

# WHAT CAN YOU DO?



Protect the establishment and continuation of adult-child attachments.



Recognize and respond to children and adults who have experienced toxic stress to allow effective interventions.



Ask “What has happened to you?” not “What is wrong with you?”.



Recognize functional behavioral modeling and behavior modification are evidence-based but inadequate responses to behaviors resulting from toxic (unbuffered) stress.



Provide consistent, repetitive, loving care to prevent and mitigate toxic stress.



Professional therapeutic responses to toxic stress can support and augment consistent and repetitive loving care.

# QUESTIONS ?

Resources For More Information on Toxic Stress

Center on the Developing Child  HARVARD UNIVERSITY  
<http://developingchild.harvard.edu/>



<http://www.childtrauma.org/>



<http://www.cdc.gov/ace/>

# TOXIC STRESS GUIDE



RELATIONSHIPS **MATTER**  
RELATIONSHIPS are **PROTECTIVE**  
RELATIONSHIPS **HEAL**

ASK YOURSELF  
**WHAT CAN I DO?**

In your role as a service provider, advocate, administrator, or program coordinator, what can you do to address the needs of young children and families? Sometimes a committee is not needed. Sometimes all they need is you.

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<http://dhhs.ne.gov/publichealth/MCAH/Pages/TogetherForKids.aspx>

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**STRONG  
FREQUENT  
PROLONGED**

exposure to an adverse experience



**NO ADULT SUPPORT**



# TOXIC STRESS

**10 Adverse Childhood Experiences  
That Can Change A Child's  
Brain Development**

## HOUSEHOLD TRAUMA/DYSFUNCTION

Drug addicted or alcoholic family member

Incarceration of a family member

Loss of a parent due to death, divorce, or abandonment

Witnessing domestic violence

Mentally ill, depressed, or suicidal family member

## ABUSE

Physical  
Emotional  
Sexual

## NEGLECT

Physical  
Emotional



# SIGNS OF TOXIC STRESS

## YOUNG CHILDREN

(5 and younger)

Disruption in sleeping  
and eating patterns

Withdrawal or lack  
of responsiveness

Abnormal, intense  
or pronounced  
separation anxiety

Regression in skills

Bed wetting

Fear of the dark

Easily startled

Frequent tantrums

Increase in aggressive or  
impulsive behavior

Change in level or activity

New/intense anxieties,  
fears, and/or worries

Cling to caregivers

Become passive and  
lose interest in play

Become  
over-compliant

Easily irritable  
or fussy or  
have difficulty  
calming down

Repeat events  
over and over in  
play or conversation

## ELEMENTARY SCHOOL-AGE CHILDREN

(6 - 12 years)

You may see signs you would see in young children listed above in addition to the following:

Difficulty paying  
attention

Eat more/less than usual

Fight with  
peers or adults

Change in  
school performance

Get into trouble at  
home or school

Truancy  
Want to be left alone

Be tearful and sad  
and talk about scary  
feelings and ideas

Become quiet, upset,  
and withdrawn

## TEENAGERS

(12 - 18 years)

Antisocial behavior

Don't follow rules

Promiscuity

Truancy

Physical fighting

Aggression

School failure

Substance abuse

Withdrawal

Depression  
with irritability

Anxiety