

ON OUR SLEEVES[®]

The Movement for Children's Mental Health

Coping with Stress During the School Year

Boundaries

Sometimes the biggest cause of stress, anger, or sadness is taking on too much or only doing things because it's what others want us to do. Knowing your limits and boundaries can help keep you mentally healthy.

- Start by taking time to reflect on your values and your personal goals. Remember, there is no way to make everyone happy all the time. Focusing on your goals will help you stay true to what you believe instead of focusing on what others think.
- If you're feeling like you have too much on your plate, stop and think about what activities you can cut back on to make your schedule more manageable.

Take a Relaxation Break

It's important that you give yourself time to rest and relax every day -- even if it's just 5-10 minutes a day! Here are some ideas of what to do:

- Look up guided meditation on YouTube or use free apps such as Headspace or Calm. Meditation has been shown to be helpful in releasing stress and boosting our mood.
- Belly breathing can help our body's nervous system calm down.
 - Take a deep breath.
 - Fill your belly up with air like a balloon.
 - Hold it for as long as you feel comfortable.
 - Then slowly exhale like there's a small hole in the balloon.

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Fun Activities

Just like finding time to rest and relax is important, finding time to do things just for fun can help us with stress management. You can try:

- Doing something fun or different one day. Although our routines are comfortable, a change of pace can help your day. Plan a trip with friends, take a walk in a different park, or hang some new pictures in your room.
- Doing something creative, like painting, drawing, or crafting.
- Making time for movies or video games can be great for our stress too! Just remember, it's easier to not get carried away if we schedule screen time and balance it out with other activities.

Coping Skills

When feeling stressed, it's important we purposefully pause and use our coping skills. Here are some ideas:

- Write in a journal. Notice any negative thoughts you may be having about a situation and try to come up with a different way of thinking. What would you say if your friend was having those thoughts?
- Listen to music.
- Organize an area of your home.
- Play with a pet.
- Talk with a trusted friend or family member.
- Relax or do something fun (like we talked about above!).

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Take Care of your Physical Health

Our mind and bodies are connected. If you are not taking care of your physical health, you are more likely to feel stressed, irritable, or sad.

- Research shows that physical activity can increase energy levels, reduce depression and boost your overall well-being. Make it a point to be active and get your body moving. Setting an achievable goal, like 30 minutes of activity each day, is a great way to start! For example, going for a walk, playing a sport, or simply stretching.
- Prioritize sleep! Did you know that you need about **8 to 10 hours of sleep** to function best? Not getting enough sleep can affect your mood, physical, and mental health as well as your academics. Turn off electronics at least an hour before trying sleep.