

What to do with all that STRESS!

Parents and children experience STRESS through their senses (body)



There is good stress and bad stress!

Toxic Stress does not refer to the cause of the stress. It refers to the body's physiological response to the stress. Your heart rate increases, your blood pressure goes up, stress hormones are activated which triggers a Fight/Flight/Freeze response. The difference between *toxic stress* and *tolerable stress* is the extent to which people can manage the stress and feel some sense of safety, being in control, which brings your stress system back down to baseline (homeostasis).

For babies, toddlers and small children, their ability to manage their own stress and emotions is not entirely up to them. They are dependent on their parents and caregivers to help their bodies return to a calm state after a distressing event. **Attachment** plays a critical role in 1) helping children in the moment decrease *toxic stress* and return to a calm state, and 2) learn *emotional regulation skills* that allow them to bounce back from distressing events. These regulation skills are most easily learned when children experience 'tolerable stress'

- All children need to FEEL safe. A sense that you are being taken care of, despite of what is going on around you by the adults who are caring for you
- Parents who provide that sense of safety have to FEEL that sense of safety themselves. None of us are capable of feeling safe and secure by ourselves all of the time. We are wired to be in relationship with one another to feel secure
- Play is probably the most important thing. For those parents and children to have outlets for the negative energy that toxic stress creates. Play with your child. Play creates opportunities for problem solving, taking turns, making decisions, sharing, being silly, laughing ... all of which strengthen resilience and coping skills. 'Serve and return' interactions strengthen brain development
- Give your child and yourself a break. Allow your sensory system to go on 'shutdown'; be quiet, calm and still. The mind can't calm down inside a body filled with *toxic stress*. Music, drawing, meditation, yoga, walking, reading, etc..

10 Things I Do to De-Stress My Body & Mind

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