



# The Early Edition

Summer 2015

## Greetings from the Executive Director

Welcome to the Summer 2015 issue of the Early Edition. The children are out of school, and the heat and long days tell us that summer is in full swing. Hopefully, you've had a chance to enjoy the warm weather.

In this issue, we focus on a hot topic in early childhood today: toxic stress. You may have heard this term referenced in the media, online, and in your community. Nationally, this topic has recently taken center stage as brain science teaches us more and more about the important role adults have in helping children develop healthy stress response systems. Science is also showing us what can happen when a child experiences continued stress without supportive adult relationships.

In this newsletter, you will learn about the different types of stress ([page 1](#)) and how to build healthy, responsive relationships with children ([page 3](#)). We have also included resources you can use to learn more about stress, trauma, and ways to help children who have experienced adversity ([page 7](#)).

As always, we are honored to serve the residents and children of the District, and we are always available to answer any questions you may have regarding childhood development. Please feel free to call us at 202-698-8037, email us at [info@earlystagesdc.org](mailto:info@earlystagesdc.org), or visit [www.earlystagesdc.org](http://www.earlystagesdc.org).

Sincerely,  
Sean Compagnucci  
Executive Director

### IN THIS ISSUE

<a href="#">Types of Stress</a>	1
<a href="#">Types of Childhood Trauma</a>	2
<a href="#">Effects of Trauma and Building Resiliency</a>	3
<a href="#">Adult and Child Self-Care</a>	5
<a href="#">The ASQ:SE-2</a>	6
<a href="#">Trauma and Resiliency Resources</a>	7
<a href="#">Early Stages Professional Development</a>	8

## Types of Stress

You may think you know what stress is—we've all experienced it, right? Well, did you know that there are actually three *different* types of stress? The three types are *positive stress*, *tolerable stress*, and *toxic stress*. Read on to learn more about the differences between them:

### Positive Stress

Positive stress response is a normal part of healthy development. It is characterized by brief increases in heart rate and mild elevations in hor—



Sources:  
Harvard University Center on the Developing Child, <http://developingchild.harvard.edu/>  
The National Child Traumatic Stress Network, <http://www.nctsn.org/trauma-types>

(continued on page 2)

## Types of Stress

(continued from page 1)

-mone levels. Some situations that might trigger a positive stress response in children are the first day with a new caregiver or receiving an immunization shot. Positive stress is an important and necessary part of healthy development. It occurs in the context of stable and supportive relationships, which help to keep physiological stress responses small and manageable, and assist the child toward developing increased confidence and self-control.

### Tolerable Stress

Tolerable stress activates the body's alert systems to a greater degree because of more severe, longer-lasting difficulties, such as the loss of a loved one, a natural disaster, or a frightening injury. If the activation is time-limited and buffered by relationships with adults who help the child adapt, the brain and other organs recover from what might otherwise be damaging effects.

### Toxic Stress

Toxic stress occurs when a child experiences strong, frequent, and/or prolonged adversity—such as physical or emotional abuse, chronic neglect, caregiver substance abuse or mental illness, exposure to violence, and/or the accumulated burdens of family economic hardship—without adequate adult support. This kind of prolonged activation of the stress response systems in childhood can disrupt the development of the brain's makeup well into the adult years.\*

***When a toxic stress response occurs continually, or is triggered by multiple sources, it can have a cumulative toll on a child's physical and mental health—for a lifetime.***

#### Positive

Brief increases in heart rate, mild elevations in stress hormone levels.

#### Tolerable

Serious, temporary stress responses, buffered by supportive relationships.

#### Toxic

Prolonged activation of stress response systems in the absence of protective relationships.

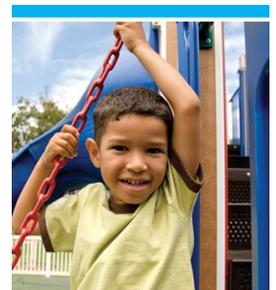
Source: [http://developingchild.harvard.edu/key\\_concepts/toxic\\_stress\\_response/](http://developingchild.harvard.edu/key_concepts/toxic_stress_response/)

## Types of Childhood Trauma

*While physical abuse and neglect are the most common types of childhood trauma, there are many other types to consider when thinking about a child's possible exposure. Children may be exposed to:*

- ◆ Community Violence
- ◆ Complex Trauma
- ◆ Domestic Violence
- ◆ Early Childhood Trauma
- ◆ Medical Trauma
- ◆ Natural Disasters
- ◆ Refugee and War Zone Trauma
- ◆ School Violence
- ◆ Sexual Abuse
- ◆ Terrorism

*To read in-depth about these types of trauma, please visit [www.nctsn.org/trauma-types](http://www.nctsn.org/trauma-types).\*\**



## Effects of Childhood Trauma and Toxic Stress

What are the signs a child may be experiencing traumatic stress or trauma? Some children may act out, displaying what could be mistaken for ADHD or challenging behavior, while other children may exhibit the opposite symptoms and withdraw or seem fearful. Other signs may be:

Preschool Children	Elementary School Children
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feel helpless and uncertain</li> <li>• Fear of being separated from their parent/caregiver</li> <li>• Cry and/or scream a lot</li> <li>• Eat poorly and lose weight</li> <li>• Return to bedwetting</li> <li>• Return to using baby talk</li> <li>• Develop new fears</li> <li>• Have nightmares</li> <li>• Recreate the trauma through play</li> <li>• Are not developing to the next growth stage</li> <li>• Have changes in behavior</li> <li>• Ask questions about death</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Become anxious and fearful</li> <li>• Worry about their own or others' safety</li> <li>• Become clingy with a teacher or parent</li> <li>• Feel guilt or shame</li> <li>• Tell others about the traumatic event again and again</li> <li>• Become upset if they get a small bump or bruise</li> <li>• Have a hard time concentrating</li> <li>• Experience numbness</li> <li>• Have fears that the event will happen again</li> <li>• Have difficulty sleeping</li> <li>• Show changes in school performance</li> <li>• Become easily startled</li> </ul>

Sources: The National Child Traumatic Stress Network, <http://www.nctsn.org/resources/audiences/parents-caregivers>

## Combatting Trauma—Building Resiliency In Children

**What is resilience?** Put simply, resilience is a positive, adaptive response in the face of adversity. Children who develop resiliency skills will be able to adapt to and overcome obstacles more easily.

*“It is easier to build strong children than to repair broken men.” —  
Frederick Douglass*

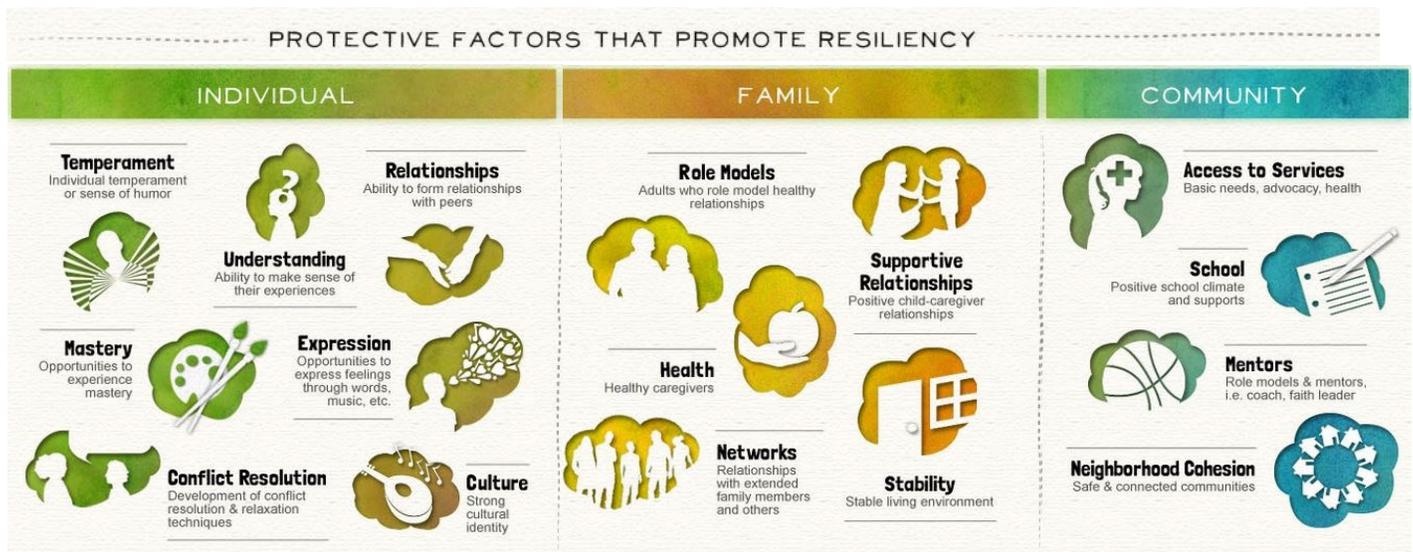
**How can I help my child/student build resiliency skills?** The most important thing any adult caregiver or teacher can do to promote resiliency in children is to be a strong, consistent and supportive presence in a child’s life. “Resilience depends on supportive, responsive relationships and mastering a set of capabilities that can help us respond and adapt to adversity in healthy ways,” says Dr. Jack Shonkoff, director of the Center on the Developing Child at Harvard. “It’s those capacities and relationships that can turn toxic stress into tolerable stress.”

(continued on page 4)

## Building Resiliency in Children—Protective Factors

When thinking of how to promote resiliency in children—we need to think of protective factors relating to the WHOLE child. We consider the child himself, the child’s family, and even the child’s community. Developing protective factors in each of these areas promotes resilience. *(continued from page 3)*

According to the organization Futures Without Violence, over 60 million children will be affected by family violence before the age of 17. While research shows that the number one protective factor in a child’s life is a supportive, responsive adult caregiver, there are many other protective factors we can help develop in our children:



Source: <http://promising.futureswithoutviolence.org/files/2014/01/Promising-Futures-Infographic-FINAL.jpg>

### ARE YOU A MANDATED REPORTER?

If you work for an organization that serves children (school, law enforcement agency, child welfare agency, or child health care organization), you are likely a mandated reporter – obligated by law to report any evidence of child abuse or neglect to Child and Family Services (CFS). In the event of any suspected child abuse, a mandated reporter should: (1) inform the child’s caregiver about your obligation to report to CFS; (2) evaluate the safety needs of the child; and (3) inform CFS of the nature of the abuse, the perpetrator, and the child’s level of danger.

Source: Futures Without Violence, 2004.

### Other Resiliency Building Activities

It’s hard to be resilient when you’re sick or when you’re tired—that’s why it’s imperative to help children maintain proper health and sleep habits. Remember, sleep and exercise are two of the most powerful activities for brain health and happiness.

- \* **Practice proper sleep habits:** Create a bed-time routine to help your 3-5 year old get between 10-12 hours of sleep per night.
- \* **Teach meditation:** Even young children can learn to meditate. Meditation calms the brain and the body as well as develops executive functioning skills such as self control.
- \* **Exercise daily:** Make it a priority to help your child exercise or play vigorously for at least 60 minutes a day. This supports sleep habits as well!
- \* **Promote confidence:** Focusing on an activity your child enjoys, help him to master that activity to build confidence and positivity within himself.

Source: [thehappinessinstitute.com](http://thehappinessinstitute.com)

## Adult Self-Care—Taking Care of Yourself While Caring for Others

*Caring for children and/or families who have experienced trauma is an important but exhausting job. Just as you take care of others, it's as important to care for yourself as well. Self-care, especially for an adult who may be caring for a child who has experienced trauma, is one way you can make sure you are emotionally healthy and available to support your children and/or students. Even for adults who are not supporting young victims of trauma, self-care is an important tool you can practice to maintain balance, calmness, and focus in your life. Read on for some important self-care tips.*



### **Adult Self-Care Tips:**

- ◆ Know your limits. Know when to say “no” or when to remove yourself from a situation.
- ◆ Take breaks. Taking regular breaks helps the brain to process information and experiences.
- ◆ Become informed. Take a training or read an article on trauma (like this newsletter)!
- ◆ Eat well. Just as you want your children and students to develop healthy habits, you must also develop and maintain these habits to be able to support your children and students. A healthy diet is just the beginning.
- ◆ Exercise. Research shows exercise and sleep are two of the most potent anti-depressants.\*
- ◆ Listen to relaxing music. Take a moment out of your day to enjoy some music that will relax and calm you.
- ◆ Use soothing scents like lavender, rose, and sage. Some people find these scents calming and helpful during stressful times.
- ◆ Accept support from family and friends. You can't do it all. Be open to accepting help when it's offered or even asking for it yourself. Which brings us to...
- ◆ Know when and how to get professional mental health support when you need it. For more information, see below.

### **When to Seek Mental Health Support**

The following signs may be signals that it's time to seek help:\*\*

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| ⇒ Prolonged sadness or irritability          | ⇒ Confused thinking  |
| ⇒ Feeling extreme highs and lows             | ⇒ Growing inability to cope with daily problems and activities |
| ⇒ Excessive fear, worry or anxiety           | ⇒ Denial of obvious problems                                   |
| ⇒ Social withdrawal                          | ⇒ Substance abuse  |
| ⇒ Dramatic changes in eating or sleep habits |  |
| ⇒ Strong feelings of anger                   |  |

\*Source: <http://www.theatlantic.com/health/archive/2014/03/for-depression-prescribing-exercise-before-medication/284587/>

\*\*Source: [www.mentalhealthamerica.net/conditions/](http://www.mentalhealthamerica.net/conditions/)

## Check for Social-Emotional Health—The ASQ: Social-Emotional

### Why Use the ASQ: Social-Emotional?

*As more and more children are experiencing risk factors for depression, anxiety, and antisocial behavior, early identification of social-emotional concerns has become as important as regular developmental screening. The ASQ: Social-Emotional screening tool allows caregivers and parents to quickly pinpoint behaviors of concern and determine whether a child needs additional evaluations to support social-emotional development.*

### The ASQ: Social-Emotional Screener at a Glance

- Which social-emotional areas does it screen?  
Self-regulation, compliance, communication, self-care, ability to be independent, and interaction with people.
- What age range does it cover?  
One month to six years. There are nine age-appropriate versions of the questionnaire based on age.
- How many questions are there?  
About 30 per questionnaire depending on the child's age.
- How long does it take?  
Each questionnaire takes 10–15 minutes for parents to complete and just 2–3 minutes for professionals to score.
- How can I be trained to administer this tool?  
Early Stages provides FREE TRAINING on how to use this tool. See the information at the bottom of this page for more information.\*

### PROUD PARTNER: THE HOYA CLINIC

Knowing that the early identification of developmental delays can lead to better outcomes for children, Georgetown's HOYA Clinic launched a Child Assessment Team to serve the over 600 children living in the DC General Family Shelter. This team performs developmental screening (using the Ages and Stages Questionnaire, ASQ-3) on children under the age of six. When possible delays are identified through the screening, the HOYA Clinic refers children to either DC Strong Start (0-3) or DCPS Early Stages (3-5) for assessments and, when the child is eligible, services. The team also works to connect children to a medical home, located in the shelter, as well as psychiatry and behavioral services as needed.

Thanks to Early Stages' and HOYA Clinic's partnership on the implementation of regular developmental screening, the HOYA Clinic is regularly referring at-risk children to Early Stages for evaluation. Early Stages is also proud to provide on-site support and training for HOYA's medical school interns.

For more information about the HOYA clinic, or for a copy of their annual report, please call (202) 468-4816, email them at [info@hoyaclinic.org](mailto:info@hoyaclinic.org), or visit their website at <http://hoyaclinic.org>.

Early Stages sends a big thank you out to everyone at the HOYA Clinic! Together we are working to give these children the strongest possible start to school.

### ATTN: PROVIDERS! START SCREENING TODAY!

If your organization, medical practice, or childcare center is interested in offering social-emotional developmental screening to the children you serve, Early Stages wants to help you! Talk to us about scheduling a FREE Ages and Stages Questionnaire: Social-Emotional training for your team.

Call 202-698-8037 or email us at [info@earlystagesdc.org](mailto:info@earlystagesdc.org).



# TRAUMA AND RESILIENCY RESOURCES

The following resources may be helpful to teachers and parents when supporting children or families who have experienced trauma:

- ⇒ Early Stages (DCPS) professional development and parent workshops (see more information on page 8)
- ⇒ DC Healthcheck Resource Guide—<http://dchealthcheck.net/resources/healthcheck/mental-health-guide.html>
- ⇒ P.I.E.C.E Program through the Department of Mental Health (202) 673-7440
- ⇒ Head Start Family Services Referral (see box below)
- ⇒ DC Healthy Futures, Department of Behavioral Health—(202) 673-7440
- ⇒ Early Stages Referral—call your organization's Child Find coordinator or call our main number at (202) 698-8037

## Calling all DCPS Early Childhood Teachers and Families!

Did you know that one of the most valuable resources may be at your local elementary school? The **DCPS Family Services Team** can provide all DCPS families enrolled in one of our Title One early childhood programs with a broad range of supportive and preventative services addressing health, nutrition, parent involvement, community engagement and other services, while also being responsive to each child's and family's ethnic, cultural, and linguistic heritage.

**Community Parent Outreach Coordinators** (CPOCs) work to promote parent engagement. This is done through providing weekly parent support and education groups, information and referrals to community resources, attendance monitoring, creating classroom and school development plans and facilitating monthly parent committee meetings, educating parents about developmental milestones, and community outreach.

**Case Management Specialists** (CMSs) work directly with families of children enrolled in PK3 and PK4 classrooms by creating individual plans that address fostering self-sufficiency, managing crises, and promoting overall family well-being. CMSs can also:

- ◆ Help resolve issues related to home environment, parental capabilities, family interactions, family safety, child well-being, attendance, social and community life, family health, and other family needs.
- ◆ Provide school support by participating in school meetings, IEP meetings, classroom observations, and Student Support Team meetings.

**Referring a child to Family Services** is easy. The first step is to fill out a referral form (you can request this from the CPOC assigned to your school) and submit it via email to your school's CPOC, CMS, or team lead. The referral will be screened and assigned to a CMS within 24-48 hours. The assigned CMS will notify the referrer of the actions taken to engage the parent. You can also email the Office of Early Childhood Education at [dcps.earlychildhood@dc.gov](mailto:dcps.earlychildhood@dc.gov).

## For Our Community



### LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES!

**Schedule a FREE Workshop Session with Early Stages!!**

Call your Child Find coordinator or our main office to schedule  
(202) 698-8037

Early Stages offers a vast array of **professional development** and **parent workshops** tailored for community organizations, childcare centers, schools, medical facilities, and parent groups.

#### Our workshop programs include:

- **Addressing Challenging Behavior**: Teaches educators the reasons behind challenging behavior and gives them tools and targeted interventions to help address those behaviors.
- **Early Childhood Developmental Milestones**: Provides an overview of typical developmental milestones for children between the ages of three and five as well as activities to help develop each domain.
- **How to Administer the Ages and Stages Questionnaire-3 and Ages and Stages Questionnaire: Social-Emotional-2**: Trains caregivers and educators on how to administer these important screening tools and how to relay information to parents/guardians. *(Only offered as a Professional Development Course)*
- **Implementing a Screening Program Using the Ages and Stages Questionnaire(s)**: Teaches various screening methods using the ASQ-3 and ASQ: SE-2 and what may work best for your center. *(Only offered as a Professional Development Course)*
- **Overview of Special Education**: Covers the basics of special education including law, the process and rights of parents/guardians.
- **The Importance of Early Intervention and an Overview of Early Stages**: Presents information about why early intervention is so important for the child, family and society. Also provides an overview of Early Stages and our process.
- **Trauma and Resiliency: Building Strength in Children**: Presents in detail how trauma can effect the developing brain and how to build resiliency in children so they can develop into emotionally strong and capable adults.

All workshops are free of charge and provide professional development clock hours as certified through the Office of the State Superintendent for Education.

**Early Stages** is a free DC Public Schools diagnostic center for children between the ages of 2 years 8 months and 5 years 10 months. We help identify any delays that a child may have and arrange services to address them. Research shows that the first 5 years of life are the most important to a child's development, and that acting early can greatly improve education outcomes.

Children referred to Early Stages receive a developmental screening, and if necessary, a more in-depth evaluation. If eligible, services that Early Stages can recommend include specialized instruction, speech/language therapy, physical therapy, occupational therapy, psychological services, and behavioral support services. These services are coordinated and delivered through DC Public Schools.

## Strong Beginnings. Bright Futures.



DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA  
**PUBLIC SCHOOLS**  
Office of Specialized Instruction

### Ways to make a referral to Early Stages

- Phone: 202-698-8037
- Fax: 202-654-6079
- Email: [referrals@earlystagesdc.org](mailto:referrals@earlystagesdc.org)
- Online form: [www.earlystagesdc.org](http://www.earlystagesdc.org)
- Contact your Child Find Field Coordinator. To learn who is assigned to your organization, please call 202-698-8037