Fostering Resiliency through Strengthening Connections and Coping Skills

UBC Early Years Conference

2018

THE PSYCHOLOGY
FOUNDATION
OF CANADA

LA FONDATION
DE PSYCHOLOGIE
DU CANADA

A child's ability to cope with stress in the early years has consequences for physical and emotional health through out life.

- National Scientific Council on the Developing Child (2005)

Our Mission

Confident Kids, Productive Adults

Practical, evidence-based programs spanning critical developmental stages

Birth - Make the Connection

Parenting for Life
School years - Kids
Have Stress Too! and

Adults - Stress Strategies

Toddlerhood -
Make the Connection &
Parenting for Life

Adolescence - Stress
Lessons & Parenting
for Life

THE PSYCHOLOGY
FOUNDATION
OF CANADA

LA FONDATION
DE PSYCHOLOGIE
DU CANADA

Our learning objectives

- Share evidence-backed attachment promoting strategies for parents

- Reflect on how stress can affect developing brains and its relevance to fostering resiliency in young children

- Identify evidence-informed developmentally appropriate strategies/resources that can assist in helping young children develop the skills to cope with life's challenges
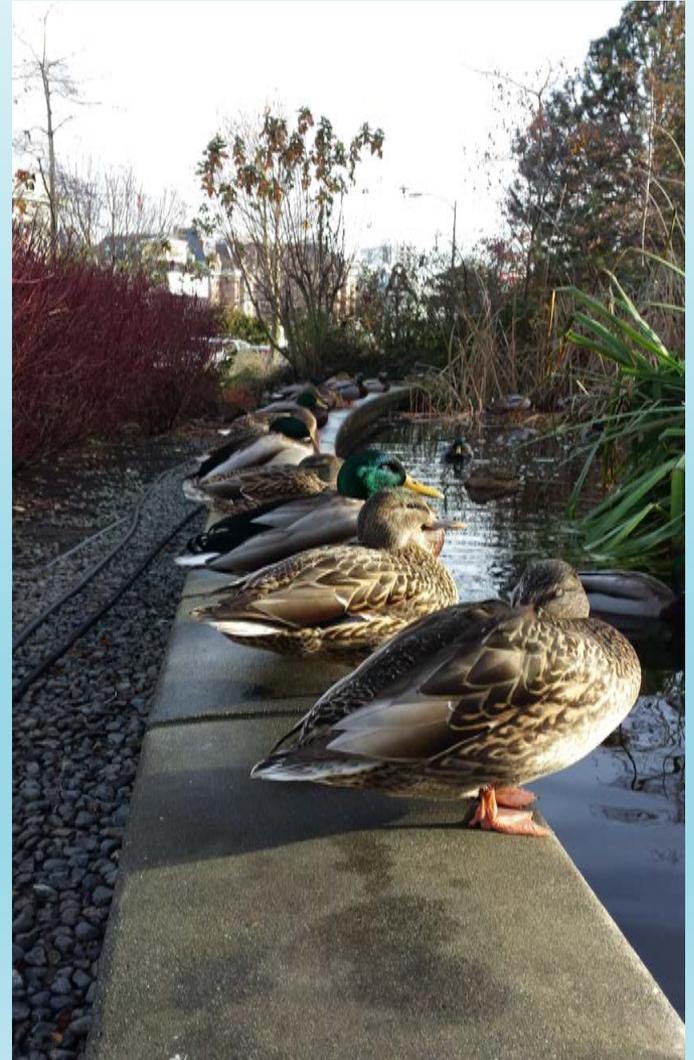
Stress isn't always bad …

"You gain strength, courage and confidence by every experience in which you really stop to look fear in the face… You must do the thing you think you cannot do." · Eleanor Roosevelt

WHEN IS WORRY A GOOD THING?

- Displays of anxiety, *especially during change*, is a good thing!
- Worry is a normal, healthy & predictable response to the unknown.
- Anxiety keeps us alert and aware of possibility when something is new.

Let's Talk About Stress

In pairs, share a minor stressor that has caused each of you stress in the last few weeks (e.g., late for an appointment, disagreement with someone, etc.), and answer the following questions :

1. Why was it stressful?

2. How did you feel physically?

3. How did you deal with it?

Discuss results in the larger group…

http://www.albertafamilywellness.org/resources/video/how-brains-are-built-core-story-brain-development

"Stress has an enormous impact on children's self-regulation. Self-regulation is increasingly being seen as key to successful learning in the classroom and beyond. Teaching children stress-management techniques can improve self-regulation and learning."

Stuart Shanker, 2012

Positive Stress

- ❑ Energizing

- ❑ Motivating

- ❑ Stimulating

- ❑ Sufficiently challenging

- ❑ Performance enhancing

- ❑ Helpful in facing physical danger

Tolerable Stress

- ❑ Significant stress that can alter a child's brain

- ❑ Not considered long-term or "chronic" – child's brain can often recover

- ❑ Often triggered by unhappy or difficult experiences/events
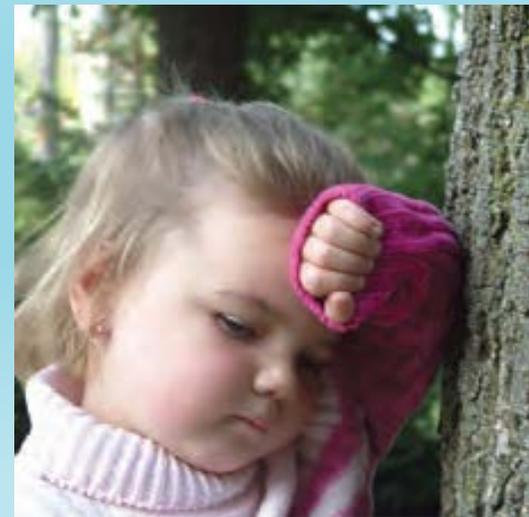
Toxic Stress

- Can negatively impact brain development

- Can negatively affect the stress response system (i.e., child can start to over-react to stress)

- Stress can become "toxic" or "harmful" if it is:

  - Chronic

  - Uncontrollable

  - Accompanied by an *absence* of consistent and supportive adult relationships to help the child cope

Every child requires someone in his or her life that is absolutely crazy about them.

- Urie Bronfenbrenner

Stress in Children - let's think about …

1. Stressors

2. Signs and symptoms of stress

3. Strategies that kids use on their own

4. Strategies that practitioners can use

We want to help children:

- Gain a sense of control

- Learn how to relax

- Develop a "can do" attitude

- Build capacity for self-regulation

- Improve executive functioning

… **flourish!**

Body/Mind/Feelings/Behaviour Connection
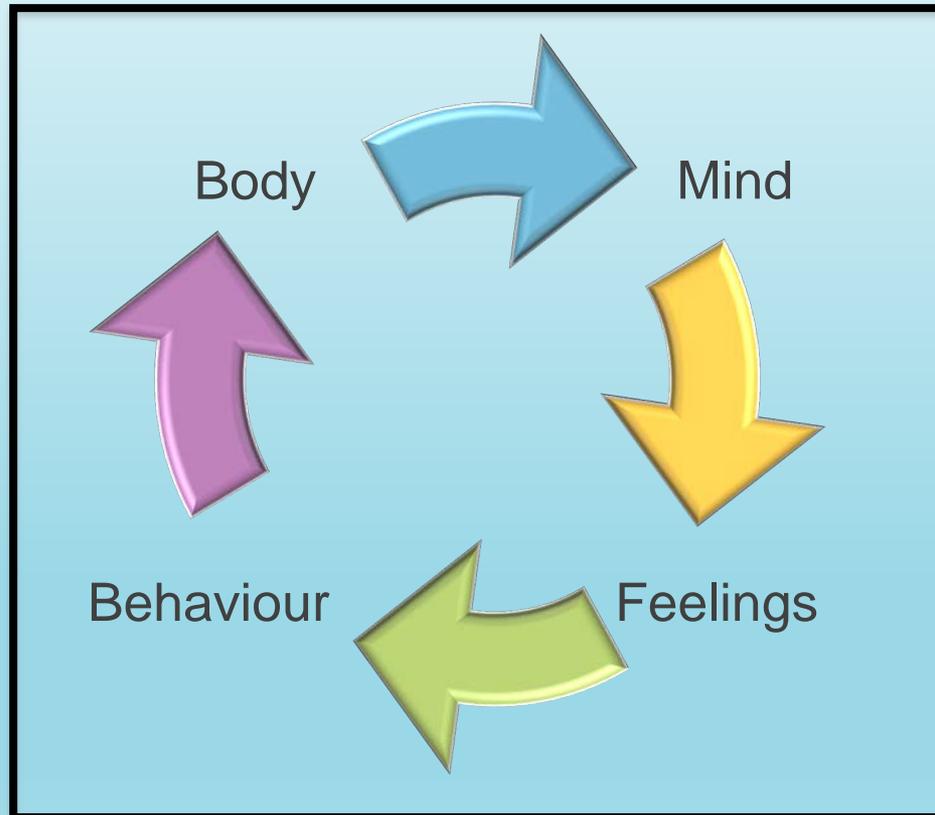
Stress Stoplight

Red Light: STOP – "Red Alert" – Recognize stress symptoms

Yellow Light: CHANGE – Deal with the stress and use tools in the toolbox

Green Light: GO – Feel the stress go away; feel energized, more relaxed, in control and ready to go!

Strategies for Reducing Stress

- Prevention Strategies

- Symptom Reduction

- Problem Solving

- Adaptation Response

Not all children (or adults!) will respond to the same strategies

Prevention Strategies

Focus on preventing stress and/or preventing stress from worsening:

- Identify and reduce stressors in child's environment

- Recognize signs of stress in the child and deal with them

- "Stress friendly" practices (e.g., adequate sleep, proper nutrition, exercise, loving relationships)

"*Life* is like riding a bicycle. To keep your balance you must keep moving."
- Albert Einstein

plereminders.com

Symptom Reduction

Helps calm the body and mind – to help move from a highly emotional state to a more rational one:

- physical relaxation activities (e.g., deep breathing, stretching)

- Increase options/choices for children to self-soothe (e.g., snuggling with a toy, rocking, etc.)

- daily physical activity
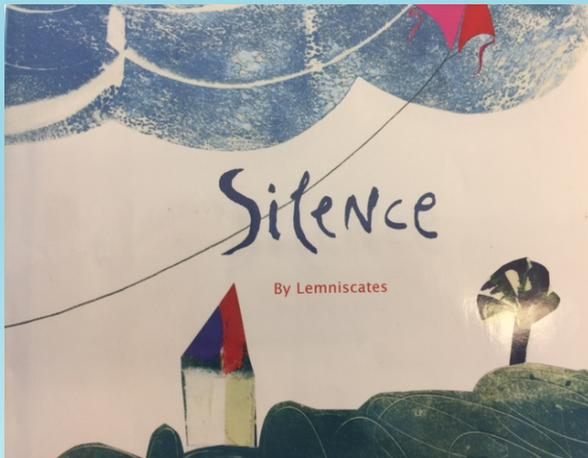
Problem Solving

Focuses on resolving problems when they occur, in order to reduce stress:

- One of the most important life skills a child will ever learn

- Provide children with tools to gain some emotional control

- Show children they have choices when they face a problem – they can achieve positive results

when nothing
goes right...

go left.

Adaptation Response

Help children minimize the impact of a stressor that cannot be eliminated (e.g., visit to the doctor, death of a loved one, etc.):

- Put stressors into perspective

- Implement positive thinking (a "positive voice")

- Use imagination and relaxation skills

Toolbox Activities

- Variety of activities you can use to help children develop their coping skills

- www.psychologyfoundation.org

Key Concepts (since) Kids Have Stress Too!

1. Educators, parents and caregivers can help children learn ways to manage stress.

2. There are signs and symptoms of too much stress.

3. Children who can recognize, acknowledge and express their feelings appropriately, cope better with stress.

4. Relaxation strategies can reduce a child's reaction to stress.

Key Concepts of KHST! Continued…

5. With help, children can learn to solve problems.

6. There are some simple ways to create a less stressful environment for children.

7. When children speak harshly or critically to themselves, they create more stress. Using their positive voice can lower stress.

8. Physical activity is a proven strategy for coping with stress and promoting self-regulation.
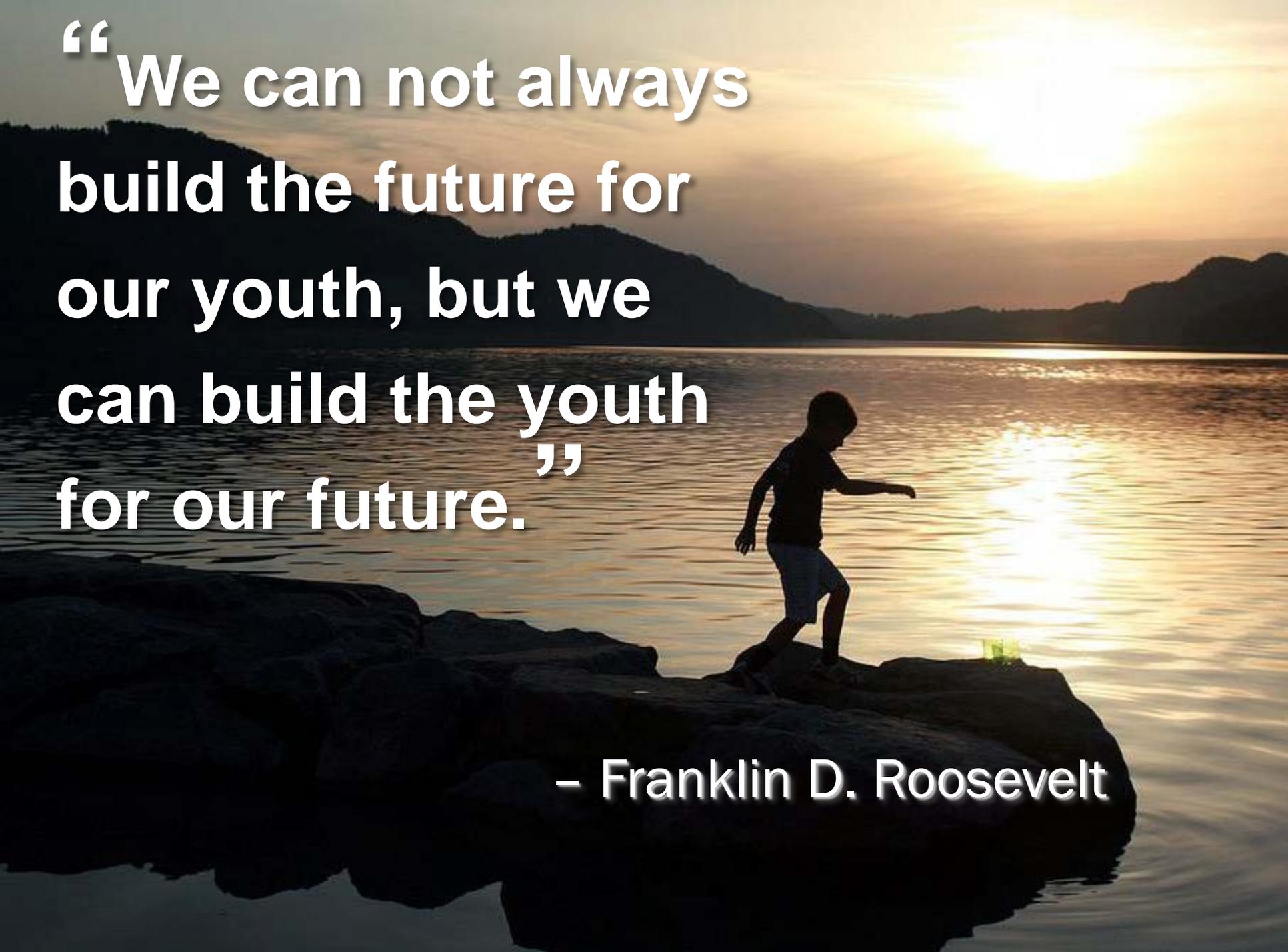
❤ FB/JOYOFMOM ❤
The kids who need the most love will ask for it in the most unloving of ways.

"We can not always build the future for our youth, but we can build the youth for our future."

– Franklin D. Roosevelt

Thank you!
Keep in touch!

www.psychologyfoundation.org

cindypandrew@psychologyfoundation.org

References underpinning the "Kids Have Stress Too!" program, on which this session is based are included below.

THE PSYCHOLOGY
FOUNDATION
OF CANADA

LA FONDATION
DE PSYCHOLOGIE
DU CANADA

Anderson, M., Shinn, C., Fullilove, M. et al. (2003). The effectiveness of early childhood development programs, a systematic review. *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, Volume 24, Number 3S.

Barnett, W. S., Jung, K. et al. (2008). Educational effects of the Tools of the Mind curriculum: A randomized trial. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, Volume 23, Issue 3, 3rd Quarter 2008, 299-31.

Barr, C. S., Newman, T. K. et al. (2004). Interaction between serotonin gene variation and rearing history in alcohol preference and consumption in female primates. *Archives f General Psychiatry*, 61(11), 1146-1152.

Berk, L. E. (2000). *Child Development* (5th ed.). Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon.

Berk, L. Mann, T. D. & Ogan, A. T. (2006). Make-Believe Play: Wellspring for Development of Self-Regulation. In Singer, G. et al. (Eds.), *Play = Learning,* New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Blair, C. (2002). *School Readiness: Integrating Cognition and Emotion in a Neurobiological Conceptualization of Children's Functioning at School Entry*. American Psychologist. 52 (2) pg. 111-127.

Blair, C. & Diamond, A. (2008). Biological processes in prevention and intervention: Promotion of self-regulation and the prevention of early school failure*. Development and Psychopathology, 20,* 899-911.

Boris, N. W. & Zeanah, C. H. (1998). Clinical disturbances of attachment in infancy and early childhood. *Current Opinion in Pediatrics*, 10(4):368.

Bowlby, J. (1969). *Attachment and loss: Vol. 1 Attachment.* New York, NY: Basic Books.

Brooks, R. & Goldstein, S. (2001). *Raising Resilient Children*. New York, NY: Contemporary Books.

Burdette, H. L. & Whitaker, R. C. (2005). Resurrecting free play in young children: Looking beyond fitness and fatness to attention, affiliation, and affect. *Arch Pediatr Adolesc Med, 159*, 46-50.

Dadds, M. R. & Roth, V. H. (2001). Family processes in the development of anxiety problems. In Vasey, M. W. & Dadds, M. W. *The developmental psychology of anxiety.* New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Diamond, A. (2007). Interrelated and interdependent. *Developmental Science*, 10:1,152-158.

Gottman, J. (2004). *What am I feeling?* Seattle, WA: Talaris Research Institute.

Gunnar, M. R. (2001). The role of glucocorticoids in anxiety disorders: A critical analysis. In Vasey, M. W. & Dadds, M. R. (Eds.), *The developmental psychopathology of anxiety*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Harris, K. R. (1990). Developing self-regulated learners: The role of private speech and self-instructions**.** *Educational psychologist,* Volume 25, Issue 1 , 35-49.

Hincks-Dellcrest Centre. (2007). *Handle with care: Strategies for promoting mental health of young children in community-based child care* (p. 30).
Hoffman, J. (2010). *Kids can cope: Parenting resilient children at home and at school.* Psychology Foundation of Canada. www.psychologyfoundation.org/order_worklife.php#KidsCanCope

Infant Mental Health Promotion Project. (2000). *A simple gift: Helping young children cope with emotions.* Toronto, ON: The Hospital for Sick Children.

Jared A. Lisonbee et al. (2008). Children's cortisol and the quality of teacher-child relationships in early learning and care. *Child Development*, Volume 79, Issue 6.

Kobasa, S.C. (1979a). Personality and resistance to illness. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 7, 413-423; Kobasa, S. C. (1979b). Stressful life events, personality and health: an inquiry into hardiness. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 37, 1-11.

Kochenderfer-Ladd, B. & Skinner, K. (2002). Children's coping strategies: Moderators of the effects of peer victimization? *Developmental Psychology*, 38(2), 267-278.

Kurcinka, M. S. (1991). *Raising your spirited child* (p. 25). New York, NY: Harper Perennial.

Landy, S. (2009). *Pathways to competence. Encouraging healthy social and emotional development in young children (*2nd ed.). Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brookes.

Lantieri, L. (2008). *Building emotional intelligence: Techniques to cultivate inner strength in children.* Boulder, CO: Sounds True, Inc.

Lieberman, M. D., Eisenberger, N. I. et al. (2007). Putting feelings into words affect labeling disrupts amygdala activity in response to affective stimuli. *Psychological Science,* Vol. 18 (5), 421-428.

Lupien, S. J. de Leon, M. J., Santi et al. (1998). Cortisol levels during human aging predict hippocampal atrophy and memory deficits. *Nature Neuroscience*, 1(1), 69-73.

Margles, J. & Ho, G. (2003). *Kids Have Stress Too! Parent Evaluation Report.* Unpublished report. Psychology Foundation of Canada.

Masten, A. (2001). Ordinary magic: Resilience processes in development. *American Psychologist*, 56(3), 227-238.

National Scientific Council on the Developing Child. (2007). *The Science of Early Childhood Development.* Retrieved from http://www.developingchild.net

National Scientific Council on the Developing Child. (2004). *Working Paper #1.*
Shonkoff, J. P. (2009). *Encyclopedia on early childhood development.* Retrieved from http://www.child-encyclopedia.com.
National Scientific Council on the Developing Child. (2005). *Excessive stress disrupts the architecture of the developing brain: Working Paper # 3*. Retrieved from www.developingchild.harvard.edu

National Scientific Council on the Developing Child. (2010). *Early experiences can alter gene expression and affect long-term development: Working Paper #10*. Retrieved from www.developingchild.harvard.edu

Nelson, J., Lott, L. and Glenn, H. (2000). *Positive discipline in the classroom.* New York, NY: Three Rivers Press.

NICHD Early Child Care Research Network & Duncan, G. J. (2003). Modeling the impacts of child care quality on children's preschool cognitive development. *Child Development, 74*, 1454-1475.

Shonkoff, J.P., Phillips, D.A., (2000). Neurons to neighborhoods: The science of early child development. Washington, DC: National Academy Press.

Shonkoff, J. P. (2009). *Encyclopedia on early childhood development*. Retrieved from www.child-encyclopedia.com

Sterling Honig, A. (2010). *Little kids, big worries*. Baltimore, MD: Paul H Brookes.

Strain, P. S. & Joseph, G. E. (2004). A not so good job with 'good job': A response to Kohn 2001. *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions*, 6(4).

Thompson, R. A. (1998). Early sociopersonality development. In Eisenberg, N. (Ed.), *Handbook of child psychology: Vol. 3 Social emotional and personality development* (5th ed.) (pp. 25-104). New York, NY: Wiley.

Tudge, J. & Caruso, D. (1989). *Cooperative problem solving in the classroom*. Urbana, IL: ERIC Clearinghouse on Elementary and Early Childhood Education.

Vingilis, E. & Seeley, J. (2010). *Evaluation of the Kids Have Stress Too! Preschool Program.* Population & Community Health Unit, Family Medicine, University of Western Ontario.