



Teen Stress

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What Is Stress



- ❖ **“EXPECTATIONS”**
- ❖ The body’s physical and psychological response to anything perceived as “overwhelming”.
- ❖ A natural part of life.



Stress



- ❖ Begins the first moment we are born.
- ❖ Not automatically a bad thing.
- ❖ Being stressed or “challenged” makes you learn new things and promotes brain functioning.
- ❖ In all the major theories of learning, there is stress.
- ❖ The amount of stress that youth today are faced with can be overwhelming.



S.T.R.E.S.S. =

Someone
Trying to
Repair
Every
Situation
Solo

-Dave Willis



The Effects of Stress



- ❖ Teen stress and worry can make simple everyday activities like coming to school ***DIFFICULT***.
- ❖ Too much stress causes children to get immobilized and can interfere with their development.

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Continued Effects of Stress

❖ Stress is the single most contributing factor for mental health problems in children and teens.

- Anxiety
- Depression
- Eating Disorders
- Substance Use
- Self-Injury Behaviors
- Suicidal Ideation



Causes of Stress

- ❖ Academic/School stress
- ❖ Learning or attention issues
- ❖ Career/College decisions
- ❖ Family Changes/Conflict
- ❖ Dating and peer/friend relationships
- ❖ **Social Media**
- ❖ Pressure to belong or be accepted
- ❖ Over scheduling
- ❖ Fear of failure
- ❖ Perfectionism
- ❖ Hormones/Puberty
- ❖ Body image
- ❖ Being exposed to bullying, sexual harassment, or violence



Warning Signs



❖ Emotional

- Increased anger/irritability
- Tearfulness/easily upset
- Constant worry/nervousness
- Difficulty focusing or concentrating
- Feeling powerless/incapable
- Negative self-talk
- Loneliness or feeling rejected/isolated
- Shutting down/withdrawn
- Difficulty making decisions
- Anxiety/Depression

❖ Physical

- Headaches/Migraines
- Stomachaches/gastrointestinal problems
- Increased Fatigue
- Restlessness
- Change in Appetite
- Difficulties falling or staying asleep
- Increased nightmares
- Dizziness, heart racing, muscle tension
- Panic attacks



How to Help



- ❖ Assist your teen in adapting to stress, rather than trying to avoid or change stressors
- ❖ Be a positive example (“MODEL”)
- ❖ Focus on “process” NOT “product”
- ❖ Listen to your child to “understand”, not “fix” their stress
- ❖ Reflective listening and validation of feelings
- ❖ Empower teen to problem solve
- ❖ Remind teen of things they can and cannot control





- ❖ Encourage healthy habits
- ❖ Move on...don't make the situation bigger than it is
- ❖ Be patient, follow up on teen's plan of action, but don't nag
- ❖ Confront unrealistic expectations
- ❖ Monitor and LIMIT screen time and social media use
- ❖ Use of Mental Health apps
- ❖ Seek Help



Tools for Reducing Stress



- Books
- Stress Balls
- Music
- Journaling & Drawing
- Physical Activity
- Mental Health Apps
- Visualization & Imagination Activities
- Deep Breathing & Relaxation Exercises
- Teach Organizational & Time Management Skills
- Free Time



What Are Coping Skills?

C - Create

O - Opportunities

P - Personal

E - Empowerment



Empowerment vs. Enabling

Empowerment

The process of encouraging or authorizing an individual to think, behave, take action, and control work and decision making in autonomous ways.

Enabling

The process of taking responsibility, blame, or making accommodations for another person's thoughts, feelings, or behaviors (often with the best of intentions).



Asking for Help



- ❖ Sometimes even with our best efforts, there comes a time to ask for additional help.
- ❖ A mental health evaluation of the child and/or family system may be necessary to assess the need for therapy services and/or medication(s) to provide an increased opportunity for development of healthy coping skills and healthy boundaries.



Conclusion



- ❖ Stress is a *normal* part of life.
- ❖ It is necessary to teach & encourage youth how to “*COPE*”.
- ❖ The primary adults in teen’s lives need to focus on teen’s *readiness* for tomorrow, not just their happiness for today.
- ❖ The end result will be increased self-confidence, self-control, and self-esteem on which teens can build healthy relationships and form a healthy self-image.



Inspiration



“You are braver than you believe, stronger than you seem, and smarter than you think.”

- A.A. Milne

Favorite Mantras



- ❖ “Do your Best, Forget the Rest”
- ❖ “You can do anything, but not everything”
- ❖ “It’s just a bad day, not a bad life”



Helpful Resources

Books:

Emotional Literacy: To Be a Different Kind of Smart by Rob Bocchino

Fighting Invisible Tigers by Earl Hipp

How to Raise An Adult by Julie Lythcott-Haims

How to Talk So Teens Will Listen & Listen So Teens Will Talk by Adele Faber

Positive Parenting by Rebecca Eanes

Pressure: True Stories by Teens About Stress by Al Desetta, M.A.

The Gift of Failure by Jessica Lahey

The Price of Privilege by Madeline Levine, PhD

The Teen Years Explained by Clea McNeely, MA, DrPhD and Jayne Blanchard

Websites:

American Psychological Association
www.apa.org

Anxiety Disorders Association of America
www.adaa.org

Mental Health America (MHA)
www.mentalhealthamerica.net

National Alliance on Mental Illness
www.nami.org

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration
www.samhsa.gov



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