



## EXPLANATORY METAPHOR

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# Overloaded

**A metaphor for the relationship between social conditions and a parent's ability to buffer their children from toxic stress**

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### **The story you're telling**

Just as a truck can only bear so much weight before it stops moving forward, challenging life circumstances can overburden parents, making it hard for them to provide the best kinds of care and support.

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### **Strategically redirects thinking away from patterns such as:**

- Individualism
- Fatalism
- Stigma

## Overloaded

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### Concepts included in this frame element:

- **When a truck carries too much weight for a long period of time, its axles and engines are stressed, making it difficult to move forward:** Making people think about the long-term effects of being overburdened helps to explain how past experiences of stress can accumulate and affect people in the future.
- **Heavy loads make a truck move more slowly, and can also cause damage to the truck:** Communicating that stressors cause different kinds of effects, both short- and long-term, helps to explain how social drivers can lead to a wide range of problems.
- **Trucks that don't have access to regular maintenance—things like oil changes and tire rotations—are more prone to breaking down when saddled with an especially heavy load:** Explaining that people need regular supportive experiences to build and maintain their abilities to care for children even in times of stress helps to build support for preventive policies and programs.
- **There are many ways of helping an overloaded truck. We can bring in other trucks, find specialists to make repairs, and think about how to redistribute the weight:** Proposing solutions helps to make them concrete in the public's mind.
- **We can prevent breakdown in the first place by figuring out ways to keep some of the heaviest loads from ever coming onto the truck:** Suggesting that becoming overloaded is not inevitable helps people see there are things that can be done to prevent children and families from experiencing toxic stress.