



## Growing up with adversity – Breaking the cycle



**ACEs have the potential to impair all life chances and create a destructive pathway that enhances the possibility of their continuation from generation to generation. Look inward to discover what is required to support recovery, sustainable change and opportunity for future generations –break the cycle.**

ACEs are stressful events occurring in childhood, including domestic abuse, parental abandonment through separation or divorce, having a parent with a mental health condition, being the victim of abuse (physical, verbal, sexual and/or emotional), being the victim of neglect (physical and emotional), a member of the household being in prison, growing up in a household in which there are adults experiencing problems with alcohol and drug use.

<b>Unresolved, unacknowledged &amp; significant trauma depending on severity &amp; number of ACEs</b>	Traumatic events of the earliest years of infancy and childhood are not lost but, like a child's footprints in wet cement, are often preserved lifelong. Time does not heal the wounds that occur in those earliest years, time conceals them. They are not lost, they are embodied.	<b>Ask:</b> what happened to you? What was your life like for you as a child?
<b>Potential for developmental trauma and/or complex trauma</b>	The root of many physical, mental and emotional conditions can stem from childhood. Experiencing complex trauma (exposure to multiple traumatic events (often of an invasive, interpersonal nature) will have implications on how an individual might live their life.	<b>Ask:</b> do you ever have thoughts, feelings or behaviour patterns that bother you, but you've been unable to figure out why?
<b>Deep rooted guilt &amp; shame – too painful to admit &amp; toxic</b>	Our behaviour, thoughts and feelings may be linked to these unacknowledged traumas and can create emotions such as shame, worthlessness, feelings of depression and anger.	<b>Ask:</b> how does this affect how you feel about yourself?
<b>Dissociation – disconnected from the world, personal thoughts &amp; feelings, body &amp; memories.</b>	Dissociation is a natural response to traumatic experiences. It happens more intensely in response to prolonged and repeated trauma when the brain disconnects from what is happening and to escape distress.	<b>Ask:</b> what are you scared might happen if you allow yourself to acknowledge what you feel or process what happened?
<b>Fear of vulnerability – build-up of defence mechanisms</b>	Emotional vulnerability for many people can bring up feelings of being exposed, judged, fear of being hurt, humiliated and shamed.	<b>Ask:</b> what does vulnerability mean to you?
<b>Inability to regulate emotions – internalised rage, fear &amp; loneliness, emotionally withdrawn</b>	Infancy and early childhood are developmental periods when emotional development is particularly malleable and highly affected by trauma exposure.	<b>Ask:</b> how good are you at noticing your emotional states? What clues you into the fact that you are feeling one way or the other? What did you learn about emotions growing up?
<b>Unhelpful coping strategies – substance misuse, subjugation, abandonment, defectiveness</b>	Unhelpful coping strategies may be adopted to deal with unresolved issues resulting in feelings of worthlessness, loneliness and a fragile sense of self.	<b>Ask:</b> how do you deal with the stresses in life? What role have substances played in tolerating feelings?
<b>Low self-esteem &amp; self-worth, fear of not being good enough, disorganised attachment style</b>	Fear of being unlovable is a shame-based fear of being unworthy of love. A coping mechanism for not feeling worthy of love would be to distance ourselves from loving relationships of any sort.	<b>Ask:</b> do you find it difficult to form relationships? Do you put other people's needs before your own? How does emotional closeness make you feel?
<b>Enter parenthood emotionally unavailable – hijacked attachment, poor bond and lack of attuned interactions</b>	Unfortunately, the cycle continues if trauma isn't processed, resulting in emotionally unavailable parenting.	<b>Ask:</b> what was it like growing up in your family? What relationship would you like to have with your child? What did you need as a child? How would you describe the way you were parented? How would you like to do things differently for your child? What would your child say about their childhood?