



# The Blue Ribbon

**An Important Update for Orange County**  
**Child Abuse Prevention Council Newsletter**

## In this Issue "Special Edition: Reducing Toxic Stress for Teens"

*Select to jump to article*

- [Reducing Toxic Stress for Teens](#)
- [CAPC Trains Professionals in Child Abuse Prevention, Treatment, and Intervention](#)
- [Safe Sleeping](#)
- [CAPC Council Member Spotlight: Cathy Rodriguez](#)

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## Reducing Toxic Stress for Teens



*By Marci Mednick, Mission Hospital*

**As the year unfolds, you may find your child feeling a bit overwhelmed with his/her increasing workload and the everyday challenges of being a teen.**

Understanding stress and adolescent brain development can help parents know how to support their child during this time. Stress is the body's physiological response to physical, emotional and intellectual challenges. The still developing teen brain allows stress to kick in more quickly and easily than it does for an adult. This fact helps to explain why young people feel much more anxious about social situations and academic challenges – which unfortunately, can lead to more stress.

Teen stress is very different than adult stress. In a recent American Psychological Association (APA) survey, 27 percent of U.S. teens reported experiencing extreme stress during the school year with only 13 percent reporting extreme stress during the summer. Stress resulted from school demands, negative thoughts and feelings about themselves, pressure to have a certain body type, social difficulties, taking on too many activities, high expectations, pressures to experiment with drugs, alcohol or sex, problems at home and bullying. Experts suggest that parents can offer support by listening with an open mind and not minimizing their child's concerns – regardless of how they may feel about them. What seems minor to a parent is often not minor to a teen.

When a teen is stressed, parents may notice changes in mood – increased irritability, tearfulness, feelings of hopelessness; physical complaints - stomachache, headaches, tiredness - withdrawal from friends and family and difficulty concentrating. Psychologists believe that increased stress levels correlate with rising numbers of adolescents diagnosed with depression and anxiety. If you are concerned that your child may be experiencing symptoms of stress, consult your pediatrician or mental health provider.

The most important tip for parents is to listen and try to understand what is causing your child's stress. Help your child find positive ways to deal with stress – physical activity and taking breaks for enjoyable activities, talking about problems with others, setting small goals and breaking tasks into manageable chunks, focusing on what they can control and letting go of what they cannot control, deep breathing, lowering unrealistic expectations, eating healthy, and getting a sufficient amount of sleep.

By modeling healthy coping strategies and practicing these techniques yourself, your child will have a better idea of how to cope with stress. When you and your child feel stress levels rising, head outside for a walk.

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## CAPC Trains Professionals in Child Abuse Prevention, Treatment, and Intervention



Orange County's Child Abuse Prevention Council (CAPC) provides Continuing Education Units (CEUs) and professional networking opportunities at no charge to professionals in fields such as social work, public health, and law enforcement. These free trainings are designed to better equip those in various fields to serve clients, grow in the latest knowledge, and reinforce consistent professional standards and expected practice behaviors. In addition, these trainings provide opportunities for attendees to network with other professionals, share and learn about upcoming events, and serve as a free resource for renewal of credentials.

Please mark your calendars for these upcoming events:

- **Advancing Practice: Working with Parents, Children, and Families Training:** We hope you will join us on November 15-16 at Mission Hospital, Mission Viejo for this important and informative training on strengthening families. All are

welcome, and Continuing Education Units are available for LCSW and LMFTs. Please email [info@theraisefoundation.org](mailto:info@theraisefoundation.org) to sign up.

- **2018 Annual Holiday Breakfast:** Come celebrate the holidays with fellow professionals and volunteers who also care deeply about the safety of children. Stroll through the festive gardens and enjoy a complimentary breakfast and training on December 3, 2018 at the Hacienda in Santa Ana. Debra J. Baetz, Director of the County of Orange Social Services Agency, will provide an agency update followed by a presentation on self-care given by certified Health & Wellness coach Natalie Ohanessian. Please arrive around 8:15 a.m. for check-in. Breakfast and program begin at 8:30 a.m. Please [CLICK HERE](#) to reserve your spot!

Please check the Raise Foundation website ([www.theraisefoundation.org](http://www.theraisefoundation.org)) periodically as we begin to update it with our list of 2019 Trainings and Networking events. Sample upcoming events that will soon be added include an Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) training and a Resilience Networking event.

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## Safe Sleeping

### Infant Safe Sleep



**Baby sleeps safest alone, on their back, in a crib.**

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*By Keri Gee Semmelman, The Raise Foundation*

When it comes to infants in the home, one's instinct may be to decorate the child's crib with crib bumpers, to let them nap with a stuffed animal, and to lay down right next to them as they sleep. However, the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommends doing just the opposite. While AAP advocates that infants share their parents' bedroom for at least the first six months and, optimally, for the first year of life (as room-sharing decreases the risk of SIDS by as much as 50 percent), they also recommend parents use bedside and in-bed sleepers for their infant rather than sleep together on the same sleep surface.

These and many other guidelines appear in an updated report published by the AAP in November 2016 on how to create a safe sleep environment. Rachel Moon, MD, a Fellow of the AAP (FAAP), and lead author of the report, also adds, "Parents should never place the baby on a sofa, couch, or cushioned chair, either alone or sleeping with another person. We know that these surfaces are extremely hazardous."

According to AAP, approximately 3,500 infants die annually in the United States from sleep-related deaths, including sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS); ill-defined deaths; and accidental suffocation and strangulation. The number of infant deaths initially decreased in the 1990s after a national safe sleep campaign, but has plateaued in recent years. While infants are at heightened risk for SIDS between the ages one and four months, new evidence according to AAP shows that soft bedding continues to pose hazards to babies who are four months and older.

Lori Feldman-Winter, MD, AAP, member of the AAP Task Force on SIDS and co-author of the report, explains that pillows, sheets, blankets or other items could obstruct the infant's breathing or cause overheating.

Additional AAP recommendations on creating a safe sleep environment include:

- Place the baby on his or her back on a firm sleep surface such as a crib or bassinet with a tight-fitting sheet.
- Avoid use of soft bedding, including crib bumpers, blankets, pillows and soft toys. The crib should be bare.
- Offer a pacifier at nap time and bedtime.
- Do not use home monitors or commercial devices, including wedges or positioners, marketed to reduce the risk of SIDS.
- Supervised, awake tummy time is recommended daily to facilitate development

"Stuffed animals and other soft toys are great for play and interaction but not for times when the child is resting or sleeping," shares Jamie McDonald, executive director of the Orange County Chapter of the AAP. "Following these guidelines can be life-saving."

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## **CAPC Council Member Spotlight**

### **Cathy Rodriguez**



*Community Leaders Serve on  
Orange County's Child Abuse Prevention Council*

**Raise: Tell us a little bit about yourself. What inspired you to promote the well-being of children through your work?**

Cathy: I was a single mother for many years and understood firsthand the challenges associated with providing for children as a mother and also as a father figure. Stress levels can be high when trying to juggle time, finances, housing, food, and the myriad of other things children need. I was fortunate to have had access to wonderful supportive services through the City of Irvine. If it weren't for these services, my life would have been very different and my children would have been more negatively affected by their father's absence. As the years went on and my boys grew to be young men, I always knew I wanted to be involved, to give back to the community and programs that help those families in need. I found the Exchange Club of Irvine and joined in 2012.

**Raise: How are you or your organization contributing to the mission of child abuse prevention?**

Cathy: The Irvine Exchange Club, as well as other Exchange clubs across the nation, premise their focus on the prevention of child abuse. Each club is unique with the programs and services they offer to the communities they serve. The Exchange Club of Irvine participates in wonderful supportive events honoring those in our community who serve families, such as the Irvine Police Department, Irvine Teachers, City and County leadership, and the Orange County Fire Authority. Our club also reaches out to at-risk youth honoring their academic efforts amidst personal tragedies and challenges. The

club also participates in various grassroots programs as the need arises. I am proud to say that through one of our key annual events, our club has raised almost \$8,500 for the Raise Foundation.

**Raise: As a result of your efforts, what do you hope to see accomplished in Orange County to keep children safe, healthy, and happy?**

Cathy: Each of us has the opportunity to reach a child, person or family in need. Whether we help through collective efforts such as the Raise Foundation or the Exchange Club or interact on an individual basis through our immediate connections, all is extremely valuable and important to make a positive difference at any level. The Exchange Club of Irvine strives to make a positive and lasting contribution to children's lives on a daily, monthly, and annual basis through our individual membership and programs of service and support.

*The Raise Foundation convenes Orange County's Child Abuse Prevention Council as officially designated by the Orange County Board of Supervisors (Resolution No. 74-492) in 1974. This is in keeping with the California Welfare and Institutions Code (Section 18982) which requires every county to have a child abuse prevention council. As a "community council," its primary role is focused on coordination of the community's efforts to prevent and respond to child abuse. Child Abuse Prevention Council Member Cathy Rodriguez shares her passion for keeping Orange County's kids safe, healthy, and happy.*