

KNOWLEDGE TO ACTION BRIEF

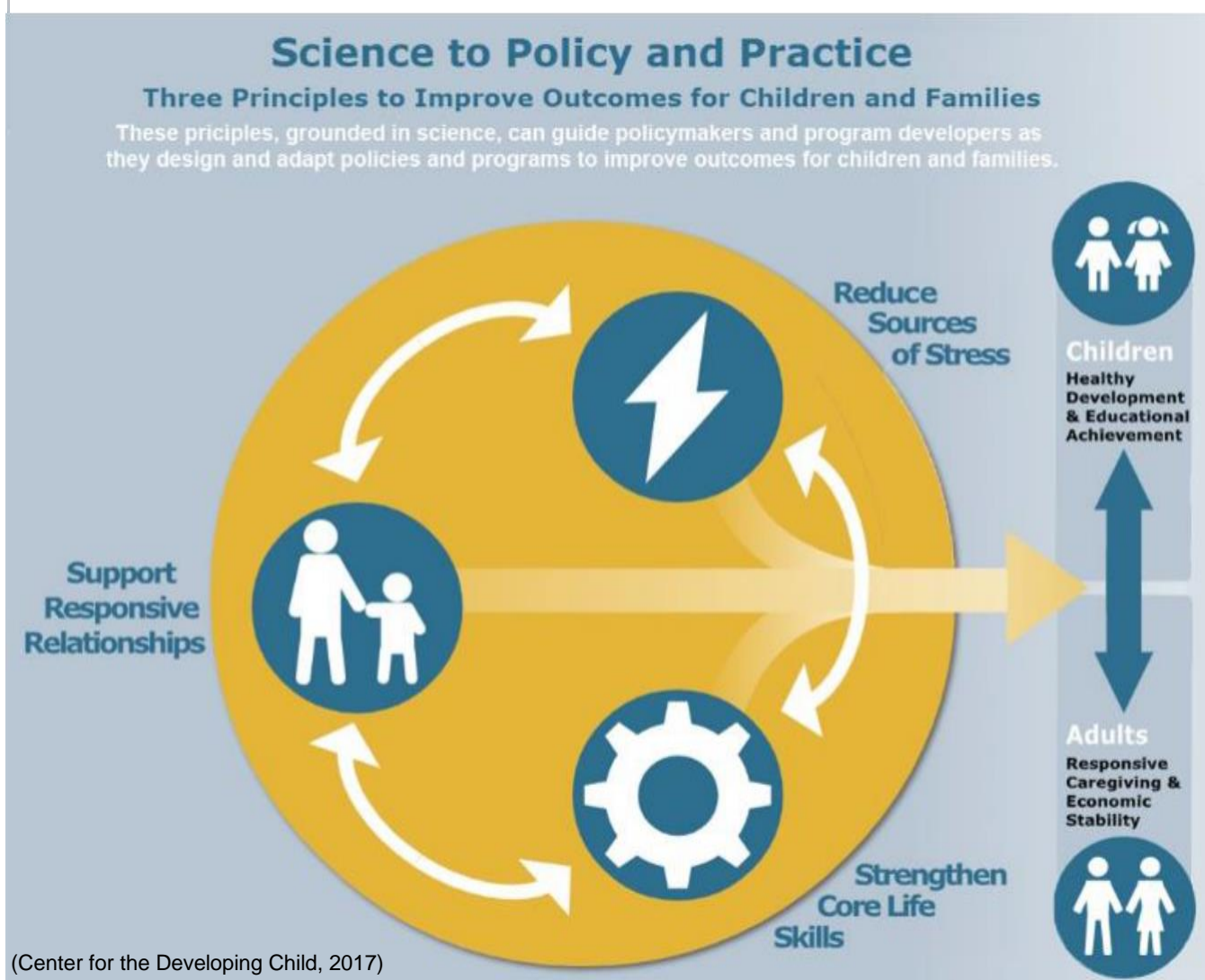
Parental Resilience: A Protective Factor

Most of the time the joys of being a parent outweigh the frustrations. When the challenges of parenting accumulate and become overwhelming, parental stress can occur. According to the Center for the Study of Social Policy (CSSP), even though all parents experience stress, by increasing parental resilience, parents can effectively manage stressful situations and help ensure positive outcomes for their family.

There are multiple types of stressors arising from:

- ▶ typical life events and changes (e.g. change of residence)
- ▶ unexpected events (e.g. sudden medical issues)
- ▶ individual factors (e.g. history of trauma)
- ▶ social factors (e.g. isolation)
- ▶ the environment, community or society (e.g. poverty)

Additionally, continuous experience of prolonged, frequent, and intense stress without the support to manage and overcome it may lead to toxic stress, which can manifest via symptoms of depression, anxiety, and other behavioral health disorders. The experience of toxic stress severely affects the parent-child relationship because the parents' ability to attend to their child's needs decreases (CSSP, n.d.).



Furthermore, parental burnout, a result of chronic parental stress, is strongly associated with a parent withdrawing from their child and even experiencing suicidal thoughts. It is at times also associated with neglectful and violent behavior towards their children, even when controlling for educational level, income, and addictions (Mikolajczak et al., 2018).

More important than the source of the stress is how parents respond to what is causing them stress. To build resiliency and create positive family outcomes, the Center for the Developing Child asserts that policies and practices need to incorporate three principles: reduce sources of stress, support crucial relationships and strengthen core life skills (Center for the Developing Child at Harvard University, 2017). Beyond focusing on the sources of stress, family strengthening professionals can instead help families by working with parents to build resiliency. Parents who are resilient can manage stressful situations despite experiencing challenges and trauma, and as a result, can better respond to their child's needs. In turn, the child builds a secure emotional attachment and develops their own resiliency (CSSP, n.d.). Thus, resilience supports a positive intergenerational cycle.

Take Action

It is integral that professionals in the family strengthening field provide support and assist parents in building resilience in order to create healthy outcomes for families.

- 1) Work with families to identify and build upon their strengths and address their needs.
- 2) Assist parents in creating and expanding connections with other parents, partner with community organizations to ensure families can access resources, or support parents by teaching them how to meet their own needs.
- 3) Learn how to support families in building parental resilience and strengthening other protective factors by participating in Strategies 2.0 trainings. Enroll at StrategiesCA.org.

Resources

2018 Prevention Resource Guide childwelfare.gov/pubPDFs/guide_2018.pdf

References

Center for the Developing Child at Harvard University. (2017). 3 Principles to Improve Outcomes for Children and Families. Retrieved from <http://developingchild.harvard.edu/resources/three-early-childhood-development-principles-improve-child-family-outcomes>

Center for the Study of Social Policy (CSSP). (n.d.). Parental Resilience. Retrieved from <http://cssp.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/ProtectiveFactorsActionSheets.pdf>

Mikolajczak, M., Brianda, M.E., Avalosse, H., & Roskam, I. (2018). Consequences of parental burnout: Its specific effect on child neglect and violence. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 80, 134-145.



Strategies 2.0

Strategies 2.0 is a multi-dimensional initiative to help professionals and organizations make a bigger impact.

We train, support, and link professionals and organizations together to more effectively support families as well as build power to advance equity and opportunity in our communities.

