

The Effects of Toxic Stress On The Brain & Body – How to Heal & Protect

Posted January 28, 2016 by Karen Young

Stress is a normal part of life, and so is our response to it. The physiological response to stress is hardwired into all of us and is evolution's way of keeping us alive. In times of stress, our heart beats faster, our blood pressure increases, and adrenaline and cortisol (the stress hormone) surge through our system to make us stronger, faster, more alert and more powerful versions of our normal selves. In short, the physiological changes that come with stress are to give us the physical resources to deal with whatever might break our stride.

But – the stress response was only ever meant to happen for brief periods of time. In the right doses, the cortisol (the stress hormone) that surges through the body in times of stress will help us to perform at our peak. When the cortisol is turned on and off quickly, it energizes, enhances certain types of memory, and sets the immune system to go.

In a chronically stressful environment, [the body's stress](#) response is always on – there is very little relief from the surge of chemicals and the increase in heart rate and blood pressure. When this happens, the stress becomes toxic and can cause dramatic changes in the brain and body – but there are ways to heal.

Toxic stress isn't so much about the cause of the stress, but about the chronic and ongoing nature of the stress.

Everyone will experience stress. It's a very normal and healthy part of being human. For children though, a little goes a long way. It is through stressful times that kids learn resilience, determination, optimism and how to soothe themselves when things start to get tough. When [stress is managed](#) in the context of loving, stable and caring relationships, where children feel safe and secure, they can get through stressful, traumatic times without scarring.

The fallout from physical or emotional abuse and neglect is obvious, but then there are the more indirect hits, such as chronic conflict in the home, a parent battling addiction, maternal depression, or serious illness. The stress from these doesn't have to turn toxic but it can. A prime condition for this happening is when there is no loving, supportive, attentive relationship to buffer the impact. The relationship doesn't have to be with a parent – any adult can make a powerful difference.

For the complete article please go to :

<http://www.heysigmund.com/toxic-stress/>