

Stress and Anxiety Management

Stress is defined as mental and/or emotional strain resulting from demanding circumstances. Stress is the body's way of rising to a challenge and preparing to meet a tough situation. Anxiety is a feeling of worry, nervousness, or unease about an imminent event or an event with an uncertain outcome. We experience anxiety when we perceive or think we are in danger. Anxiety can sometimes be a reaction to stress.



What can cause stress and anxiety? There are multiple factors that can play a role in the development of stress and/or anxiety. Some factors to consider, include: lack of positive coping strategies; lack of confidence; poor time management; lack of problem solving skills; genetics and brain chemistry; personality characteristics; or life events.

Signs of Stress and Anxiety



PHYSICAL: headaches, nervous stomach, poor sleep, feeling tired, appetite changes, excessive sweating, rapid heart beat, getting sick easily, low energy



COGNITIVE/BEHAVIORAL: daydreaming, lack of interest in activities, having a hard time making decisions, difficulty concentrating, difficulty getting up in the morning, avoiding people or activities, criticizing self, crying easily



EMOTIONAL: Constant worrying, moodiness, irritability or short temper, agitation, inability to relax, feeling overwhelmed, sense of loneliness, isolation, general unhappiness

What can we do to prevent or cope with STRESS and ANXIETY?

Coping Strategies for Stress and Anxiety



Positive coping strategies are things you can do that will make you feel better. Some examples, include:

- Help children identify things/situations/experiences that may cause anxiety
- REMIND children to use their positive coping strategies when stress or anxiety occur!
- Practice deep, centered breathing.
- Engage in mindfulness with your child. The premise of mindfulness is being present in one's surroundings and experiencing moments with openness and curiosity. Mindfulness requires you focus on the present moment instead of worrying about what is to come. Research indicates mindfulness increases overall well-being.
- Practice gratitude. Gratitude is the quality of being thankful and the readiness to show appreciation for and to return the kindness. Focusing on gratitude can shift a child's focus from what is/might go wrong to what is going well.
- Re-Focus! When a child is stressed, have them refocus on their surroundings! Look around and find 5 things you can see, 4 things you can touch, 3 things you can hear, 2 things you can smell, 1 thing you can taste. This strategy can help when a child feels like they have lost control of their senses.
- Engage in positive self-talk! If our thoughts are negative, our feelings will match. Positive, encouraging, and motivating statements are powerful in calming our minds and bodies.
- Get organized! Help children develop plans to accomplish school work, establish a consistent routine, avoid procrastination!
- Engage in self-care activities! Examples include journaling, listening to music, playing outside. What is your child passionate about? What does he/she enjoy? If necessary, even schedule these self-care activities into your busy schedule!
- Exercise! Move your body! Eat! Make sure your child is eating healthy food, having breakfast daily, and carries a snack if necessary. Get enough sleep! School work and extra curricular activities should not impede a child from getting the sleep they need. Laugh! Try and find humor in the situation. Sometimes laughter is the best medicine.
- Model! Parents can model for children how to make mistakes and cope with them. Parents can also model for children how to put their feelings and experiences into words.
- Consider contacting your School Counselor! Counselors provide short-term individual and small group counseling.
- Make efforts to prevent stress in the first place! Use time management, set limits, write things down, create dedicated study time, and make time to declutter study space. Say NO to some events; try not to over-commit!

When Is It Time to Seek Professional Help?

There may come a time when parents may want to seek support from an outside consultant. Consider contacting a professional if the parent observes ongoing:

- Perfectionism, highly critical of self
- Excessive avoidance behavior
- Disruption of normal, daily functioning
- Constant somatic complaints (ex. headaches, stomachaches, etc)
- Anticipatory anxiety (worrying far ahead of the event)



Resources/Apps to Help with Stress:
Relax Melodies - Breath2Relax - Headspace - Gratitude Journal (\$) - The Worry Box
<http://www.mindful.org/meditation/mindfulness-getting-started/>
<https://childmind.org/article/what-to-do-and-not-do-when-children-are-anxious/>

