## Applying

# Developmental Science



to the Child Welfare System

Part 1 of 2

## 3 Key Concepts from Harvard's Center for the Developing Child



#### "Serve-and-Return" Interactions

Back-and-forth interaction between young children and adults.

Vital for the development of strong brain architecture in young children.



#### **Toxic Stress**

"Fight, flight or freeze" physiological responses triggered by adverse experiences.

If long-lasting, results in an overdeveloped stress-response system and underdeveloped core capabilities.



#### **Core Capabilities**

Self-regulation, and executive function (goal-setting and problem-solving)

Low stress levels and active skillbuilding are needed to develop and use these capabilities.

## Impact on Children and Adults

### A Triple Burden for Adult Caregivers



Constant supply of stressful situations repeatedly activate stress response system.



Easily triggered stress-response system that takes a toll on cognitive resources and health



Needing help from the child welfare system ingrains belief that they are failures incapable of escaping their situation.

#### Impact on Young Children



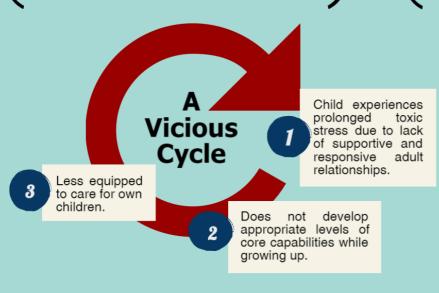
Neglected children do not receive enough of the serve-and-return interactions that help build brain architecture.



Stressful early-life experiences may lead to long-term mental & physical health issues.



Positive early-life experiences and "serve-and-return" relationships with adults can help build resilience to adversity.



Did you know?

"Serve-and-return"
interactions are so
important that
scientists define
"neglect" as the
prolonged absence
of responsive
caregiving.

