

Module 2: Guided Questions

Toxic Stress

Guided Questions

These guided questions are designed to expand on the content provided in module two and to encourage learners to think about how the information on toxic stress can be applied to their practice and/or training.

These questions can be used in either large group decisions and in small break-out groups by giving each group a question(s) and asking them to report back to the larger group.

Please note that these questions are provided to serve as a starting point for your teaching and presentation use. You are encouraged to adapt these questions to meet your learner's needs and/or add your own. Sample responses are provided. However, the responses provided should not be viewed as the only way to answer the questions.

The source for many of the questions and answers below is the AAP's publication, *Helping Foster and Adoptive Families Cope with Trauma*. While this publication was written to help foster and adoptive families, much, if not all of the content can be applied to toxic stress in general as well. The publication is available through AAP web site at <http://www.aap.org/en-us/advocacy-and-policy/aap-health-initiatives/healthy-foster-care-america/Documents/Guide.pdf>

1. Addressing toxic stress is part of being a pediatrician or a public health professional. List some ways that you feel make you uniquely positioned to intervene and prevent or mitigate toxic stress?

- Interacting regularly with children and families.
- Serving as frontline guardians of healthy child development and caregivers rely on them to screen, diagnose, and treat both developmental and behavioral problems.
- Recognizing the important role that families and communities play in determining wellness.
- Using a developmental approach to health.
- Understanding the advantages of prevention over remediation.

2. What local resources do you share when you work with patients or clients and families who are experiencing toxic stress or are at risk for toxic stress?

- Access to resources that provide high quality, affordable or subsidized child care. Do you know if your community has a resource that provides information on high quality child care programs? Consider using the [Quality Rating & Improvement System \(QRIS\) Compendium](#) to learn about quality child care systems in your state.
- The name of and referral process for early intervention and early childhood screening programs in your community.
- The contact information for Head Start, Early Head Start, and at-risk pre-school programs using the [Head Start locator](#) and [Child Care Resource and Referral Agency Search](#).
- The contact information for respite and other support programs/services for parents.
- To find information about therapies available to help children who have experienced trauma see:
 - [National Child Traumatic Stress Network](#)
 - [Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration: Behavioral health treatment services locator](#)
 - [Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration: Trauma-informed care and trauma services](#)
 - [Home Visiting Programs: State Fact Sheets](#)

3. What are some ways that you could probe for information about toxic stressors in a non-threatening but trauma-informed manner?

- Use open-ended questions that provide a prompt for what the parent/caregiver may have forgotten or is unsure if you would want to know:
 - Do you know any really scary or upsetting things that happened to you or your child since the last time I saw you?
 - Have there been any changes in your family life such as working more or less hours, changes in regular sources of care/support?
 - You have told me that your child is having some problems with acting and sleep. Just as fever means the body is dealing with an infection, when these behaviors happen, they may mean the brain and body are responding to stress. Do you have any concerns that your child might be feeling stressed or anxious?
- Ask about and praise existing protective factors and sources for resilience.
 - Does the child go to a high quality preschool or daycare?
 - Does the parent/caregiver spend time reading and engaging with their child in a way that nurtures the child?

Consider sharing [The Family Experience with Primary Care Physicians and Staff](#).