



# HOW NOT TO BUBBLE WRAP KIDS

LEARNING HOW TO USE DAILY STRESS TO DEVELOP RESILIENCE

If you've paid attention to the media recently, you might now believe that any stress is bad for a child's physical and mental health, that stress has reached epidemic proportions, that you need to do everything you can to reduce the amount of stress in your life and that various products from supplements to special water to squeeze balls will decrease your child's stress and make them healthy.

BUT the science says that this isn't true. In fact, experiencing and learning how to use stress is an important part of having good mental health and there is no evidence that any of the highly marketed stress reduction products are any more helpful than going for a brisk walk!

**Mental health** is the capacity to successfully adapt to life's circumstances. It does not mean happiness nor does it mean not having negative feelings, worries, or difficulties. It includes the experience of stress and the use of that experience to help your child learn new skills and effectively address the many and frequent challenges of life, now and in the future.

This means that someone with good mental health isn't someone who avoids or is protected from experiencing stress, but instead, someone who uses the stress they experience to learn and grow.

## THE LANGUAGE OF STRESS

**Stressor:** An event that triggers the stress response in your body. It can be an internal event, like a thought, or an external event, like a social interaction, sound, chemical, etc.

**Stress Response:** Your body's signal that you need to adapt and change in order to accommodate or deal with the stressor. This signal includes your heart racing, palms sweating, shortness of breath, butterflies in your stomach, and more.

## DIFFERENT TYPES OF STRESS

There are different types of stress and, actually, most daily stress is good for you!

**Positive:** Positive stress is short-term and it helps us learn how to adapt and grow. Situations that cause positive stress can be positive or negative (e.g., writing an examination, giving a presentation, calling someone you don't know, not making the school team, etc.) and happen daily – often multiple times a day.

**Tolerable:** Tolerable stress is also short-term but involves situations where there is more serious impact (e.g., someone dying, parent's divorce). It occurs multiple times throughout your life and as long as you have supportive relationships around, is unlikely to have any lasting negative consequences.

**Toxic:** Toxic stress is prolonged and extreme (e.g., abuse, neglect, violence), but for most young people, this is rare. Many will go their whole lives without experiencing toxic stress.

Toxic stress is the only type of stress that's actually bad for you. Experiencing positive or tolerable stress actually makes us stronger, healthier and more understanding human beings!