

A PARENT

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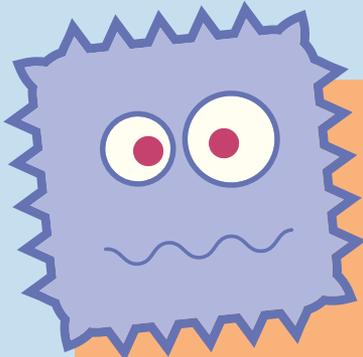
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SHIELD

against the effects of
childhood toxic stress.



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Toxic Stress

occurs when we experience stressful and negative experiences over a long period of time. Toxic stress can be especially harmful to children. It can lead to adult health problems like heart disease, cancer, asthma, and depression. Negative experiences can include things like:

- Divorce/separation
- Economic problems
- Arguments or fighting in the household
- Death of a parent/guardian
- Family member in prison
- Abuse
- Having family member with mental illness
- Living with someone who abuses drugs/alcohol



Even though these experiences can be very difficult for a child, the good news is that a parent can help protect their child. In fact, a parent is the #1 shield against the effects of childhood toxic stress.

Here are some ways parents can help their children bounce back from a negative experience:

Talk about IT!

Think about any difficult experiences your child may have had and talk to them about it. Talking with your child about the experience is not going to harm them. Give your child the opportunity to say what it has been like for them. Help them identify their feelings by teaching them different emotion words and asking them to say how they feel.



Make every moment count!

Spend time with your child in activities that your family enjoys – like playing sports, board games, dancing or singing. Eating family meals together is another great way to show support! Always remember to tell your child you love them.

Don't go at it alone!

Make sure that your child is surrounded by other supportive family members, friends, teachers and other good adults.



Get advice!

Talk to your child's pediatrician, school counselor or school nurse. They may be able to give you more ideas of how you can help support your child and they can help you decide if other services like counseling will be helpful.

Stay active!

Enroll your child in positive activities – like a church group, sports team, school club or other community activity. This will give your child an extra outlet to deal with the stress and may help them keep a positive attitude.

Take care of yourself!

All parents become stressed at times. Find healthy ways to manage your stress – like talking with a friend, doing something you enjoy, going for a walk or exercising.

Jennifer's Story:

Jennifer had been feeling sad for some time, but her family's financial problems caused her to slip into a deep depression. Even though her daughter was only 6, she would constantly worry about her mother. Jennifer opened up to a friend who encouraged her to go speak with the family's doctor. The doctor began treating Jennifer and she slowly started feeling better. In the meantime, Jennifer enrolled her daughter in a free afterschool program several days per week – this gave Jennifer extra time to focus on her health and it also helped her daughter by giving her time to focus on kids' stuff – like homework and fun.





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