

SUPPORTING STUDENTS UNDER STRESS

Definition of Trauma: Stressful events and the individual's response to that stress.

Impacts of Trauma are determined by: *Frequency of exposure to toxic stress

*Age of onset of trauma determines extent of impact

Common Examples of Trauma and ACEs (Adverse Childhood Experiences)

MILD	MODERATE	SEVERE
Argument with friend	Car accident	Death of a family member
Test at school	Parent separation (work)	Divorce in the family
Poor grades	Death of a pet	Homelessness
Loss of treasured object	Bullying	Domestic abuse
Financial insecurity	Breakup in relationship	Substance abuse
Power outages		Incarcerated parent

Experiencing many ACEs, as well as things like racism and community violence without supportive adults can cause what is called **toxic stress**. Toxic stress can derail healthy development and cause long-term wear and tear on the brains and bodies of students, making learning difficult or even impossible in extreme cases.

How to help those who have been exposed to stress, trauma, and/or ACEs:

- Therapeutic sessions with mental health professionals
- Physical exercise
- Meditation
- Spending time in nature
- Reducing sources of stress
- Fostering strong relationships between children and their caregivers
- Calming self-help exercises listed on page two and through links at Forestcharter.com
- Avoid challenging or arguing with students who are in distress or who are no longer using the rational parts of their brain

Please refer to the following page for activities and additional resources to support students under stress.

The following rhythmic activities are helpful for young people (or anyone) who may be in a stressed or anxious state and in need of a calming self-regulating technique.

Diaphragmatic Breathing

- We breath in through our nose (if possible) for a count of 2 and intend the breath into the diaphragm.
- Hold in for the count of 2.
- Exhale with a relaxed, dropped jaw for the count of 2.
- Hold it for the count of 2.

Hand Breathing

- Stretch your hand out like a star
- Prepare your pointer finger ready to trace your fingers up and down on your other hand.
- Slide up each finger slowly, pausing at the tip for two seconds, then slide down the other side.
- Breath in as your finger slides up and breath out as your trace down the other side of each finger.
- Continue until you trace each finger on your hand.

The Double Clap

Clap a patterned clapping progression with yourself or with another. For example, clap twice in front of your chest, and then clap twice on your lap, followed by two foot stomps, and finally one clap in front of your chest. The rhythm is soothing to those who may feel anxiety approaching.

The Jedi (isometrics)

- Two firm claps
- Pull apart w/fingers and take two deep breaths
- Press palms together and take two deep breaths
- Hands at sides, deep breath, and hold arms up to “fill the balloon,”
- Hold.....then release
- Two firm claps

Additional resources, information, and activities can be found at the following links:

[Brain Breaks](#)

[Basics of Tapping](#)

[Toxic Stress Derails Healthy Development](#)

[Hand Model of the Brain \(video\)](#)