

## Parents: Take Care of Yourself!

Your stress level can have a significant impact on your child! Here are some simple steps for parents to reduce stress. Taking a moment for yourself every day can go a long way to create a happier world for you AND for your child.

If you're feeling stressed ...

- Stop what you're doing and take some deep breaths until you feel calmer.
- Try to identify the things that cause you the most stress. Is it toilet training or setting limits for your child? Call The Children's Resource Center (828-695-6565) to get help in addressing these issues.
- Talk with a trusted friend, neighbor or family member about what is troubling you.
- Connect with other parents who are very likely going through the same things you are! It is OK to take time for yourself.
- Your child will notice and copy how you handle stress in your life! It is important for you to model healthy ways of dealing with challenges so that you successfully end the cycle of toxic stress.



## For More Information

If you realize that toxic stress may be an issue with you or your child, help is available for you!



**To learn more about family support programs or other community resources, contact:**

### The Children's Resource Center

828-695-6565 (English)

828-695-6515 (Spanish)

738 4th Street SW, Hickory, NC

### Local Mental Health Resources for you or your child:

#### Birth - 3 Years Old:

- Check with your child's physician

#### 3 Years Old - Adult:

- Check with your physician
- Contact your child's school counselor
- Family Net (mental health services for children and adolescents)  
828-695-6500
- Partners Behavioral Health Management (to connect with a network of mental health providers)  
1-888-235-HOPE (4673)



This brochure was printed in April 2015 by the Toxic Stress Task Force, a committee of The Children's Resource Center

# Raising Happy, Healthy Children



## Be the best parent you can be!

Everyone experiences stress.

This brochure provides some information about how to protect your child from the kinds of stress that can have negative effects on his or her development.

Parents experience many kinds of stress ... from immediate issues that we face on a day to day basis ... to the difficult experiences we had when we were children. Learn about the impact severe stress can have on your child and some strategies for making both you and your child stronger, happier & healthier!

## What is Toxic Stress?

When facing any type of stressful situation, our body reacts. We feel our heart rate, blood pressure, and breathing rate go up. Most stress is tolerable; it is short-lived and manageable. However, **toxic stress** occurs when we are faced with prolonged stress, like extreme poverty, abuse, neglect, or family violence. Young children are especially vulnerable to the effects of this kind of stress, because their brains are still developing. Exposure to toxic stress can actually cause lasting negative impacts on their social, emotional, brain and physical development.

According to the Johnson Foundation ([www.johnsonfdn.org](http://www.johnsonfdn.org)), research strongly shows that toxic stress in children poses a real risk to healthy development. This risk may even increase the risk of chronic illnesses as an adult.

## What Signs Should I Look for?

According to Linda Chamberlain, PhD, when stress goes on for a long time or if several bad things happen close together, children can have difficulty coping and dealing with their feelings. Here are some signs you can look for which might point to toxic stress:

- Acting out, being aggressive, or fighting with other children
- Difficulty paying attention
- Difficulty calming down
- Being hyperactive and impulsive
- Ongoing physical problems such as headaches, stomachaches, and asthma
- Becoming withdrawn

## What Can We Do About Toxic Stress?



Here is the **GOOD NEWS** ...

Research shows us that at least one strong positive nurturing adult relationship in a young child's life can help buffer the negative effects of toxic stress.



Here are some ways you can protect and nurture your child:

- Provide positive one-on-one time with your child ... read books, sing songs, go to the park, give lots of hugs.
- Follow a routine every day that includes time for active play, naps, healthy meals, and snacks.
- Be calm and consistent in setting limits for children. Avoid yelling, hitting, or using threats.
- Provide comfort when your child makes a mistake. Reassure him that everything is OK, even when things go wrong.
- Limit your child's exposure to scary and stressful media coverage.
- Give your child lots of praise and reinforcement for the good behaviors you want to see continue!
- Know how the stress in your life is affecting the life of your child. Get help dealing with your own stress. Contact a counselor, pastor, or your mental health agency to help you get through the tough times.



## Childhood Stress Can Impact your Adulthood

Here is an excerpt from the ACES (Adverse Childhood Experiences) survey that can help you understand the impact that your previous experiences may have on your health as an adult and on your child.

**For each item that applied to you as a child, put a 1 in the corresponding box.**

- A parent or other adult in your household often swore at you, insulted you, put you down, or humiliated you.
- A parent or other adult in the household often pushed, grabbed, slapped, hit or threw things at you.
- You experienced some type of sexual abuse as a child.
- You often felt that no one in your family loved you or thought you were important.
- You often felt that you didn't have enough to eat, had to wear dirty clothes, and had no one to protect you.
- Your parents were separated or divorced.
- You lived with someone who was a problem drinker or used street drugs.
- You lived in a household with someone who was depressed or mentally ill.
- You had a member of your household go to prison.
- TOTAL POINTS = YOUR ACES SCORE



*If your ACE Score is **4 or higher**, you could have a higher risk of social, emotional, and physical issues that will have an impact on you and could have an effect your child!*