



STRESS MANAGEMENT

As adults, we are well aware that stress is a part of our daily life, but we often forget that children experience stress as well.

Children and teenagers may experience stress due to one or many of the following triggers:

- Health issues, including chronic recurring complaints such as headaches, abdominal pain, poor diet and sleep patterns, and chronic diseases such as asthma and diabetes
- School-related issues such as concern about academic performance, conflict with teachers or classmates, conflict with parents about academic performance, or poor understanding of their attentional issues or learning disabilities
- Family issues such as parental conflict, separation, and divorce, illness and/or death of family members, and family issues involving mental health, employment, substance abuse, etc.
- Issues with peer acceptance, teasing and bullying, and the making and breaking of friendships
- Decisions about behavioral issues including smoking, drinking, drug use, and sexual activity
- Pressure involved in sports and extra-curricular activity participation or religious education
- Time management, completion of homework and other required activities

How can we help children manage their stress??

- Children should be encouraged to talk to family members, school personnel, physicians, and mental health providers
- Children should be encouraged to identify stress-relief activities such as writing in a journal, doing art activities, listening to music, or doing physical exercise
- Children should be aware that stress will directly affect them physically, potentially affecting eating, sleeping, and behavior, as well as causing physical complaints like headache, stomach ache, and fatigue.
- Parents should minimize children's involvement in parental conflict
- Parents should be honest about problems in the household, but should also make sure that the children remember that it is not their responsibility to solve adult problems.
- Parents should be supportive of group and individual therapy when it is necessary.

For more information on stress management in children, see http://kidshealth.org/parent/positive/talk/stress_coping.html