



KIDS & STRESS

Stress is now occurring at much younger ages, so it is vital to teach the children and teens in your life positive coping skills before stress escalates into more serious mental health issues like depression.

The Most Common Stressors in Children & Teens

Elementary School	Middle School	High School
Sibling rivalry	Moving from elementary	Getting into college
Friendship struggles	Increased friend drama	Parent discord
Any changes in family	Academic pressure increases	Development of hormones
Death or loss of pet	Developmental changes	Over scheduled & sleep deprivation
Academic pressures	Choosing between sleep & grades	Relationships
Lack of sleeping / nutrition	Focus of appearance	Pressure to succeed

Stress Management Techniques

- Practice square breathing: deep breath in through the nose for 4 seconds, hold for 4 seconds, exhale for 4 seconds, hold for 4 seconds – think of breath in a color you associate with relaxation (maybe blue or green) and exhaling a color you associate with stress (maybe red or orange).
- Reach out to a trusted friend or family member in person or with a phone call
- Exercise: take a walk, run, practice yoga or a sport, dance to your favorite “happy” song
- Write in a journal: consider concluding with 3 things that you are grateful for
- Treat yourself: do your nails, take a hot bath, have a piece of chocolate
- Nourish your brain and your body: eat breakfast, drink water, limit sugar, get at least 9 hours of sleep
- Schedule breaks and down time to give yourself a chance to recharge
- Listen to music, set your alarm/phone to play some fun music when waking up
- Express your creativity: painting, drawing, collages, photography
- Move, roll your shoulders, flex and release fingers and toes, tighten and release arms and legs, and roll your neck

How do I talk with my child/student about stress?

- Let him/her know that you are genuinely interested in understanding his/her world and are willing to listen respectfully.
- Remind him/her that stress is a normal part of life and that learning how to cope with stress takes time and practice. Perhaps share a time you remember feeling stressed in high school.
- Show empathy by saying, “I can appreciate how you might feel that way/think that way/ see it like that.”
- Ask questions that encourage him/her to give you more information.
- Be willing to examine if you’re contributing to his/her stress levels.
- Explore how you can work together to help him/her regulate his/her practice healthy self care and break tasks into smaller, more-manageable chunks to start taking action.
- Don’t expect perfection, just progress. Sometimes the lesson is how not to give up.

For more information, contact your school IMPACT counselor.