

1 **Managing Childhood Stress in the Classroom through Mindful Practices**

2 **Agenda**

- Welcome: Introductions
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- Review and identify levels of stress in Children
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- Harvard Research on Stress in Children
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- Strategies (Mindful Practices) to Manage Stress in the Early Education Classroom
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- Reflection
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3 **Three Types of Stress**

- Positive Stress Response: Brief increases of heart rate 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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4 **What does this look like?**

5 **Reflection**

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- Think about the children you work with. What type of stressors may exist in their lives?
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- 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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7 **Relationships are Central**

- 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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8 **Mindful Practices to Manage Stressors**

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10 **1. 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)

11 **Visual Schedules provide a.....**

12 **2. Provide a Self-Regulation Space**

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Prepare "private" spaces for children.

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. 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)

14 **3-Provide Opportunities for Relaxation**

- Incorporate opportunities to develop intentional self-control. [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.

Stretching and relaxation exercises assist children in self-reflection and build self-regulation skills. Teachers can use calming activities (relaxation & sensory experiences) informally as well as during group experiences and program transitions. 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. 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)

16 **4- Bibliotherapy**

Read and tell stories that include characters in distress as well as the caring response of others.

(Framework, Vol. 1, Pg 56)

17 **5-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)

18 **Partnerships**

1 ◦What is our role in addressing children in the need of services?

◦How can we bridge the gap between our classroom environments to the additional practitioners supporting our children?

19 **Reflection**

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Resources

21 **Thank you and Be Well!**