



2. Children's basic needs: How do we create resilience in children, so they can thrive and sustain positive development?

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Abstract What are children's basic needs and how can we create a resilient environment? In this chapter the factors that are needed to create a safe and positive, healthy development for children will be presented. Some of these basic factors will be described in more detail, especially in connection to attachment and healthy neuropsychological development. The chapter emphasizes children's rights and safety, as essential for children's development. The importance of providing safety through attachment and teacher relations is highlighted.

Keywords children | resilience | attachment | child rights

CHILDREN'S SITUATION IN THE WORLD AND CONTEXTUAL CHALLENGES – HOW TO CREATE A HEALTHY UPBRINGING

Children grow up in various countries that differ in wealth, economy, physical and mental health offers and education. There are differences between rich and poor countries, and the world experiences various challenges, such as child poverty, pollution, and problems with unemployment and lack of schooling. Recently UNICEF published a report on the mental health of children around the world, *The State of the World's Children 2021*, where the mental health of children, adolescents and their caregivers are studied (UNICEF, 2021). In the report the risks and protective factors children may experience through their life course are discussed and the social determinants that impact mental health and well-being are examined. The report highlights a systemic world view and asks countries to commit and communicate, especially on the behalf of vulnerable children, but also for the mental health of all children (UNICEF, 2021). The COVID-19

pandemic has also created mental health challenges, but according to the UNICEF report there has long been worldwide ignorance about children's mental health and they call for action around the world (UNICEF, 2021). Many children live in environments where they have little freedom and few rights. The Convention on the Rights of the Child was created to set out the rights of children (1924), and the United Nations General Assembly embraced the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of the Child (1948, 1959). The rights focus on the entire child as an independent individual with free will, as an active-thinking individual with many rights. To provide a healthy upbringing and quality of life for children's lives, their rights need to be respected and protected by caretakers and society. Without rights, children are at risk of exploitation, violence and health risks. The focus in this chapter will be to reflect upon children's basic needs. First the concept of mental health will be presented, and the focus will be on what children need to become resilient and to develop positively and thrive in their communities.

METHOD

This chapter combines information from developmental psychology and social psychology, surveys and research studies regarding child development. The information in this chapter is based on searching for literature in the databases in Oria, such as Academic Search Ultimate, ERIC and Web of Science, and within literature bases at research institutions, such as the Center of the Developing Child (CDC) at Harvard University. The Center of the Developing Child at Harvard University creates briefs, which sum up evidence-based research to order to provide help for children and families. In this chapter some major findings from the CDC will be presented, since the center emphasizes how to provide research and better conditions for children with a focus on global health to support children's development and safety. As authors we are aware that future research needs to incorporate the perspectives of all nationalities included in studies, and the research needs to be culturally sensitive and respectful to the nations, with the noble goal of creating the best possible child development conditions. WEIRD, an acronym that stands for Western, Educated, Industrialized, Rich, and Democratic, was introduced as a concept by Henrich et al. (2010) to describe how research based on a small selection of minority world societies may not be suitable for all countries in the world. There are "no *priori* grounds for claiming that a particular behavioural phenomenon is universal based on sampling from a single subpopulation", according to Henrich et al. (2010), so we need to continue to collect data and do more research. In this chapter we realize

that there are many varied ways of bringing up children, and we are aware that there may be some cultural bias in the research, also including child research. However, here we are trying to present the theories and a framework that may be helpful for child development in various cultures.

As authors, we both are practitioners who are theoretically oriented and influenced by our previous experience working with and meeting children and families from various backgrounds and nationalities. We seek to encourage researchers, professionals and caretakers to focus on children's basic needs and their human rights, both in child research and in practical work to support the best possible child development. The chapter findings demonstrate that children's rights need to be prioritized as a part of children's basic needs, in combination with safety, which is central for neurological and social development and learning, and to create resilience these factors need to be addressed and prioritized on a community level.

THE IMPORTANCE OF GOOD MENTAL HEALTH AND LIFE MANAGEMENT

The UNICEF report reflects upon what the term mental health means for children and families. It means that everyone needs to get some basic needs covered, such as food, nutrition, and housing, and to keep a balance with family and work. It points out that there are some challenges when it comes to the concept of mental health, because mental health is in many parts of the world still being perceived as a problem in the form of only a biological or medical problem. However, the World Health Organization (WHO) has a wider concept of health and defines mental health as:

“A state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.”

This is a wide definition that involves both physical and mental health (WHO, 2004). In the UNICEF report they identify seven points for ensuring positive mental health in children and families:

- 1 As a positive, mental health has been described as “a dynamic state of internal equilibrium” that involves the capacity to apply essential social, emotional and cognitive skills to navigate effectively through life and the world.
- 2 Other definitions link positive mental health with the ability to “enjoy life and deal with the challenges we face.”

- 3 In general, most definitions touch on emotional, cognitive, functional, social, physical and spiritual capacities.
- 4 Often, mental health is linked to well-being – a broad concept that can involve health, economics, nutrition and psychology.
- 5 In *Worlds of Influence: Understanding what shapes child well-being in rich countries*, the UNICEF Office of Research – Innocenti pinpointed three categories involved in well-being: good mental well-being, good physical health and skills for life.
- 6 For children and young people, mental health and well-being is linked to parents and caregivers who are intimately involved in shaping their lives. A recent framework developed for adolescents in particular identified five domains of well-being: good health with optimum nutrition; connected, positive values and contributing to society; safe and supportive environments; learning, competence, skills, education and employability; agency and resilience.
- 7 In many ways, all these frameworks come together to describe positive mental health and well-being. In a general sense, however, mental health and well-being can be understood in three categories.

(UNICEF, 2021, p. 30)

These seven points cover various aspects of health that are of great importance for ensuring children's positive development. Lately the term "life management" has become more popular in relation to mental health. The argument goes like this: To manage one's life a person has to manage thoughts, emotions and various situations in a balanced way to develop and maintain optimal health, and this also requires a certain self-regulation and co-regulation in social relationships (Øverland, 2021). Childhood health and lifelong health are deeply intertwined, and the body and the brain are connected, according to the Center of the Developing Child at Harvard University (CDC, 2022). This means that we have to take care of the environment and create good living conditions. How we live and what is going on in the world affect the developing brain and many other physiological systems, according to the CDC (2022). It means that the policies we make as adults influence children's upbringing, and the way we behave and care for our children influences the world's health and conditions. However, both the world conditions and the rapid early development of children require that we are there for the young children at the right time. Timing is important, because brain development happens fast in the first three years and children need stimulation at the right time (CDC, 2007b, 2007c).

FOCUS ON CHILDREN'S HUMAN RIGHTS AND SUSTAINABLE LIFE CONDITIONS

Throughout the world there are various challenges related to climate, nutrition, health, war, poverty and schooling (UNICEF, 2021). The United Nations General Assembly accepted the Declaration of the Rights of the Child, and it was the first major international consensus concerning fundamental principles of children's rights (UNICEF, 1959). This declaration, which has been signed by many countries around the world, views children as vulnerable and in need of special protection and rights. Although the declaration has been signed by many countries, we know that there are others that have not signed or that breach human rights. There are also challenges in many countries that have signed. Unfortunately, there are still children in the world who are exploited by adults and there are governmental systems that may ignore children's rights (United Nations, 2020). Children fundamentally have rights, and children and adults ought to be aware of these rights and put them into action. There is also a need for political systems which support and work to sustain children's human rights. From a human rights perspective children have the right to be seen and heard. It is important that children get to express themselves and be included in decisions that can have an impact on them and their families – also in the school setting (Kolnes, Midhassel & Øverland, 2021). To be able to help children and create resilience, the children need support from adults, who see them as human beings with individual needs and rights.

ATTACHMENT AND DEVELOPMENT

When children are born, the most important persons in their upbringing are their parents or their caregivers. Babies who have loving parents and family members will most likely develop close and warm relational bonds and feel safe and secure in their families. Such emotional bonds are called attachment and were identified and researched by Bowlby, Ainsworth and Crittenden (cited in Øverland, 2013; Bowlby, 1958; Ainsworth & Bowlby, 1991; Crittenden & Ainsworth, 1989). In order to develop such emotional bonds, the baby has to have responsive and sensitive caregivers. By providing a secure environment for the baby, the caregivers give the baby an opportunity to explore the world and develop physically, emotionally and cognitively. That way the baby can develop inner mental schemas that are the basis for self-regulation and for later attachment patterns. Attachment patterns are the ways that the baby or child tends to react in challenging situations. The attachment patterns evolve based on everyday experiences with the caregivers and in combination with genes (Bowlby, 1958, 1982). Four

basic attachment patterns have been identified (Ainsworth, 1967; Ainsworth & Bowlby, 1991; Bowlby, 1982):

- 1) *Secure attachment pattern*: children have experienced secure and safe parents. Children in this category tend to feel safe and are able to explore and develop into secure and well-functioning children and adults.
- 2) *Insecure attachment pattern*: children most likely have experienced parents who are insecure or withdrawn themselves, and the children who develop this pattern seem to be more withdrawn and insecure, especially in challenging situations, and are at risk for developing some mental health problems, such as shyness, anxiety and depression.
- 3) *Ambivalent attachment pattern*: children may experience mixed emotional reactions from their caregivers, such as parents who may be sending concrete messages one day, but may be more “laissez-faire” or may ignore the child the following day. The children who react to an insecure attachment pattern may show mixed emotions and tend to show an insecure way of reacting to other people and challenges.
- 4) *Reactive attachment pattern*: children have severe difficulties with relational bonds with others and do not trust others, because they have experienced a lack of responsiveness and sensitivity from their caregivers. Many of the children who have a reactive attachment pattern have experienced physical and emotional abuse from their caregivers. The children tend to show poor emotional regulation, their behaviour may also be very challenging, and many are struggling in their relations with others. Some of them may end up with behavioural problems and severe relational problems.

It is important to provide a safe and loving environment, and it is equally crucial that a whole health approach is adopted for children so as to ensure the optimal development conditions for children. Some years ago, there was a lack of research about the youngest children and the safety bond between mother and child and the family. Due to years of research and practice, there is now a knowledge base about how attachment develops and how it is related to biological brain development (CDC, 2007a, 2022). There are also many parent advisory services which offer parents and caregivers support in providing good attachment development. One of the programmes that are based on the literature about attachment is the Circle of Security, as it involves assessable visual tools and practice guidance through books, films and brochures – and these are offered by trained counsellors or therapists (Hoffman et al., 2017). This shows that it is important to provide safe

environments and advice for parents, because it can prevent further problems in development and teach them new skills for raising their children.

BRAIN DEVELOPMENT AND STRESS IN CHILDREN REQUIRES A “SERVE AND RETURN” RELATIONSHIP

The first five years of development are very sensitive for young children. The architecture of the brain is built before birth and continues to develop, and therefore the brain and the child are very sensitive to the environmental factors in the child's surroundings (CDC, 2005/2014, 2017, 2022). This means that the child's early experiences are very important for positive development. In the first years after birth neurological developments require interaction with the environment. Experience with deprived children in Romania demonstrates that children who were not stimulated in the right way as infants had impairments in sight, hearing and motor skill development (Glasper, 2020). In order to develop neural connections that are robust and not fragile, children need the right stimulation. In the first developmental period there are millions of nerve cells that are developing and forming circuits, but later there is a pruning period that makes the cells more efficient, and here the sensory pathways for vision, hearing, language skills and cognitive functions need to be stimulated (CDC, 2007a). Later the more complex brain circuits will build on the previous and more simple circuits that were formed through the earliest experiences (CDC, 2022).

But what created the developing brain? The brain and the child are influenced by relationships, and it is the interactive relationship between genes and experience that creates the developing brain, according to researchers from Harvard (CDC, 2004b, 2022). Scientists have documented that there has to be a serve and return function in a relationship, in order to get the development going. A serve and return relationship mean that the communication goes back and forth between the young child and the parents/caregivers (CDC, 2017). If the mother smiles and make cosy sounds to the baby, the baby will eventually return the smile or the sounds; if a father waves to his one-year-old child, the toddler will most likely try to wave back; if a sibling rolls a ball to the toddler, the toddler tends to roll the ball back. Such micro relations create serve and return opportunities where learning and emotional and social development can take place. The child will normally try to engage and imitate the parents' gestures, facial expressions, and emotional reactions, and then get a response. To become stable in their own reactions and to be able to learn new things, the child is dependent on parental or caregivers' responses.

Research also shows that the children's brain are very flexible when they are young, and therefore it is important to stimulate children according to their development and needs in their early years. Neuroscience has shown that the brain is very "plastic" during the first years, which means that the brain is flexible and is able to reorganize and adapt to new and unexpected challenges, but this ability is not so flexible later. Therefore, it is important to "serve and return" (CDC, 2017), that is, to communicate with and stimulate young children as early as possible in order to be able to influence as much as possible.

RISK FACTORS CAN HAVE A NEGATIVE IMPACT ON CHILDREN'S HEALTH

Various risk and stress factors will be presented in the coming sections, such as the consequences of growing up in a toxic stressful environment, such as one involving substance abuse and violence. Neurodevelopment and social development "go hand in hand", and in order to provide the best conditions for children's development, we need to acknowledge these mutual interactions and provide arenas that are safe and give children the opportunities to develop at their own speed. To experience pressure and a harsh upbringing, especially with punishment and violence, can be very damaging for children. Factors that create disadvantages and damaging conditions for children's upbringing and mental health are called risk factors (CDC, 2007c; Øverland, 2001). Children who grow up with abuse are very much at risk of developing negative psychological health and severe behavioural problems. Psychological abuse can be in the forms of threats, patronizing and negative words, or comments aimed to hurt. Physical violence can include being hit, kicked, or burnt. There are children who experience latent violence or who witness violence, and other children experience sexual violence. Growing up with parental alcohol/drug abuse or with parents who are involved in criminal activities are also risk factors. If a child experiences an unsafe upbringing, without love and care, it will influence their development in negative ways, as this creates bad conditions for human brain development (CDC, 2007c).

CHILD ABUSE AND TOXIC STRESS

Sometimes children experience stressful situations. Stressful feelings are individual, and people react differently to stress. When a child meets new challenges, such as a changing environment, meeting new people or doing a task for the first time, it can be challenging. Some children may be shy, while others are more extroverted, and they may have different reactions to new situations. Sometimes they

feel pressure and experience bodily reactions when they meet challenges. In such situations they usually get some guidance from adults, and they manage to overcome the difficulties or challenging thoughts or emotions. When the child develops mastery and self-control in such situations, it can be called "*Positive stress*", according to the CDC (2007a, p. 9), which describes three forms of stress;

- 1) "*Positive stress*" denotes where a child can experiences a form of mastery that can be stimulating and challenging for new situations. If the child experiences physiological responses, that may disrupt brain architecture. Such responses can be caused by possible traumatic experiences, such as losing a friend or family member in death, divorce, or natural catastrophe. Such events may be very stressful, but usually the stress system calms down with care and support from family and friends, and this is called tolerable stress.
- 2) "*Tolerable stress*" becomes less stressful after a while – if there are supportive people or systems to help. The third stress experience, toxic stress, is more serious and damaging.
- 3) "*Toxic stress*" occurs in situations where there is tremendous stress for the child and little or not enough care from adults. Such stressful situations can be violence in the family, violence from others, neglect, growing up with chronically ill caregivers or substance abuse. Such stress activates stress hormones and disrupts the architecture of the brain and the chemistry in the developing brain, according to the Center on the Developing Child (2007c, 2022). Children react individually to stress and the effects may vary, but most of the children who experience toxic stress will experience that it influences memory and learning, and self-management of thoughts, emotions and behaviour in a negative way (CDC, 2007c), and that it can influence the immune system in negative ways and also create problems for maintaining healthy relationships with others (CDC, 2007c).

"Toxic stress in early childhood is associated with disruptive effects on the nervous system and stress hormone regulatory system that can damage developing brain architecture and chemistry and lead to lifelong problems in learning, behavior, and both physical and mental health" (CDC, 2007c, p. 10).

Child abuse and war can create toxic stress in children, as well as neglect. If children experience severe stress and end up with toxic stress reactions, they need help to manage their emotions and reactions. Since the brain is most plastic in the early years it is the best to provide a safe environment and help services as early as possible in the child's development. When the children are young it is easier to

influence the brain's ability to change, by providing safety and new learning experiences. According to the Center of the Developing Child at Harvard, they call it “windows of opportunities” – we have to create opportunities for skill development and behaviour adaptation, because when the children get older it may be harder to influence the “wired” brain circuits, and the capacity for the brain to change may be more reduced (CDC, 2007c, p. 10). In order to create a healthy and safe upbringing for children we need to stop abuse and violence towards children, and we need to create safe and healthy communities. To provide help for the children we need to organize help systems and schools that are trauma sensitive, so children and families can receive help if they are exposed to stress or trauma situations.

PROTECTIVE FACTORS AND RESILIENCE IN CHILDREN'S LIVES

Protective factors are factors that give children the opportunity to thrive, develop, and learn. The importance of having a good relationship and someone to trust, like supportive parents and close adults, has been documented to be essential for positive development. In many ways protective factors are opposite to risk factors. Love and affection, and responsiveness towards children, are protective factors. *Resilience* means that children can make it and develop to function well, despite any risk factors that are present in their upbringing. To have a person to be very close to is one of the best protective factors for children, and usually this is the main care person (the mother or the father) for children, but research has also found that teachers can be important protective and secure persons for children (CDC, 2004a).

When children experience risk factors, such as violence, sexual abuse, neglect, like parental absenteeism, and lack of care over a long time period (also lack of food, nutrition, water and medical care), they may experience stress in their lives. Such stress can become toxic stress, because it is a threat towards a healthy childhood and may cause mental health problems and behavioural problems. So how can parents, caregivers and society provide a safe upbringing and protect children from abuse or neglect?

HOW TO STRENGTHEN CORE SKILLS AND BUILD A RESISTANT AND SUPPORTIVE COMMUNITY

There are many ways to create safe and healthy communities for children. The family is usually the smallest care unit, but since most babies stay in small family units and develop rapidly, it is of great importance that toddlers are cared for and

stimulated. Families vary in norms, form, and size in different cultures, but for most of them it is of great value to take care of the youngest. Prenatal influences need to be considered –alcohol and drug abuse are particularly recognized to hurt a child during the pregnancy, because in this period important brain circuits are formed (CDC, 2007a). Children are also born with particular genes, and although it is important to be safe in the womb, it is also important to have a safe postnatal experience, because they are at risk of experiencing physical and mental health problems if they are not properly taken care of (CDC, 2007a). They need love, care and food. The pre-birth and the early years (1–3) are important for forming attachment bonds, and in this period the child develops at a rapid tempo. They usually develop in cognitive, linguistic and social abilities and become better at regulating their own emotions. By the age of five most children have developed into young negotiating individuals, who are able to discuss and convey their opinions, according to the CDC (2007a). However, research now shows that there are individual differences, based on economy and living conditions (UNICEF, 2021).

THE IMPORTANCE OF COOPERATION AND SYSTEM WORK TO PROTECT CHILDREN AND CREATE A THRIVING COMMUNITY

Science within developmental behaviour research, neuro-science and programme evaluations have expanded our knowledge about children's upbringing. It is very important to love and care for young babies and children and create attachment and relationships (2015). Early childhood experiences determine whether a child's brain architecture provides a strong or a weak foundation for their future learning, behaviour and health, according to the Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University (2007a). This means that it is important to create safe family and community settings, with close and caring interactions. This is a process that is time-consuming, and it also needs to be prioritized politically, so the wider community can help to ensure time, room and space to create a caring community. Since all children develop differently and also change as they get older, there are various skills to be developed at various ages. According to the CDC (2007a), four decades of programme evaluation have detected some influential factors for the first five years, called "effective" factors, that can provide a framework for informed policy choices:

- 1) Access to basic medical care for pregnant women and children can help prevent threats to healthy development as well as provide early diagnosis and appropriate management when problems emerge.

- 2) For vulnerable families who are expecting a first child, early and intensive support by skilled home visitors can produce significant benefits for both the child and the parents.
- 3) For young children from low-income families, participation in very high-quality, center-based, early education programs has demonstrated to enhance child cognitive and social development. There are certain qualities that need to be present: 1) highly skilled teachers; 2) small class sizes and high adult-to-child ratios; 3) age-appropriate curricula and stimulating material in safe physical setting; 4) a language rich environment; 5) warm, responsive interactions between staff and children; and 6) high and consistent level of child participation.
- 4) For young children from families experiencing significant adversity, two-generation programs that simultaneously provide direct support for parents and high-quality, center-based care and education for the children can have positive impact on both.

(CDC, 2007a, p. 4)

Children's conditions vary in the world, and not all children are able to grow up in ideal child-centred communities, but it has to be a goal to create better conditions for all children. This can be done by learning about risk and protective factors and how communities can become involved in politics in order to improve children's living conditions, including ensuring children's rights and accepting that children are vulnerable and need protection from adults.

HOW CAN CHILDREN WHO EXPERIENCE TOXIC STRESS AND TRAUMA BE HELPED?

When a child has experienced trauma situations, such as violence, the child may suffer for a long time and show reactions to trauma, such as fright, stress, panic, aggression or withdrawal. Stress reactions may vary, but some experience problems in regulating emotions and reactions. Others may find that they relive the negative situation when they are triggered by something that reminds them about the trauma situations, or they experience intrusive memories of the traumatic situations. Many children have problems explaining in words what they have experienced, and it can be difficult to understand their needs. They tend to wake up with nightmares, and some may start to dissociate, or repetitive or stereotyped play and behavior, to push away triggers or difficult memories. Some children may experience one traumatic incident, while others grow up with repeated trauma situations and may experience complex traumatization or Post Traumatic Stress Syndrome (PTSD). Children

who have experienced traumatic situations need care and safety from “safe” adults, who stop the abusive situations and protect the children. Many children who have experienced trauma can be helped by safe and caring adults, but some need professional therapy, from psychologists or medical staff. Van der Kolk has focused on three levels that needs to be focused on when children need help after having experienced trauma: relations, safety and emotional regulation (Bath, 2008). Here a “child-friendly model” of his model will be presented, looking at the three focus areas that can be helpful for children who have experienced trauma (see figure 2.1).



Figure 2.1: The child-friendly version of “The Three Pillars of Trauma-Informed Care” (Øverland, Vaage & Lecock, 2020).

Adapted with permission, Bath, 2008, for the Caring for Traumatized Children Project, OTB, 2020.

The model shows that it is important to understand how to provide care for children who have experienced trauma, and the actions needed is to work on good relations, safety and emotional regulation. By providing the child with a safe environment after trauma, the nervous system can get time to heal. By eliminating threats and dangerous situations, and by talking and listening to the child, the body can start its

healing process. By focusing on self-regulation, such as gaining skills to better control their thoughts, feelings and behaviour, it is possible to provide the child with some coping strategies after trauma. By learning how trauma affects the nervous system and how the body, with its thoughts, emotions and reactions, responds to traumatic events and what to do when various reactions occurs in children, such as relaxation techniques, the children can reduce the trauma reactions. It is important that parents, caretakers and teachers know how trauma affects children's behaviour and health and that they know what to do to provide care for the children. To work on relations, create safety, and help children with self-regulation skills are important for all children, not only those who are traumatized.

According to the Center on the Developing Child at Harvard the results from evaluations of programmes and components have been evaluated as constructive for working with children who experience toxic stress:

For young children experiencing toxic stress from recurrent child abuse or neglect, severe maternal depression, parental substance abuse, or family violence, interventions that provide intensive services matched to the problems they are designed to address can prevent the disruption of brain architecture and promote better developmental outcomes.

For young families living under the poverty level, work-based income supplements from working parents have been demonstrated to boost the achievement of some young children.

Environmental policies that reduce the level of neurotoxins in the environment will protect fetuses and young children from exposure to substances that are known to damage their developing brains.

(Main points from CDC, 2007a, pp. 4–5)

The research shows that there are no perfect programmes (CDC, 2007a). The CDC recommends that if the institution or country does not have such programmes or resources, it is possible to focus on creating safe development arenas and gradually build up programmes that provide individual caretaking and safety, and gradually try to build up training and technical assistance to improve the quality of the work (CDC, 2007a). To provide better health for children who have experienced trauma, the communities must decide to provide safety and financial aid to hire staff and increase trauma competence in the community. There are also other health risks that may be challenging for children and families, and it is important to have specialized help and educated staff to deal with some of the mental health conditions that may occur. So for which other health conditions is it important to create help systems to help children thrive?

DEPRESSION AND ANXIETY IN CHILDREN

Although traumatic experiences and the experience of toxic stress can be harmful for children, there are other problems that may be difficult for some young children, especially for teenagers. As they grow older and face new experiences and challenges, there is an increase in depression and anxiety problems among teenagers (National Center on Birth Defects and Developmental Disabilities, 2022). This is mostly documented in the Western world, but others who experience difficult life conditions or experience something sad may also suffer from such problems. Depression is a mental state where people experience dark, ruminating or sad thoughts, and many suffer from a lack of positive energy and a feeling of hopelessness. This makes it hard to participate in school or work, and life may feel meaningless, and it may result in suicide attempts or even death by suicide. Anxiety is a mental state where people become afraid of various things and tend to worry too much, and there are various forms of anxiety, such as separation anxiety, being afraid of parental separation in young children; general anxiety, being afraid of many things; social anxiety, being afraid and worrying about and in social situations; and panic attacks; these are strong physiological reactions (Øverland & Bru, 2016). To prevent and treat such mental health conditions it is important to focus on these mental challenges. It is possible to prevent and to treat children who suffer from such conditions (Øverland & Bru, 2016). The best prevention will be a social system that cares about children and creates life management situations and prepares them for life management skills and acknowledges and respects them as unique individuals who belong to a group, where they can learn, thrive and belong. Recognizing that stressful reactions may affect children and families and trying to reduce sources of stress can be helpful for maintaining positive health. Excessive early adverse influences can cause negative effects on the developing cardiometabolic systems, which again can cause diseases, so stress prevention may also save medical expenses in the future (CDC, 2022).

CHILDREN WHO ARE IN NEED OF SPECIAL SERVICES AND HELP, DUE TO PHYSICAL AND DEVELOPMENTAL PROBLEMS

Children with physical and developmental challenges have the same basic needs as any other children, but they might need more or other ways of fulfilling their needs. Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) define persons with disabilities as persons with long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments, which hinder their full participation in society (CRPD). The convention stated the

need for reasonable accommodations to ensure equality and eliminate discrimination (CRPD). It is important to focus on how services and accommodations are delivered and coordinated in order to ensure the equality of all children; this includes children with disabilities who have the right to receive help and a safe upbringing. Since children with disabilities may have more problems to tell and protect themselves from abuse, it is especially important that adults are advocates and protect children with disabilities. It is important to provide children with disabilities an equal opportunity to learn and socialize with other children and to ensure the staff have the necessary education, tools and support to handle challenging situations (Nag, 2020). Some countries still have challenges when it comes to including children with special needs and providing adequate help services for them, and well-functioning system work may not be prioritized or provided in schools (Kolnes, Øverland & Midthassel, 2020).

HOW CAN SUPPORTIVE RELATIONS BE HELPFUL FOR CHILDREN AND ADULTS?

Attachment theory and the importance of developing emotional bonds and focusing on children's rights to create resilience were the focus of attention at the beginning of this chapter. It is important to continue to build a positive climate with children up through their development stages. According to the National Scientific Council on the Developing Child, brains are built over time, and how this happens is documented in a series of working papers (CDC, 2007a, 2007b, 2007c, 2022). Although the early years are of great importance for building brain circuits, it is a building process that continues up through youth. There is an interactive influence of genes and experience, that shape the architecture of the developing brain, and here parents, other caregivers, and family and community members are important for the care of children, according to the CDC (2007a, 2005/2015, 2015). Since both brain architecture and developing skills are built "from the bottom up", first with simple nerve circuits and skills that provide the basis for continuing to build stronger circuits and skills, it is possible to add and train to develop and gain better emotional and social self-control and skills (CDC, 2007a). As the child gets older the goal is to provide good bottom-up experiences, to build and rebuild nerve circuits and skills. This means that being safe adults and being with the children as a community is important.

To include children, with their differences, is essential to create a thriving and healthy upbringing. This means that we must accept differences and at the same time acknowledge that children may need various help from adults. This is especially important if children have experienced traumatic situations or toxic stress.

PLAY AND ART ARE IMPORTANT FOR CHILDREN AND ADULTS

Children have natural instincts to engage in play and like to participate in playful learning. When parents do the “serve and return” practice and develop emotional bonds with children, they can engage in playful activities with the children, such as “peekaboo” and hiding games or taking turns. Children need breaks from daily activities that feel demanding. Their attention spans are shorter than adults, varying with age and experience, so play can give them new energy after a playful break. Children develop through play and tend to be happy when they play. For parents it can also be joyful to play together with the children, and most children enjoy it when adults play together with them. Through play it is possible to stimulate the children's senses, that are crucial for their development (Glasper, 2020). Through play they learn new skills, they become social, and they imitate adults and other activities. In play they get to know their own emotions, reactions and how they themselves can affect others. Empathy is a part of social competence, and through play and in relation to others they experience and learn how to be empathic, which is an important human aspect for living a healthy life, and to later form new friendships and attachments with others. Adults also need recreation, the ability to use their creativity and enjoy life – such aspects can make them thrive in their parenting and hopefully give them some stress relief from difficult life circumstances. Creating a good family atmosphere with close relations will also benefit their children who may get happier parents, and that again may reduce the risk of coercive parental reactions (Øverland, 2021).

EDUCATION IS IMPORTANT FOR CREATING RESILIENCE IN CHILDREN

The world is in a dynamic state, where there are wars going on and pandemics. It is not always easy to navigate in everything that is going on, and it may be difficult to create optimal care for children in some parts of the world, but adults have to work for a better world for all and to protect and raise healthy children. Sometimes there are also discussions about what is the best way to raise children. There is quite profound research documentation regarding what is helpful in children's upbringing and what can be destructive for their healthy development. To provide children with education is a positive and constructive world task. Still, there are countries that do not offer children education, and there are also some countries that only educate boys. Through education it is possible to create a constructive learning environment for children, where they can thrive, learn and use

their creative abilities to provide new and upcoming solutions for the best of the world. There are many discussions about the quality of education, but the foundation of learning is to feel safe: on the way to school, in school, and on the way home from school. The best way to learn efficiently is to create a positive teacher-student relationship (Pianta et al., 2003). Bullying in school has been found to create trauma symptoms and toxic stress in children, and it makes it difficult to learn in school (Idsoe et al., 2012; Sjursø et al., 2019). Bullying therefore needs to be addressed in all school systems, and the school leaders have to create plans to stop and reduce bullying in schools. This also includes a focus on internet bullying and internet-related abuse (Livingstone et al., 2012). Many schools do not have systems to follow up with students who have been bullied, and this may create long-term health problems (Tharaldsen et al., 2017). It is important that the school leadership focuses on cooperation, education and follow up with new staff, especially because it can be hard to follow up with children who are struggling with emotional health and behavioural problems (Roland et al., 2016). To offer a good education where both teachers and children are safe is important, and it is also of great concern to reduce stress for the staff and children. Reducing stress can be done by focusing on offering support, acknowledgement, training and dedication to the work (Lazarus, 2006). It is important to talk about health, emotions and behaviour with children, to listen to them and to provide them with problem-solving skills, so they can develop a healthy brain.

Research and years of bringing up children have taught us that love and affection and care are needed by all children. To learn and get educated is important, but without love and care, children tend to get in trouble. They all need love and responsive caretakers who are willing to listen to them. When it comes to parents, the authoritative parental style is important, and this style of raising a child can also be helpful in the school's learning environment.

SUMMARY

Creating resilience and thriving communities for positive and healthy child development needs to be prioritized. Thriving children are the future and the responsibility of every adult and each nation!

Children grow up in a changing world and in a world with challenges, which are hard to resolve. It will require good relations, communication and cooperation to reduce and solve some of these problems, such as war and conflicts, climate challenges and poverty, but we need to keep up the hope for a better future.

In this chapter the focus has been on children's basic needs. As adults it is our responsibility to be caretakers and protectors of children. Children with special

needs are especially vulnerable and need extra aid and protection. To be parents, teachers, policy makers, or responsible adults means that we need to focus on children's basic needs and fundamental human rights.

According to Uri Bronfenbrenner, a developmental psychologist, children have to feel safe and be able to develop in all the arenas they participate in, and there has to be communication and consistency between all the levels in a social system (Bronfenbrenner, 2005). It means that what is going on in the home influences daycare, school, wider society, and policy makers and vice versa. Development happens in a mutually influential system where there is communication between genes and social influences. The Center on the Developing Child has made a summary of three basic focus areas, based on research and practice, to support children of the world:

1. Support responsive relationships for children and adults.
2. Strengthen core skills for planning, adapting, and achieving goals.
3. Reduce sources of stress in the lives of children and families.

(CDC, 2021, p. 1)

We have an obligation to create the best possible growth and developmental conditions for children, so they can feel safe and develop positive health. To prevent bullying and reduce risk factors and toxic stress reactions, we all have a responsibility. In this chapter there has been a focus on the little things that happen in communication between children and parents, in micro relations, and a focus on policies that may be helpful in creating a safe and better environment for the developing child and the world. Each part of the social system influences each other. We also know that children are not fully developed (and not neurological fully developed), so children are especially vulnerable to negative risk factors. Therefore, adults and nations need to become responsible caretakers and provide a healthy and resilient environment for children. Children develop through positive and close relations over time! In this chapter there has been a focus on basic needs and how to create a positive developmental environment and resilience. It all starts with loving and listening to our children and respecting their human rights.

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