



Toxic Stress

Toxic stress can have damaging effects on learning, behavior, & health across the lifespan

Positive

Brief increases in heart rate, mild elevations in stress hormone levels.

Tolerable

Serious, temporary stress responses, buffered by supportive relationships.

Toxic

Prolonged activation of stress response systems in the absence of protective relationships.

Why It Matters:

When toxic stress response occurs continually, it can have a cumulative toll on an individual's physical and mental health - for a lifetime. The more adverse experiences in childhood, the greater the likelihood of developmental delays and later health problems, including heart disease, diabetes, substance abuse, and depression.

Toxic stress. Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University. (2020, August 17). Retrieved April 7, 2022, from <https://developingchild.harvard.edu/science/key-concepts/toxic-stress/>

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(2 minute video)