

## Promoting Resilience in Children, Families, Staff, and You! Webinar

Vanessa Maanao-French: So, for those of you who have been on past webinars you may recognize my voice. My name is Vanessa Maanao-French, and I'm with the National Center on Quality Teaching and Learning. And, typically, when I present, I have the lovely Sher'ee Maxwell with me, who is a Tribal Liaison, but she is off today, well deservedly. And so, it's just me flying solo, but I've got some support, too. So, I'll be sure to let you meet Susan, who's also with me today.

Susan Stewart: Hi, everybody. Dawn is also taking a very deserved day off, and so it's just me behind the scenes. But I'm here, in case you have any questions or any needs that you need some help with. So, just send me a little note in the questions box, and it'll pop up on my screen -- no one else will see it --and I'll respond to you. So, I'll turn it back to Vanessa.

Vanessa: Thanks, Susan. So, hopefully, you're in the right place, because we're going to be talking about stress and resilience, today, and it seemed to be a topic that was well timed. There's so much going on right now, and it seems there's more than usual going on right now, in Head Start that can be real stressors, whether it's sequestration or the Designation Renewal System, as new things or things that are ongoing that seem to be just a part of Head Start: Teacher turnover, making sure teachers are qualified; you know, budget is always an issue, and there's always something, right? So, how can we balance out those stressors and build resilience in our children, in our families, our staff, and of course within ourselves as leaders? So, we'll talk about that a bit today.

And as usual, we like to frame our time, and this is what we do each time. We want to learn from you, so, I'm hoping you will be active on those discussion boards and really put Susan to work today, asking questions and participating in our polls, because really, it truly does shape how we move forward within the webinar itself. We want to offer you resources and strategies that promote resilience for adults and for children. And we're going to have some time to reflect on the impact of stress.

We'll talk a bit first about kiddos, and then we'll focus in the second half on adults. We always tie our webinars back to the effective practice framework, and we've been really staying in the foundation of the house, because truly that's where the teaching comes from, where the quality is really based. Without these engaging interactions and environments, promoting resilience would be really difficult to do.

So, you think about social-emotional support, which is part of the foundation, having a well-organized classroom, and also about those instructional interactions that you have with kids, and those are all really dependent on the teachers being consistent, nurturing, safe, and intentional. And that's exactly the kind of environment kids need, all kids need, to learn and thrive. But, kids who are experiencing stress need it even more so. The other model that we'll be looking at today -- and really does help frame what we're going to discuss, and you've probably seen this before -- is the CSEFEL pyramid, and in particular, we're going to be focusing on the bottom levels.

Typically, people look at this pyramid or they use it for planning. It's our interventions for kids with challenging behaviors. But really at the foundation, it's stuff and strategies, that are good for all kids, and there's things we can think about. And thinking about the effective workforce is one thing I like to bring up first, because without the effective workforce, how are we going to have those interactions? And it's not just about making sure they have the right training on a curriculum or an assessment; it's really also thinking about: Is this a motivated team? Do they have passion behind what they're doing? Do they understand the impact of their relationship with the kids in the classrooms each day? Is there a sense of respect and positive regard between team members? Because, all of these other things outside of learning a curriculum and implementing a curriculum or an assessment you know, leads to low morale. If you don't have that sense of respect, if you're an unmotivated team, if there's poor communication, low morale can have just as much of an impact on classroom quality, as a teacher who's poorly trained in child development.

Speaking about the next level up: Nurturing and responsive relationships; this is so closely tied with social-emotional support, whether you're thinking about it within the foundation of the house or within the CLASS framework or with any of your other social-emotional tools. Without relationships, everything else falls apart, because we know kids learn in the context of relationships. And then finally, in thinking about the pyramid, I wanted to touch a little bit on that high quality supportive environment. We can think about the books on the bookshelf and that the tables are clean and that there are transitions and routines that help kids get through the day; that's very, very important. But it's also, too, about that feeling you have when you're in a classroom that the kids experience, that they are excited to come to school. And I think the best way for me to kind of illustrate that is to give a couple of examples that are at different ends of the spectrum, but I'll put it into an adult perspective.

So, I want you to think first about a situation when you are -- maybe you're heading to a party, a celebration. And at this celebration, you're heading to the home of a friend. And when you get there, you know every single person in the room. And when you enter, people turn their heads; they smile, they wave; they greet you. People are already huddled up into small groups, having discussions, and you're kind of already figuring out exactly who you want to go hug first and join in conversation. And this might be one of those celebrations that's related to a traditional community event; so, you know the sequence of what's going to happen next. You know the food that's going to be served; you know the people so well; you know who's going to arrive late and who's going to leave early, et cetera, et cetera. You just feel like this is your place to be and that you belong. You know exactly who you want to go talk to first and get -- just join into the fun.

The opposite experience could be that you're walking into a room where you know no one. This may be your first time on a work group or subcommittee, and you've been assigned to it, so you go. And you don't have an agenda, so you don't know what to expect going in. There's no one there who's looking at you smiling and inviting you over to come chat or to engage you. You look around, and you're hoping for somebody to say -- acknowledge you, but it doesn't happen. And people are in these small groups, already talking, so you feel like you might be late. But you were early, but it seems like you're late. And then you're left with this feeling of: Do I really belong here, and maybe I'd rather just leave?

So, thinking about those two sides of the coin, you know, where would you rather be, right? This really does parallel how kids walk into the classroom each day with their parents. If they walk in and it feels like that first example, the party, the celebration, where we know what to expect, people smile and they engage you and they welcome you in; that's a very different feeling than the second example where you don't know where you go first and you really feel like you'd rather just walk back to the door, get back in your car, and go home. So, environments cannot be understated, as having an impact on kids and on staff and on families. So, enough of that. I'll move us on.

So, as we move through this webinar, I think it's important for us to kind of be grounded in a couple definitions. If we're going to be talking about stress and resilience, let's define those. So, stress is defined as strain felt by somebody, you know, mentally, emotionally, or physically. And it can be caused by anxiety or overwork. And I'm thinking that, of you guys out there, you're probably having some of those feelings, right now, given the time of year -- so much going on right now.

In contrast, we've got resilience, which is the ability to recover quickly from problems or from setbacks. And I found this photo; I thought it was perfect. You know, here you've got this little flower against all odds -- with way too much sun probably and not enough water probably -- is able to push through the desert and bloom. And I think that is what the children do that are suffering through stress, what staff do, what you do every day in your work. You do have to learn to be resilient and to push through and to bloom like this little flower. So, I think of you all as little flowers out there, and I hope you like that analogy. So, let's shift.

Now, that we've got the basis of our definitions, let's talk about the kids. This definition comes from Dr. Shonkoff, who's from Harvard University, and when I first read this, it shocked me. "No matter how intellectually gifted a child may be -- stress can impact what they are able to learn." And this -- his words literally hit me across the forehead, and I was like, oh, my goodness! Because, when I think about that, it tells me that a child could be born -- I mean, literally -- with the potential to be a rocket scientist, right? They have that much smarts in that brain of theirs, but stress can inhibit her gift, so, she doesn't become that rocket scientist and her potential is diminished. So, stress has a real deep impact -- it can have a deep impact on children. And this is also a graph that kind of brings it together. You know, the more risk factors, which is what we've got on the bottom of the graph; the more risk factors a child faces in their early years, and we're talking like birth to 3, the greater chance they'll have a developmental delay.

And when we think about risk factors, you know, I think about homelessness or abuse in the family, violent communities, those types of things. And so -- but I want to know from you, in your community, what are those stressors or risk factors that your children in your community are facing? And we've got the question box for you to type in some of your thoughts about your kids. And I'll give you a little bit of time.

Susan: We've got quite a list here. We're seeing things like poverty, alcoholism, lack of support by parents for children's education, teen parents, grandparents raising children, unemployment. Here's one about suicide of family members. These are very similar to some of the things that we heard yesterday. Addiction seems to be a big one. Parental addiction, obesity, high cost of living, substance abuse, long cold dark winters -- that's an interesting one. Homelessness, of course. Divorces happening in the family. So, lots of -- a wide variety of stressors that are happening.

Vanessa: Wow, this list. This happened to me yesterday, too. It just makes my stomach feel tight and my heart feel very, very heavy. It's similar to what we heard yesterday and it's similar to, in my experience, working in Head Start, that our kids and families really are struggling through quite a few -- and there are significant stressors in their lives.

So, thank you so much for sharing your thoughts. So, we wanted to take this a little bit further, because I want us to really use your experiences to be able to look at this chart in more depth. So, you had a list of those risk factors, and now I'd like for you to just quantify that. So, thinking about the kids, in general, in your program, how -- on average, what's the number of risk factors you think that a child may experience? Is it 1 to 2, 3, 4, 5, or 6 to 7? And we'll give you some time to do that as well.

Susan: Great. I'm going to close the poll now and share the results.

Vanessa: Wow, this is a little bit different than yesterday. It's a little bit more of a spread between 1 to 2, 3, 4, and 5. But 6 and 7, oh, my gosh. That's so hard. I always imagine that the chart will turn out differently, but in my heart, I know it's going to end up looking something like this. And what I -- when I look at this and then, I look back at the chart that we have, you know, here, thinking about your number, holding on to your numbers. You know, if you were a 6 or a 7 or even if you were a 1, and then looking to the left of this graph and looking at the percentages, so -- and there are some significant jumps, too, right, as you're looking at this. You know, from 4 risk factors to 5, there's this big jump in the potential for a child to have developmental delays. But it just kind of puts it into perspective, right? So, sometimes those disabilities that we're experiencing in these kiddos have a direct correlation with stress. I'll show you a little bit of why that is.

So, this also comes from Dr. Shonkoff and many, many other brain researchers out there that have focused their attention on young children. We now know that persistent stress literally changes brain architecture. And one of the key things that happens is that the hippocampus, with all that stress and with all these stress hormones going through the brain, the hippocampus gets changed. And in a negative way. And the hippocampus is the center of memory -- short-term memory and long-term memory. I mean, think about all the things you need to do to learn. Memory is key to that, right? If you can't draw on past experiences to inform what you're doing right in the moment, that makes learning really, really difficult. If short-term memory is difficult for you, paying attention in class and following directions is going to feel nearly impossible. And it's because stress has altered the hippocampus. So, when we think about these kids in our classrooms who seem so inattentive, and we know what's going on at home, we know what's happening physically, potentially in their brains.

Another thing that can happen, that's that nasty stress hormone, when it's too much, it can have a wear and tear on the brain and the neural connections that it's able to make. And especially in the first few years of life, making those connections is so critical. And what can end up happening, if a child is exposed to chronic or persistent stress is that their brains, because they don't have the same number of connections is literally smaller. This is a photo of a normal 3-year-old brain and a child who's experienced severe stress in her life. And literally her brain is smaller. And then, the last thing that I'll talk about with regard to brain development is that it interrupts a child's executive functioning, because they're constantly or nearly always in this "fight or flight" place.

You know, this happens to me when I'm driving in the car and somebody cuts me off, and I'm like, "I'm ready to fight," right? So, that feeling of like just, it's in my body. My heart rate goes faster; I start to sweat; I'm clutching onto the steering wheel, and in my head, I want to run that person down because I've got my daughter in the back seat. And just, that's what I want to do. But these kids who are experiencing stress don't know -- like I know -- it's probably not a good idea to go run that person down. I can talk myself down from that feeling of wanting to fight. But for these kids who haven't practiced figuring out, "Oh, this is my body reacting to stress. I can have these mechanisms; I can have these rituals that I can do to bring myself back into a calm state;" they stay there. And the longer they stay in that "fight or flight" place, the more it becomes generalized to more things.

So, for me -- so if I were to put it into the perspective of a kid, not that they'd be driving, but taking my driving experience, I would be stressed the moment I saw a car, got in a car, buckled my seat belt. And I wouldn't be unstressed until I was away from a car, because that becomes generalized: Cars are stressful. So, for a kiddo walking into a classroom, they may have some generalized stress that comes from experiencing persistent risk factors, whether it be in the home, community, or within themselves and we'll talk more about that in a minute.

So, all of that not-so-good news about the impact of stress on kids, I need to balance out with hope. And I feel as if Emmy Werner is the person who helps do that for us. And Emmy Werner, for many of you who may be familiar with her, she is -- she's the mother of resiliency theory and did a lot of her research on the island of Kauai focusing on young children and infants, who were experiencing multiple risk factors and really followed them for many, many, many years. I want to say this was like a 50-year longitudinal study. And followed them. And what she was most interested in were those kids that didn't have that cycle, right, where, you know, it's a teen mom and then, you know, the child then becomes also a teen mom. Or an aggressive person who has a father who is incarcerated, grows up to be a person who also has a history of incarceration.

And so, she focused on the kids that were resilient through that. And what she found is that those kids that are able to not follow that negative path had a person, had a person in their life that helped them to become resilient, and that it was really about that relationship that they had with that person who was consistent, safe, and nurturing, and that that made all of the difference.

So, going back to thinking about the risk factors that we spoke about a little bit earlier -- and you listed quite a few of them -- the risk factors can be balanced out by protective factors. And there's within child or individual child risk factors, such as being born premature, having physical or cognitive disabilities, maybe even having a chronic illness like asthma.

There's also the family risk factors; you guys mentioned many of those: Low income, the education level of parents, abuse in the home, homelessness. And then, also there are the community risk factors that you also mentioned: Violence in the community, no access to health care, low performing schools. But thinking about balancing that out within the child -- and I love talking about the within child protective factors -- you could have a kiddo who's just born with a temperament that has them easygoing, right? They can make friends very quickly; they have a terrific sense of humor, and they're a natural leader. They can form play groups; they can lead a play activity; they can create new games.

And then the family protective factors. Again, this goes back to Emmy Werner's work. There's a dedicated family member who is a consistent caregiver. Or there's a male in the child's life, whether it's the biological father or not, but there's a strong male figure for that child, as an example. Or that you've got a large extended family. And I think the opposite of what somebody mentioned earlier is that you have a parent who's really actively engaged in the child's education. And then, finally, those community protective factors. Number one on my list is Head Start. I think that for our children Head Start really can be a place in the community that offers them comprehensive care that's nurturing, not just to them but to their families as well. But also, in the community there can be the tribal elders; there can be those community activities and events that really make the child and family feel like they're part of the greater community, that they have membership and that they belong.

So, there are strategies; there are things we can actually do, and these things help build back that brain; they help exercise the brain, so that the child can have those coping mechanisms they need to be able to bounce back from stress. And the first kind of bucket of strategies or skills kids need is to feel attached, to be able to, you know, in my words, with their peers be able to be a friend and make a friend. And to be able to do that with adults, too, right? So, it's not an easy thing to learn to be a friend and to keep a friend. It's not easy to learn how to enter play and to exit play. These are things that kids need to learn how to do. And as they're able to do that, attachment is built, and that is so critical for kids to have at this young, young age.

The next bucket of skills is around self-regulation. This gets back to that executive function skill set. That they're able to identify emotions in themselves and in others and to be able to manage those "big feelings" that they have in pro-social ways. is an emotion. How you react is a behavior. So, what behaviors can we exchange? Instead of hitting, what can we do instead? And that's a skill that teachers and parents and the other adults in the child's life can help them to learn. And then the final bucket is initiative. This where we want to build those leader skills within the child, that they're able to persist even when tasks are difficult. And even when they fail -- to try again. And that they're interested and able to lead activities. Make up a new game, like I said, a new song, a story -- that they're feeling like they can do it. I think that's so critical. Because this is about preparing kids to be successful in school, yes, but it's also about helping them be successful in life. And all of these skills help them now and forever.

So, here's a quick poll question for you guys. It's about asking do you have a specific curriculum that you use to teach and promote these skills of attachment, initiative, and self-regulation or self-control? And we've got a couple choices up there for you.

Susan: All right, we'll see what it says.

Vanessa: Oh, okay. So, we have -- using the DECA. Go ahead, Susan.

Susan: I'm sorry. So, the different types of curricula are Project ACHIEVE's Stop and Think Social Skills curriculum and also Checkpoint are the two that came up for us.

Vanessa: Oh, okay. Those are different from the ones yesterday, too. Interesting. But today, we've got responses around using the Devereux Early Childhood Assessment, and that's one that I'm very familiar with. And yesterday, we had more that used Second Step, and nobody, today. That's very interesting.



But thank you, for your responses. It certainly is -- I always love to see how the polls turn out. Okay, let's move us on.

So, we always like to leave you with resources, and I know I talk about these all the time, but that's because they're so great. And I want to frame this in thinking about promoting resilience. So, we talk about our in-service suites quite a bit, but I pulled out these, specifically, because these seemed to fit nicely into our conversation today. So, within Social and Emotional Support, the NCQTL in-services that fit nicely are Fostering Connections, Being Aware of Children's Needs, and Creating a Caring Community. That's all about attachment, which is just so beautiful. And then when I think about initiative, Giving Children Responsibilities and Following Children's Lead is another great example.

So, this combination right here would be great for attachment and initiative, and I've got another set of suites that would be really great around self-regulation or self-control or executive function, however you'd like to frame it. But, you know, kids having -- being able to problem solve in the moment, being able to move through transitions and know the schedule and routines of the day. These are all things that help kids around self-control. So, those are great resources, but here are some others. And these are on the NCQTL page under "Disabilities." You can click on that and you can get right to the Head Start Center for Inclusion. And we included the Head Start Center for Inclusion in a previous webinar, and we just feel like we wanted to touch on it again, because there are some resources here that are really helpful.

So, I'm just kind of taking you through how to get to the final site which looks like this. And it was originally designed to support kids with disabilities, but there are so many wonderful tools within this website that are great for all kids. And it's resources for teachers and staff, disabilities coordinators, supervisors, for families, family service providers; it's all there. And it's set up similarly to the way the NCQTL page is set up, because we do, on this page as well, have those 15-minute in-service videos, and a list of other resources, too, and I'll walk through those in a second. I pulled up this one in particular, because if you can see at the very top of the screen, it's about membership, which is all attachment, right? Being a friend, making a friend.

And so, again, the in-service suites, the video clips that demonstrate interactions in the classrooms. There are those "Print and Go" resources. People always don't want to re-create the wheel, so we've got stuff that's ready to go. And then, also even more things. And a lot of the more things, more helpful resources, are letters to parents, things you can put into newsletters. So, there's great content here, and it's worth taking a look.

And so here's a quick example of one of those Print and Go resources around membership or attachment. And it's the skill of asking a friend to play. Not all kids do that naturally. Some kids need some coaching, and some kids need visuals to remind them how to do it. So, this is one of those resources you can draw from and share with your teachers. The other quick link to show you on our page as well is the link to CSEFEL, or the Center on the Social and Emotional Foundation for Early Learning. Under "Disabilities," you can click on this link and it'll take you right to their page, which is wonderful. And there you see our pyramid that we just talked about earlier.

And for those that haven't been there before, or of those who have been there before, here's a reminder. They've got a little link to get to the presentation, and they've got videos for every level of the pyramid. And these are nice. They're fairly short. Good for staff, good for families. And it really does help to bring in the importance of relationships in a high-quality environment.

So, now we get to shift to thinking about adults. And every time I see this photo of the zebra, I think about myself. I feel like I'm losing my stripes. [laughs] So, we're going to shift now and talk about adults and the impact on adults. And you may know some of this already, but research says -- and we picked up this off the Internet, so, it must be true, right; I'm sure it will resonate -- that at least one-third of teachers suffer from extreme stress or burnout. The number of teachers taking stress leave has increased by 10 percent over the past four years, and there has been a 50 percent rise in stress-related absences altogether.

So, thinking about stress and the impact on our teachers, I mean, just stress alone, but thinking about absenteeism and the impact on the classrooms is another way to think about it, as well. So, I want to ask you, because you know your teachers; you know the staff you work with or the programs you're working with: What creates stress for your teachers? And select all that apply. And we always like to have that "other," because we don't always capture everything. But tell us what creates stress for your teachers. Oh, wow.

Susan: Interesting.

Vanessa: It is. It is.

Susan: Similar to yesterday's in some respects.

Vanessa: Yeah, I was just thinking the same thing. The top vote-getter, yesterday, was also working with children with challenging behaviors. And I -- I'm interested, too, in the "other," the "other" category. Do we have some write-ins for that as well?

Susan: Yeah, we do, actually. We've got stress in their own personal family lives. I think that's really true. And then, also non-funded federal mandates, parent demands, personal and professional boundaries.

Vanessa: Wow, yeah, that certainly adds to the list. And, oh, my goodness. Okay, thank you, everyone, for adding to that. And I'm hopeful that, in thinking about stress and thinking about the stress that children experience and how it manifests, that maybe framing for teachers why kids are acting why they're acting, maybe that will help. Anyway, I'm going to keep us going. So, there are other things that contribute to teacher stress, and you listed many of them, but I'm going to add a little bit to the list, too. And one of the things that contributes to stress is the lack of money or resources for things they want and wish they could do in their classrooms.

Another is not having enough time, you know, whether it be for planning time or just to get out of the room for 10 minutes to have a bathroom break. And then another could be -- and this was definitely mentioned -- you know, the constant changes in rules and regulations imposed by others. And in this time of Head Start with Designation Renewal and with CLASS and all these other things coming in; it just feels like there's constant change that, by and large, is really out of your control, out of the teacher's control. And so, as hard as it may be, you know, shifting our attention from what we can control -- no, from what we cannot control to what we can control, is an exercise that can help us deal with stress. And we'll chat a little bit more about that in a second.

There's other things, though, that relate to stress and teachers and that's the lack of moral support and recognition. You know, having those opportunities as a team, or even individually with their supervisor to celebrate when things are going well. And sometimes it can feel like it's been a long time since we've had something to celebrate, but there almost always is something amazing happening in the classrooms, something great that happened between a teacher and a parent, something great that's happened with the program and the community that really could be celebrated. And those celebrations really do make a difference. And I made it a point with my staff that I had many, many years ago to do -- to do celebrations every month, where we recognized one another. And it could've just been a short, quick one sentence about, you know, this child came to school 15 out of the 20 days he could've come to school today, and that is a record, and we are so excited. I mean, little celebrations even about attendance can make a difference.

The other is -- this may be hard for you guys to do; I struggle with this at times, too -- is the inability to say "no" and overcommitting to too many projects. And this is a place where ED managers really do have some control and can support their teachers.

So again, thinking about the places and times and reasons to celebrate and to recognize a job well done. And then also supporting teachers in being able to find ways to say no, to not over commit themselves, to really focus on the work at hand. And so, next I kind of want to focus on you guys, you all out there with us, today, to do a quick little stress test to see how you're feeling. And I'm going to do this with you. And the little link is in the question box. I'm going to go ahead and click on it myself. It's only six questions. It doesn't take long to complete.

So, yesterday I was moderate, and here's my thing. But it does give you some ideas about looking for some sources of stress that I can eliminate, or that there's some things that I'm putting into my day that I really don't need to do, for example. But I love, too, that it gives you some positives, like searching out some creative outlets, finding a place and a time to laugh; humor is always great. And there it is again, simplifying your life by saying no. All right, so for those that did the stress test: What was your level of stress? What did it turn out to be? And for those that didn't go offline or go onto the other website what do you suspect that your stress level is? Are you high, moderate, or low?

Susan: All right, closed poll. There are the results.

Vanessa: Wow, everybody's moderate. Yesterday was so different!

Susan: It is. Must be that Friday thing.

Vanessa: Yeah, very interesting. Yeah, yesterday, we had more of a mix of high and moderate. We saw nobody at low, but that's interesting. Maybe, it's the Friday effect or the three-day weekend effect. I'd like to think so. Thank you, everyone, for voting.

So, next I'd like for us to kind of put some of that stress into perspective. And for this piece, some of this may be a review, so, I'll go through this fairly quickly, but I want us to recognize that there are different levels of stress and that the first level is "positive stress." And by its name, it really is good for you. It's that temporary stress that happens. You know, mild elevations of your hormone levels related to stress, but you get through it.

My best example of that is going through your job interview that you went through for the job you have right now. You had to go through a certain amount of stress to get there, but it's because you practiced dealing with stress, in small ways leading up to that interview, that you didn't react to that stress by jumping out of your chair, running out of the room, and getting in your car and driving home. You knew you could get through it. And we all need positive stress in our life. The next level of stress is "tolerable."

And actually, we had an example of that this week. You know, sadly, there was the tornado in Oklahoma, in Moore, Oklahoma. And, you know, tolerable doesn't seem like the right descriptor, but it is tolerable stress. It is very, very serious. What happened there is horrific, but it's temporary, and it can be buffered by supportive relationships. And so, by the communities around Oklahoma, really the whole country, coming together to support that community, the stress can be buffered. And then you also have those families and friends who are reaching out individually with hugs and conversation and bringing them into their homes. That's going to help relieve some of that stress.

And then, the final stresses are some of those things you mentioned much earlier: Being in a place where the stress is prolonged; it's persistent; it's chronic stress. And there isn't a protective relationship there. So, I think about those kids and families that don't have someone to protect them from the abusive relationship, or that they're not sheltered from watching somebody who has a drug addiction. So, they're being exposed to all of it. There isn't that protection, that bubble to help them. And it impacts us directly, stress, as adults. It impacts us. We talked about kids, talk a little bit about adults, now.

You know, you feel it in your body, and you probably have felt this along the way in your job that you have today: Those headaches, those tension headaches, muscle pain, chest pain, fatigue, stomach upset. I've experienced everything on this list in different times in my life as a professional. It also impacts your mood. That feeling of anxiety, of restlessness, the inability to focus or to stay motivated.

You know, and then ultimately those feelings of irritability and anger all come out of stress. There's also the impact on how you actually behave. You know, the others can be really internal, but then now we're going to turn it outward to the world. You know, overeating or undereating, angry outbursts with other people turning to drugs or alcohol as a way to cope, and then tobacco use is something that they list as part of stress.

But there are strategies; there are things we can do to offset that. Much like the balance scale that we looked at earlier, you know, we have the stresses on one side, but we can balance it out with these strategies. And I know we've heard this one over and over and over again, you know, sleep well, eat well, exercise. But if you're stressed, you can't sleep. [laughs] You know? But these are the things that if we make a mindful effort to try to do, really does change us physically, and then changes how we react to stress within the day. And I talked a little bit, and I'll share really quickly, with you all today, here, too, that I had -- I did a walk and talk.

I'm not sure if anybody else has done this before. But I had a walk-and-talk meeting with a staff member of mine, back when I was a supervisor, and we had to have a really difficult conversation. And we were both very stressed about it. I didn't want to have the conversation; she didn't want to listen to me have the conversation, nor did she want to participate in the conversation and really didn't even want to be able to sit in the same room with me and have to look at me in the face. And so, my strategy was for us to walk and talk about it. We could move our bodies; we could get the blood flowing, we wouldn't have to look at each other; we could look straight ahead. A lot of that stress that we were feeling that's really pent up in your muscles starts to be eased. The longer we walked and the more we talked, the physical stress that we brought into the conversation was taken away by the walking. And I -- we had more than one meeting of walk and talks, and -- but I really do believe that if we didn't walk and talk, we wouldn't have been able to make the strides that we did. And we were able to come to a place where we really did have a collaborative relationship, and we were able to move forward and really impact the quality in the classroom. I was really able to work with this staff person who is actually still at the program that I left. So, it's a success story, but I think it all came from the walk and talks. It really could've been a place where she would've taken a different turn in her career.

So, another strategy -- enough about me -- is to try to reframe those negative thoughts. There are so many times when we can say, "I can't," "It won't happen," "This will never work," and there's actually brain science around this that, if we can reframe it in a positive way, there's an impact on our stress levels. So, instead of "We can't" and "We won't" or "It can never happen," to change it to, "This will be tough. But we can make it work" really does work. It might take multiple strategies, but it really does help with stress.

So, I've said this a couple of times. You know, it's okay to say "no" and to resist overcommitting. And I know that's easy to say and sometimes harder to do, especially, with certain people that we have to report to. And so, there are times when you feel like you have to say "yes." But my strategy is, and I use this myself, is if I have to, have to say yes, I offer a timeline that I can work with, right? "I know you need this; yes, I can, but I can get it to you by June 15th." Not tomorrow, not next Friday, June 15th.

So, here's another strategy for you: Humor. I love humor. And when Sher'ee and I are here together, we laugh quite a bit during our webinars; I kind of miss her right now. But humor is probably what keeps me motivated and engaged in the work that I do every day. I have a team of tribal liaisons that I laugh with constantly. Susan and Dawn, when I work with them, we're laughing through our planning; we're laughing during our debriefs. It relieves stress. It really, really does. I mean, just -- just think about the mood you're in when you have a good laugh and just how it makes you feel. It literally is releasing the good hormones into your brain and into your body. So, it's not just because it's nice to feel. It actually has a positive physical effect on you.

And I love this little -- the poster. I shared yesterday that my boss had this on his door, and I would ask him from time to time, "Is this for me, or is this for you?" And it depended on the day. [laughs] And another strategy here is to keep it into perspective. You know, about what we're worried about, what we're stressed about. And this worry chart kind of captures it. We worry about things that will never happen or that already happened. And really when it comes down to it, such a small percentage of things that we can really do something about, that we can really take our worry and put it into some sort of an action that will dissipate that worry. So, keeping it in perspective.

And then finally, I offer this strategy, something that we probably don't get to do very often, but it's taking some time for yourself, even if it's just 15 minutes, just 5 minutes during your day to just listen to yourself breathe, take some deep breaths, listen to your favorite music, do nothing for just a few minutes can make all the difference. So, a quick question for you. What are your strategies to overcome stress?

Susan: I was talking to somebody the other day, and they had things like tea, having their cup of tea, surrounding themselves by family and friends, going to church. Really a wide variety of things. Here are some others: Reading, walking at lunch, bringing those tennis shoes to work, absolutely. Playing with grandchildren. Reading a fun book together, or reading a fun book, caring for a pet -- oh, I feel that one. Gardening, exercising, going for a bike ride, lifting weights. A lot of very active things as well as things that are more quiet and reflective in nature. And speaking of which, watching nature, observing what's going on around you in nature. Wonderful list.

Vanessa: That is a nice list. I think I might borrow some of those things on the list. [laughs] Thank you, everyone, for sharing. I really will take some of those off the list and try them this weekend. So, to wrap up the adult section, here are just a couple of resources for you to check out if you're interested. The folks that create the DECA tool, the Devereux folks, actually have a whole section of their work that's devoted to promoting resilience in adults. And they do have a webinar that's coming up in just a couple of weeks on Monday, June 3rd. It's a free webinar.

As always, with these companies, they'll probably toss out a product or two that you can purchase, but it's free to be on this webinar, and you may get some good strategies from this webinar as well. And the next resource is this website. It's fantastic: [brainrules.net](http://brainrules.net). There is a book you can purchase. However, what I want to highlight is that this professor, Dr. Medina, he's from the University of Washington, and he has these brain rules for adults but also brain rules for babies and kids. And if you click on the links that I've circled, he has a whole sequence of short videos that really explain brain development and the impact of interaction on brain development in such an accessible way. It's great for families, great for staff. If you want to learn more, check it out. It's just -- it's wonderful. And he's really engaging and fun for a researcher. I actually was very entertained by him.



And then finally, we're on this last page, and we always end with a quote. And this is our quote for today, and I'm going to actually let you read it. And what I wanted to end with is telling you a little secret, but it's the same secret I told the folks yesterday. It's now 1:24, and you are booked on your calendars until 1:30, and so we've got a little bit of time here. And we mentioned having that 15 minutes -- well, you've got 6 minutes -- to just be with yourself in this moment with this quote, with your breathing, to just prepare yourself for the weekend. So, I will end by saying thank you so much for joining us today, on the edge of a weekend. Relax and enjoy your weekend. Thanks.