GUIded Questions

Module 2
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 discussions or in small breakout groups by giving each group a question(s) and asking them to report back to the larger group.

Please note: These questions are provided to serve as a starting point for your teaching and presentation use. You are encouraged to adapt these questions as you see fit to meet your learner’s needs and/or add your own questions to the list. 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 the AAP web site.
1. **Addressing toxic stress is part of being a pediatrician. List some ways that you feel pediatricians are uniquely positioned to intervene and prevent or mitigate toxic stress?**

- They regularly interact with children.
- They are frontline guardians of healthy child development and caregivers rely on them to diagnose and treat both developmental and behavioral problems.
- They appreciate the important role that families and communities play in determining wellness.
- They use a developmental approach to health.
- They understand the advantages of prevention over remediation.
- They tend to use a systems-based approach to impacting child health and well-being.

2. **What local resources do you know about that you contact or refer patients and their families to who are experiencing or are at risk for toxic stress?**

- The contact information for respite and other support programs/services for parents
- Access to resources that provide linkages to home visiting programs, nurse-family partnerships
- Access to resources that provide high quality childcare
- The name of 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
• To find information about therapies available to help children who have experienced trauma see:
  o National Child Traumatic Stress Network
  o Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (behavioral health treatment services locator)
  o Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (trauma-informed care and trauma services)

3. **What are some ways that providers can ask parents/caregivers questions in a non-threatening but trauma-informed manner? What are some things that you can ask yourself/or think about in terms of possible protective factors?**

   When asking parents/caregivers questions:
   
   • 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:
     o Do you know any really scary or upsetting things that happened to you or your child since the last time I saw you?
     o Have there been any changes in your family life such as working more or less hours, changes in regular sources of care/support?
     o You have told me that your child is having some problems with eating and sleeping. Just as fever indicates that 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?
Think about possible protective factors and sources for resilience. Ask yourself questions such as the following:

- Does the child go to a high quality preschool or child care center?
- Does the parent/caregiver spend time reading and engaging with their child in a way that nurtures the child’s development?