

Identifying the stress in All of Us



Everyone experiences stress. Stress is the physical, mental, and emotional response to life's changes and demands. The changes and demands that cause stress are called "stressors."

Stress can be positive or negative. Some stress can encourage a person to try harder to learn a new skill or motivate him or her to meet a challenge. Stress can also seem overwhelming when something very scary or painful happens or when a person experiences too many stressors all at the same time.

Stress can come from situations around us or from our feelings and thoughts about others or ourselves. A person might feel stress from situations he or she can control or from situations that are not within a person's control. Stress can last only



Notice Your Feelings and Thoughts

Stress causes feelings that can alert you to a stressful situation. Once you recognize your stress, you can begin to manage it and calm yourself down. Here are a few ideas:

- Take a break from the situation if you can.
- Count to ten to give yourself a chance to relax.
- Do something you enjoy, such as read, listen to music, draw, or write.
- Find someone to talk to.
- Play your favorite video game.
- Do something physical, like run, walk, dance, or play a sport.

Find someone to talk to.

Your thoughts influence the way you experience situations. If you think positively about something, you are more likely to deal with the situation in a healthy way than if you think negatively.

a few moments or a long time. Stressors can be minor irritations or cause intense reactions.

We have been studying how to recognize stress, what causes stress, and how to manage it. Your student has two worksheets to share with you. One worksheet lists the reactions people have to stress and typical stressors for middle school youth. The second worksheet provides you with your student's plan for stress management. Take a minute to review these worksheets and to add your ideas. Then, acknowledge that you have reviewed the worksheets by signing the "My Stress Management Plan." An electronic signature is acceptable.

Take a minute to read about the stress management strategies your student has learned.

Take a break from the situation if you can.

Prepare Ahead of Time

Lower the Number of Activities and Personal Expectations

Be realistic about what you can and cannot do. If you are always on the go and have trouble keeping up, cut down on the number of activities.

Rehearse

Some stressful situations can be rehearsed. For example, imagine you want to ask your friend to help you but you aren't sure how. Practice asking for help. Try different ways of wording your request until you find one you like.

Think About What You Can Control

Focus on things you can control. If you can't control a situation, it may be very frustrating and increase your stress if you try to change it.

Be Physically and Mentally Ready When Stress Strikes

Managing stress will be easier
if your body is healthy.



▶ Get regular physical activity.

▶ Get a good night's sleep. For young people ages 10-17, this means about nine hours of sleep. For children ages 5-10, ten to eleven hours is best. For adults, seven to nine hours is recommended.

▶ Don't be tempted by a quick fix. Alcohol and other drugs do not "fix" things.

▶ Eat nutritious foods in appropriate amounts.

Stress Stress



Find Ways to Release Tension and Relax

Relaxing creates a sense of well-being and calm — just the opposite of stress. Each person finds different things relaxing. Here are some to try:

- Read a good book.
- Make time for a hobby.
- Spend time with your pet.
- Take a relaxing bath.
- Listen to music.
- Do something physically active, such as run, walk, or play a sport.
- Spend time outdoors.
- Get involved in an art project.
- Write in a journal or create song lyrics.
- Spend time with your friends.
- Play video games.
- Surf the Internet.
- Distract yourself. Do something else for a while.
- Laugh. Take a break from being serious.



Ask for Help

Remember. Everyone experiences stress. When your stress management strategies don't seem to work, ask for help.

- Share with a family member, friend, or other trusted person what's going on and how you feel.
- Ask him or her to take a break with you and do something enjoyable.
- Talk to a school counselor or favorite teacher.
- Get professional help from a doctor or mental health therapist.
- Contact one of the following crisis hotlines:
 - Disaster Distress Helpline: 1-800-985-5990
 - National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273-TALK (1-888-628-9454 for Spanish-speaking callers)
 - Youth Mental Health Line: 1-888-568-1112
 - Child-Help USA: 1-800-422-4453 (24 hour toll free) Coping With Stress

What do you do to relax and take a break?