

A large purple triangle points from the top-left towards the bottom-right, set against a white background. Several smaller, colorful triangles (blue, green, orange, pink) are scattered around the purple triangle's edges.

Helping Kids and Teens Recognize and Manage Stress

AND GET BETTER WITH OUR OWN STRESS MANAGEMENT

Magellan
HEALTHCARESM

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

1. Recognize common stressors of kids and teens
2. Identify how kids and teens experience and show their stress
3. Describe helpful stress management practices
4. 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





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 disease and illness.



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





Share your beliefs around stress and your children

1. Does your child/teen know what stress is?
2. Do you think your children understand stress?
3. Does your child/teen handle stress well?
4. 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



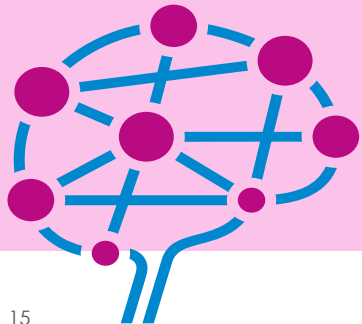
Not all children experience stress the same

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
- Parent in jail

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 can be found here: <https://psychcentral.com/lib/15-common-cognitive-distortions/>
- Helpful resource site for helping younger children with their cognitive distortions: <http://meadowbrookschoolcounseling.weebly.com/ants.html>
- Ten ways to unwist your thinking/cognitive distortions and author reference can be found here: <https://glassempty.wordpress.com/2014/07/09/ten-ways-to-untwist-your-thinking-cognitive-distortions/>



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