



# Family News

## Spring 2013

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### STRESS: THE GOOD, THE BAD, AND THE TOXIC

We all know what stress feels like. The elevated heart rate, the sweating, the fast breathing, that ball in the pit of your stomach. None of us are strangers to this acute response to stressful surroundings and situations, but imagine being subjected to that feeling every day for weeks, months or years. Now, imagine you're a child; you can't run away, you can't ask for help, and you have very little control over your environment.

"We classify stress into three different types," says Todd Grindal, a Julius B. Richmond Fellow at the Center for the Developing Child at Harvard. "Think of a child on his first day of preschool. That's a pretty stressful event! But it's brief, and there are supportive adults to help with the transition. We learn to take chances, try new things."

That's the good kind of stress. "But think of stress that's more serious and longer in duration," Grindal says. "Natural disaster, divorce, a parent's death, the recent Boston bombings – these are awful, but they are still tolerable, the effects can be buffered by supportive adults."

That's the bad kind. But there's a worse kind: toxic stress. Toxic stress results from an activation of the stress response system for a long period of time with no supportive adults to intervene. Chronic poverty, abuse, neglect, severe

*"It's never too late to help, but it does get harder."*



depression in a caregiver, family violence – these are some of the circumstances that can result in toxic stress. "It's not caused by a single event," Grindal points out. "But a continuation of multiple events."

For a child, whose brain is in its primary stage of development, stress like this can have lingering effects. "It's associated with reduced cognitive development and there are lifelong implications for their ability to learn and for their physical health." Children who grow up with toxic stress tend to have higher rates of heart disease, diabetes, depression, and substance abuse.

But it's never too late to help children who might be subjected to toxic stress. "We're trying new and innovative ways to moderate stress," says Grindal. "Parents can be provided with healthy ways of interacting with their kids. We can provide mental health services as needed." Authorities should intervene in cases of abuse and neglect and provide follow-up support for the victims. Other parents in the community can provide as much support and understanding as possible for the children. "It's never too late to help," says Grindal. "But it does get harder."

For more information, visit:  
<http://developingchild.harvard.edu/>



## Our Mission

The Family Place  
Parent Child Center  
supports the positive growth  
and development of all  
parents by offering services  
that encourage families to  
build upon their strengths.



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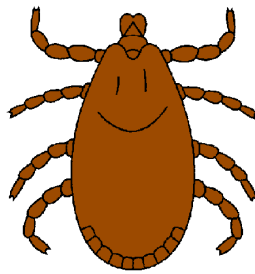
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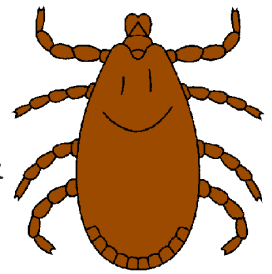
Jack Wilson

## It's tick season!

Check your kids every evening before bed. Use a tick removal spoon to lift any attached ticks from the skin, and if it's a deer tick, call your doctor. Deer ticks transmit Lyme disease and are moderately prevalent in the Upper Valley area.



Dispose of the tick in rubbing alcohol or by wrapping it in tissue and flushing it down the toilet, or seal it in a plastic container if you think it's a deer tick and want to show the doctor.



For more information, visit:

<http://www.vermontlyme.org/ticks.htm>

<http://www.tickinfo.com/>

[http://healthvermont.gov/prevent/lyme/lyme\\_disease.aspx](http://healthvermont.gov/prevent/lyme/lyme_disease.aspx)

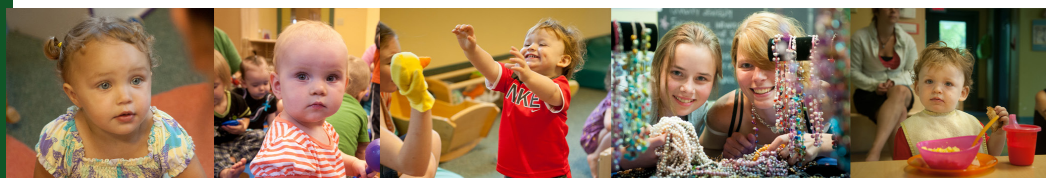


Here at The Family Place we recently said a fond farewell to our Executive Director of 19 years, Elaine Guenet. We also warmly welcomed our new Executive Director, Mary Smit!

Mary most recently held the position of Team Leader for Casey Family Services in White River Junction, Vt., where she supervised staff directly involved with adoption and specialized foster care services. In this role she also provided leadership at the regional level to staff working with Vermont and New Hampshire families who struggle with abuse, neglect, substance abuse, poverty, homelessness, mental illness and other challenges. Previously, Mary held fundraising and social work leadership roles, for 13 years for Bethany Christian Services in Michigan, and then as a Director of Development for the Pine Rest Foundation in Michigan.

"The Family Place has such a strong reputation as a leader and collaborator in our community concerning parenting education and support, prevention, and early childhood," says Mary. "It is an honor and a privilege to be able to join the staff and board in this work."

Please join us in welcoming Mary to The Family Place!



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