


## Managing Childhood Stress in the Classroom through Mindful Practices



We Can't Wait Conference 2019  
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## Agenda

- **Welcome: Introductions**
- **Review and Identify Levels of Stress in Children**
- **Harvard Research on Stress in Children**
- **Strategies (Mindful Practices) to Manage Stress in the Early Education Classroom**
- **Reflection**

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## Three Types of Stress

- **Positive Stress Response:** Brief increases of heartrate and mild elevations in hormone levels (i.e., new caregiver/immunizations).
- **Tolerable Stress Response:** Longer lasting difficulties: loss of loved one/natural disaster. Brain & organs can recover from what might be damaging effects with intervention.
- **Toxic Stress Response:** Occur with prolonged adversity: physical or emotional abuse, neglect, caregiver with mental illness. Can increase the risk for stress-related disease and cognitive impairment well into adult years.

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What does this look like?

Three Core Concepts in Early Development

3 Toxic Stress Derails Healthy Development

NATIONAL SCIENTIFIC COUNCIL ON THE DEVELOPING CHILD  
Center on the Developing Child HARVARD UNIVERSITY

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Reflection

- Think about the children you work with. What type of stressors may exist in their lives?
- Consider how these stressors may interfere with their learning?

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*Young children's close relationships with preschool teachers and caregivers are important to their development of school readiness. A number of studies have found that the warmth and security of the preschool child's relationship with a preschool teacher are predictive of the child's subsequent classroom performance, attentional skills, and social competence in the kindergarten and primary grade classroom.*

(California Preschool Learning Foundations, Volume 1, pg. 82)

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**Framework Volume 1**

- Social-emotional Development - research shows that healthy social-emotional development assists in children's learning: sustaining attention more easily, maintaining friendships, communicating their wants and needs, and problem solving
- Caring relationships provide a base for children to seek comfort, security and support
- Responsiveness to culture

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**Mindful Practices to Manage Stressors**

Building Positive Relationships:

- Being Culturally Responsive
- Create an Aesthetically Pleasing Environment
- Provide a Self-Regulation Space
- Provide Self-Regulation Exercises
- Incorporate Bibliotherapy into planning
- Provide Calming Music throughout the day

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**Cultural Responsiveness**

*Knowing about cultural differences and respecting such differences are necessary foundations for successful collaboration with diverse children and families. However, knowledge alone does not guarantee respect. Teachers need to develop strategies and skills to work through differences with families.*

(Family Partnerships & Culture, pg. 10)

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### Provide an Aesthetically Pleasing Environment

- Use appropriately stimulating aesthetic elements such as soothing colors, natural woods and fibers, and soft textures.
- When children feel calm and comfortable, they constructively interact with adults, peers, and learning materials.
- Neutral walls and furniture should fade into the background so that children can focus on their "work."
- Visual clutter should be avoided as much as possible.



*(Framework Vol.1, pg. 49)*

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### Visual Schedules Provide a Decrease in:



- Anxiety
- Challenging Behaviors
- Misunderstanding/Confusion
- Dependence on Verbal Prompts



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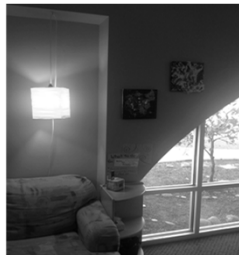
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### Provide a Self-Regulation Space



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### Prepare "Private" Spaces for Children

- o The sounds of active learning can be loud and at times, overstimulating. In these and other situations, many children need "private" spaces where they can find a retreat from group participation.
- o Teachers can make private spaces inviting by including comfortable pillows, blankets, stuffed toys, and a small table for the child who would like to engage in an activity on his own.



(Framework, Vol. 1, pg. 51)

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### Provide Opportunities for Relaxation



- o Incorporate opportunities to develop intentional self-control.
- o [Developing] skills for behavioral and intentional self-control enable preschool children to gradually attain a greater ability to deliberately focus attention.

(Foundations, Volume 1, pg. 29)

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### Introduce Children to Relaxation Exercises

- o Stretching and relaxation exercises assist children in self-reflection and build self-regulation skills.
- o Teachers can use calming activities (relaxation & sensory experiences) informally as well as during group experiences and program transitions.
- o An adult can soothe a frustrated child by drawing attention to the body's response to stress: "You look really upset! Your face is red and tense. Can you feel how fast your heart is beating?" Then guide the child through a deep-breathing exercise and comment on its effects.
- o Initiate a brief group stretching and relaxation exercise between active and quiet routines to help prepare children for more focused exploration.



(Framework, Vol.1, pg. 51)

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### Bibliotherapy

- **Read and tell stories that include characters in distress as well as the caring response of others.**  
(Framework, Vol. 1, pg. 56)



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### Provide Calming Music

- Eliminate or reduce background noise to help children with learning disabilities, speech and language impairments, and hearing impairments attend to auditory input.
- Reducing background noise helps all children, including English learners, focus more readily on oral language as conversations take place near them while they are playing.



(Framework, Vol. 1, pg. 49)

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### Partnerships

- What is our role in addressing children in the need of services?
- How can we bridge the gap between our classroom environments and the additional practitioners supporting our children?

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**Reflection**

- What are your next steps to managing childhood stress in your setting?
- How will you advocate for supporting children's healthy well-being?

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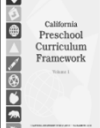
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**Resources**



<http://www.best-childrens-books.com/bibliotherapy.html#bibliotherapy-subjects>

<http://www.earthskids.com/meditation-kids.aspx>

[www.developingchild.harvard.edu](http://www.developingchild.harvard.edu)

<http://www.parents.com/fun/activities/indoor/yoga-for-kids/>

[www.csefelteachingpyramidframework.org](http://www.csefelteachingpyramidframework.org)

<https://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/cd/re/psfoundations.asp>

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**Thank you and Be Well!**



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