



Prevention *for parents*

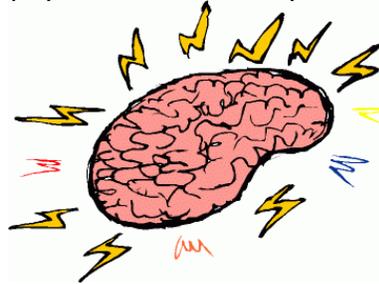
Stress and Teen Brain Development

Did you know that overwhelming amounts of stress can influence the way our brains develop?

It's called toxic stress, and it happens when a child is exposed to things like physical and emotional abuse, neglect, racism, community violence, caregiver mental illness, household violence, or other traumatic experiences.

These experiences result in excessive activation of the stress response system in the brain, which creates a

lot of wear and tear on our physical and mental systems.



A person who has experienced many of those things is more likely to develop mental health issues and physical health problems as well.

The good news is that **toxic stress is preventable and treatable.**

Positive childhood experiences can negate the effects of toxic stress and promote mental and physical wellness.

Here are some tips for promoting positive experiences in your teen's life:

- Make sure your own mental health is being cared for
- Foster social and emotional skill development in your family
- Cultivate your teen's resilience
- Make sure your family and teen get support when things are difficult

Coping Strategies for Change

As we return to school and embark on *another* schedule change, your child may feel overwhelmed or stressed by the change to their routine.

Change is hard for everyone, even if we've had plenty of practice with it this year. Hopefully, your teen has developed and prac-

ticed some healthy coping strategies throughout the pandemic. Encourage them to be proactive this time around by coping in positive ways right away as we start a new schedule, not just when they start to feel stressed.

If your child hasn't found their secret-sauce for cop-

ing, here are some ideas:

- Read or write
- Create art
- Have alone time
- Connect with others
- Exercise / move
- Get enough sleep
- Learn a new skill / try a new hobby
- Hang out with pets
- Listen to / make music

Parent Self Care

Taking care of yourself is the first step in taking care of your teen. It's the same idea as putting on your oxygen mask first when you're on an airplane. In order to help your child, you need to



be well, too. Plus, it's a great way to model positive behaviors for your teen.

However, starting a self care routine can feel like one more thing that you don't have time for. Here are some tips to get started:

- Think about what has worked for you in the past that you could easily start again / continue
- Have someone keep you accountable
- Start slow— try building 5 minutes into your day to do some self-care then increase as you can
- Be kind to yourself. Just do your best and keep going if you miss a day!

What Would You Like To See In The Next Issue?

Contact Colleen Chan with any suggestions, comments, or questions.

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Crucial Conversations Challenge: *Women's History Month*

We know that prevention is closely tied to social justice. Members of oppressed groups (historically or currently) are more likely to experience mental and physical health issues.

This month we have the opportunity to talk about National Women's History Month. Take some time with your child to talk about their understanding of women's history in America.

Here are some questions to get the conversation started:

- What do you know about women's rights in our country?
- Who are some female historical figures that you have heard about?
- Who are some female leaders, scientists, writers, or other figures that you admire? Why do you admire them?
- What is it like to be female in America / what do you think it is like to be female in America?



- What is it like to be male in America / what do you think it is like to be male in America?

Parent Resources

1. [ACEs and Toxic Stress](#)—Harvard University
2. [Responding to ACEs With HOPE: Health Outcomes From Positive Experiences](#)—*Academic Pediatrics*
3. [Self Care For Families](#)
4. [A Guide to Self-Care for Parents: Why Making Time For Yourself Matters](#)—Waterford.org
5. [Keeping Youth Drug Free](#)—Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)
6. [BAR Lab Experiment](#) (3:49 min)—Dr. Jason Kilmer on Youtube