

Coping with Teen Stressors (from CincinnatiChildrens.org)

If you're feeling stressed or overwhelmed, don't be afraid to talk to a friend or a trusted adult. You can also find ways to tackle stress on your own. Here are some tips for keeping stress under control:

- **Remember You're Not Alone**

Everyone struggles with stress, but they don't always talk about it. Remember that it's normal not to feel normal. If you are feeling overwhelmed, reach out to someone you trust and talk about what's causing you stress. Chances are they've walked in your shoes before and can help you find ways to cope.

- **Take Care of Your Body**

Too much stress can sometimes affect our bodies, so it's important to eat right and stay active. Exercise can release endorphins, a hormone in your brain that makes you feel good and can alleviate stress. Start by trying a 30-minute walk each day to boost your mood.

When you feel stress, it's easy to rely on junk food like chips and candy. But when your body and mind are under pressure, it's important to stick to healthy, nutritious food.

- **Get Plenty of Sleep**

Many teens like to stay up late and sleep in. But if you stay up late and then get up early for school, you may not get all the hours of sleep your body needs. Sleep is especially important when you're stressed; it can help refresh both your mind and body. The Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends teens get 8-10 hours of sleep per night.

- **Lean on Friends**

Build a group of friends who can help you cope with stress in a positive way. Knowing supportive people are in your life can help you feel more confident in facing life's challenges.

Think about friends, trusted adults at home or school that you can lean on during stressful times in your life. Don't be afraid to ask for help and support when you need it. Share what you're going through, both good and bad.

- **Make Time for Fun**

Be sure to build time into your day for events you enjoy. Setting aside time for fun and healthy activities can help reduce stress. Try listening to music, spending time with a pet, taking a walk, working on an art project, writing in a journal, reading a good book, or enjoying nature.

- **Take Deep Breaths**

Breathing exercises are a great way to quickly relieve stress, and you can do them anytime or anywhere you're feeling stressed. Try inhaling slowly counting to five, then exhale slowly counting to five again. Take deep breaths with your hand on your stomach, feeling your body rise and fall as you breathe in and out.

- **Unplug from Social Media**

Our non-stop connection to social media can have stressful side effects for teens. It's easy to see "likes" or "shares" as signs of popularity, which can cause jealousy, insecurity, or fear of missing out.

- **Stay Positive**

Your point of view and attitude can affect how you react to stressful situations. When you're feeling stressed, think about what you're grateful for in life and try to avoid focusing on the negatives. A positive attitude can help you make the best of stressful situations and allow you to learn from the challenges.

- **Don't be too Hard on Yourself**

Learn how to feel good about doing an acceptable or “good enough” job. Whether it’s schoolwork or sports, you don’t need to expect excellence from yourself and others. While it’s important to do your best, remember that no one is perfect.

- **Know the Signs of Stress**

Notice how your body feels when you’re stressed. It’s important to learn how to recognize signs that you are becoming stressed, such as increased heart rate, butterflies in your stomach, or feeling like you want to punch something. If you know these signs, you’ll be able to tackle stress early before it becomes overwhelming.

- **Understand your Stress Triggers**

Think about what situations, events or people cause you stress. If you know in advance what causes stress for you, you’ll be able to prepare better and respond. Similarly, what people or situations give you strength and comfort? It’s important to seek them out when you’re feeling stressed or overwhelmed.

- **Plan Ahead**

It’s easier to tackle a stressful situation when you go into it calm, cool and collected. Have a plan for how what you can do to relax when the stress is on. Try practicing relaxation exercises and coping skills ahead of time. Then, when the pressure is on, you’ll be ready to take on the challenge.

Even with these coping tips, you may still find yourself in challenging and stressful situations. Know that these challenges are normal and will come up from time to time, but you have the skills and support to overcome them. In the end, you’ll be able to turn these challenges into opportunities to grow and learn.