

Tips to Reduce Your Stress

Every teen deals with some level of stress. School starts early and days can be full of things to do, like homework, after-school sports, clubs or a job. It's easy to feel stressed with everything you have going on. In this handout, you will learn helpful tips to reduce your stress.

WHAT IS STRESS?

Stress is your body's way of responding to different demands. When there are too many demands or difficult demands, your body starts to feel stressed out.

It's normal to have some stress in your life. But, if you have **chronic stress** (feeling stressed for long periods of time), it can have long-lasting effects on your body and how you feel.

WHAT ARE SIGNS OF STRESS?

Everyone's body responds differently to stress, but some common signs of stress include:

- Feeling tired
- Feeling anxious, nervous or overwhelmed
- Stomachaches or headaches
- Eating too much or too little
- Having trouble focusing
- Ignoring or **procrastinating** (putting off) on other things you have to do
- Having negative thoughts
- Changes in how you sleep

WHAT HAPPENS IF I HAVE CHRONIC STRESS?

Chronic stress can cause:

- Acne (pimples)
- Anxiety
- High blood pressure
- Other problems that lead to depression, **obesity** (being overweight) and heart disease

HOW CAN I REDUCE MY STRESS?

- **Talk about your stress.** It's easier to manage stress when you let others help you. Talk with your doctor, family, friends, guidance counselor or a teacher.
- **Get enough sleep.** Most teens need about 8 ½ - 9 ½ hours of sleep every night, even on school nights. This can be hard with school, homework and other responsibilities, but getting a good night's sleep can help you feel your best.
- **Make sure your schedule includes self-care.** This means making time in your schedule for "me time," or time to take care of yourself and do things you enjoy. Find things that make you happy, like listening to music, doing an art project, going for a run or watching a movie.
- **Eat a healthy diet.** When you eat more healthy foods, like fruits, veggies and whole grains, your body is healthier. This means you can manage stress better and feel more focused.
- **Get moving!** Exercise or playing a sport is 1 of the best ways to reduce stress. Build activities you enjoy into your schedule, like yoga, running or a sport.
- **Use a free mindfulness app.** Mindfulness is a way to quiet your mind and relieve stress by being aware of your feelings, thoughts and surroundings without judgment.
- **Stop, Breathe and Think®.** A free app that lets you check in with how you're feeling and guides you through meditation lessons.
- **Calm.com®.** A meditation website and app designed to bring peace to your mind. The 7-day program is free. Other longer programs are low-cost.
- **MindShift®.** A free app designed to teach you positive ways of coping with anxiety, stress and feelings of being overwhelmed.

A note for your parents...

A lot of your teen's stress might come from feeling like he/she can't do everything they need to do in 1 day. If your teen is open to it, help and encourage him/her to plan the day ahead. This way, your teen can learn the basics of time management to help him/her plan days appropriately so he/she can get everything done, including having time for him/herself.