



Center on the Developing Child  
HARVARD UNIVERSITY

# How Early Experience Shapes Development

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*@HarvardCenter*

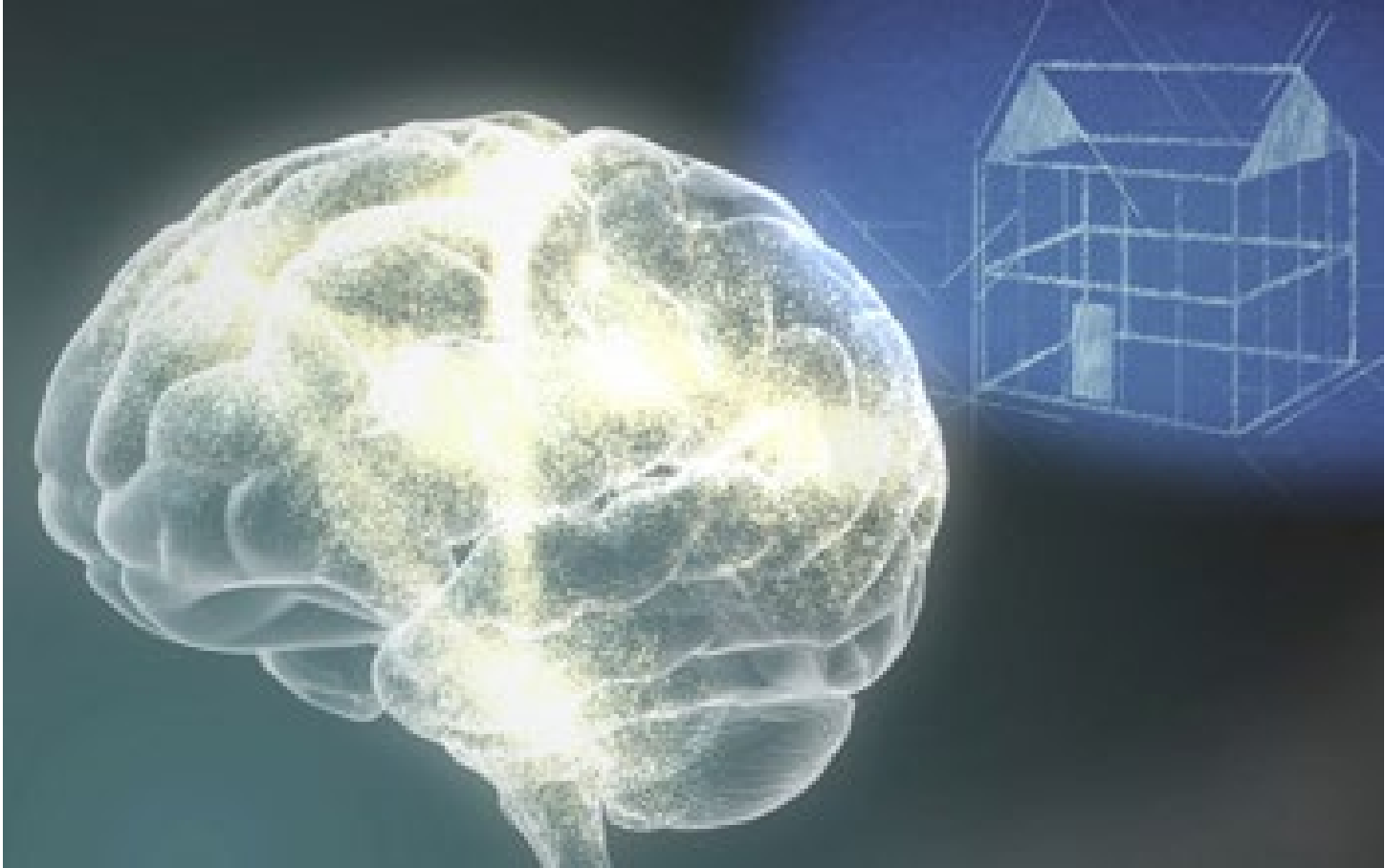
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# A Quick Poll

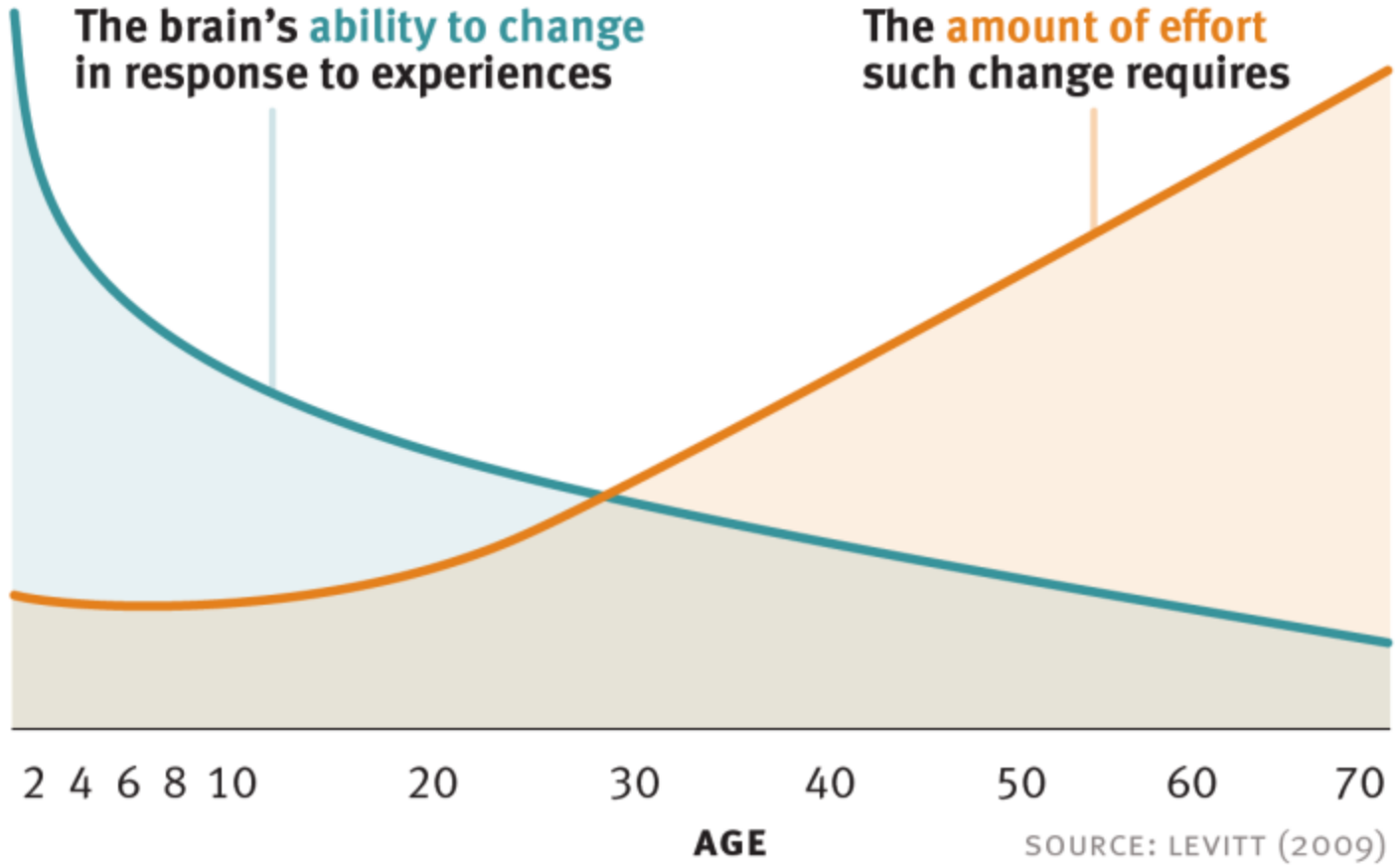
How familiar are you with the science of early childhood development?

(not at all familiar, somewhat familiar or very familiar)

# Experiences Build Brain Architecture



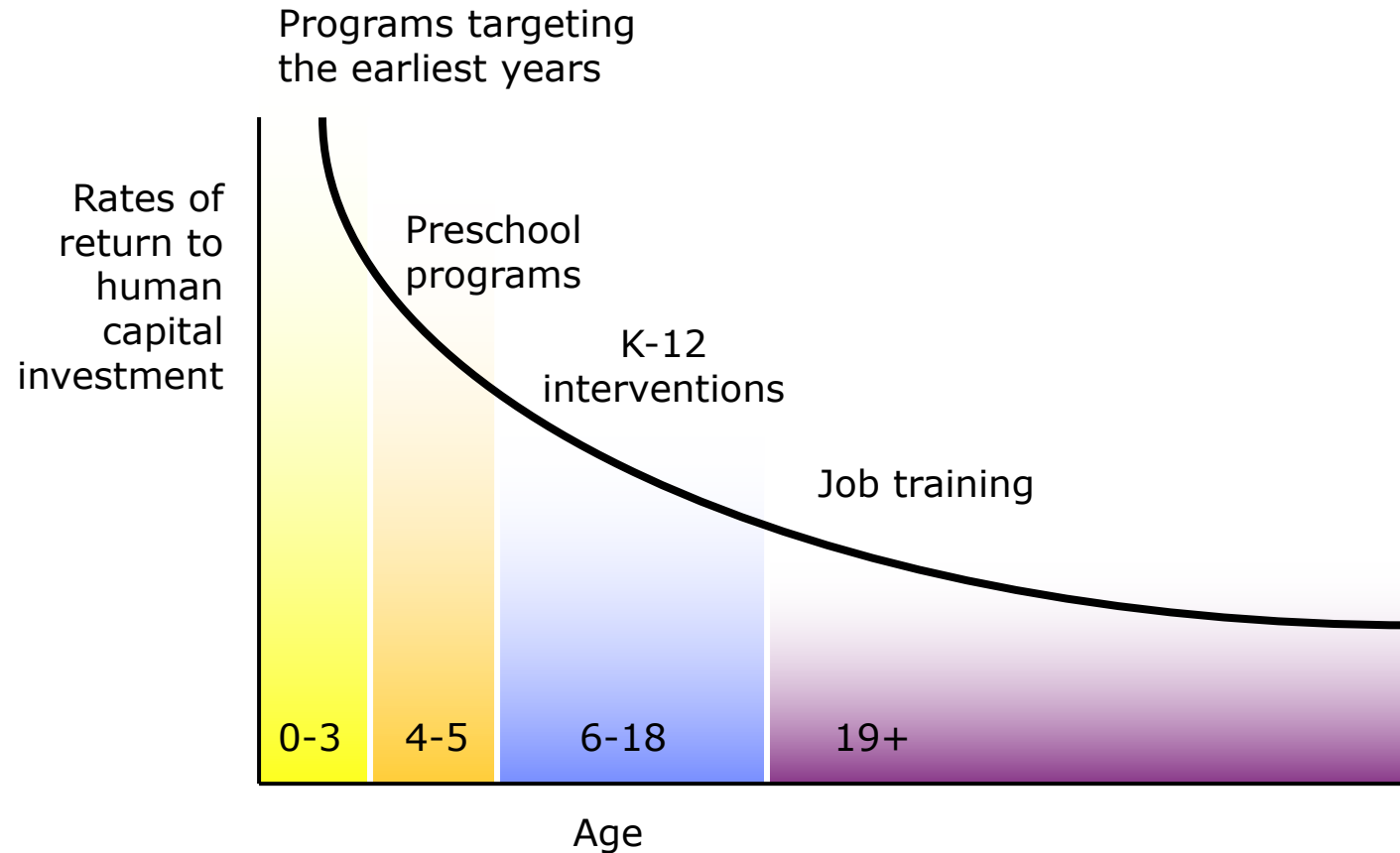
# Brain Plasticity is Greatest in the Early Years



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# Preventive vs. Remediation



Source: Heckman (2007)

## Pair and Share

How is the fact that early experience shapes brain architecture relevant to the topic you're focused on in the fellowship?

# Children Develop in an Environment of Relationships

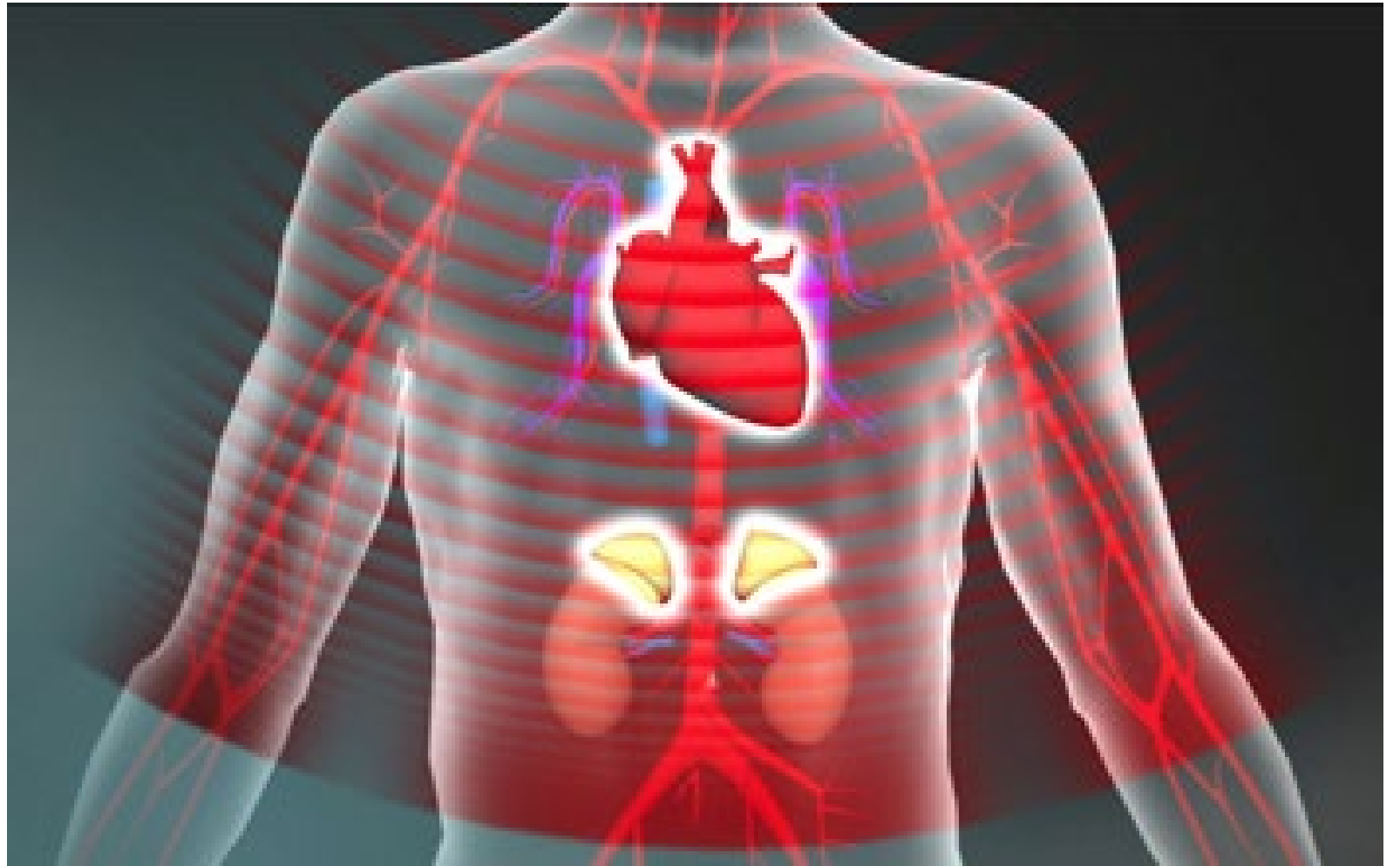


## **Pair and Share**

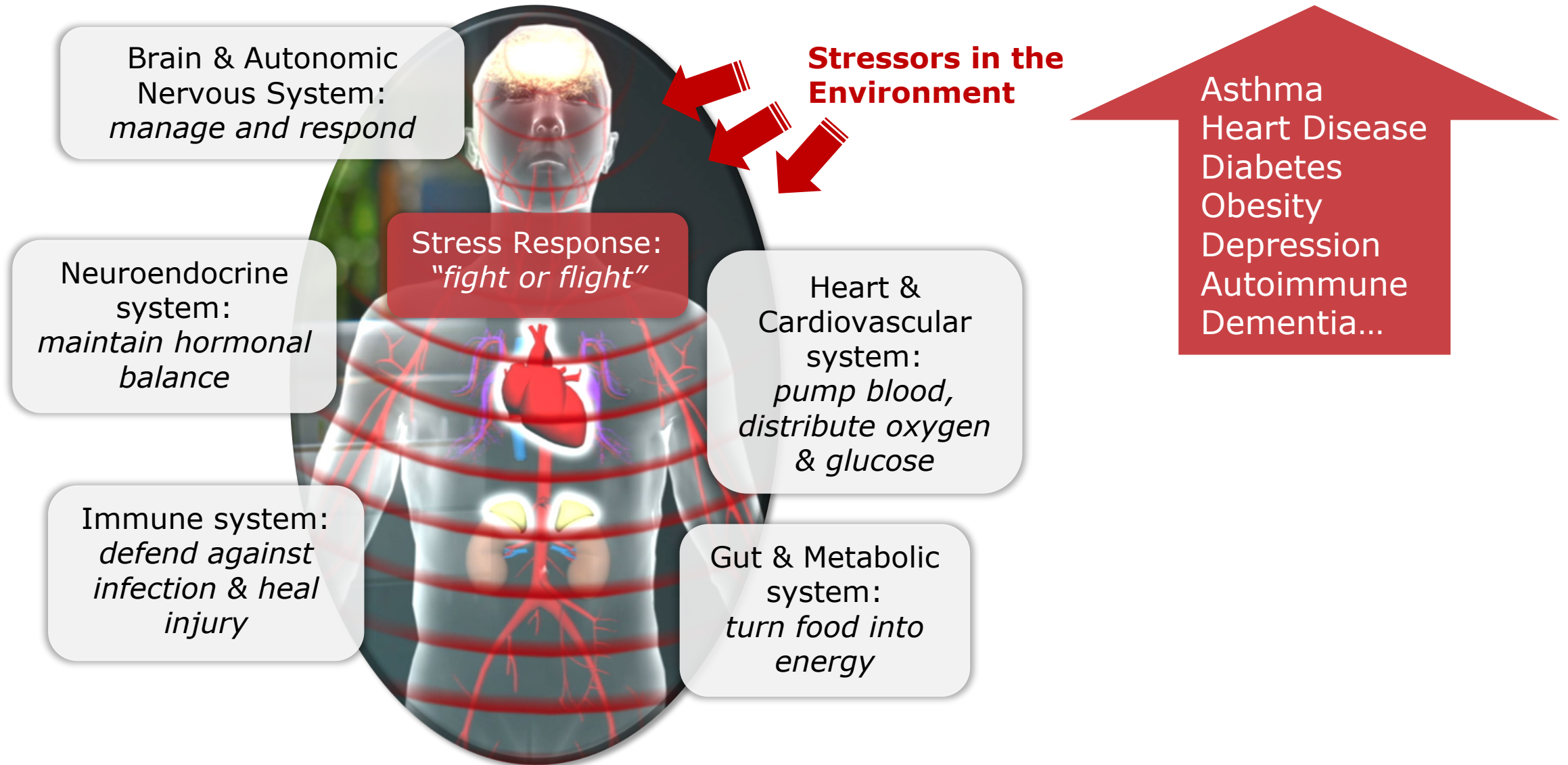
What opportunities are there to support the quality of relationships in the context of the issue you're focused on in the fellowship?



# Toxic Stress Can Derail Healthy Development



# The Brain is Connected to All other Systems in the Body



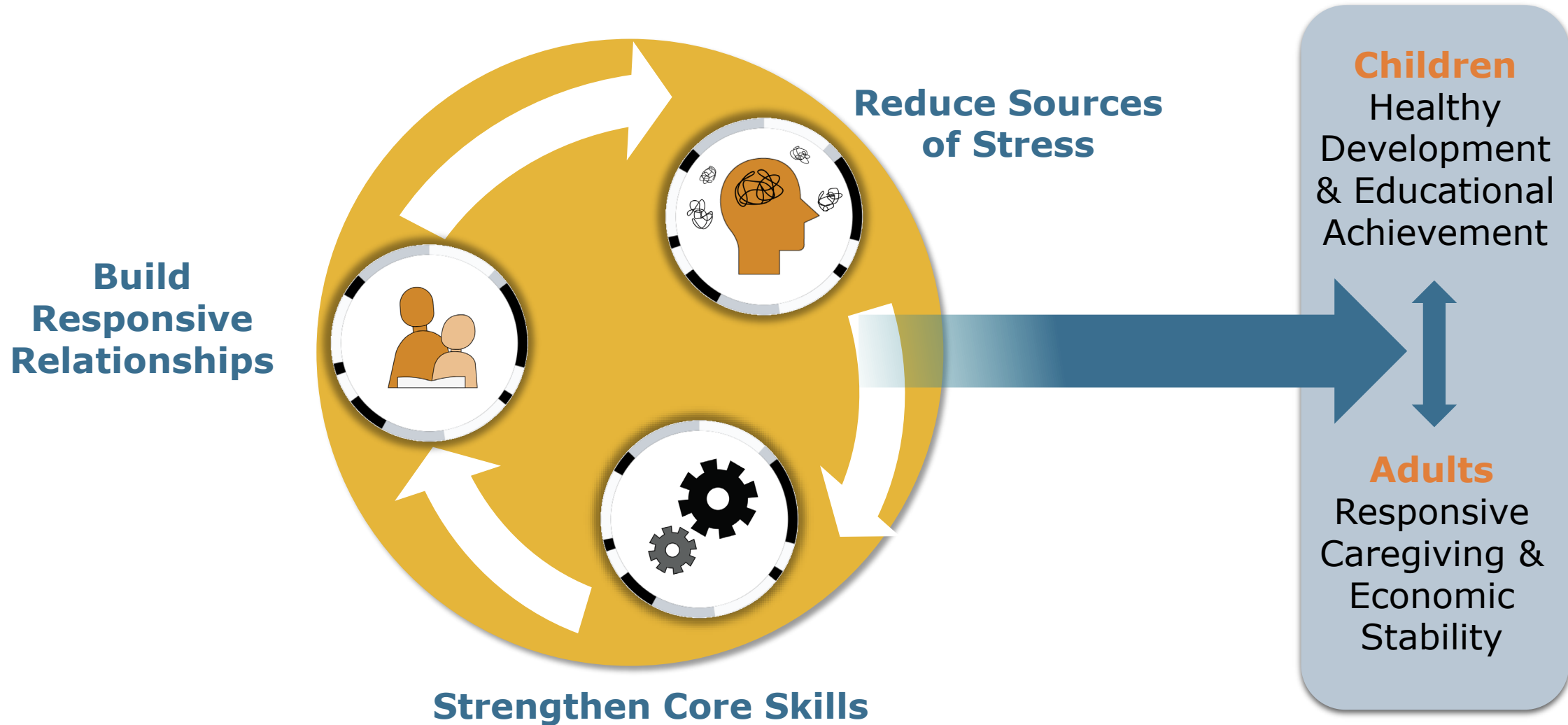
# The Effects of Toxic Stress



## Pair and Share

What are the common sources of stress in the community you serve? How do those stressors affect young children, youth, young adults and families?

# 3 Science-Informed Design Principles Can Improve the Impacts of Policies and Services on Children & Families



# Support Responsive Relationships



- Early experience builds brain architecture and lifelong health
- Serve & Return interaction is key
- Provides a double benefit—promoting development and buffering stress

# Strengthen Core Life Skills



- The essential skills we all need to manage life, work and relationships successfully
- Include executive functioning and self-regulation
- Develop over time with coaching and practice

# How Children and Adults Can Build Core Capabilities for Life



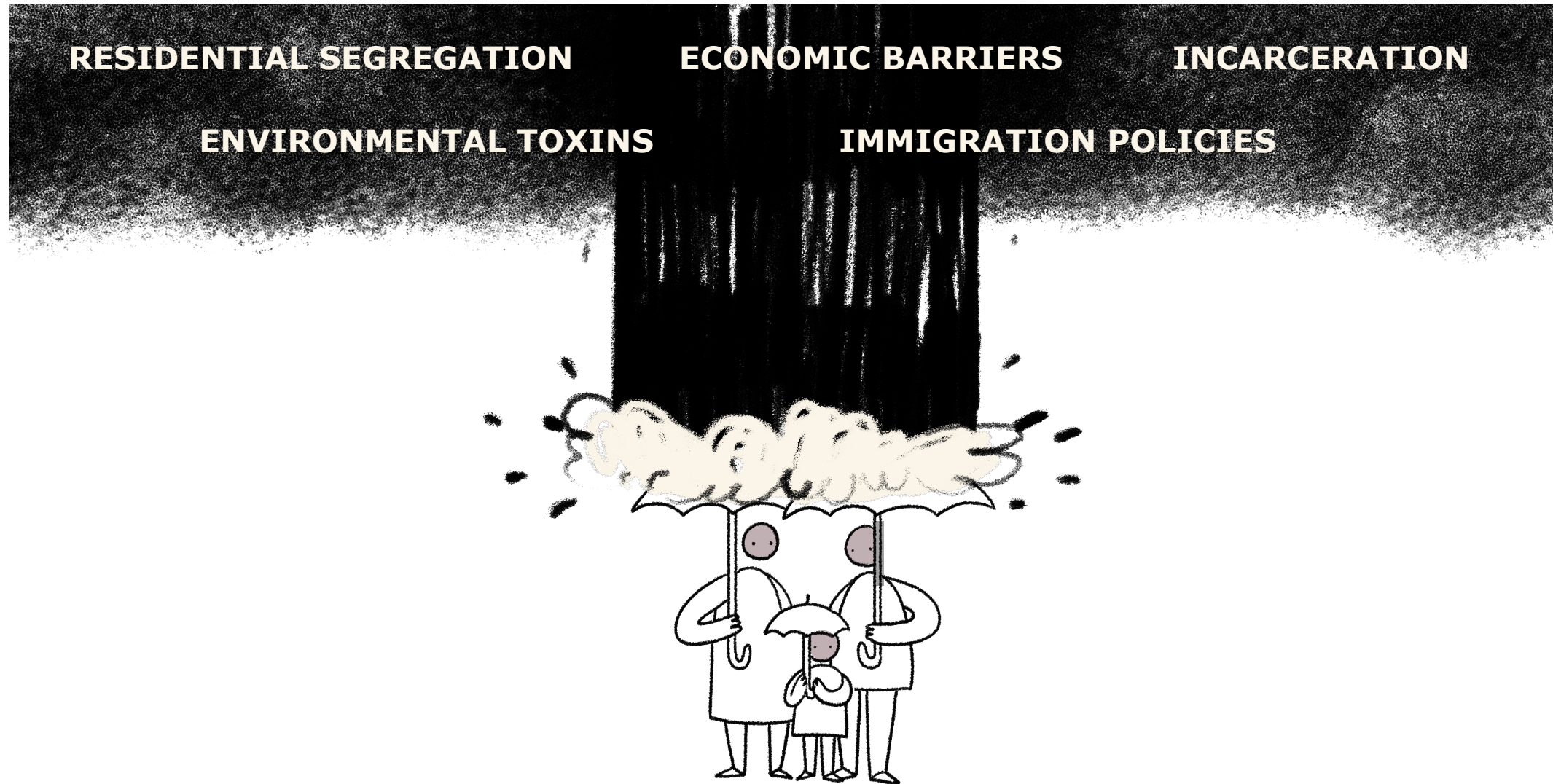


# Reduce Sources of Stress



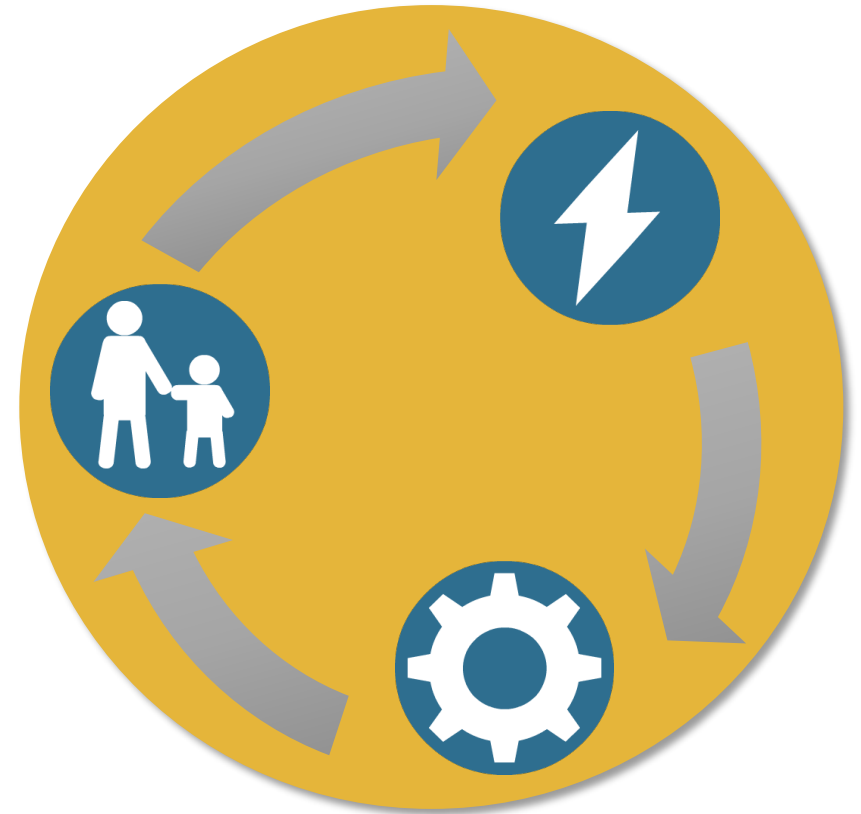
- Not all stress is bad but unrelenting, severe stress can be toxic
- Reducing toxic stress protects children directly by decreasing activation of the stress response system
- And indirectly because the adults they depend on are better able to support them

# Systems and Structures that Impose Disproportionate Burdens on Families of Color



# Guiding Questions

- 1) What are policies, systems and practices doing to address each principle?
- 2) What could be done to address them better?
- 3) What barriers prevent addressing them more effectively?





The collage features three distinct content elements:

- Working Paper Cover:** Titled "Connecting the Brain to the Rest of the Body: Early Childhood Development and Lifelong Health Are Deeply Intertwined" (Working Paper 15). It includes the Harvard University logo and the text "Center on the Developing Child HARVARD UNIVERSITY".
- Video Player:** Displays a video titled "HOW RACE AFFECTS CHILDREN'S HEALTH". The text on the video reads: "Years of scientific study have shown us that, when children's stress response systems remain activated at high levels for long periods, it can have a significant wear-and-tear effect on their developing brains and other biological systems. This can have lifelong effects on learning, behavior, and both physical and mental health.<sup>1</sup>" The video player shows a progress bar at 0:24 / 0:24.
- Website Banner:** A call to action banner for "Re-Envisioning Early Childhood Policy and Practice in a World of Striking Inequality and Uncertainty". It features a photo of a man holding a baby and includes the text: "The early childhood field is at a critical inflection point in a changing world. The opportunity to align new science and the lived experiences of families and decision makers across a diversity of sectors, cultures, and political values offers a powerful pathway forward. The need for shared leadership along that path is urgent." A button labeled "Read the Call to Action" is visible.

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