences are called Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs).



ACEs fall into two categories:

1. Household

Like a baby bird, you were once young and vulnerable. Your home and family were your world. Along with the good times, there may have been stressful things too—like divorce, drug or alcohol use, and/or incarceration.



2. Community

Outside of the nest, there was a bigger world. Things in the bigger world—like lack of jobs, pollution, or racism—were largely out of any one person's control. But they still may have affected your nest.

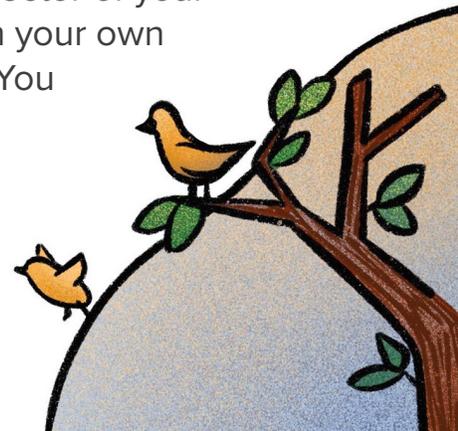


of Nebraska parents report experiencing at least one ACE, out of 10 possible ACEs as reported by Kidsights in 2023.

Now you have a nest and offspring of your own.

While it is not your fault that you experienced ACEs, you are the most powerful person to reduce their effect. YOU are the most important protector of your children and their future. You also have good experiences from your own childhood that make you the caring parent that you are today. You can give your children a good example for handling stressful experiences that happen in their own lifetimes.

You can't change the past, but you can certainly change the future. Turn this page over for ways to help you make sure that your children are ready to fly when they leave the nest.



So what actions can you take?

Here are a few ideas. Check the ones you may like to try:

1. Add a bit of physical activity every day.

- Find ways to move that feel good to you.
- Schedule times to get up, stretch, and move during the day.
- Walk or run. Dance. Do a few jumping jacks, push-ups, or sit-ups. Play catch, throw a frisbee, jump rope, or hula hoop.

2. Practice something called “mindfulness.”

- Take a deep breath. Notice how you feel.
- Ask your home visitor about a breathing practice to try.
- Reflect on 3 things you’re grateful for.
- Think about the things that bring you comfort and support.
- Try a mindfulness app (like Insight Timer or UCLA Mindful).

3. Experience nature, if you have some nearby.

- Go outside every day, if you can! Breathe fresh air.
- Look up at the sky. Feel the sunshine or rain on your face.
- Smell flowers, walk on grass, listen to birds, touch a tree.

4. Talk to a friend, or start looking for a new one, if you can.

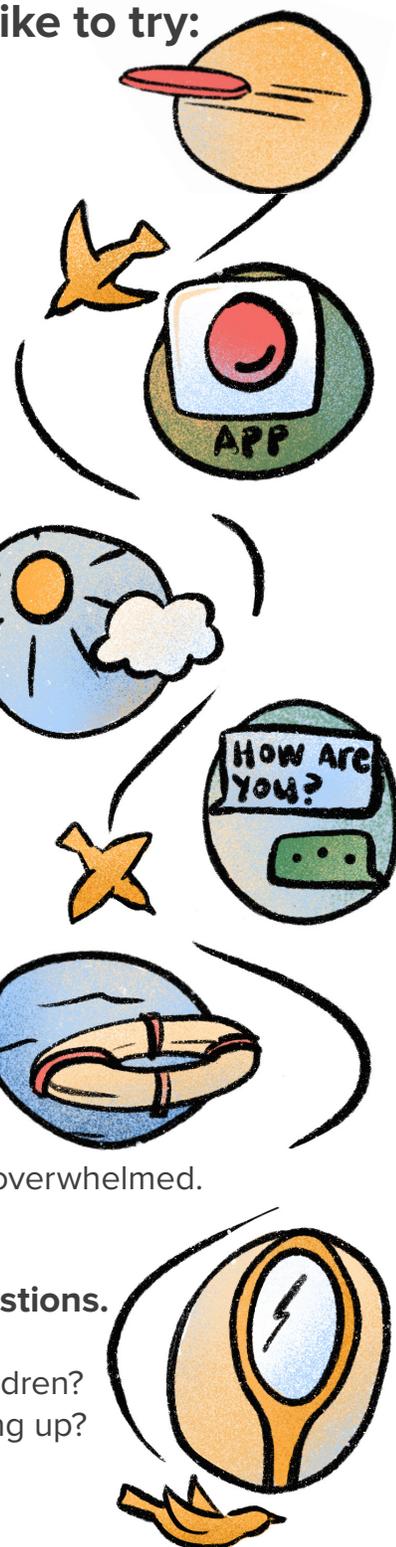
- Try a socialization activity at your home visiting program.
- Talk with a trusted adult.
- Consider joining a parent group.

5. Take steps to promote good mental healthcare for you and your family.

- Talk with your family about how everyone is feeling.
- Make a plan for what to do when you get stressed, angry, or overwhelmed.
- Reach out for support, if you need to.

6. Take time to reflect and quietly ask yourself some key questions.

- What are you doing now that helps you take care of yourself?
- What is something that you enjoy doing with your child or children?
- Who was a person you could count on when you were growing up?
- Who are your people in your life, now, that provide support?
- How did ACEs impact your childhood?
- How might ACEs impact your child/children?



For More: Call the Nebraska Family Helpline at 888-866-8660
Call or text the 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline at 988