

# What are ACEs?

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. Examples include having a caregiver who struggled with mental health or substance use, witnessing domestic violence, or experiencing abuse or neglect. ACEs are common — in California, three out of five people have experienced at least one ACE.

## The three types 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



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, which can impact our minds and bodies well into adulthood.

**Learn more at [livebeyondCA.org](https://livebeyondCA.org).**

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# There's healing ahead

The good news is that it's never too late to get support and begin healing. Stress-busting activities like getting a good night's sleep, moving our bodies, and caring for our mental health can help us heal. And we don't have to do it by ourselves. Help from trained peer supporters, mental health therapists, and medical providers is also available. **To learn more and find additional resources, visit [livebeyondCA.org](http://livebeyondCA.org).**



## Here are some ways to put Stress Busters into action:

### *Spotlight your senses*

If you're able to do so, go for a walk. Pay extra attention to the sights, smells, and feelings you experience. Check out apps like AllTrails for options near you — no matter where you live.

### *Move*

Take three or more five-minute breaks throughout the day to get your body moving. Try taking the stairs, doing 25 jumping jacks, yoga, jumping rope, or just dancing around!

### *Write it down*

Journaling can help us check in with ourselves, express our emotions, and find a sense of calm. Answer these prompts: How am I really feeling today? What do I need at this moment?

### *Breeeeathe...*

...deeply. Put your hand on your belly and take a big long breath in, so that your belly goes up, and then exhale slowly through your mouth and feel your belly go back down.