

infants, this may be a mismatch between capabilities and capacities and their environments. The Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University describes stress as *positive, tolerable, or toxic*. They write that stress *can have a cumulative toll on an individual's physical and mental health—for a lifetime. The more adverse experiences in childhood, the greater the likelihood of developmental delays and later health problems.*⁴ We know what this looks like from our observational NIDCAP training. We observe autonomic, motoric, state, attentional, and regulatory stabilities, stresses, and strivings.

Heidelise frequently quoted Winnicott's writing: *Babies are liable to the most severe anxieties... if left for too long (hours or minutes) without familiar and human contact; they have experiences which can only be described as: Going to pieces; Falling forever; Dying, dying, dying; and Losing all vestige of hope for the renewal of contact.*⁵

Resilience is not an innate quality. From the womb, fetuses are developing all sorts of competencies. When newborns are born prematurely, they may be described as "fighters" with strong drives to steady, survive and thrive. Yet, after attempts to steady and to thrive, they may have experiences of repeated overwhelming instability and they may give up. This is what is referred to in psychology as learned helplessness. If this situation persists it may result in failure to thrive outcomes.

Reilience develops and is affected by experience. The Model of Stress applies to individuals of all ages, including parents of infants in intensive care. Illness, sleep deprivation, anxiety, fears, struggles, all strain experiences of resilience and well-being and unfolding parenting confidence and competence. Professor Kristen Lee Costa wrote: *sometimes we just don't have the skills we need for emotional regulation or stress tolerance. In general, our threshold for coping can vary a lot,*

(continued on p.3)

Editorial

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A milestone in a shared journey



The echoes of the 34th Annual NIDCAP Trainers Meeting are still resonating, marking yet another milestone in our shared journey of promoting developmental care for hospitalized newborns. In this issue of the Developmental Observer, we are thrilled to bring you the essence of the

meeting, capturing the energy and insights that unfolded during this significant event.

One of the highlights was Deborah Buehler's Inaugural Heidelise Als Lecture, a powerful discourse on resilience that injects fresh inspiration into our NIDCAP endeavors. The echoes of her words continue to reverberate, reminding us of the profound impact our collective efforts can have on the lives of the infants we care for.

Our global community shone brightly as we heard about the groundbreaking work happening across continents. Abstract presentations from Australia, Belgium, Canada, Colombia, France, Germany, Iran, Israel, Qatar, and Spain showcased the diversity and richness of our shared commitment. We are confident that the innovative approaches highlighted in these presentations will serve as motivation for your work.

Gretchen Lawhon, in her insightful summary of the meeting, emphasizes the paramount importance of family in our mission. She articulates how the family unit plays a pivotal role in the NIDCAP journey, underlining the interconnectedness of our work with the broader fabric of familial bonds.

Through the lens of Family Voices, Katie Reginato Cascamo shares a deeply personal account of her NIDCAP experience, demonstrating the transformative power of listening

and the profound impact it had on her premature son. Her narrative exemplifies the human dimension of our work and reinforces the enduring value of empathy in healthcare.

Venturing into the international landscape, we explore developmental care in China and Xiaojing Hu's dedicated efforts to integrate NIDCAP principles. The global imprint of NIDCAP is evident, resonating with our shared commitment to realizing the goals set by the NFI for NIDCAP care worldwide.

As the Developmental Observer embarks on its 17th volume, we are committed to bringing you innovative stories that captivate and inform. In our new "Behind the Scenes" feature, we introduce Rob Catalano, a hidden force behind the scenes since the inception of our publication. His story illuminates the collaborative efforts of the many committed individuals who contribute to each issue.

Your feedback is the lifeblood of our publication, and we eagerly anticipate hearing from you. Let us know which features resonate with you and share your ideas for new content.

Thank you for your unwavering commitment to the NIDCAP mission.

Kaye Spence AM FACNN

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Erratum. Image on page 10 of Vol 16, Issue 3 should read – 'Joana'