

S T R E S S R E S P O N S E

POSITIVE

Physiological response to mild or moderate stressor

Brief activation of stress response elevates heart rate, blood pressure, and hormonal levels

Homeostasis recovers quickly through body's natural coping mechanisms

Tough test at school, playoff game

TOLERABLE

Adaptive response to time-limited stressor

Time-limited activation of stress response results in short-term systemic changes

Homeostasis recovers through buffering effect of caring adult or other interventions

Immigration, natural disaster

TOXIC

Maladaptive response to intense and sustained stressor

Prolonged activation of stress response in children disrupts brain architecture and increases risk of health disorders

Prolonged allostasis establishes a chronic stress response

Abuse, neglect, household dysfunction

Fig. 2. Spectrum of the stress response: positive, tolerable, and toxic.