



STRENGTHEN RELATIONSHIPS THROUGH LAUGHTER & PLAY

# Joyful Together Newsletter

December 2022 | Vol 1. Issue. 1

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- ▶ Joyful Together 2021-2022 Ohio Children's Trust Fund project outcomes
- ▶ Read along with us!: The IFCI's recommendations for the month.
- ▶ Research Railroad: What is the crew conducting now?
- ▶ Community Resources

## Let's Talk About JOY!

Picture this: A child experiencing uncontrollable giggles, they are laughing so hard that their belly starts to ache. Are you smiling yet? You might be wondering what this child is laughing so hard about. Well, the simple answer is JOY! Continue reading the rest of this newsletter to find out more!

Joyful Together is an evidence-based program that limits toxic stress in children while enhancing childhood resiliency and adding positive childhood experiences. You are probably asking "Okay... nice, but how?" Joyful Together strengthens parent/caregiver and child relationships through joyful play using easy-to-do activities. The program coaches parents/caregivers to infuse joyful play with their young children into everyday routines to create stronger bonds and lower stress.

OhioGuidestone's Institute of Family and Community Impact created the Play Based Model Joyful Together in response to pressing need for everyday actions to combat childhood adversity, toxic stress, and trauma. About half of all Ohio children have at least one Adverse Childhood Experience (ACEs) while one in seven have three or more. Adverse Childhood Experiences can impact brain development and increase the risk of long-term negative effects; most especially in the first five years of life.

THE INSTITUTE OF FAMILY & COMMUNITY IMPACT

An OhioGuidestone Initiative



STRENGTHEN RELATIONSHIPS THROUGH LAUGHTER & PLAY

Joyful Together proves that hope is not lost because positive childhood experiences boost positive brain development, and even help overcome ACEs.

# Joyful Together Centers Joy In The Ordinary Moments



## How Does Joyful Together Work?

- It promotes increased parent-child and caregiver-child play through everyday routines using each family's own joy language.
- Our Joyful Together coaches and parent book walk families through suggested ways to increase loving interactions at ordinary, everyday times such as meal times, play times, and transition times.

Joyful Together increases strengths that parents already have and offers ready-to-use activities and ideas to increase Joyful Play with children. It helps adults understand the power of play and positive effect on health and learning and reminds parent/caregivers of the permission to play and have joy even during the tough times.

Joyful Together enhances the child/caregiver relationships through joyful play which builds childhood resiliency while reducing toxic stress in children. Studies and lived experiences demonstrate that healthy connections with caregivers can block or lessen the negative effects of ACEs. Playing with loved ones causes good hormones to flood the brain and body and send more messages that promote optimal brain development.



## Jumping for Joy After Learning About Joyful Together?

**Do you live in Lorain, Summit, or Medina County?**  
Scan the QR code to join our JT-OCTF study!



# STRESS & EARLY BRAIN GROWTH

## Understanding Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)

### Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)

Read more about ACEs on the next page provided by the Community and Family Services Division at the Spokane (WA) Regional Health District! [You can view the PDF here.](#)

### What are ACEs?

ACEs are serious childhood traumas—a list is shown below—that result in toxic stress that can harm a child's brain. This toxic stress may prevent a child from learning, from playing in a healthy way with other children, and can result in long-term health problems.

### Adverse Childhood Experiences can include:

1. Emotional abuse
2. Physical abuse
3. Sexual abuse
4. Emotional neglect
5. Physical neglect
6. Mother treated violently
7. Household substance abuse
8. Household mental illness
9. Parental separation or divorce
10. Incarcerated household member
11. Bullying (by another child or adult)
12. Witnessing violence outside the home
13. Witness a brother or sister being abused
14. Racism, sexism, or any other form of discrimination
15. Being homeless
16. Natural disasters and war



### Exposure to childhood ACEs can increase the risk of:

- Adolescent pregnancy
- Alcoholism and alcohol abuse
- Depression
- Illicit drug use
- Heart disease
- Liver disease
- Multiple sexual partners
- Intimate partner violence
- Sexually transmitted diseases (STDs)
- Smoking
- Suicide attempts
- Unintended pregnancies

### How do ACEs affect health?

Through stress. Frequent or prolonged exposure to ACEs can create toxic stress which can damage the developing brain of a child and affect overall health.

Reduces the ability to respond, learn, or figure things out, which can result in problems in school.

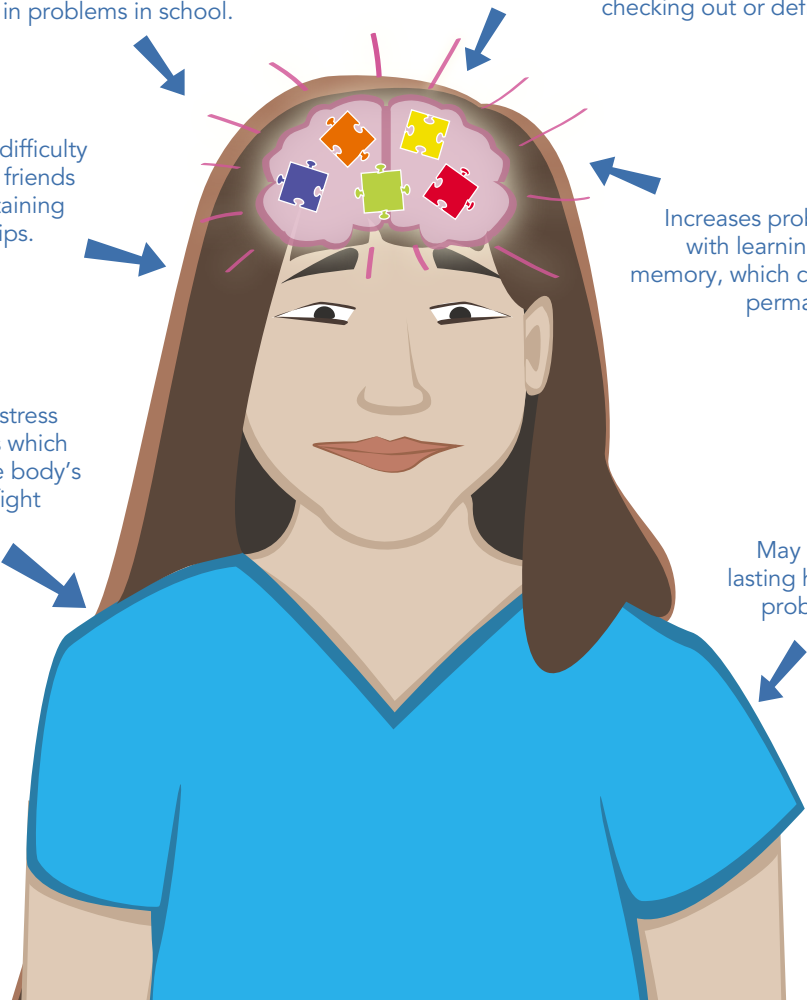
Lowers tolerance for stress, which can result in behaviors such as fighting, checking out or defiance.

Increases difficulty in making friends and maintaining relationships.

Increases problems with learning and memory, which can be permanent.

Increases stress hormones which affects the body's ability to fight infection.

May cause lasting health problems.



A Survival Mode Response to toxic stress increases a child's heart rate, blood pressure, breathing and muscle tension. Their thinking brain is knocked off-line. Self-protection is their priority. In other words: "I can't hear you! I can't respond to you! I am just trying to be safe!"

# JOYFUL TOGETHER OHIO CHILDREN'S TRUST FUND

A look at a Joyful Together project in the Northeast Ohio communities, from 2021 to 2022



We wanted to learn if the successes of past families who completed Joyful Together carried over even in high stress times like the COVID-19 pandemic—Turns out they did! Read below about continued family reports of positive outcomes using Joyful Together!

## More about Joyful Together OCTF 2021-2022

The Institute of Family and Community Impact received funding to introduce Joyful Together to families with young children 2021-2022 from Ohio Children's Trust Fund. Our goal was to spread joy with families throughout Lorain, Medina, Summit and Wayne counties. 44 children and parent/caregivers went through our 6-week Joyful Together program. Families met with Joyful Together coaches each week for 30-60 minutes online or in-person (ex: at home, or in the park). Coaches introduced the "wise" of Joyful Together and encouraged families to share their joy language and add joyful together activities to their normal daily routines. Halfway through, most families had already found their favorite joyful together activities and spent the last three Joyful Together sessions trying new ideas, reflecting lessons learned, or maybe their own memories of playing with the kids, and began verbalizing the small-big changes they were seeing in kids, family and even themselves when adding and increasing Joyful Play. Continue reading to learn about the assessments we used, and to learn more about the results!

## ASSESSMENTS:

The Devereux  
Early Childhood  
Assessment  
(DECA)

The Devereux  
Student  
Strengths  
Assessment  
(DESSA)

The Protective  
Factors Survey,  
Version 2 (PFS-2)

## Joyful Together Ohio Children's Trust Fund Results

- The average scores of the DECA, DSSA, and PFS-2 surveys improved or remained the same
- The caregiver-practitioner relationship as a protective factor was found to be significant at a 45% change.
- Significance was also found in the family functioning and resilience protective factor at 15%.

### What were we asking?

- Would parent stress decrease?
- Would childhood protective factors increase?
- Would family relationships improve?

## Our Participants Highlighted Prevalent Needs:



Healthy & safe outlets  
for family activity



Social connection  
& support



Food Assistance,  
Basic Needs Coverage



Navigating the  
COVID-19 pandemic



Ohio Children's Trust Fund  
Ohio's Prevent Child Abuse America Chapter



# DECEMBER READING CORNER

Each month we will include readings that are relevant to our work at IFCI!  
This month's recommendations all align with our Joyful Together Play Based Model!



## "The Importance of Play in the Parent-Child Relationship"



This article explores play as a defining element in the parent-child relationship. The authors connect play to preparation for the child's adult life. The findings suggest that play is connected to child development and allows the child to develop a distinctive personality.

## "Summer Fun Creating Positive Childhood Experiences"

In this article, Ohio Children's Trust Fund (OCTF) offers parents free ways to create Positive Childhood Experiences (PCEs) with their children. There is a more in-depth PCE article hyperlinked within this short, sweet, and Summer-sunshine-centered article!



## "Toxic Stress Exposure in Childhood Linked to Risky Behavior, Adult Disease"

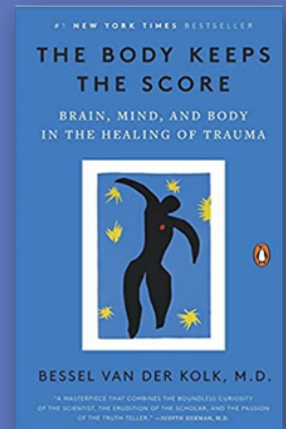


This article explores toxic stress in children and the importance of supportive adult-child relationships to combat toxic stress.

## WHAT WE'RE READING:

This month our Team is reading "The Body Keeps the Score!" We at IFCI know that exposure to toxic stress and trauma impacts the body, and our Joyful Together model promotes building relationships to combat the impact of toxic stress and trauma! Read the quick summary from Amazon below and scan the QR code to buy the book! We at IFCI promote Trauma-informed care, trainings and innovations- read along with us to find out more!

*"This book explores recent scientific advances to show how trauma literally reshapes both body and brain, compromising sufferers' capacities for pleasure, engagement, self-control, and trust. He explores innovative treatments—from neurofeedback and meditation to sports, drama, and yoga—that offer new paths to recovery by activating the brain's natural neuroplasticity. The Body Keeps the Score exposes the tremendous power of our relationships both to hurt and to heal—and offers new hope for reclaiming lives."*



- (1) Runcan, P., Petravcovschi (Ionescu), S. & Borca, C.V. (2012). The Importance of Play in the Parent-Child Interaction. Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences. 46. 795-799. 10.1016/j.sbspro.2012.05.201.
- (2) Ohio Children's Trust Fund
- (3) Kashef, Z (2015). Toxic Stress Exposure in Childhood Linked to Risky Behavior, Adult Disease. - YaleNews. <https://news.yale.edu/2015/11/19/toxic-stress-exposure-childhood-linked-risky-behavior-adult-disease>

# COMMUNITY RESOURCES



We work with the communities we serve! Below are some resources that might be of help to you, the READER! This is also where you can add your own resources! Contact [IFCI@ohioguidestone.org](mailto:IFCI@ohioguidestone.org) to include your resources in upcoming releases!

## HELP ME GROW



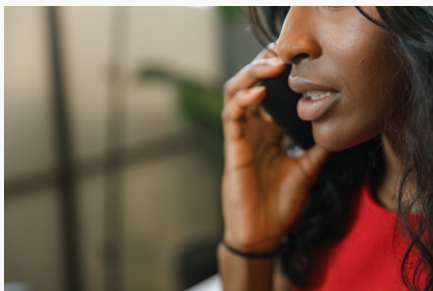
Help Me Grow is an evidence-based parent support program that promotes early prenatal and well-baby care, and parental education to promote the comprehensive health and development of children. Filling out the referral form is the first step for caregivers who have concerns about their infant or child. Follow the hyperlink above to fill out the referral form!

## COMMUNITY RESOURCE SERVICES



Located in Avon Lake, Ohio. Community Resource Services is a responsive, community-based organization that seeks to diminish the negative impacts of poverty in Avon, Lake. The website provides community members with information on resources such as the food pantry, financial assistance programs, and more!

## NATIONAL MENTAL HEALTH HOTLINE FOR EXPECTING MOTHERS



This "warm line" is for women before, during, and after pregnancy. This number can be used if you need to talk or if you are experiencing a non-emergent behavioral health issue. Accommodates English and Spanish speaking moms:  
1-833-943-5746

## IN FUTURE NEWSLETTERS, LOOK OUT FOR EVENTS WHERE YOU CAN MEET THE OHIOGUIDESTONE CREW!

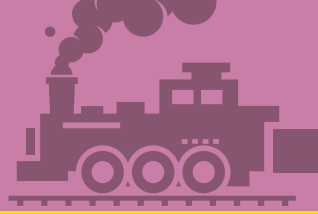


Pictured: OhioGuidestone staff at the WIC Medina Farmer's Market event! Spreading JOY with the Joyful Together info-booth and discussing Early Childhood Mental Health with community members :) We look forward to meeting you!

Check out the 2nd December Newsletter for more resources! We have two December newsletters this month—the second one includes mental health resources and more!

# RESEARCH RAILROAD

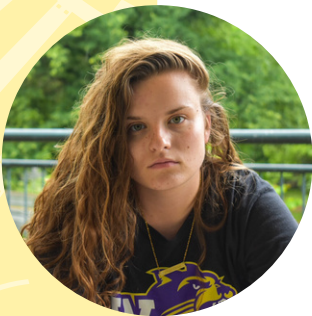
All aboard the IFCI Train to more equitable community solutions!



This month you will meet IFCI's conductors of research! The Research Assistant Team will be introduced in the next few pages...stay turned for more IFCI introductions in the coming months!



We're hiring! We have a few openings, including full-time, part-time and PRN. Check out these openings on [OhioGuidestone.org](https://ohioguidestone.org)  
Research Assessor (license holding or license-eligible clinician with a research interest)- PRN and part-time  
Research Assistant (wide range of backgrounds and expertise who want to make an impact using research, training and innovation with an equity and community focus)  
Institute Scholar (internship role for volunteer or class credits for across fields/majors)



Payten R. Kleinhenz is a Full-Time Research Assistant for the Institute of Family and Community Impact at OhioGuidestone. She graduated from Western Carolina University (Go Cats!) in May 2022 with her Bachelor of Science in Sociology with a Political Science minor. Her primary research interests are inequality and stratification, human rights, and poverty. She is a lifelong learner who enjoys reading for pleasure. When Payten is not at work, she can be found talking on the phone with her great-grandmother or spending time with her dog Aspen. Since she is new to this area, she loves exploring her new home any chance that she gets! P.S. she is the leader and writer of the Monthly Newsletter that you are currently reading! :)



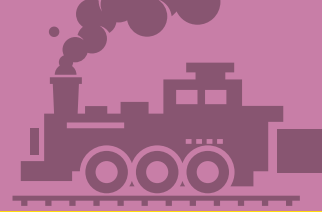
Taylor Mason is a Summa Cum Laude graduate from Kent State University with a bachelor's degree in Psychology. They are a member of Phi Beta Kappa and graduate student at Antioch University's Clinical Mental Health Counseling program. They are a research assistant for The Institute of Family and Community Impact at OhioGuidestone. They recruit and enroll participants for the Joyful Together OCTF Study. They also manage participant progress and data. Taylor has been a research assistant for four other psychological research laboratories at Kent State University. They also have experience as a Registered Behavioral Health Technician at behavioral health center for children.



Tiffany Star Skillern-M.A, CCC-SLP is a board certified, state licensed Speech-Language Pathologist with an ASHA Certification of Clinical Competence. Tiffany is the owner of S.T.A.R Treatment Education and Therapy Services whose goal is to provide family training and Speech-Language, Preschool Readiness, and Feeding intervention. She is the author of a parent guide on Amazon.com titled Relentless: A Parents' Pursuit for Peace. Tiffany is also the owner of Metamor5sis, Inc. whose mission is to strengthen families by helping women who are justice involved or in recovery navigate the barriers of reentry. Tiffany is the mother of 5 beautiful children! Her other passions include Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc, raising awareness about Pediatric Feeding Disorders, and community service.

# RESEARCH RAILROAD

All aboard the IFCI Train to more equitable community solutions!



Oscar Perez is a senior at Cleveland State University who is majoring in psychology with a minor in statistics. He hopes to become a clinical psychologist in the future and has a passion for breaking mental health barriers in communities of color. In his personal time, Oscar enjoys hiking, biking, running, and nearly anything that puts him in nature. Oscar also enjoys cooking, math, the arts, and playing with his new puppy Bleu. He is very excited to be a member of the research team at OhioGuidestone!



Ashley Seeling is a part-time research assistant at OhioGuidestone and a master's student at Cleveland State University studying Psychological Science. Her primary research interests are terror management theory, existential isolation, and religion/spirituality. At OhioGuidestone, she assists with the Joyful Together project, which helps children and caregivers strengthen their relationships through play. In her free time, she enjoys crocheting, geocaching, and playing board games.



Zach Dispirito is currently a student in Heidelberg University's Master's of Arts in Counseling program, a setting that fosters his profound interests in supporting individuals, couples, and families with communication, mood, attachment, or thought concerns. Whenever he isn't working or studying, Zach has his cat, Arlo, to keep him company while he watches TV, cooks, or listens to music. When the weather is cooperative, Zach may be found on with his kayak on the lake, but whenever the weather is dreadful, he'll be under a blanket on the couch.



Kiliyah Mair is a Part-time Research Assistant for the Applied Clinical Sciences & Research Team at Ohio Guidestone. She is currently studying at Baldwin Wallace University as a Senior Psychology Major with a minor in Diversity Studies. By utilizing her research experience with anti-fat discrimination, misogynoir, and structural inequalities, Kiliyah intends to acquire her Ph.D. in Clinical Mental Health Counseling and combat the long-term psychological and physical conditions created by oppression. During her free time, Kiliyah enjoys watching TV dramas, writing short stories, and engaging in meaningful conversation with family, friends, and peers. Her primary goal is to accumulate as much knowledge as she can before returning to her hometown of Lorain, Ohio and creating programs for marginalized populations in her community.



Raven-Lynn Lipford is a senior at Case Western Reserve University studying English Literature and Bioethics and Medical Humanities. She is joining OhioGuidestone as a part-time research assistant working on the Black Maternal Vitality project with Brittany Pope. Her goal after undergrad is to become a physician assistant who works internationally on global health projects! She hosts her own podcast every Sunday that focuses on mental health and well-being called RayofLight TV! A note from Raven: I am extremely grateful to be here and learn more about the health of Black women.



# FEATURED



WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU! One of OhioGuidestone's Institute of Family and Community Impacts goals in issuing these Monthly Newsletters is to collaborate with the community we serve! Are you a participant who wants to share your individual or family story? Email [IFCI@ohioguidestone.org](mailto:IFCI@ohioguidestone.org) to set-up an interview, or to share a written/video testimony to be featured in our newsletter!



## OhioGuidestone

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or scan the QR code to learn more!



# WHAT'S NEXT AND FEEDBACK

## Quarterly Newsletter

The Institute of Family and Community Impact will be releasing monthly newsletters like this one to communicate our projects, innovations, and other happenings while strengthening our relationship with the community in an accessible manner. On a Quarterly basis, we will also release a Quarterly Newsletter. This newsletter will include a deeper dive into happenings within The Institute of Family and Community Impact, and serve as a way to continue to hold ourselves to an accessibility level appropriate for the community we work with. We will provide detailed summaries of our Institute initiatives and innovations, along with news-worthy information, and our reading corner. This will aid in our ongoing communication with the community and strengthen our bond as we seek to serve, advocate and partner with you.

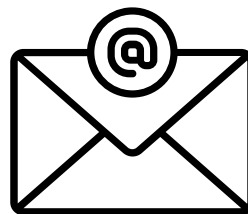
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## Feedback

Thank you for reading the December monthly newsletter from the Institute of Family and Community Impact! This was our first release, and we would love to hear from YOU—the reader! What would you like to see? If you are reading this as a participant in our research and you would like to be featured in an upcoming Monthly or Quarterly newsletter to share your story, please email us at [IFCI@ohioguidestone.org](mailto:IFCI@ohioguidestone.org).

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## CONTACT US!



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Twitter: @ifci\_research Email: [IFCI@ohioguidestone.org](mailto:IFCI@ohioguidestone.org)

# SUPPORT OUR VISION!



The Institute of Family and Community Impact, an OhioGuidestone initiative believes in building strengths in individuals and communities by addressing the barriers individuals, families and communities face. We do research, while offering trainings, developing innovations, advocating for trauma-informed policies, translating science, and publishing products! We work with communities whose voices have been historically silenced by forced marginalization. To support our vision of building resilient communities, follow the steps to donate below! Continue reading our monthly and quarterly newsletters to see the impact of your donation!

## Donation Steps:

[Scan this QR code or click here to donate virtually.](#)



**Click the amount you would like to donate or specify an amount of your choosing.**

**Direct your donation by using the dropdown menu. To direct your donation to the Institute of Family and Community Impact, click "IFCI" in the dropdown menu.**

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