"Do. Or do not. There is no try." - Yoda

"You must unlearn what you have learned. Do. Or do not. There is no try." -- Master Yoda

What do you do with the mad that you feel? If Jedi Master Yoda was your teacher and you were explaining to him the kind of person you were teaching your young Padawan to be, would you be an Everyday Hero or a Sith Lord? Below are two scenarios; one favors the Jedi, the other favors the Sith. Seeing as there is no such thing as perfection, how do you relate to each example. How would you change the outcome of scenario A? How do you strive for excellence like in Scenario B?
I was in line at the deli counter after work one evening last week. The deli was understaffed, and there was quite a line. I found myself people watching for several minutes. I watched two couples who hadn't seen each other in quite a while get caught up on what had been happening in their lives. I witnessed an older gentleman give up on trying to pronounce Gruyere, relying instead on just pointing at the block of cheese through the glass counter. Then, I saw a beautiful little girl. She appeared to be four or five years old. I first noticed her because of the natural ringlets in her hair, and then, because she was unselfconsciously doing a little dance while waiting for her mother's deli number to be called.

Her mother and her father appeared to be in conflict. The mother wanted the father to place her deli order while she did the rest of the shopping. He didn't want to and was in a separate line getting a sub sandwich for himself. The girl was adorable, and I wasn't the only one being entertained by her movements. I caught grins on the faces of several of the others waiting in line. Our smiles quickly turned to frowns as we heard a voice snap, "Quit it! Can't you be still for even one minute?" The little girl's face dropped as she heard her mother's words. She looked as if she'd been slapped. She said quietly, "But, Mama...I'm just dancing." To which her mother replied, "I said, quit it! Now get out of my sight and go stand with your father, if he won't help me, at least he can watch you." (End of Scenario A.)

CONTINUE READING

... He puts his hand on his son's back and shares proudly, "My older son loves to read!" then continues, his tone changing to concern, "My younger son, not so much..." Both boys look up as they hear themselves acknowledged, and we all smile. José says, "I bought them a dictionary, and they have to bring me five new words a day; EVERY
DAY. We all talk about them and what they mean, and now my son is bringing me all kinds of crazy words I have never even heard of, and he keeps laughing at me!" He is smiling as he continues, "It is hard because seven days a week I work, but no matter what, I make sure to spend time with them every day, because it's important."

(End of Scenario B.)

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If the behavior of Scenario A. were to be repeated over and over to this little girl, that could cause toxic stress. Childhood toxic stress can be the cause of serious health issues and mental health difficulties later in life. A recent study shows childhood toxic stress can shorten a person's life expectancy by as many as 20 years. Toxic stress is a strong, persistent activation of the body's stress response without the buffering protection provided by a responsive, supportive relationship. It worsens in conditions where children do not get consistent support from their caretakers. Extreme poverty, neglect, abuse, violence, and severe maternal depression are some of the things that can create toxic stress in children. For those children, consequences can result in cognitive deficits, academic problems, emotional problems, and health problems.

The caring and supportive relationship with a parent or caregiver is the number one shield against toxic stress. Having a healthy relationship with a parent or caregiver can help the child manage their feelings and calm their stress reactions, helping to build resilience in the child. The quality of a caregiver's interaction with a child is a key building block for healthy emotional, social and even physical development. Research shows that something as subtle as a parent's facial expression and tone of voice will affect even a young infant. One of the realities of dealing with children who have been exposed to toxic stress is that many of their parents were raised in the same kind of environment, making it difficult to break the cycle.

There are many ways to reverse stress causing behaviors including unlearning what you may have learned. In the News and Events section at the top, there are several opportunities that can help parents and caregivers learn the skills to be an Everyday Hero!

Parents can text EverydayHero to 77453 for up to three weekly tips on how they can create learning experiences for their children!

We welcome your thoughts. Contact us at info@GradeLevelReadingSuncoast.net.