



Clearinghouse on Supervised Visitation

The Institute for Family Violence Studies

Florida State University

JANUARY EPRESS

QUESTIONS FROM DIRECTORS

In the last phone call, you talked about adding a provision to our policies about lost items. Can you explain what that would look like?

Yes! The question comes up periodically about lost items: pieces of a puzzle that a parent brought to the visit are missing, a gold earring a child was wearing is lost, a tee shirt that a child vomited on and had to be changed and was accidentally discarded – those are the kinds of things that happen at visits. Parents should be made aware that the *program is not responsible for lost or damaged items*. This is an issue that should be raised at intake so that everyone is on the same page. It really is a simple issue, but I still hear of parents who put expensive clothing on kids for visits, and toys that are new but get broken during the visit. Programs should not be responsible for these things.

A new Request for Proposals is coming out for St. Lucie County, which needs supervised visitation services. Can you help circulate it?

Yes. Please send the final version and we will email it to all programs this month.

A judge asked us to provide separate visits for a mother and her two children who are in separate relative placements. We are a small program and would prefer to host the visits together. Can we tell the judge that?

There may be very good reasons to hold separate visits: one child may be medically complex, one child may have perpetrated abuse on the other child, or some other issue prevents the children from visiting together. You should examine the file and determine what the reasons may be for the separate visits. Yes, all programs should have ways to communicate with the court, but first do your homework. Call the attorneys for the parents. Call the case manager. Figure out what's going on in the case, and whether you can accommodate those special circumstances. If you can not, you must alert the court. Do not hold the visits at the same time unless that arrangement is acceptable to the court.

January Crafts and Activities for Supervised Visitation

By Brittney Clemons

The crafts are easy to make and all of the supplies are readily available and inexpensive. These simple crafts are sure to make visitation more enjoyable this holiday season.

Paper Snowman Luminaries



Materials:

- 1 sheet of white copy/printer paper
- Black and orange markers, crayons, or colored pencils
- Tape
- Scissors
- LED tea light candle

Instructions:

1. Fold paper in half lengthwise.
2. Open up and cut along the crease (You can get two luminaries from one sheet of paper).
3. Use the markers to draw a snowman face in the center of the paper.
4. Tape the two ends of the paper together to form a cylinder.
5. Place an LED tea light on the table and set your paper luminary over the top of the tea light. Done!

Cardboard Tube Penguins

Materials:

- 1 paper towel tube, cut in half (or two toilet paper tubes)
- 1 sheet black construction paper
- ½ sheet white paper
- Scraps of orange, pink and blue construction paper
- 4 googly eyes
- White craft glue
- Glue stick



Instructions:

1. Cut paper towel tube in half and use glue stick to cover the tube in black construction paper.
2. Cut the head and belly from white paper, a figure eight shape is all you need! Glue it to the black tube.
3. Cut small triangles from orange paper for beaks and glue on. Attach googly eyes.
4. Cut simple bow tie shapes from blue and pink paper and attach to the penguin.
5. Cut feet from orange paper and glue to the inside of the bottom of the penguin.
6. Let everything dry. All done!

CARDBOARD TUBE GNOMES

Materials:



- Cardboard tubes
- Construction paper
- Pom poms
- Yarn
- Craft glue
- Scissors

Instructions:

- Cut cardboard tubes into varying lengths to produce gnomes of different heights. Cover them with construction paper.
- Roll white construction paper into a cone and secure with glue or tape. Trim the open end straight.
- Wrap yarn around your four fingers 10-12 times. Cut a piece of yarn about 6 inches long and thread it through the center of the looped yarn. Tie in a knot then cut the loops.
- Trim the beard to make the strands a bit more even then glue it to the top of the cardboard tube. Glue it so that the yarn knot is resting above the top of the tube. This will make it easier to get the hat over it. Glue the hat over the beard and glue a pom pom to the top of the beard where it meets the hat.
- Let everything dry completely. When dry, the final step is to carefully bend the hats a little to give them some character. You can skip this step and stick with straight caps if you like!

Other Activities

- Come up with a new year's resolutions
- Read books
- Play board games
- Color
- Solve puzzles

References

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3. <http://craftsbyamanda.com/paper-bag-fireplace/>
4. <http://kixcereal.com/kix-cereal-paper-plate-christmas-characters-santa-rudolph-snowman/>
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Expressing Support and Love to Unresponsive Adolescents

By Lily McLauchlin

Introduction

Adolescence is a difficult time during which teens experience physical, mental, and emotional changes. As a result, they may begin to distance themselves from their parents. They may become moody and difficult to communicate with. However, this is no reason for parents to become less involved in their adolescent's life. Continued parental support is vital in order to help children through their teen years. Close familial relationships have been shown to provide a number of benefits for teens, including decreased risky behavior, substance abuse, and mental health problems during adolescence. Talk to parents of adolescents (teens and pre-teens) during intake about these issues. Give parents the handout, attached.

Objectives

This E-press will address the following:

- Challenges of adolescence
- The importance of parental support during adolescence
- Parenting tips for supporting unresponsive adolescents

Challenges of adolescence

Adolescence is a major time of development. Adolescents are experiencing many significant changes at this point in their lives. The following are some of the many changes they will face:

Physical changes

Adolescent physical changes, such as brain development and hormones, have been shown to increase irritability and risk taking behavior. Puberty, and the symptoms that accompany it, may be confusing to teens, causing stress and self-consciousness.

Mental changes

Neurologically, adolescents become capable of more abstract thought, allowing them to develop their own view of the world. However, this process continues throughout the entirety of adolescence, meaning that in early adolescence, teens are often confused about themselves and the world.

Social changes

In addition to all the physical and mental changes, adolescents also experience many social changes. They begin to spend less time with parents and become more

dependent on peers for intimacy and support. They also tend to take on new social roles, such as entering the workforce or entering into dating relationships.

The confusion, moodiness, and increased dependence on peers can cause adolescents to distance themselves from their parents. However, it is essential for parents to continue to show support and love. These changes are also associated with the onset of many health problems including depression, eating disorders, substance abuse, risky sexual behavior, delinquency, and school dropout. Parental support is a valuable resource that can help mitigate these issues.



The importance of parental support during adolescence

Parental support is vital in helping adolescents through challenging times. Parental support can positively influence the lives of adolescents in the following ways:

1. Buffer against mental health problems

Research shows that parental support is a protective factor against mental health problems. Adolescence with low levels of perceived parental support are shown to have higher levels of depressive symptoms. Additionally, parental support may protect adolescents from unhealthy coping mechanisms resulting from peer-victimization.

2. Discourage risky behavior

Parental support is considered a protective factor for delinquency and substance abuse. Research shows that children with supportive parents often choose non-drug using and less deviant friends.

3. Increase the quality of adolescent peer relations

Parental support promotes a positive self-esteem in adolescents. When adolescents have a more positive self-esteem, they will cultivate more fulfilling peer relations. This includes increased peer activity, having a best friend, and higher perceived acceptance by peers.

4. Increase the life satisfaction of adolescents

Research shows that parent-child relationships are the strongest predictors of life satisfaction in adolescents. Life satisfaction is a feeling of well-being with one's self and life circumstances. It is related to one's psychological health and happiness.

Parenting tips for supporting unresponsive adolescents

Parental support is vital to adolescent development. However, because of all the changes they are experiencing, some teens may be resistant to interacting with their parents. They may distance themselves from their parents or simply reject their parent's efforts at a relationship. The following are ways parents can be supportive, even if their child is unresponsive:

1. Listening

When a parent is readily available to listen to their adolescent, trust is built.

Parents should create a space where their adolescent can share, without fear of



judgement or confrontation. It may be difficult, but adolescents will not open up if they do not feel comfortable. Parents should also try to avoid directing the conversation to a serious topic they want to know about. Once an adolescent feels comfortable talking to their parent about everyday things, they will begin to open about more serious things going on in their lives.

2. Giving praise and encouragement

Praising an adolescent's accomplishments will validate their actions during a time where they may not feel the most confident. Encouragement will keep adolescents positive through challenges they may be experiencing. Even if they are unresponsive, praise and encouragement lets them know that their parents are there for them.

3. Showing respect

Adolescents are not children anymore. They are individuals who are developing their own world view and discovering who they are. It is important for parents to recognize and appreciate their teen's differences. It is also important for parents to try and see things from their teen's perspective. When adolescents see that their parents are trying to understand them, they may feel more open to a relationship.

Conclusion



Adolescents can be hard to communicate with because of all the changes they are going through. They may be moody and begin to distance themselves from family. However, parental support is vital to healthy development in adolescence. Parents should continue to build their relationship with their child in adolescence. Even if the teenager is reluctant, parents can still show support by simply being there for them.

Resources

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Use the Handout
to give to parents
at intake!

Supporting Your Adolescent Child

Adolescence can be a stressful time for pre-teens, teenagers and parents. Below are five ways parents can support their child.

1. **Be a good listener.** Pre-teens and teenagers will experience many life changes and emotional ups and downs. They need someone who will listen to, connect with, and support them. Listening to your child and showing that you're there for him or her will strengthen the parent-child bond and build trust.



2. **Spend time together.** Yes, your child will want to hang out with friends, but you can help your children feel loved and supported by spending time together.



3. **Provide consistency.** Set limits that are clear, and explain why you made them. Children need structure and supervision appropriate for age and development. Limits keep children safe emotionally and physically, and remind them that you are a reliable figure in their life.



4. **Teach responsibility.** Part of growing up is learning how to make individual, responsible decisions. Giving children chores and teaching them new skills will help them gain a sense of independence and success.



5. **Be understanding.** It can be easy to label a child as rebellious or bad – but it is better to consider what your child might be feeling or experiencing. Your child needs help navigating these new life experiences, so try to understand their point of view and work through problems together as a team.

CHAPTER

RESILIENCE

Case Scenario

Carina has been involved in visitation with her 10-year-old son, Ian, for about two months due to her severe substance abuse issues that she is receiving treatment for. During their visits, Ian has become increasingly withdrawn and hardly talks to his mom. When he does talk to Carina, he is often angry and begins yelling things like “You don’t care about me” or “I hate you”. Ian’s grandmother has been caring for him the last two months, and she informed Carina that he is failing most of his classes and has been suspended once for getting into a fight with another child. Within the three months, Carina will complete her case plan and she will regain custody of Ian. She believes that Ian will be unmanageable by that time if she doesn’t do something and she is afraid of the stress their strained relationships might create.

After completion of this chapter, you will be able to answer the following questions:

- What stressors may be affecting Carina and Ian?
- In this situation, what is the connection between trauma and resilience?
- How can building resilience help Carina and Ian in this situation?
- What indicators show that Ian is exhibiting low resilience?
- How can Carina help Ian build his resilience, and how can visitation staff help?

Introduction

In this chapter, visitation monitors will learn about resilience and its role in the families and children they work with, but first it is important to understand how trauma and resilience are connected.

Supervised visitation programs will frequently work with families who have a history of trauma. Traumatic experiences can cause various negative short term and long-term effects on individuals, and are particularly harmful to children’s

developmental processes. When individuals are resilient, it can help buffer them from the adverse effects of trauma and prove invaluable to the healing process. Visit monitors should work with families and children to enhance their resiliency in order to ultimately prevent or weaken the effects that long term trauma can have on families. Additionally, resilience serves as a protective factor for parents and children and can assist them in overcoming typical life stressors, not just traumatic experiences.

What will I learn in this chapter?

This chapter provides information about trauma, stress and resilience particularly in regards to their effects on children and families.

After reading this chapter, a visit monitor will be able to:

- Understand the impact of trauma and stress
- Identify the ways trauma affects child development
- Define Resilience
- Recognize factors that can aid or inhibit resilience
- Help children and parents build their resilience

Snapshots

Below are facts related to the issue of trauma and resilience.

- It is estimated that 61% of men and 51% of women will experience at least one lifetime traumatic event.
- Abused children are seven times as likely to have significantly weakened self-regulatory functions (planning, goal-setting, self/social monitoring, abstract reasoning, etc.), language, and memory abilities.
- Without at least one supportive adult relationship helping children learn to cope with and recover from stressful events, many otherwise tolerable events can be toxic to their body's developing systems.
- Parents without resilient coping skills Are at increased risk for drug and alcohol abuse, and may develop health problems related to stress, such as headaches, stomach aches, muscle pain, and trouble sleeping.

Overview of Trauma

The term “trauma” refers to experiences that cause intense physical and psychological stress reactions. It can refer to a single event, multiple events, or a set of circumstances that is experienced by an individual as physically or emotionally harmful or threatening and has lasting adverse effects on the individual’s physical, social, emotional, or spiritual well-being.

Below are several types of traumatic events, although it is not an all-inclusive list, as trauma differs for every individual.

- Experiencing or witnessing interpersonal violence (domestic violence, child abuse)
- Physical, sexual, or institutional abuse or neglect
- War, terrorism, or natural disasters
- Stigmatization due to gender, race, poverty, sexual orientation, or incarceration



Trauma overwhelms one’s ability to cope and deal with everyday stressors and activities. Individuals who have experienced a trauma will fall within a continuum from feeling overwhelmed to overcoming the trauma. As a supervised visitation monitor, many times when you first begin working with a family, they will be on the overwhelmed side of the continuum.

Hopefully, towards the end of a visit monitor’s time with the family, they will have moved to the overcoming side of the trauma continuum, indicating the processing of the trauma and the development of adaptive coping skills.

Impact of Trauma

Scientific research has shown that since children’s brains are still developing, experiences of abuse, neglect, and other forms of trauma can actually alter connections in the brain. When these connections are altered in children, it can affect how they will function later in life.

There are specific periods when certain brain developments occur, which if interrupted by trauma, can impair later development and behavior. The brain develops as a chain reaction: if one connection is not made, it affects everything else that is supposed to

Did you know...?

The first three years of a child’s life are the most sensitive to both positive and negative outside influences

come after it. The development of each part is dependent on receiving specific stimulation. Without making the connections on one level, the brain cannot just skip it and move on.

Our brain creates these connections based upon our surroundings, processing the nonstop stimulation we encounter in the womb, after birth, and for every single day after that. These patterns are embedded in our brain, and we learn to respond to our surroundings by what we have previously encountered. For example, when children are abused, their brain internalizes that experience, which can unconsciously shape how they interact later in life.

Effects of Trauma	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning delays • Regression • Dissociation/detachment • Hyper- vigilance constantly scanning surrounding for safety), • Lack of social skills • Anger • Low self-esteem • Drug or alcohol use 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of impulse control • Difficulty reasoning • Depression • Hyper-arousal (when the fight or flight response is triggered due to loud noises or other unexpected situations, even if there is no threat of harm) • Difficulty adapting to new people and settings

Trauma in particular can cause an individual to experience toxic stress which research has shown to be the most damaging to the brains developmental processes in children.

Toxic Stress

Toxic stress, which can damage brain architecture, may occur when individuals experience trauma that is chronic, uncontrollable, and/or extreme.

When children experience severe or chronic trauma such as abuse, certain parts of their brain that are involved with fear, anxiety, and impulsive responses may over-develop. At the same time, the areas in their brain that are involved with reasoning, planning, and behavioral control may under-develop.

Below are the various ways that toxic stress can affect an individual’s brain:

- Physical abuse and neglect has been associated with a reduction in volume and activity of the major brain structures involved in emotional regulation.

- Trauma affects the Hypothalamic-Pituitary Axis, increasing hypersensitivity to cortisol, and an individual’s vulnerability to depression.
- Trauma increases sympathetic (“Fight or Flight”) nervous system activity. This often manifests as exaggerated startle or defense responses to situations or events that are not typically threatening or harmful.
- Abused children are seven times as likely to have significantly weakened self-regulatory functions (planning, goal-setting, self/social monitoring, abstract reasoning, etc.), language, and memory abilities.



The table below is also in the chapter, *Domestic Violence and Supervised Visitation*

Long-Term Effects of Excess Stress		
<i>Effect</i>	<i>Explanation</i>	<i>Outcome</i>
Increased Cortisol	An increase in stress hormones like cortisol can poison circuits in the child’s brain	Depending on which circuits are damaged, the child’s ability to form new relationships may be permanently disrupted.
Disassociation	Being in “fight or flight” mode for extended periods of time with no option for either.	The child shuts down in order to avoid the stress.
Fear Conditioning	Child experiences “embedded stress” and remains at a high level of stress for long periods of time	Increases the likelihood of anxiety troubles throughout the child’s life.
Mental Health	Children exposed to domestic violence are at a higher risk of developing mental illness. This includes substance abuse, learning disorders, hyper arousal, increased violent tendencies, etc.	Increased startle response, serious sleep disorders, anxiety, hyperactivity, conduct disorder, attention deficit and hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), and PTSD

Without at least one supportive adult relationship helping children learn to cope with and recover from trauma and stressful events, many otherwise tolerable events can be toxic to their body's developing systems. This can cause the stress system to activate more easily and longer than is normal, causing stress-related physical and mental illness later in life, and can lead to depression, anxiety disorders, smoking, drinking, overeating, poor sleep habits, cardiovascular disease, diabetes, stroke, and other lifelong negative impacts.

However, supervised visitation programs are in a unique position to help children develop coping skills, such as resilience, to combat the effects that toxic stress and trauma can have.

Defining Resilience

Resilience is a person's ability adapt to and thrive after experiencing negative situations. Other descriptions of resilience characterize it as the ability to "bounce back", to rebound from adversity, and to "bend, but not break".

For healthy development, resilience helps to protect the brain and other organs from problems with over-active stress response systems, and can reduce potentially toxic levels of stress to become tolerable. Research has shown that resilience can reduce the psychological damage that events or moments in a child's life such as maltreatment, poor parenting circumstances, violence, poverty, war, or natural disasters might cause.

The most important thing to remember about resilience is that it can be nurtured, taught, and effectively learned which is incredibly important when working with families and children who have a history of trauma.

Important Reminders About Resilience

Resilience....

- Is like a muscle, it can be strengthened with daily positive interactions with others.
- Can be enhanced by at least one caring and supportive relationship with an adult.
- Is not set in stone. A child who is resilient during one situation may not be resilient in all situations
- Can developed in many ways. some children tend to build resilience through strong, caring relationships, and others tend to build up resilience through active problem-solving.

Factors Correlated with Resilience

In order to strengthen resilience in individuals, it is helpful to know what factors are correlated with an individual who has a high level of resilience and those factors which are associated with low levels of resilience.

General factors connected with high resilience

- Having an easygoing, optimistic, or positive outlook
- Practicing self-compassion
- Positive relationships with close family
- Social support
- Well-developed problem-solving skills
- Peer group acceptance
- Strong sense of personal identity
- Ability to act independently of others
- Strong sense of humor, empathy, and compassion
- Emotional regulation skills
- Having healthy lifestyle choices, including healthy eating, and adequate sleep and exercise.
- Practicing relaxation techniques (deep breathing, mindfulness, etc.)

Things correlated with low resilience:

- High levels of adversity or negative life events
- Presence of mental illness
- Sense of guilt or shame about past trauma
- Stressful home environment
- Negative self-beliefs
- Seeing the world as unsafe, unpredictable, untrustworthy
- Sense of hopelessness

Using Supervised Visitation to Build Resilience

Developing and strengthening resilience in parents and children is a protective factor that aids tremendously in creating healthy families.

Research indicates that children with parents who have resilient coping skills are at reduced risk for child abuse and maltreatment. Resilient coping skills allow a parent to be able to solve problems, keep calm and collected when upset, and make it through challenging times. When parents are resilient, they are better able to build strong and resilient families.

When children are resilient, they are able to overcome challenging situations and significantly decrease the negative effects that can occur from traumatic experiences.

In the following sections, visit monitors will learn how to help parents and children build their resilience.

Building Resilience in Parents

When a family is confronted with stressful situations, a child will look to his or her parents for reassurance, strength, and guidance on how to cope. Research shows that how a parent handles these situations can have a greater impact on the child than the stressor itself. When a parent responds to a difficult situation with patience, positive coping methods, and uses effective problem solving skills a child will feel safe and supported as a member of a strong and resilient family.

When parents share their worries and anxiety during visitation, monitors have a



chance to help build resilience and coping strategies. Because parents may not recognize the ways stress may impact their interactions with their child, supervised visitation monitors can help parents understand the importance of coping with stress in a healthy, positive way and modeling coping behaviors for children.

Monitors can work with parents to understand what causes and

triggers stress, currently inappropriate or unhealthy coping methods (such as drinking alcohol and smoking) and the impact of stress on the family dynamic. After identifying stressors and existing coping skills, monitors and parents can identify healthy coping skills (such as listening to music, going for a walk, etc.) and preventative methods to reduce stress.

Preventative methods can include pre-planning, recognizing triggers and when stress is building, using appropriate coping skills to avoid a blow-up, and communicating clearly to avoid misunderstandings. Supervised visitation monitors can also work with parents to help build self-care into coping skills and daily routines, as parents who do not care for themselves are unable to care for their children.

Learn to Manage Life Stressors

The following tips may be useful for parents to manage stressful situations. Monitors may print these out for parents or encourage parents to implement these strategies in their lives.

- **Take a deep breath.** When you are feeling overwhelmed by a stressor some immediate relief can come from closing your eyes and taking a few deep breaths to clear your mind and refocus on the issue at hand.

- **Reach out to friends and family.** The support that comes from your social connections can be valuable when dealing with stressors. Identify people in your life who are trustworthy and understanding. Share with them your thoughts and concerns about the stressors you are facing.



- **Get active.** Research shows that exercise can provide immediate relief during a stressful time. Take a walk, go for a swim, or dance it out and feel a sense of refreshment that can last for hours.
- **Take a break.** When a situation is very stressful it can be hard to think about much else. Give yourself permission step away from the issue to focus on what you need to relax.
- **Do something that you enjoy.** Whether it's settling in with a good book, taking up a new hobby, or having coffee with a friend, it is important to leave time for the activities which you are passionate about. This time will help you diffuse the stress of the day.

Resilient Parents...

The following points will provide a picture of what a resilient parent looks like.

- **Prioritize self-care.** Parents that make healthy eating, exercise, and rest a priority will model good practices for their children and be well positioned to cope with crises and support their family. Remember,

parents and children have strengths which will support them when they are facing challenges!

- **Remain calm when frustrated.** A parent who uses his or her coping skills effectively when confronted with stress can manage a crisis with a clear and level mind.
- **Engage social resources.** A parent that has a strong social network is able to call on family, friends, and community resources, such as religious organizations and groups, to help in a crisis, as well as to provide comfort and stress relief



Helping Children Become Resilient

Children will primarily learn how to become resilient by modeling their own behaviors and coping strategies after those of their parents. Parents also play an important role in helping their children develop resilience and their own coping skills.

How Parents Can Help

1. Build Caring Relationships.

A caring relationship is one in which your child feels loved, understood, accepted, and protected from harm. There are many ways to create caring relationships. For instance, you can give your child attention and affection with smiles; or show interest in his or her day and activities. Playing with your child and comforting them when they need it are good ways to build trust and create a close relationship.

2. Be a Positive Role Model

- Listen to your child and others
- Stay calm
- Show patience
- Show positive outlook
- Recognize strengths
- Take responsibility

3. Gather Community Resources.

An important part of building resilience is to reach out for help when you need it. Building a network of people and resources you can count on will show your child that it is okay to ask for help. Community resources can be beneficial in many ways.

4. Develop Self-Regulation

Self-regulation is what helps us handle life disappointments, worries, and frustrations. You can help your child build self-regulation by making sure your child gets enough sleep and eats healthy foods. In order to learn and understand patience, you can practice waiting with your child. For example, you can play waiting games with them such as “Red Light – Green Light” or “Freeze.”

5. Support Confidence

When we have confidence in our abilities, it helps us respond to our problems with resilience. Ways to help your child with his confidence:

- Encourage your child to keep on trying
- Show your child that mistakes are okay
- Offer your child choices and opportunities to make decisions
- Read or tell your child stories
- Teach your child ways to solve problems and resolve conflicts



6. Develop a Positive Outlook

Being resilient includes looking for positives in life. By seeing things in a different perspective and making the best of situations you can help show your child how to bounce back from disappointment. For example, if an outdoor picnic had to be cancelled because of rain, stay positive and have the picnic inside. Creating new plans and adapting to speed bumps are crucial to being resilient!

7. Encourage Responsibility and Participation

Responsibilities will allow your child to feel like he or she is contributing. By participating in sports or other activities your child will feel like he or she is a part of something. Having responsibility and participating in activities will help build your child's interests and strengths



Resilience and Middle School Children

School-aged children often reveal their levels of stress through school performance. Just as an adult's performance at work diminishes with increasing stress, children also find it difficult to focus on schoolwork in times of high stress. Anytime a child's grades are slipping significantly, it should be a red flag that alerts caring adults to explore what is going on in the child's life.

Middle school can be an extremely difficult time for children. They tend to have new groups of friends and challenges. It is important to reinforce empathy and help the child keep perspective. Encourage parents to talk to children about their own feelings during stressful situations; this teaches children that it is acceptable to express their emotions when they feel overwhelmed.



By watching the parents' modeling positive coping methods, the child may feel more in control and confident when dealing with a stressful situation.

Resilience and High School Adolescents

It's important to talk with parents about being on the lookout for changes in their teenager's behavior. Although a new circle of friends or radical change in dress style can merely be a sign of self-development, parents should be wary of these changes as a possible indicator of

stress. Adolescents sometimes use unhealthy coping methods in reaction to stress, such as giving into peer pressure, rebellion, or using or abusing substances.



Any suspicion that a teenager may be abusing substances calls for parental involvement, as well as potential professional guidance. It is important to engage adolescents in conversation about stress, coping, and resilience. Parents should create a safe environment in which adolescents feel they can express themselves on these issues without being judged.

Parents can help adolescents develop positive skills by presenting possible stressful situations and appropriate coping methods adolescents can use if they encounter any of the situations. Adolescents will then be able to identify stress when it arises and will have options for how to handle it healthily.

Conclusion

Developing resilience is a process. All people, even the most stable and resilient, reach their limits with stress at times. It is not a sign of weakness for a child to be stressed, but simply a part of life. Supervised visitation providers should inform parents that they can help guide the adolescent on building resilience, but it's important to note that what works for one individual may not work for another. Parents can help their adolescents identify positive coping methods and resilient behaviors that most relate to them as an individual.

Online Resources

Here is a list of online resources about resiliency that you may find helpful:

1. Center on the Developing Child's Resource Center.

<http://developingchild.harvard.edu/resources/>

Everything from multimedia to digestible briefs and in-depth papers on children, toxic stress, and development.

2. Enhancing and Practicing Executive Function Skills with Children from Infancy to Adolescence. <http://developingchild.harvard.edu/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/Enhancing-and-Practicing-Executive-Function-Skills-with-Children-from-Infancy-to-Adolescence-1.pdf>

A guide to developing executive function skills at all ages.

3. Youth symptoms of exposure to domestic violence.

<http://www.nctsn.org/content/ages-and-developmental-stages-symptoms-exposure>

Although specifically about exposure to domestic violence, many of the symptoms listed here are applicable to reactions to toxic stress in general.

The American Psychological Association has developed a series of tips, and if you would like to know more, we encourage you to look over them:

<http://www.apa.org/helpcenter/resilience.aspx>

<http://www.apa.org/helpcenter/road-resilience.aspx>

<http://www.apa.org/helpcenter/talking-about-stress.aspx>

<http://www.apa.org/helpcenter/stress-children.aspx>

<http://www.apa.org/helpcenter/stress-talk.aspx>

<http://www.apa.org/helpcenter/stress-teens.aspx>

<http://www.apa.org/helpcenter/bounce.aspx>

<http://www.apa.org/helpcenter/manage-stress.aspx>

<http://www.apa.org/helpcenter/stress-tips.aspx>

<http://www.apa.org/helpcenter/exercise-stress.aspx>

<http://www.apa.org/helpcenter/managing-stress.aspx>

<http://www.apa.org/news/press/releases/stress/2009/signs-stress.pdf>

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