

# Stress & Anxiety

Middle school is hard! Students are asked to manage a lot of moving parts all while undergoing major brain development. Most students will experience some level of stress or anxiety at some point, as parents here are some resources to help you support your student.

**Definitions:** It can be helpful for young people to name how they are feeling. The more specific the better! That way you can address exactly how they are feeling.

**Stress**

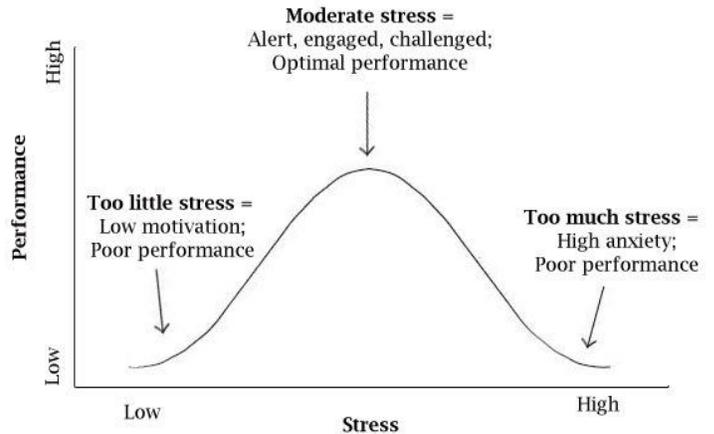
a state of mental or emotional strain or tension resulting from adverse or very demanding circumstances.

**Anxiety**

a feeling of worry, nervousness, or unease, typically about an imminent event or something with an uncertain outcome. (Great Anxiety [Resource](#) Here!)

**Angst**

a feeling of deep anxiety or dread, typically an unfocused one about the human condition or the state of the world in general.



Some stress is good! The right amount of stress activates us to make change or to take action.

**Signs of Stress:** Stress shows up differently in everyone. [HERE](#) is a great resource for possible signs of stress in your student.

**Emotions Word Bank:** Your student may not have words to describe how they are feeling. Help them expand their emotional vocabulary!

Fear	Surprise	Happy	Sad	Disgust	Anger
Humiliated Rejected Submissive Insecure Anxious Scared	Startled Confused Amazed Excited	Optimistic Playful Peaceful Powerful Accepted Proud Interested	Guilty Abandoned Despair Depressed Lonely Bored	Disapproval Disappointed Awful Avoidance	Hurt Threatened Hateful Mad Aggressive Frustrated Distant

**Self Care Strategies:** Helping your student take care of themselves can help prevent and reduce stress and anxiety.

1. Prioritize Taking Care of Your Body: eat healthy foods, get enough sleep, listen when your body is giving you feedback.
2. Move Everyday! Take a walk, go for a bike ride, walk the dog, dance it out.
3. Opt Outside. Don't underestimate the power of fresh air & sunshine!
4. Spend Quality Time With People Who Ground You. Notice how you feel after you spend time with various people, who makes you feel most like your authentic self?

**Moments of Stress & Anxiety:** What to do in tough moments?

- **Take a deep breath.** Or two. Or three.
  - "Square Breathing"
    - 1. Inhale for a count of four.
    - 2. Hold for a count of four.
    - 3. Exhale for a count of four.
    - 4. Hold for a count of four. Repeat 2-3 times.
- **Check in with your physical body.**
  - Progressive Body Scan
    - Sitting comfortably, bring your attention to your toes.
    - Slowly, begin to scan up your body. Bringing your attention to each part of your body.
    - Notice if there is tension anywhere. Breath into the area, trying to release the tension.
    - Complete your scan when you reach the top of your head.
- **Validate, Validate, Validate!** Before you offer any suggestions make sure your student knows you hear and see them!
  - How to Validate:
    - Pay Attention- to what is said, and what is not said.
    - Reflect Back- Say what you hear them say. They will clarify if you misunderstood.
    - Understand- "It makes sense that you are feeling \_\_\_ because \_\_\_."
    - Acknowledge what is valid- even if you don't totally agree.
    - Be genuine!
- **Model problem solving skills.**
  - Help your student identify what they need help with in this moment.
  - Brainstorm people who might be able to help with that need. Who is the person best suited to help? Who do I trust to help with this problem?
  - Strategize an action plan. Focus on small steps your student can take to create change. Empower them to lead, while you provide backup & support.
  - Acknowledge and celebrate the hard work, persistence, and resilience it takes to problem solve in tricky situations.