

Helping Kids and Teens recognize and Manage Stress

And get better with our own stress management

Poll question

Check all that apply:

I'm very interested in today's topic

I'm a parent of a child/teen

I'm an aunt, uncle, grandparent, foster parent, mentor or a caregiver role of a child/teen

I have concerns about a child/teen on how they manage their stress

I have struggles managing my own stress

I'm not sure I know how to help the child/teen in my life best manage stress

Objectives

Recognize common stressors of kids and teens

Identify how kids and teens experience and show their stress

Describe helpful stress management practices

Identify ways to engage kids and teens in managing their stress

What is Stress?

Stress can be healthy until it overwhelms us.

Then stress has negative impact on the body & mind.

Stress causes **dis-ease** in the body, mind, spirit.

In what way do you notice your stress?

Body reactions

Emotional feelings or reactions

Mental thoughts

Social/relationships

Spiritually



How do you handle your own stress?

The healthy way

Exercise

Mindfulness

Reaching out to talk to someone



Not so healthy ways

Yelling

Excessive – drinking, eating, sleeping, etc.

Isolating or picking fights



Stress can come from both positive and negative life events

Death of a spouse

Marriage

Divorce

Moving state (new home, new job)

Marital separation

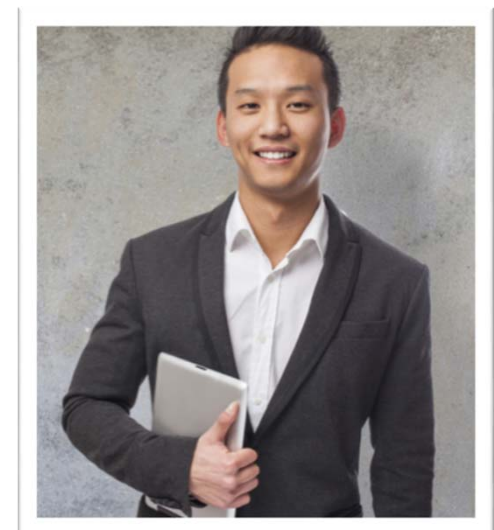
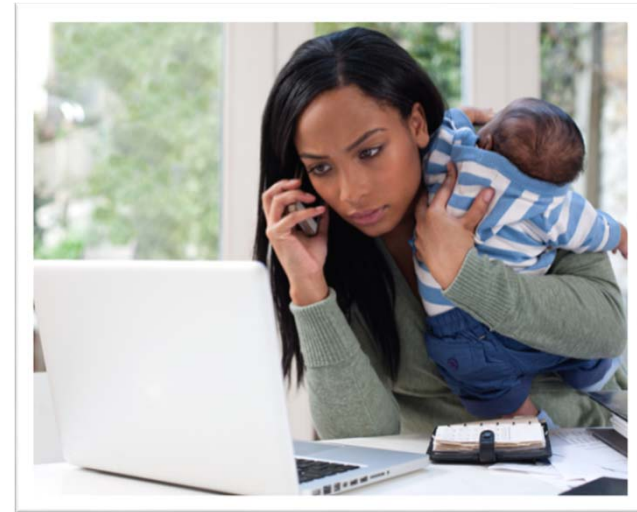
Job promotion

Time in jail

Retirement

Pregnancy

Any change in one's life



Psychoneuroimmunology

What does this mean?

Psycho refers to our thoughts and feelings (**our psychology**)

Neuro refers to our nervous system (**Fight, Flight or Freeze** when stressed)

Immune refers to the body's ability to maintain health or become ill

How we think & feel makes a difference in our behavior and reaction to stress.

The body will fight/freeze/flee to get away from the stress.

Stress weakens our immune system and our bodies ability to fight off dis-ease and illness.

Psychoneuroimmunology

Do You Remember...

Stomachaches as a kid because you were scared of a test?

Getting sick or fever the day after kids picked on you at school?

The butterflies when you had your first kiss?

When you held your breath, waiting for...?

Worked extra hours before vacation only to be sick during vacation?



The connection and what it can look like over time...

Children and teens

Infants: cry

Toddlers: temper tantrums

Grade schoolers: start worry/physical issues

Junior High: Keep emotions in, then act out

High school: body self conscious/eating disorders

College students: Worry – grades, money, job = poor sleep habits, miss class, get sick, fail

Adults

Try being emotionally tough and hold stress = heart issues, stroke, anxiety and/or depression

Stop exercising, gain weight = increased anxiety, depression, health issues and mental fog

Go to ER because of heart attack symptoms and find out it was an anxiety attack

Let negative self-talk happen for too long. Start missing days at work and lose their job





Overtime Sick
Dread Health No Time Tired
Headache
Stress Bills Payments
No Sleep Stress Debt
Fear Work
Worry Job
Anxiety Retirement
Savings Anxiety
Overdue Insurance Expectations
Fear Time Management
Late Nights
Late Ni ear

Share your beliefs around stress and your children

Does your child/teen know what stress is?

Do you think your children understand stress?

Does your child/teen handle stress well?

Do your children have YOUR stress skills?

You will know what stress is and how to help

It might look like this:

Body Aches - When your child/teen has a body ache, you find yourself asking:

“Your stomach is upsetting you, what else is upsetting you?”

“What do you think is bothering you?”

“Wonder what that means?”



Your response to your child’s stressor makes an impact on how they handle & learn stress management.

Educate yourself on what stress symptoms look like

Emotional/mental

Baby-like behaviors

Whine, cry or clingy

Fearful, anxious and worried

Poor concentration/focus

Daydreaming

Social withdrawal

Moody, emotional, annoyed or upset

Self-injurious comments or behaviors



Physical

Body aches

Nausea, vomiting

Diarrhea, constipation

Body parts shake or sweat

Bedwetting

Sleep issues, night terrors

Change in appetite

Frequent colds, fatigue

Lightheaded, fainting



Behavioral

Doing what they are told not to do

Acting out, anger, aggressive behaviors

In trouble at home, school

Nail biting, hair twirling, thumb-sucking

Fist clenching, feet tapping

Rocking back and forth

Sleeping too much or too little



Developmental stress and expectations

Not all children experience stress the same

0-5 years - No words to describe stress

5-10 years – Performance seekers
(want to make parents happy)

10-15 years –Very sensitive to rejection
(peers, parents, death)

15-18 years– “If mom/dad can do it, I can.” (want to show they are capable)



Children’s stress is correlated with brain development/skill level

0-5 years - Brain focused on physical growth and movement (eye development, crawl, walk, run, draw, write and talk).

5-11 years - Brain focused on combining physical skills (hitting a ball with a bat; scribble to writing words; learning a sport, reading outload).

12- 24 years - Brain focused on developing executive skills (fine-tuning focus, concentration and attention; time management; planning and organization; more flexible thinking; judgment and problem solving).

0-1 years infant stressors and stress management

0-1 year infant stressors

Pregnancy stress releases chemicals in mom which can impact growing baby

Not attaching or bonding with parents

Parental arguments, fighting, and violence

Not feeling safe or attached

People not getting along in the household

Infant stress management

Rocking, singing, playing and talking when they are awake

In first 1-3 months, noise can be soothing and always pick up a crying baby

Regular feeding times

Touching – Massage feet, legs, hands, arms and belly, when washing or applying lotion

Parents are encouraged to do these themselves

First year primary goal: Create safety for your baby:
Emotionally, mentally, physically & spiritually



1-5 years preschool stressors and stress management

1-5 Preschool Stressors

New siblings

Separation and stranger Anxiety

Environmental stress

Monsters/imaginary things

Night terror

Fear of being alone

Response to change

1-5 Preschool Stress Management

Teach glad, sad, mad, scared

When stressed, give only two options

Walk/talk when mad, share when glad,
cry/write/talk when sad, ask when
scared

Cuddle – rocking, carrying, or holding

HALT (hungry–eat; angry-express;
lonely-cuddle; tired- sleep)

Boundaries / saying no / set limits/
keeping them safe



Remember they typically do things
to make you happy because they
want to be seen and validated

5-10 years elementary school stressors and stress management

School age stressors

Fears/Worry about germs, dying, safety, intruders

Performing in front of others

School – grades

Parent relationships (home violence to divorce)

Physical / sexual/emotional abuse or neglect

Substance abuse in the home



School age stress management

Yoga, mindfulness, meditation

Redirect negative behaviors by offering 2-3 options

Balance activities – switch from side to side

Exercise/fun activities

Positive self talk - for one negative thought, come up with two positives

Silver lining – what positive could come of this?

Ask what they need

Remember they see and hear more than you think and like to make you happy

10-15 years middle school stressors and stress management

Middle school stressors

School/test taking

Friends – having vs. not having

Homework

Love relationships

Appearance

Body image – weight issues



Middle school stress management

Give daily words of emotional encouragement

Show up to events/activities important to the teen

Visualize success

Body scanning & breathing

Attend parent teacher meetings (find out what you don't know)

2-3 options when overwhelmed

Squash the ANTS! (Automatic Negative Thoughts)

15-18 years high school stressors and stress management

High school stressors

School/grades/tests

Family/parents

Friends/love relationships

Work

Sports

Homework

Lack of Sleep

College

Appearance

Time Management – Not having any/extracurricular

High school stress management

Anything taught over the past 15 years

Time management

Money management

All others strategies work here



18+ years adult children stressors and stress management

18+ adult children stressors

Similar to high schooler when younger

May also be similar to parents

College students have financial stress

Meeting/creating new friendships

Deciding on a major/career field

18+ adult children stress management

Remember, until about age 24, this age range may struggle with focus, concentration, attention, problem solving, and planning

Encouraging to follow what they are good at and passionate about. Liking your job/career increases stability.



Problem solving

Clearly Identify the problem / issues. Be specific. Is this it? Or is something more fundamental the problem?

What, if any, are the options to the problem?

What are the probable outcomes of each of these options? What is the best choice? What is the worst? What is most likely?

Which option is best? Make a decision.

Action: Act on the agreed upon choice.

Evaluate: How did it turn out? Is change required? If it didn't work, start back at the top and re-identify the problem.

This can also be used to manage time effectively.

Addendum

[Fifteen common cognitive distortions with explanations and author references](#)

[Helpful resource site for helping younger children with their cognitive distortions](#)

[Ten ways to untwist your thinking/cognitive distortions and author reference](#)

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