



Unlocking the Learning

M3.2 The Impact of Stress on Children



You play a crucial role in shaping the early experiences that impact a child's well-being and development. Understanding the effects of stress, both healthy and unhealthy, is essential in providing the supportive environment needed for optimal brain development.

Healthy Stress vs. Unhealthy Stress:

Healthy Stress:

- Examples include hunger, starting a new childcare, or overcoming fears like riding a bike.
- Healthy stress, supported by caring adults, fosters resilience and self-soothing abilities.
- Cortisol, a hormone released during stress, promotes learning, and a small surge is beneficial.

Unhealthy Stress (Toxic Stress):

- Arises from repeated negative experiences without supportive adults.
- Examples include neglect, abuse, or exposure to parental addiction.
- Prolonged high cortisol levels from toxic stress can lead to permanent changes in the brain.
- Negative impacts on mental health and behaviour may last a lifetime.

Everyday Connections and Stress:

Importance of Everyday Connections:

- Absence of daily connections, such as contact during feeding or comforting when upset, can cause stress.
- Routines and daily tasks provide opportunities for genuine connections.

Implications for Family Child Care Providers:

Provider's Role in Nurturing:

- Emphasize the role of family child care providers in nurturing and supporting a child's developing brain.
- Recognize the impact of positive, supportive relationships on mitigating the effects of stress.



By acknowledging the distinction between healthy and unhealthy stress and understanding their profound impact on a child's brain development, family child care providers can create environments that nurture resilience, foster positive mental health, and lay the groundwork for a lifetime of well-being. Your dedication to warm, responsive relationships contributes significantly to the healthy growth of the seeds within your care—ensuring they flourish into strong, resilient individuals.