

## Stress and Resilience

<sup>1</sup>Thoughts on stress and how we can help our children during these difficult times

### Stress –

- 1) Stress can have negative impact on our health (blood pressure, heart disease, inflammation, etc.)
- 2) Not all stress is bad
- 3) How we view stress matters
  - a) No need to be afraid of stress
  - b) Essential to healthy development
  - c) We cannot control adversity – we can and should be aware of the amount and type of stress we are managing and to reduce toxic stress when we can. We can rise up when we are faced with stressful and difficult times. We can do hard things!
- 4) Managing stress –
  - a) Coping skills
    - i) self-regulation: being able to manage our thoughts, feelings, and behavior
    - ii) Dysregulation: brain and body is overloaded, out of sync, the part of our brain is responsible for logic and reason is shut down (not a good time to “talk things out” or “think about what you’ve done”)
- 5) Be aware of dysregulation and what it looks like in our child (and ourselves) – tantrums, fussiness, withdrawal, whining, meltdowns, shutting down, avoiding,
  - a) Possible causes of dysregulation: hungry, tired, bored, scared, illness or on the verge of getting sick, changes in routine, etc. Everyone has different things that causes dysregulation
- 6) Allow our children to experience stress in predictable, moderate and controllable ways e.g. when our son had separation anxiety and cried every day when we took him to school – we developed a morning routine and predictable way of saying goodbye, provided ways for him to have some control in how things would go, etc.

During times of stress and uncertainty such as Covid-19, here are ways we can help our children cope and develop resiliency

- 1) Daily structure and routine
- 2) Family meals – dinner together but could also be breakfast if that works better
- 3) Limit media
- 4) Play and exercise – rhythmic, repetitive activities are especially helpful with self-regulation. Examples: running, dancing, singing, yoga, breathing, swinging, drumming, walking,
- 5) Connection – we were made for relationship, connecting with others is good for our heart and good for our brain. Safe, nurturing, trusting relationships buffer adversity. Some of us may have a harder time connecting, some of us will tend to isolate when under stress, or might try to handle things on our own, it’s hard for some of us to ask for help.

- a) It's important to take care of ourselves. A dysregulated adult cannot help a dysregulated child.
- 6) Help others
- 7) Good sleep (lack of sleep or poor sleep causes dysregulation)
- 8) Positive focus – don't underestimate your ability to bring calm and joy to others.

Our two jobs as a parent (Dan Siegel, Ph.D)

- 1) Elevate their joy
- 2) Soothe their distress

This is helping them learn self regulation through our relationship with them

We are for them (elevate their joy)

We are with them (soothe their distress) – no need to prevent, eliminate or fix

Wendy Mogel, Ph.D. The Blessing of a Skinned Knee and The Blessing of a B-

Sheltering in place – plenty of challenges, frustrations being together 24/7. This is a wonderful opportunity! Before SIP, we were so busy and pulled in many directions trying to find quality time together.

Now we have A LOT of time together! Our children are going to experience stress, hardship, adversity – We can't control this, nor should we

This is the time when we can be for our children and be with our children: help our children learn how to live with uncertainty, problem solve their difficulties, think through hard decisions, manage difficult emotions, work through disagreements, care for others in need, recognize their efforts, get excited about the things they are excited about.

Anxiety and worry are contagious but so are joy and hope!