



Foundations of Early Relational Health

**Early Childhood Funders Learning Circle
April 28, 2022**



**Early Relational
Health**
An initiative
of CSSP

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Center for the Study of Social Policy

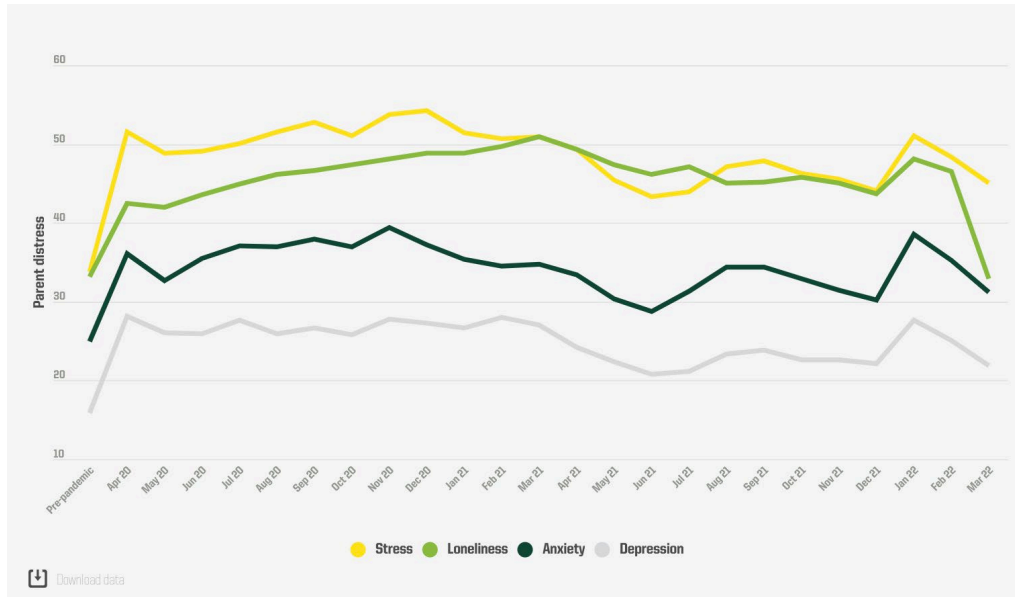


**Center for the
Study of
Social Policy**
Ideas into Action

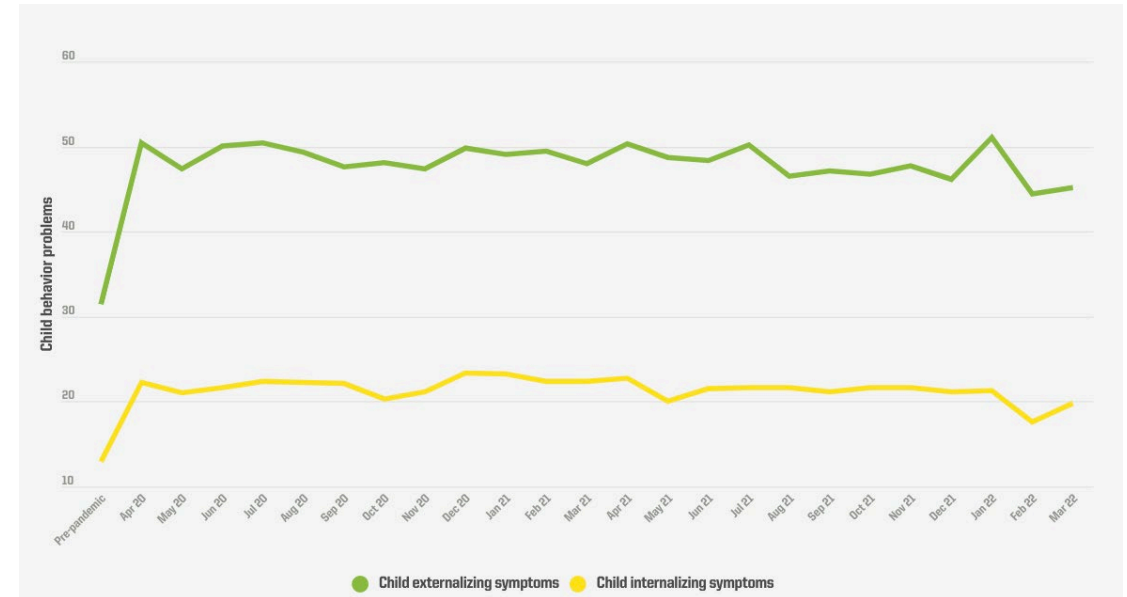


M | RAPID-EC PROJECT

An ongoing national survey of households with children ages 0–5



Parent Wellbeing Over Time

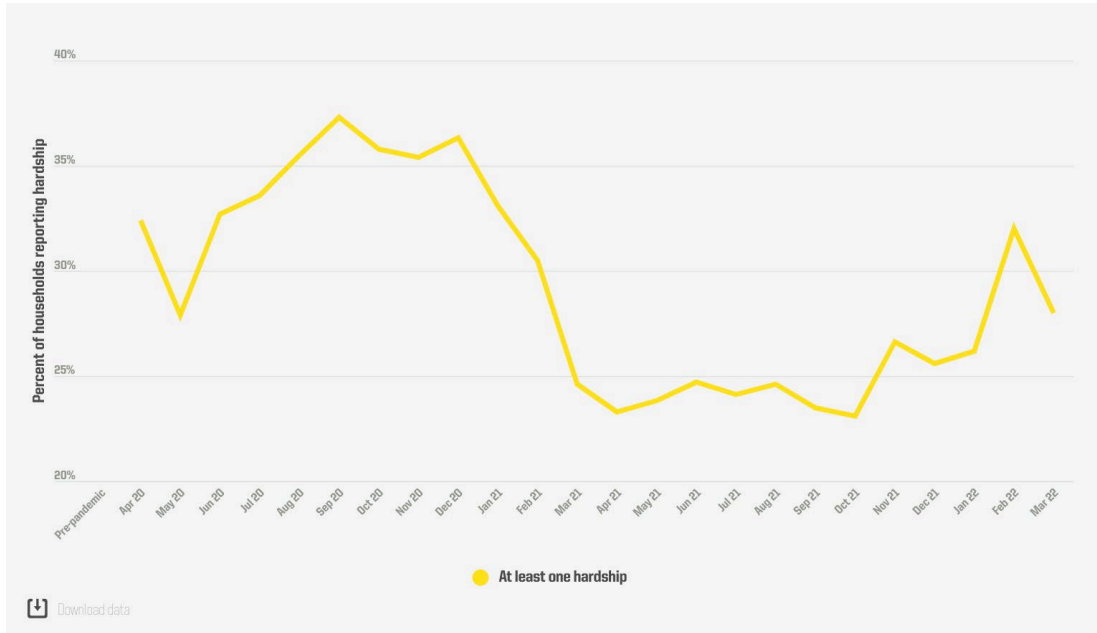


Child Well-Being Over Time

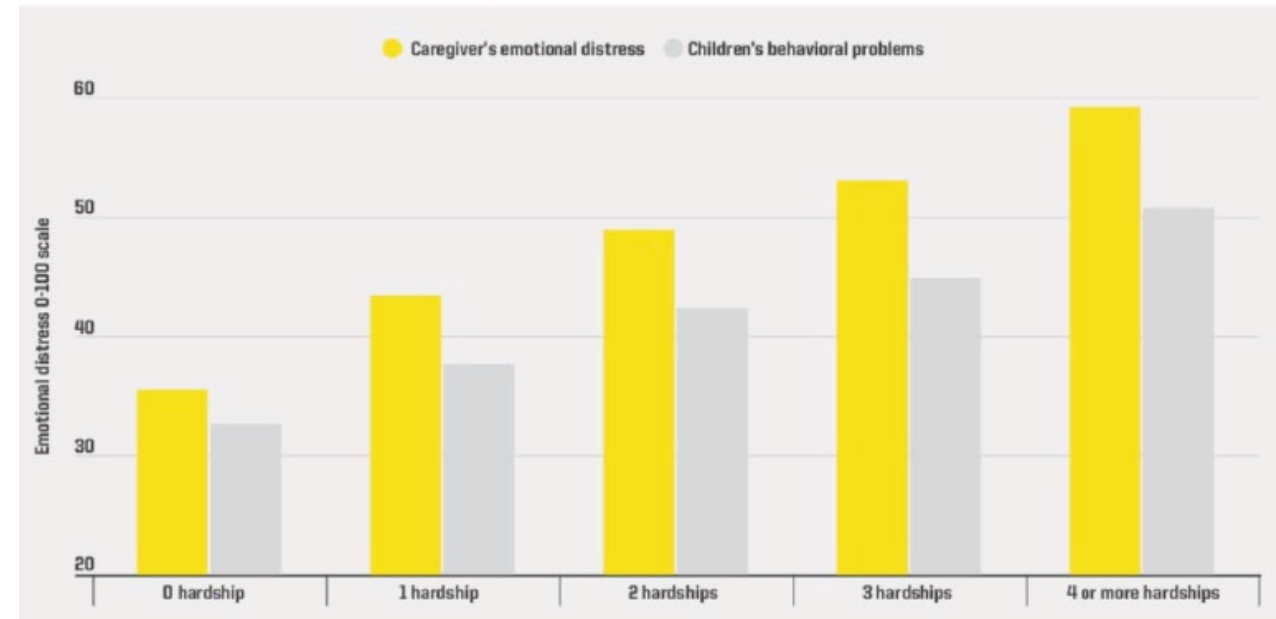


RAPID-EC PROJECT

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Material Hardship Over Time



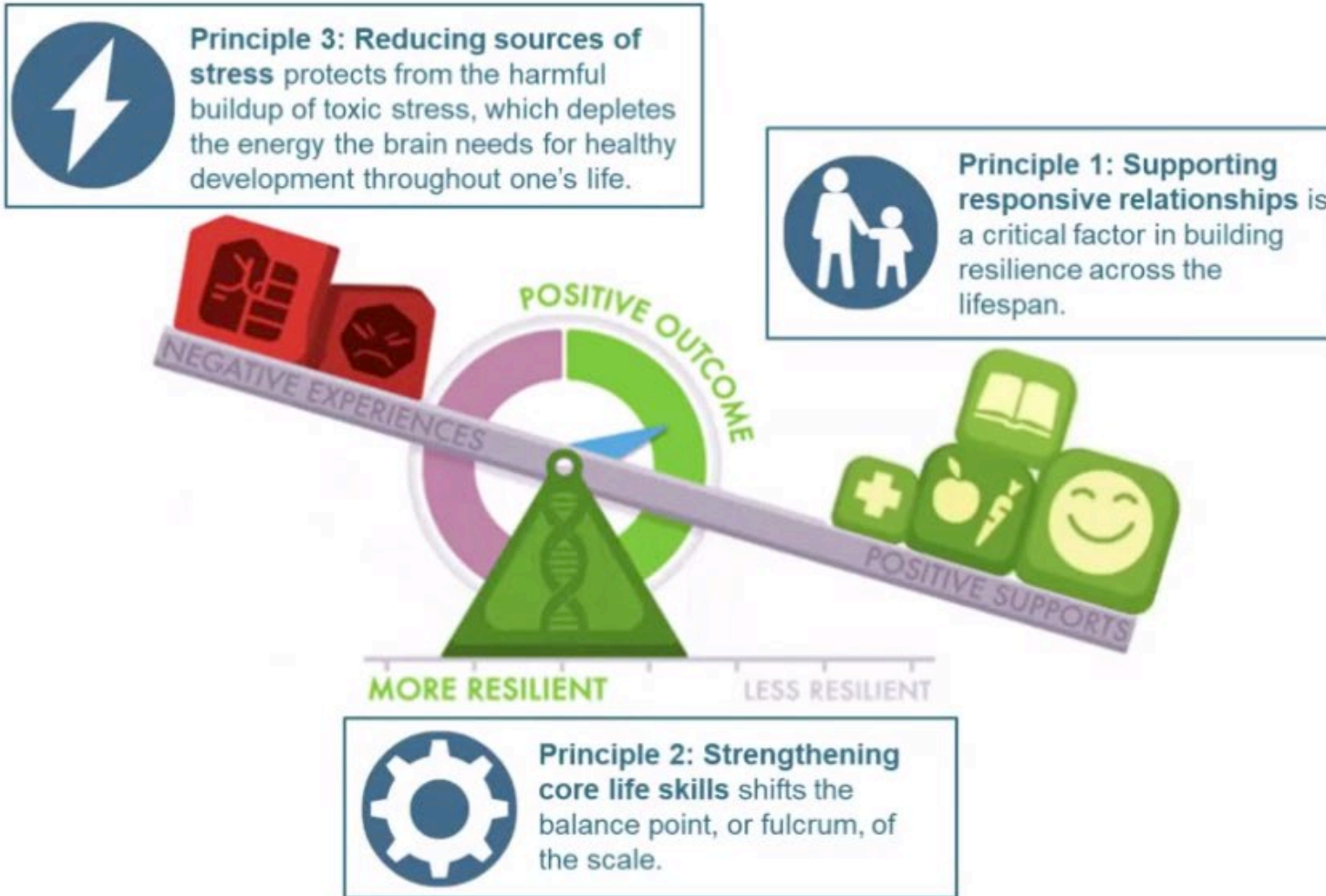
More Hardship = More Distress



The Core Story of Child Development

- Early experiences in life build “brain architecture”
- Genes and environments interact to shape the architecture of the brain
- Cognitive, emotional and social capacities are inextricably intertwined
- “Toxic stress” and adverse experiences derail healthy child development
- Brain plasticity and the ability to change behavior decrease over time
- Children develop in an **environment of relationships**

Mapping the Core Principles of Development onto the Resilience Scale





Early Relational Health

Not a new concept, but a new term

- ERH builds upon decades of research from the fields of:
 - Child development
 - Infant mental health
 - Neurodevelopment
- ERH focuses on the centrality of safe, stable and nurturing relationships (SSNR's) between caregivers and young children for future health, development and social-emotional wellbeing.





Early Relational Health

Foundational early relationships shape the well-being of both the child and the caregiver.

- The **two-way nature** of early relationships affects two-generational health and well-being in the moment and long term.
- When we focus on this foundation and support the contexts around these relationships, **children and their caregivers thrive**—now and into the future.





Vital Signs of Early Relational Health

Emotional Connection

Welch Emotional Connection Scale (WECS)
Nurturing Science Program at Columbia U.

- Attraction
- Vocal Communication
- Facial Expressiveness
- Sensitivity/Reciprocity





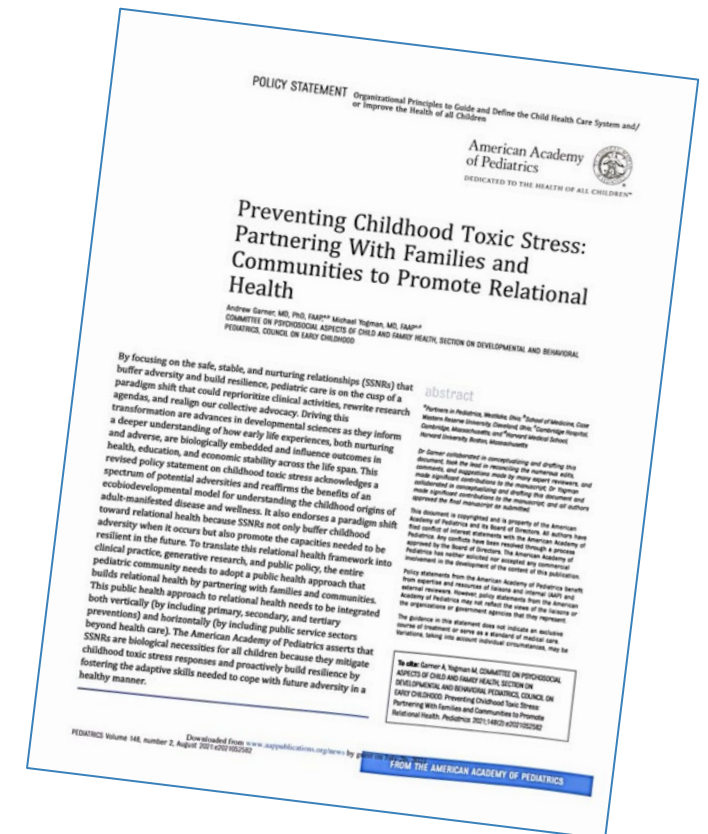
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2021 AAP Policy Statement:

Preventing Childhood Toxic Stress: Partnering with Families and Communities to Promote Relational Health

“By focusing on the safe, stable, and nurturing relationships (SSNRs) that buffer adversity and build resilience, pediatric care is on the cusp of a paradigm shift that could reprioritize clinical activities rewrite research agendas and realign our collective advocacy.”



Garner et al, *Pediatrics* 148 (2) Aug 2021.



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Early Relational Health in Action

● Promotion and Engagement

- Reach Out and Read (ROR): Next Chapter
- Promoting First Relationships in Pediatrics
Key Stones of Child Development

● High Performing Medical Home

- HealthySteps
- Project DULCE
- Collocated CHW, HV, BH

● ERH monitoring and measurements

- Early Relational Health Screen (ERHS) and video feedback
- Welch Emotional Connection Supports (WECS+)
- Early Relational Health-Conversations

● Positive parenting and relational programs

- Triple P Positive Parenting
- Circle of Security – Parenting
- Power-of-Two

● Relational Health Workforce

- Home Visiting
- Community health workers
- Doulas and perinatal supports

● Place-based and EC Community Initiatives

- Bridgeport, ECIN, Guilford, etc.
- EC-LINC communities
- PSP proof point communities
- PCI communities



The power of human connections

Even one human relationship can help us weather adversity and protect our youngest from harm

The power of human relationships comes from simple and ordinary interactions

We do not need to be perfect in every human interaction to be helpful

Winters, D., Li, J., Willis, D., Blog: 2020



A baby's future
starts now.



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CSSP's ERH Coordinating Hub

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Early Relational Health at CSSP

<https://cssp.org/our-work/project/advancing-early-relational-health/>

Perspective on Early Relational Health Series

<https://cssp.org/perspectives-on-erh-series/>

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