Understanding Toxic Stress and Brain Development

Name: _____ Date: _____

Part 1: Video Viewing Questions

Watch the video and answer the following questions using short, clear sentences.

1. **What happens in the body and brain when a person experiences normal, short-lived stress?**
    - *Answer:*

      _____
      _____
    - *Answer:*

      _____
      _____
2. **What role do caring adults play when a young child experiences stress?**
    - *Answer:*

      _____
      _____
    - *Answer:*

      _____
      _____
3. **How is "toxic stress" defined in the video?**
    - *Answer:*

      _____
      _____
    - *Answer:*

      _____
      _____
4. **What are two or three examples of extreme adversity that can lead to toxic stress?**
    - *Answer:*

      _____
      _____
    - *Answer:*

      _____
      _____

Part 2: Matching — Types of Stress

Match each type of stress response to its correct description based on Harvard's Guide to Toxic Stress.

Stress Type	Description
1. Positive Stress	**A.** Severe, long-lasting difficulties (like loss or disaster), but the child is protected and helped by supportive relationships.
2. Tolerable Stress	**B.** Brief, mild-to-moderate increases in heart rate and hormones; normal part of growth with adult comfort.
3. Toxic Stress	**C.** Strong, frequent, or prolonged activation of the body's alert system *without* a caring adult buffer, harming brain architecture.

- Your answers:
  - 1 = ____
  - 2 = ____
  - 3 = ____

Part 3: Fill in the Blank

Use the word bank below to complete the sentences.

Word Bank: *high alert, buffer, brain architecture, connections, caring adults*

1. Without _____ to act as a safety net, severe stress overloads developing systems.
2. Over time, toxic stress leaves the body's stress response system permanently set on _____.
3. Prolonged stress hormones can weaken the development of healthy _____ in the brain.
4. Having a responsive relationship with an adult can _____ the negative effects of stress.

Part 4: Reflection & Application

Think critically about the video and answer in 2–3 sentences.

1. **Why is the presence of a responsive, caring adult considered an "insurance policy" or protective factor for a child's brain?**

2. **What is one way a school, community, or family can help reduce toxic stress for children?**