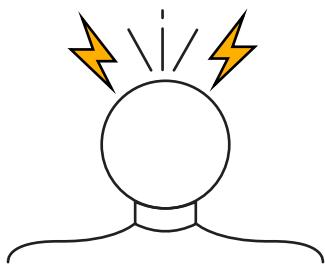


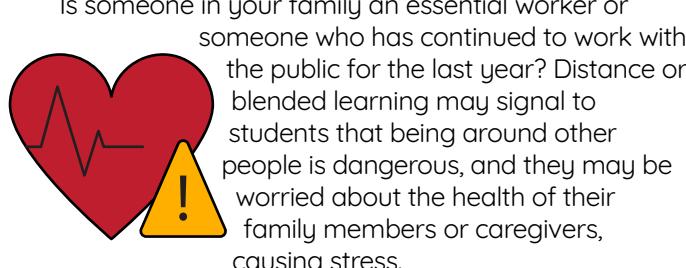
UNDERSTANDING AND MANAGING EMOTIONS

ARE YOUR CHILDREN SUFFERING FROM TOXIC STRESS?

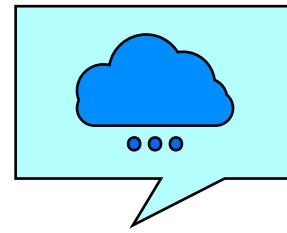


We all deal with stress in our lives, but when we get exposed to long periods of stress, that can impact our attitudes and behaviors.

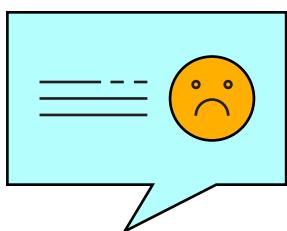
The potential for exposure to toxic stress during the pandemic has been high. Consider all the potential high-stress elements that could have an impact:



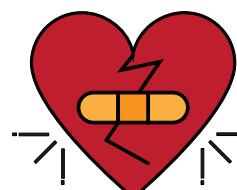
Is someone in your family an essential worker or someone who has continued to work with the public for the last year? Distance or blended learning may signal to students that being around other people is dangerous, and they may be worried about the health of their family members or caregivers, causing stress.



Many children have had their normal routines interrupted. This lack of familiarity or consistency can cause stress.



Have social relationships been disrupted? Students may feel lonely or isolated, another source of stress.



Students who rely on school as a source of food may be experiencing varying degrees of food insecurity, causing stress.

This short list is just a sample. We all have many reasons to feel stressed right now, and prolonged exposure to stress can change our attitudes and behaviors. Instead of reacting to our children's potentially negative behavior, remember that **behavior is communication**.

What does it mean to say that “behavior is communication?”

For example, is your student refusing to work? This could signify that the work is too difficult or that the student lacks the structure necessary to succeed (to name just two possibilities). Perhaps a caregiver can reach out to the school for tutoring options or develop a daily schedule to provide more structure for those still learning from home.

Is your student acting out? Maybe the child is communicating a need for attention. Sometimes, we may dismiss a child's behavior, saying, “They just want attention.” But sometimes children need attention. This could be a way to communicate that.

Whatever the case, remember that students (even the ones in high school) do not always know how to communicate complicated emotions. Negative behavior can be an attempt to communicate. Always consider what might be going on “behind the scenes,” so to speak, before reacting.

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