



# **We All Deserve to Heal from ACEs**

*Your Guide to Accessing Support*

**live  
beyond**

# There's healing ahead, and you don't have to do it alone.

Our past experiences don't define us, but they can have a lasting impact on our mental and physical health, our relationships, and how we show up at work and school. Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) are stressful or potentially traumatic experiences that happen to us growing up, before we turn 18.



HEALING ISN'T

My past  
doesn't define  
my (future)



## **The three type of ACEs are:**

### ***Abuse***

Physical, Emotional, Sexual

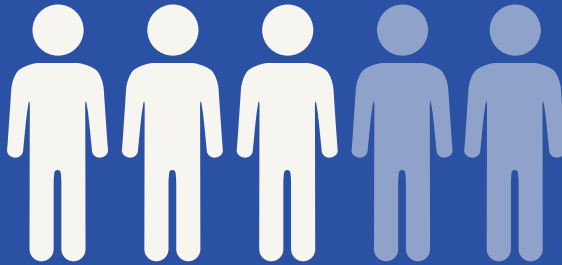
### ***Neglect***

Physical, Emotional

### ***Household Challenges***

Mental Illness, Intimate Partner  
Violence, Parental Separation or  
Divorce, Incarceration, Substance  
Misuse or Dependence

## ACEs are common.



*3 out of 5 people in California have experienced at least 1 ACE.*

When traumatic events happen over and over again, without enough buffering support, our natural stress response gets over-activated and we can experience something called toxic stress.

**Toxic stress can show up in various ways well into adulthood** — difficulties with relationships, trouble sleeping, having a hard time concentrating, or even physical symptoms like headaches or stomach aches.



**The good news is that it's never too late to get support and begin healing.** There are things you can do today to help, like getting a good night's sleep, moving your body, and practicing mindfulness or activities that center you.

Below are some proven ways to help you manage stress today. **For more information and additional healing strategies, scan the QR code to download our Stress Buster pocket card.**

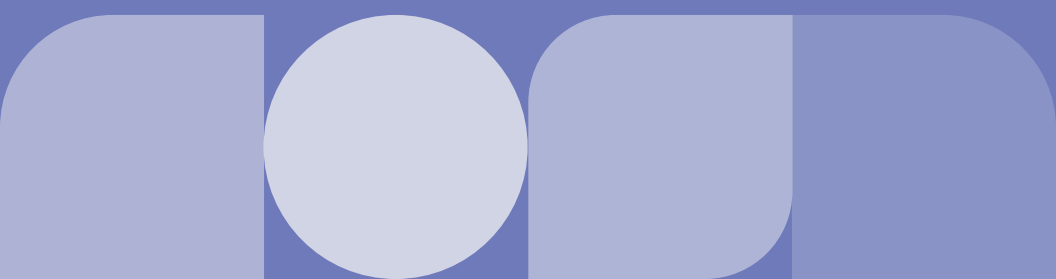




## **What if I need more help?**

It's important to listen to your body. If you're feeling overwhelmed, anxious, or just not yourself, it might be time to ask for help. Support from trained peer supporters, mental health therapists, and medical providers is available.

Trust your instincts — the bottom line is, if you think you need help, it's time to reach out. Seeking help is a courageous and positive step toward healing and taking care of yourself.





# Who can help, what do they do, and how can I find them?

Knowing where to turn can make a big difference.  
Here are some people who can help you:



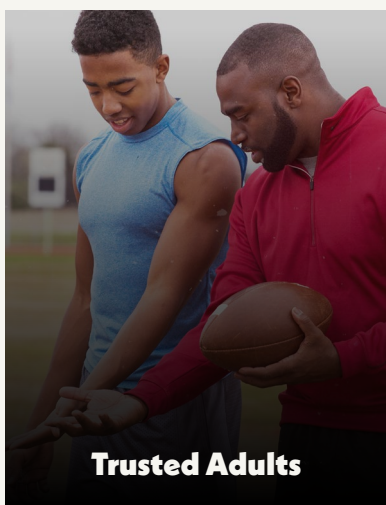
**Peer Specialists**



**Mental Health Clinicians**



**Physicians**



**Trusted Adults**



## Peer Specialists

**Who They Are:** Individuals who have gone through similar experiences, such as ACEs or mental health challenges, and have been trained to support others.

**How They Can Help:** Peer specialists listen without judgment, share coping strategies, and help you feel less alone. They understand what you're going through because they've been there too.



## Where to Find Peer Support in California:

 **soluna**



**Soluna app:** California's free mental health app for ages 13–25 offers peer support through live coaching and online communities.

Available 24/7, this app connects you with people who've had similar experiences and provides a safe space to talk.

Go to [solunaapp.com](https://solunaapp.com)

**TEEN  
LINE**  
A program of DIDI HIRSCH



**Teenline:** For teens, staffed by trained teens. Talk about anything — a rough day, school, relationships, friendships, family issues, or a mental health crisis.

Call 1-800-852-8336\*

Text **TEEN** to 839863\*

or visit [teenline.org](https://teenline.org)

*\*After hours, calls direct to 988.*

Wondering what happens when you call 988 or Teen Line? Or what to do if a friend needs help? Check out the Never a Bother campaign: [neverabother.org](https://neverabother.org)



**BrightLife Kids**  
A CalHOPE program by Brightline



**BrightLife Kids app:** Personalized support for California families with kids ages 0–12, providing free, expert coaching for sleep issues, worry, social skills, and more.

Live, 1:1 video sessions, secure chat, on-demand content, and more.

Go to [hellobrightline.com/brightlifekids](https://hellobrightline.com/brightlifekids)

## Mental Health Clinicians

**Who They Are:** Therapists, counselors, psychologists, or social workers trained to help you understand and manage your emotions and behaviors.

**How They Can Help:** Mental health clinicians provide a safe, confidential space to explore how ACEs and trauma have impacted you. They help you develop tools to cope with stress and guide you through the healing process.

### Where to Find Mental Health Support in California:



**CalHOPE:** CalHOPE offers no-cost crisis counseling, support services, and connections to mental health clinicians across California, including individual therapy and community support groups.

Call or text the CalHOPE Warm Line: 1-833-317-HOPE (4673)

Find mental health and substance use support options available in your community: [findhelp.org](https://findhelp.org)



## Physicians

**Who They Are:** Doctors, including family doctors or pediatricians, who can address both your physical and mental health needs.

**How They Can Help:** Physicians can screen you for ACEs and identify how stress might be affecting your body and mind. They can suggest treatments, recommend lifestyle changes, or refer you to specialists for further support.

### Where to Find Medical Support in California:

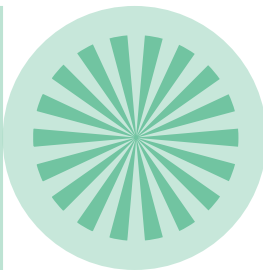


Use the **ACES Aware** Clinician Directory to find Medi-Cal providers who have taken an ACEs Aware training and are eligible to receive Medi-Cal payment for providing qualified ACEs screenings:

[acesaware.org/learn-about-screening/clinician-directory](https://acesaware.org/learn-about-screening/clinician-directory)

If you have an insurance plan, start by visiting your insurance provider's website to find a physician who works with your plan. If you have Medi-Cal, you can search for a provider here:

[www.healthcareoptions.dhcs.ca.gov/en/find-provider](https://www.healthcareoptions.dhcs.ca.gov/en/find-provider)



## Trusted Adults

**Who They Are:** This could be a teacher, coach, family member, neighbor, or community leader — anyone you feel comfortable with and trust.

**How They Can Help:** Trusted adults offer emotional support, help you navigate your options for getting help, and can connect you with professionals if needed. Sometimes, just knowing someone cares and is there for you can make a big difference.

### Where to Find Trusted Adult Support in California:

 **soluna**



**Soluna app:** Soluna offers free confidential support for 13- to 25-year-olds in California, including access to trusted adults via free 1:1 chats with professional coaches.

Go to [solunaapp.com](https://solunaapp.com)

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Live, 1:1 video sessions, secure chat, on-demand content, and more.

Go to [hellobrightline.com/brightlifekids](https://hellobrightline.com/brightlifekids)

**School counseling services:** Most California schools offer counseling services where students can talk to trusted adults like school counselors. They can help you with academic, emotional, and social issues and guide you toward additional resources if needed.





# How do I ask for help?

Starting a conversation about your feelings or experiences can be difficult, but it's a powerful first step. **Here are some tips to help you get started:**

## It's okay if you don't know where to start.

Sometimes, the hardest part is starting the conversation. Try these simple prompts.

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### How to Do It:

- You might say something like, "I'm not sure where to start, but I've been struggling and could use some help."
- Or "I don't know exactly what I need, but I know I need someone to talk to."
- These phrases signal that you're opening up and make it easier for the other person to ask follow-up questions.

## Be specific about your feelings.

It helps others understand the seriousness of what you're going through.

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### How to Do It:

- Start by naming your feelings.
- You might say, "I've been really anxious lately," or "I'm feeling overwhelmed and don't know how to handle it."
- If you're unsure of how to describe your feelings, try explaining how your daily life is being affected, like "I haven't been sleeping well because I can't stop worrying."
- Being specific also means not downplaying what you're experiencing; if it feels significant to you, it is important enough to share.

## **Be direct about what you're asking for.**

**Do you need someone to listen? A distraction from what you're dealing with? Help with finding solutions?**

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### **How to Do It:**

- You could say, "I really just need someone to listen while I get this off my chest" or "I'd really like some ideas for how to manage my stress." Being clear about your needs helps the person you're talking to understand how they can best support you.



## **Prepare in advance.**

**It can help you feel more confident and ensure that you cover the points most important to you. It can also reduce anxiety about the conversation.**

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### **How to Do It:**


- Before the conversation, take some time to think about what's been bothering you.
- Maybe write down specific examples of situations or feelings that have been challenging.
- For example, "I've been avoiding social activities because I feel too anxious" or "I've been struggling to concentrate at school." Having these points ready can help you stay focused and make it easier to communicate.

## **Ask questions.**

**This shows that you're engaged in the process of getting help.**

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### **How to Do It:**

- When talking to a mental health professional, you could ask, "Can you describe what we will do together?" or "How will you help me manage my stress?"
  - You might also ask about different treatment options: "What would you recommend for me and why?" or "Can you explain the options I have, and the pros and cons of each?"
  - By asking questions, you gain clarity and can make informed decisions about your care.
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## Be patient with the process.

Not every conversation will go perfectly, and not every helper will be the right fit. Here's what you can do if things don't work out:

- ♦ **Don't give up:** If the first person doesn't seem to understand or isn't able to help, it's okay to try talking to someone else. Finding the right support can take time.
- ♦ **Seek a second opinion:** If a mental health clinician isn't the right fit, it's best to move on and find someone you feel comfortable with.
- ♦ **Try different types:** Peer support, coaching, support groups, friends, trusted adults, online help, chat lines, self-help, and school-based support are just some of the possibilities to explore.
- ♦ **Build a network of support:** No single supporter is going to be able to meet all your needs. Instead, different people in your life will have unique experiences, skills, and availability. Continue to expand and build out your web of support over time.



## Additional tips:



**Set realistic expectations:** Asking for help doesn't mean all your problems will be solved immediately. It's a step in the right direction. Be patient with yourself and the process.

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**Practice self-compassion:** Be kind to yourself as you navigate asking for support. It's normal to feel nervous or uncertain, but remember that seeking help is a sign of strength.

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**Follow up:** After your initial conversation, don't wait for the person you spoke to to reach out and check in. Whether it's a therapist, friend, or mentor, keeping the lines of communication open and advocating for yourself can ensure that you're on the right track.





# What Are My Rights?

## (California-Specific)

Understanding your rights can help you feel more in control of your situation. Here's what you should know if you're in California:

### What's Confidential:

In California, mental health professionals are required to keep your information private. This means that most of what you discuss with a therapist or counselor is confidential and can't be shared without your permission. However, there are some exceptions. If the professional believes you're at risk of harming yourself or others, they may need to break confidentiality to keep you safe. This might involve contacting someone who can help.

Ask your mental health provider for more specific information on how this might apply to your situation.

### If You're a Minor:

In California, if you're 12 years old or older, you have the right to seek mental health services without the consent of a parent or guardian. This includes counseling and therapy. You also have the right to confidentiality, meaning your therapist cannot share information with your parents unless you give permission, with some exceptions for safety.

## Caregiver Involvement:

While you have these rights, there are situations where a caregiver might be informed about your care. For example, if there's a serious risk to your safety, professionals might need to involve a parent or guardian to help protect you. However, your wishes should be taken into account, and professionals are trained to work with you to ensure your voice is heard and respected.

You can find out more about your rights as a minor here:

<https://teenhealthlaw.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/2023CaMinorConsentConfChartFull.pdf>





**You deserve support on your journey to healing. You're in control of this process, and you have the right to seek the help that works for you.**

For short- and long-term support options, go to:  
[livebeyondca.org/start-healing](https://livebeyondca.org/start-healing)



Want to start healing immediately?  
Download our fun quick-reference pocket cards in English, Spanish, Arabic, Tagalog, Vietnamese, and Chinese:  
[livebeyondca.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/StressBusterAccordionCard.zip](https://livebeyondca.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/StressBusterAccordionCard.zip)



**Remember, if you're ever in crisis, call or text 988. You can also chat at [988lifeline.org/chat](https://988lifeline.org/chat)**

*The 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline is free, confidential, and available 24/7 in your language. Trained counselors will listen without judgment and come up with a plan to keep you safe.*







*livebeyondCA.org*



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