

How to support your kids when they are stressed

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What is stress

Stress is a function of the demands placed on us and our ability to meet them. It is our body's way of responding to any kind of demand. It can be caused by both good and bad experiences.

These can come from outside sources, such as family, school, and friends, but they can also come from within, often related to what we think we *should be* doing versus what we're actually able to do.

As kids get older, academic and social pressures (especially from trying to fit in) become more stressful.



A Poll from KidsHealth:

A KidsHealth® KidsPoll explored what kids stress about the most, how they cope with these feelings, and what they want their parents to do about it.

“What Kids Say About Handling Stress”

KidsHealth asked kids to tell them what things cause them the most stress. Kids said that they were stressed out the most by: grades, school, and homework (36%); family (32%); and friends, peers, gossip, and teasing (21%). These are the coping strategies kids said they use the most (they could give more than one response):

- 52% play or do something active
- 44% listen to music
- 42% watch TV or play a video game
- 30% talk to a friend
- 29% try not to think about it
- 28% try to work things out
- 26% eat something
- 23% lose their temper
- 22% talk to a parent
- 11% cry

Results of the poll:

- **About 25% of the kids that were surveyed said that when they are upset, they take it out on themselves, or doing something to hurt themselves.**
- These kids also were more likely to have other unhealthy coping strategies, such as eating, losing their tempers, and keeping problems to themselves.

The poll also revealed important news for parents:

- **Though talking to parents ranked eighth on the list of most popular coping methods, 75% of the kids surveyed said they want and need their parents' help in times of trouble. When they're stressed, they'd like their parents to talk with them, help them solve the problem, try to cheer them up, or just spend time together.**

The 4 Domains of Stress

Compared with what adults face, it might seem like kids don't have that much to stress about. But kids have their own concerns - and sometimes feel stress, just as adults do. And kids' stresses can be just as overwhelming, particularly if they don't have effective coping strategies.

- Interpersonal
- Physiological
- Situational
- Control

Interpersonal

- Relationships with others
 - Increases when there are strained or challenging relationships.
 - When this is high, we tend to be self-protective.

- At the Middle Schools:
 - Relationships and a sense of belonging are very important so this is a big stressor for students.
 - Self-protective: Argumentative, isolating, and “I don’t care.”



Physiological

- Area that focuses on the body
 - Lack of sleep, inadequate diet, even dehydration can make us more vulnerable to stress.
 - Stressful thoughts can appear physical in the form of tension, headaches, upset stomach and tight muscle.

- At the Middle Schools:
 - Constant complaints of headaches and stomachaches. Forgetting information.



Situational

- Centers on stress that comes from external events or situations
 - During these moments we are placed in a fight or flight reaction reaction pattern
 - When a person experiences situational stress for an extended period, it is called chronic stress. This increases your vulnerability to both physical and psychological issues that undermine positive well-being.
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- At the Middle Schools:
 - It is seen during Confrontations or when Singled Out

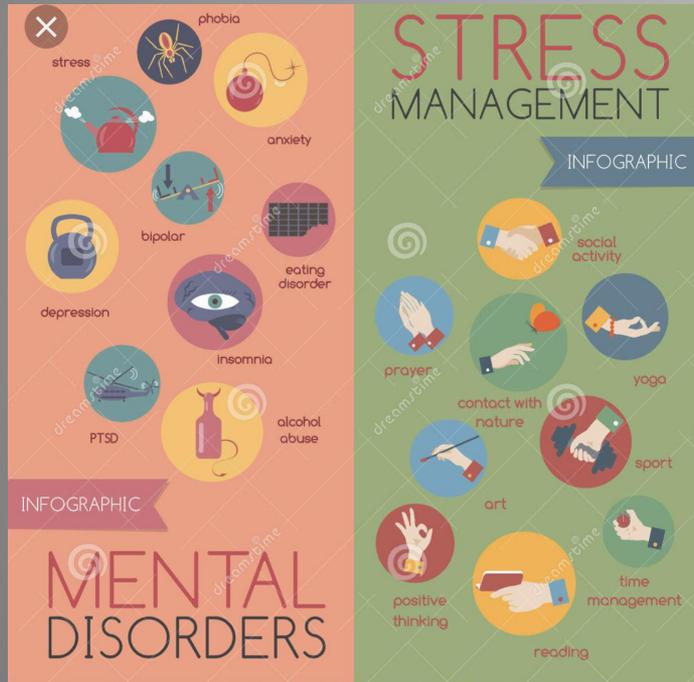


Control

- Involves feeling in control of your life and the situations
 - In psychology, we call this “locus of control”, possessing healthy levels of control will help feel like you are the captain of your ship
 - When people do not possess sufficient levels of feeling in control, they might revert to maladaptive thinking patterns such as negative thinking, hopelessness, and a belief that the world is a dangerous place.
- At the Middle Schools:
 - Students may feel like they have no control so they need help knowing they do have some control



Stress and Mental Health



When stress isn't dealt with effectively, it tends to build up.

For example,

- some people let stress build up until it explodes
- Some behave reactively
- Some repress and harbor resentment

Over time, the ineffective strategies can take a root in dysfunctional relationships and mental health issues such as general anxiety disorder, depression, obsessive compulsive disorders, PTSD, eating disorders, etc.

Signs and Symptoms

Short term behavioral changes:

- Mood swings
- Acting out
- Changes in sleep patterns
- Becoming withdrawn or spending a lot of time alone

Some kids have physical effects including:

- Stomachaches
- Headaches
- Trouble concentrating or completing schoolwork

Older kids may begin to lie, bully, or defy authority.

A child who is stressed also may overreact to minor problems, have nightmares, become clingy, or have drastic changes in academic performance.

How you can help!

As a parent, you can't protect your kids from stress — but you can help them develop healthy ways to cope with stress and solve everyday problems.

Kids deal with stress in both healthy and unhealthy ways. And while they may not initiate a conversation about what's bothering them, they do want their parents to reach out and help them cope with their troubles.

Notice Out Loud

Tell your child when you notice that something's bothering him or her.

If you can, name the feeling you think your child is experiencing. ("It seems like you're still mad about what happened at school during lunch")

This shouldn't sound like an accusation (as in, "OK, what happened now? Are you still mad about that?") or put a child on the spot. It's just a casual observation that you're interested in hearing more about your child's concern.

Be sympathetic and show you care and want to understand.

Listen to your child

Ask your child to tell you what's wrong.

Listen attentively and calmly — with interest, patience, openness, and caring.

Avoid any urge to judge, blame, lecture, or say what you think your child should have done instead.

The idea is to let your child's concerns (and feelings) be heard.

Try to get the whole story by asking questions like "And then what happened?" Take your time. And let your child take his or her time, too.



Comment briefly on the feelings you think your child is experiencing

For example, you might say "That must have been upsetting," "No wonder you felt mad when they wouldn't let you in the game," or "That must have seemed unfair to you."

Doing this shows that you understand what your child felt, why, and that you care.

Feeling understood and listened to helps your child feel supported by you, and that is especially important in times of stress.

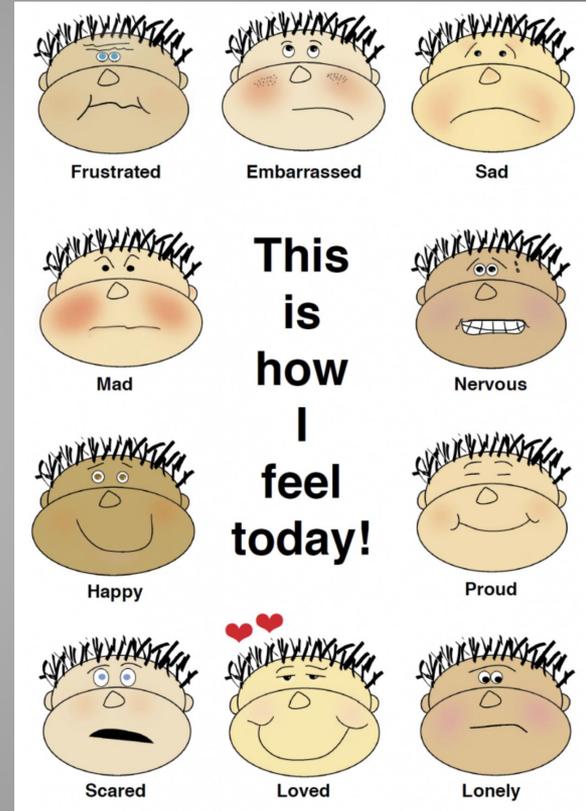
Put a label on it

Many younger kids do not yet have words for their feelings.

If your child seems angry or frustrated, use those words to help him or her learn to identify the emotions by name.

Putting feelings into words helps kids communicate and develop emotional awareness — the ability to recognize their own emotional states.

Kids who can do so are less likely to reach the behavioral boiling point where strong emotions come out through behaviors rather than communicated with words.



Help your child think of things to do

If there's a specific problem that's causing stress, talk together about what to do.

Encourage your child to think of a couple of ideas.

You can start the brainstorming if necessary, but don't do all the work.

Your child's active participation will build confidence.

Support the good ideas and add to them as needed. Ask, "How do you think this will work?"

Listen and move on

Sometimes talking and listening and feeling understood is all that's needed to help a child's frustrations begin to melt away.

Afterward, try changing the subject and moving on to something more positive and relaxing.

Help your child think of something to do to feel better.

Don't give the problem more attention than it deserves.

Limit stress where possible

If certain situations are causing stress, see if there are ways to change things.

For instance, if too many after-school activities consistently cause homework stress, it might be necessary to limit activities to leave time and energy for homework.



Just be there

Kids don't always feel like talking about what's bothering them. Sometimes that's OK. Let your kids know you'll be there when they do feel like talking. Even when kids don't want to talk, they usually don't want parents to leave them alone. You can help your child feel better just by being there —

keeping him or her company, spending time together.

So if you notice that your child seems to be down in the dumps, stressed, or having a bad day — but doesn't feel like talking — initiate something you can do together.

Take a walk, watch a movie, shoot some hoops, or bake some cookies.



Be Patient

As a parent, it hurts to see your child unhappy or stressed. But try to resist the urge to fix every problem. Instead, focus on helping your child, slowly but surely, grow into a good problem-solver — a kid who knows how to roll with life's ups and downs, put feelings into words, calm down when needed, and bounce back to try again.

This creates resilience, and prepares them for when life will be tough again!

Parents can't solve every problem as kids go through life. But by teaching healthy coping strategies, you'll prepare your kids to manage the stresses that come in the future.

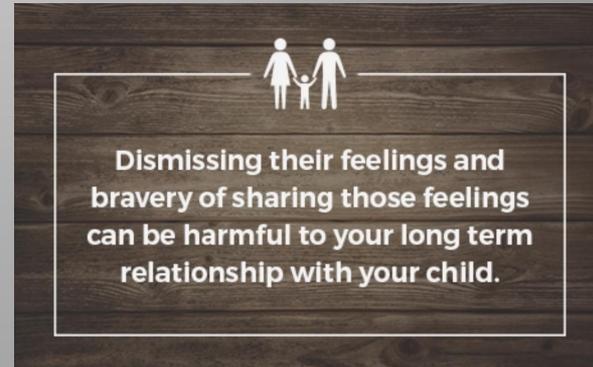
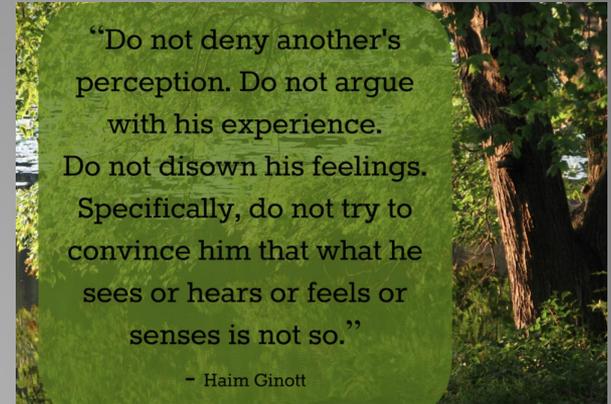
GOT A PROBLEM?

- 1. What's going on?**
- 2. What could we do?**
- 3. How did it go?**

Validation goes a long way!

Realize that some things that aren't a big deal to adults can cause significant stress for kids. Let your kids know that you understand they're stressed and don't dismiss their feelings as inappropriate.

Make time for your kids each day. Whether they need to talk or just be in the same room with you, make yourself available. Don't try to make them talk, even if you know what they're worried about. Sometimes kids just feel better when you spend time with them on fun activities.



Coping Strategies:

- Deep breathing
- Progressive muscle relaxation
- Create a relaxation kit
- Write and tear
- Worry journal
- Worry box
- Boss Back (talk back)
- Thought Stopping
- Create a character
- Engage in enjoyable activities
- Exercise

HOW TO
REFRAME
ALL YOUR
NEGATIVE
THOUGHTS

6 EFFECTIVE STRATEGIES

<p>1</p> <p>Be the Watcher</p> <p>Simply be conscious of yourself as a detached witness to your thoughts.</p>	<p>2</p> <p>Name That Thought</p> <p>Acknowledg that they are nothing more than thoughts—not your reality.</p>
<p>3</p> <p>Just Say No</p> <p>When you catch yourself in mental looping or worry, simply say, "STOP!" out loud.</p>	<p>4</p> <p>Try the Rubber Band Trick</p> <p>If you are stuck in negative thinking, gently pop it on your wrist.</p>
<p>5</p> <p>Know Your Triggers</p> <p>Pay attention to common worries and anxieties you brood about.</p>	<p>6</p> <p>Distract Yourself</p> <p>Do something that will occupy your mind so there's no room for the negative thoughts.</p>

6 Steps to Belly Breathing

<p>STEP 1</p>  <p>Sit in a Comfortable Position</p>	<p>STEP 2</p>  <p>Close Your Eyes</p>	<p>STEP 3</p>  <p>Breathe In Slowly and Count to Five</p>
<p>STEP 4</p>  <p>Feel Your Belly Fill with Air</p>	<p>STEP 5</p>  <p>Breathe Out Slowly Through Your Mouth</p>	<p>STEP 6</p>  <p>Repeat the Cycle Five Times</p>

PROGRESSIVE MUSCLE RELAXATION (PMR)

Anxiety and stress can create muscle tension. Learn to relax using PMR, where you create tension and release the different muscle groups of your body one at a time.

HOW TO DO IT

- 1 Choose a quiet place and set aside about 15–20 minutes for this exercise.
- 2 You'll squeeze your muscles from the feet to your head: feet, legs, hands, arms, buttocks, stomach, chest, shoulders, neck, mouth, eyes, and forehead.
- 3 Focus on the first target muscle group. Take a slow, deep breath in and tense (squeeze) the muscle group, holding it for 5–10 seconds.
- 4 Focus on the difference between the tensed muscle and the relaxed muscle.
- 5 Relax for 10–20 seconds before moving onto the next muscle group.
- 6 Once you finish, count backwards from 5 to 1 to bring your focus back to the present.

! Don't tense your muscles too hard! You shouldn't feel any pain or cramping during the exercise.

Visit WalkAlong.ca for more wellness tips.

 WalkAlong
Your Journey to Mental Wellness

Take each day one step at a time.

Modeling behavior

When kids can't or won't discuss their stressful issues, try talking about your own. This shows that you're willing to tackle tough topics and are available to talk with when they're ready.

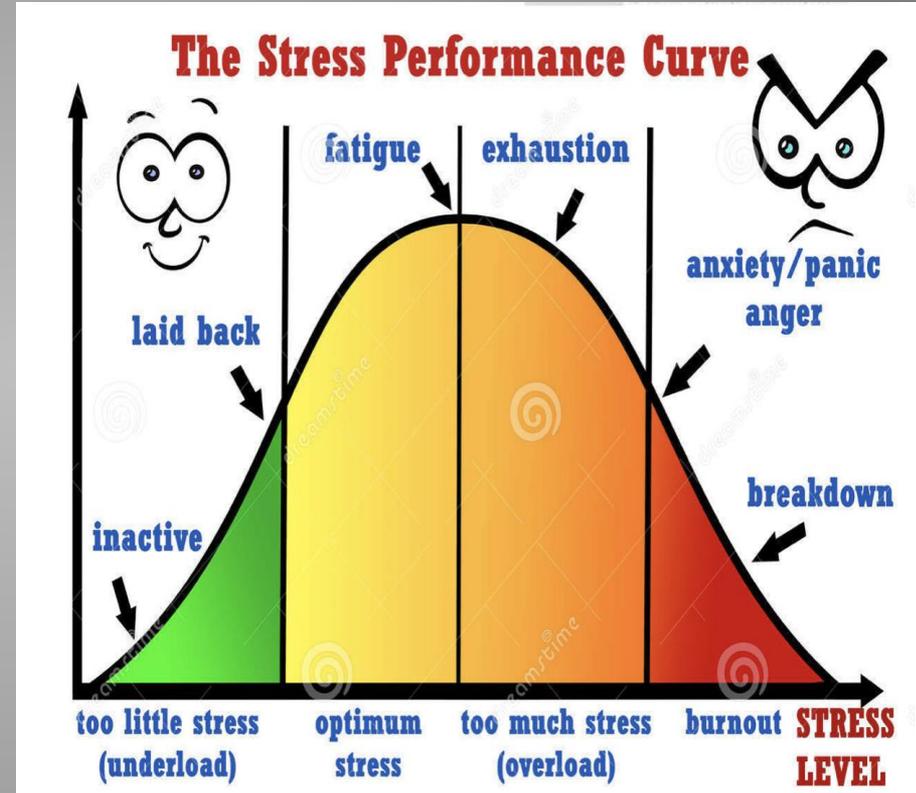
Modeling the qualities that you want your preteen to learn and practice — respectful communication, kindness, healthy eating, and fulfilling everyday responsibilities without complaining — makes it more likely that your son or daughter will comply.

When to seek help:

If a child shows symptoms that concern you and is unwilling to talk, consult a therapist or other mental health specialist.

Most parents have the skills to deal with their child's stress. The time to seek professional attention is when any change in behavior persists, when stress is causing serious anxiety, or when the behavior causes significant problems at school or at home.

If you need help finding resources for your child, consult your doctor or the counselors and teachers at school.

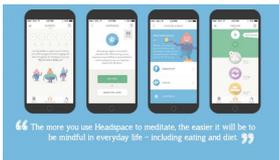


Resources

Apps:

For Kids: *Headspace*

For Parents: *Parent Resources*



On FB and Twitter

Web-Sites:

For kids and parents: *KidsHealth.org*

For parents: *Psychologytoday.com*

Kids & Conflict Resolution



What is conflict resolution?
A process that uses problem-solving and negotiation to address the needs of each person in a conflict.

Why should we use it?

Conflict resolution helps our children's social development - the way they develop relationships and deal with challenges. It teaches children empathy, and decreases the chance that they will become violent adults.

Basic steps of conflict resolution:

1. **Define the problem:** What is causing each side to be upset?

Use "Messages" to communicate how you feel, which allows you to remain focused on the problem, not the person. Try again! Because you're fighting about your own need!

2. **Define the needs of each person:** How do you feel about the problem? How do you feel about the person? Try again! Because you're fighting about your own need!

3. **Brainstorm together** in a non-judgmental way.

4. **Plan** how you will implement the solution.

BETWEEN CHILDREN & SIBLINGS:

1. **Be curious.** Children often see things from another person's perspective. Help your child see things from the other child's point of view. ("How do you feel about the problem? How would YOU feel?")

2. **Be patient.** Children have conflict resolution by doing so, give them time to develop conflict independence. Quietly observe the children and don't intervene without the conflict.

3. **Be on the edge** to see the children what to do and offer advice instead of providing the solution. ("What's the feeling when you each write a note to each other, one on one about the issue?")

BETWEEN PARENTS & CHILDREN:

1. **Use "Messages"** to communicate how you feel by asking "why" questions. ("Why did you get upset when I asked you to clean your room?")

2. **Know your own feelings.** ("I understand you're angry about a conflict.")

3. **Take your time** to separate your child's behavior from your child. ("You're a great girl, but when you throw things that's not a great behavior.")

BETWEEN PARENTS & ADULTS:

1. **Take time to connect.** Ask a friend to call you or message you in another way.

2. **Children learn by example.** Model conflict resolution for them; often you will be an argument, talk to your children.

3. **Be a child's confidant.** Don't ignore. Be open with your feelings and teach your kids that it takes work to maintain relationships.



SCAN
SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY
ASSISTANCE NETWORK
1-800-755-7273
Find more resources online at: scanwv.org/jrc

Parenting Can Be Tough
Asking for help doesn't have to be!
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Understanding Your Child's Behavior

ALL children are different and "act out" in different ways but ALL behavior is your child trying to communicate their needs to you.

<p>Age 0-2 behaviors might include: Crying Thumping eyes Yelling/Crying/Whining Biting/Scratching</p>	<p>Age 3-5 behaviors might include: Refusing to talk Ignoring/avoiding Yelling/Crying Hitting/Scratching</p>	<p>Parenting is hard! Experiencing your child's behavior might make YOU feel frustrated because:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not understanding Not prepared Not being Not or threaten your child Not <p>This is all normal! Now let's investigate some of the parenting tools that can help:</p>
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ADD THESE TIPS TO YOUR PARENT TOOLKIT:

<p>#1 Stop, Pause and Breathe: Stop everything, breathe, counting you through the stress of your child. All emotions that your child brings. By breathing in for 5 seconds and out for 5 seconds, it takes 10 deep breaths with your own hand.</p>	<p>#2 Investigate the "why?": "What did I do?" "What if I had?" "What if I had?"</p>	<p>#3 Ask & Actively Listen: Look and listen to the "how" as you listen? "Is anything that you need?" Ask about the responding to verbal and non-verbal cues. If necessary, help your child find words for their feelings.</p>
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When you've taken this on a few occasions, you can expect that:

- Your child **feels more secure** and more connected to you as their parent.
- Your child **builds resiliency** allowing them to cope with life's problems appropriately and identify and express their emotions and gain inner strength.
- Your child **builds emotional and cognitive thinking skills** to help prepare for a healthy adulthood.



SCAN
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Find more resources online at: scanwv.org/jrc

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The Power of Connection!

Staying connected as kids approach the teen years and become more independent may become a challenge for parents, but it's as important as ever — if not more so now.

While activities at school, new interests, and a growing social life become more important to growing kids, parents are still the anchors, providing love, guidance, and support.

And that connection provides a sense of security and helps build the resilience kids need to roll with life's ups and downs.





Glendora Healthy Minds

GHS-NAMI Healthy Minds

In an effort to provide student wellness, Glendora has created a district wide program, focusing on fighting stigma and providing mental health supports.

Sandburg Middle School will be joining the Healthy Mind family and will be providing a club after school, geared towards providing students with psycho-education on various mental health topics. This will be commencing the last week of November. Sign up your student if you're interested in them attending.

Questions?

If you have any questions about services please email Mental Health Coordinator:

Lucia Fernandez

lfernandez@glendora.k12.ca.us

Or call: (626) 963-5731 ext. 5424