**Background & Objective**

We noticed a growing problem with devastating effects in our communities: TOXIC STRESS in Children!

Toxic Stress leads to an over-active stress response system, developmental delays, and greater risks of mental and physical illness - including early death! Research pointed out that Toxic Stress could be combated by increasing resiliency, but exactly how?

Could the everyday work of Early Childhood Professionals beat Toxic Stress? Could Parents maximize every day moments to build resiliency? Could we strengthen Children through what they do best: play?

About Joyful Together©:
- Therapeutic program that coaches parents/caregivers to play more with their children;
- Based on science that demonstrates that positive, loving experiences can lead to increased resiliency;
- Created for early childhood professionals to model to parents during already scheduled in-home or community-based appointments;
- Doesn’t require much: just parent and child, and some joy!

Research Objectives:
After 6 sessions of Joyful Together:

- Would Caregivers report lower stress scores?
- Would Children have improved protective factors (resiliency)?

**Methods**

Intervention Group:
- 6 weekly/biweekly in-home appointments
- Modeled 2-3 Joyful Together© activities
- Coached Parents/Caregivers to do as many activities daily (use Joy Calendar)

Materials:
- 100+ Joyful Together© Starter Activities
- Parent Stress Index Form (PSI-SF)
- Devereux Early Childhood Assessment (DECA: 1-18m, 18-36m, 3-5 Versions)
- Joyful Together© Joy Calendar (sticker chart)

**Randomized Control Trial**

*Help Me Grow, Early Childhood Mental Health and Childcare Center*

**Results**

Joyful Together© Lowered Parent Stress and Increased Childhood Total Protective Factors. Key results are highlighted below.

**Parent Stress**

- Intervention Group Parents: Lower Total Stress scores averaging in the “Typical” stress range. (Intervention Group n=17)
- Control Group Parents: Increased Total Stress scores averaging in the “High” stress range. (Control Group n=12)

**Relationships**

- Joyful Together© Activities decreased stress that impacts Parent-Child relationships.
- Touch activities significantly impacted social-emotional regulation scores in children.

**Childhood Resiliency**

**DECA- Total Protective Factors (TPF)**

**Intervention Group Improves Significantly**

- Intervention Group Children: Significantly higher Total Protective Factor scores, averaging in the “Typical” range. (Intervention Group n=8)
- Control Group Children: Scores remained in the “Needs Attention” range. (Control Group n=9)

**Select References**


**More Joyful Together© Research:**

- Impact on the Stress Response System by measuring pre & post Cortisol (stress hormone) levels.
- Impact on Families using Joyful Together©.
- For More Information or Materials: research@ohioguidestone.org

Lower Parent Stress, Improves Relationships, & Increases Childhood Resiliency! Early Childhood Professionals and Parents/Caregivers can make lifelong positive impact!