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Contact: Bethany Rhodes | National Strategies Public Relations

Phone: 813-865-3093 | Email: brhodes@nspublicrelations.com

REACH OUT AND READ ADDRESSES CHILD POVERTY IN FIVE-PART PODCAST SERIES

New York Times columnist and philanthropist Nicholas Kristof headlines the series on why and how poverty can impact a child's early relationships and lifelong health — and how to mitigate it

BOSTON (Sept. 17, 2024) – [Reach Out and Read](#), a national nonprofit at the forefront of promoting early childhood literacy and relationships as a part of pediatric care, launches this week a five-part podcast series featuring experts on the childhood poverty epidemic and its lifelong impact on millions of children.

Reach Out and Read's award-winning [podcast](#) is hosted by Dr. Dipesh Navsaria, a pediatrician with a master's degree in children's librarianship, and covers a wealth of topics centered on the belief that children's books build better brains and foster healthy family relationships. In this "Spotlight on Poverty" series, Navsaria will be joined by a variety of notable guests, including experts in early childhood, early learning, and public health, starting with Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist Nicholas Kristof.

"We have strong research and practice evidence showing that bolstering the strength of parent-child relationships makes a massive difference for those coping with chronic adversity," Navsaria said. "While programs like Reach Out and Read aren't the only answer to poverty, they are a much bigger part of the solution than people might think."

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, 10 million children — 13.7 percent of children under 18 — are living in poverty. Those children are three times as likely to experience Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), which can have long-term impacts on health and well-being.

Kristof connects childhood poverty and early relationships in his new book, "Chasing Hope." "We measure poverty with metrics of income and wealth, but that doesn't get at the real gaps," he wrote. "Looking back, the kind of poverty that mattered most had to do with how infrequently children were read to, or hugged, or told they were loved."

The podcast series, which kicks off this Thursday, focuses on the intersection of childhood poverty and healthy early relationships — and how the early childhood, health, and learning ecosystem can work to mitigate poverty's impact. Across the next 10 weeks, the podcast will feature:

- **“Nick Kristof on How to Talk So People Will Listen”** — Navsaria and Kristof on how we can frame the conversation about public issues that seem insurmountable — like poverty — so that people will listen. **(Drops Sept. 19)**
- **“Seeing the Families Beyond the Numbers”** — Stanford researchers Caristi Carman and Dr. Philip Fisher discuss what data says in terms of how to study the problem of poverty. **(Drops Oct. 3)**
- **“Home Visiting Supports Families Where They Need It Most”** — Parent educator Emily Callahan and child development specialist Jennifer Bronsdon share what on-the-ground, large, organizational structures like home-visiting programs can reveal what families need to thrive. **(Drops Oct. 17)**
- **“Positive Relationships Can Help Mitigate the Effects of Poverty”** — Dr. Kate Rosenblum and Dr. Navsaria discuss how positive interpersonal approaches with children can mitigate the effects of poverty-related ACEs. **(Drops Oct. 31)**
- **“How Reach Out and Read Is Helping”** — Reach Out and Read’s Ruth Coleman, Alex Chu, and Callee Boulware outline how the nonprofit’s new strategic plan uses research to focus on under-resourced communities and support approaches to poverty and healthy early relationships. **(Drops Nov. 14)**

(See short bios for all guests below.)

“When there’s poverty, we try to address it with an income stream,” Kristof says in the first episode of the series. “And that’s important. But I think we don’t always figure out how to provide the (educational and socio-emotional) investments in the home that are standard in many middle-class homes, but don’t exist in chaotic homes.”

Public policy has often failed the needs of those households and kids, Kristof said. “Public investments in children tend in the most to begin at age 5 or so. ... We tend to miss those early years, which are crucial for dealing with trauma, for brain development, etc.”

Reach Out and Read is trying to bridge that gap. The nonprofit, which currently serves 4.4 million children annually, recently announced a goal to [reach 10 million children](#) — half of the U.S. population from birth to 5 — by 2030. The final episode of this series will feature Reach Out and Read National staff and Affiliate leaders discussing how the program works to strengthen families with young children, especially those in under-resourced communities, through nurturing relationships and shared reading.

To learn more about this podcast series and Reach Out and Read, visit ReachOutAndRead.org.

Podcast guests

Part 1

- **Nicholas Kristof:** A columnist for The New York Times who has earned two Pulitzer Prizes.

Part 2

- **Cristi Carman:** As Director of the RAPID Survey Project at the Stanford Center on Early Childhood, Carman leads the research team that administers national, state, and community surveys to better understand the experiences, challenges, and resiliency of young children and their caregivers.

- **Dr. Philip Fisher:** Excellence in Learning Endowed Professor at Stanford's Graduate School of Education and Director of the Stanford Center on Early Childhood. His research focuses on developmental neuroscience of early life adversity, strengthening early childhood systems, and accelerating research in the field.

Part 3

- **Emily Callahan:** A Parent Educator with the Parents as Teachers program at MGH Revere Healthcare Center, where she has worked for over five years supporting families facing everyday challenges. She is also a certified Child Passenger Safety Technician and is pursuing certification in Lactation Counseling. Emily has extensive experience in home visiting, including working with families of children with developmental delays and disabilities.
- **Jennifer Brondson:** A Child Development Specialist and Certified Lactation Counselor in the Healthy Steps program at MGH Revere Healthcare Center, where she also coordinates the Parents as Teachers home visiting program. She has worked in Pediatrics at MGH Revere since 2000 and previously served as a home visitor in early intervention.

Part 4

- **Dr. Kate Rosenblum:** A clinical and developmental psychologist and Professor of Psychiatry, Obstetrics & Gynecology, and Pediatrics at the University of Michigan. She co-directs Zero to Thrive, which promotes family health and resilience from conception to early childhood. She co-directs the Infant and Early Childhood Clinic and developed Strong Roots Programs, a series of evidence-based mental health and parenting promotions and interventions to strengthen families and promote early relational health.

Part 5

- **Dr. Ruth Coleman:** Reach Out and Read's National Senior Director of Growth who immigrated from Nigeria at age 9, sparking her commitment to marginalized communities. With over 20 years in nonprofit work and 13 years as an organizational consultant, she enhances growth strategies focused on collaboration and leadership, with a strong commitment to equity and inclusion.
- **Callee Boulware:** Executive Director of Reach Out and Read in the Carolinas since 2001, Callee has led the regional expansion to include Virginia and Washington, D.C. She is dedicated to making Reach Out and Read strong and sustainable for children and families.
- **Alex Chu:** Executive Director of Reach Out and Read Northeast Region with over 20 years of experience in strategic planning, youth development, and program evaluation. He is focused on enhancing the educational and social impact of Reach Out and Read's programs to include diversity and inclusion.

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About Reach Out and Read: As a 501(c)3 nonprofit, Reach Out and Read leverages the near-universal reach of the pediatric well-child visit to support caregivers in fostering healthy relationships with their young children through shared reading. In FY23, Reach Out and Read served more than 4.4 million children and provided 7.1 million free books across 8.8 million

well-child visits. More than 70 percent of the children Reach Out and Read serves are from low-income families. The only national pediatric literacy model endorsed by the American Academy of Pediatrics, Reach Out and Read serves children in every state across the U.S., through 6,200 clinics and the expertise of 36,000 clinicians. Recent research in a [peer-reviewed study published in Academic Pediatrics](#) confirms the program's effectiveness in increasing the frequency of parental reading, which builds early language and literacy skills and strengthens family relationships.

Discover more at reachoutandread.org.