Toxic Stress

**Positive Stress:**
Brief increases in heart rate, mild elevations in stress hormone levels.

**Tolerable Stress**
Serious, temporary stress responses, buffered by supportive relationships.

**Toxic Stress:**
Prolonged activation of stress response systems in the absence of protective relationships. Serious, temporary stress responses, buffered by supportive relationships.

**How stress affects the human body**

- Headaches, feelings of despair, lack of energy, sadness, nervousness, anger, irritability, trouble sleeping, mental health problems (such as panic attacks, anxiety disorders and depression), behavior younger than age

- Acne and other skin problems

- Faster heartbeat, rise in blood pressure, heart attack and heart disease

- Blood sugar increases, higher cholesterol, increased risk of diabetes

- Muscle aches and tension, increased risk of reduced bone density

- Grinding teeth, tension in jaw, increased or decreased eating

- Stress hormones increase, increased inflammation, lowered ability to fight or recover from illness, frequent colds

- Increased risk of asthma and flare ups

- Diarrhea, constipation, nausea, stomach pain, heart burn, other digestive problems

- Irregular or more painful periods, reduced or increased sexual desire, bedwetting

- Weight gain & obesity
Everybody experiences stress in their lives.

- There are 3 types of stress: Positive (e.g. getting ready for a race), Tolerable (e.g. getting in a car accident), Toxic (e.g. chronic physical abuse)
- When we have negative experiences that cause fear or anger our body releases chemicals that tell us to fight or run
- Too much stress over a long period of time affects how you make decisions and can harm your body and emotions
- Stress becomes Toxic if experienced intensely and repeatedly

Research shows that, even under stressful conditions, supportive, responsive relationships with caring adults can prevent or reverse the damaging effects of toxic stress.

The most effective prevention is to reduce exposure of young children to extremely stressful conditions. Stable, loving relationships can buffer against harmful effects by restoring stress response systems to a steady state.

Stress Relieving Activities for You

- Take three deep breaths
- Make sleep a priority; at least 7 hours is appropriate for the average adult
- Call a positive friend
- Scream into a pillow
- Sing and dance
- Stretching and fast walking
- Exercise 10 minutes each day; try jumping jacks, sit-ups, push-ups

Stress Relieving Activities for You and Your Kids

- Take a walk together
- Cook together
- Blow bubbles
- Dance at home with your kids
- Play Hide & Seek
- Play tag
- Paint
- Play basketball
- Read your favorite book
- Laugh

**BEAN BAG BREATHING**
1. Place a bean bag on your and your child’s stomach (if you don’t have a bean bag use stuffed animals or a toy your child likes)
2. Practice watching the bean bag go up and down while breathing
3. See who can lift the bean bag more slowly

**SERENITY BATH**
Ingredients:
- Kids asleep in bed
- 2 small candles
- 1 cup of herbal tea (iced or hot)
- Your favorite bubble bath or 1 cup of Epsom salt
- Relaxing, soft music