



Stress management for kids and teens

Facing stressors is a fact of life, for children and adults. These strategies can help keep stress in check:

Sleep well.

Sleep is essential for physical and emotional well-being. Experts recommend nine to 12 hours of sleep a night for 6- to 12-year olds. Teens need eight to 10 hours a night. Sleep needs to be a priority to keep stress in check. To protect shut-eye, limit screen use at night and avoid keeping digital devices in the bedroom.



Write about it.

Research has found that expressing oneself in writing can help reduce mental distress and improve well-being. Some research has found, for example, that writing about positive feelings—such as the things you're grateful for or proud of — can ease symptoms of anxiety and depression.



Exercise.

Physical activity is an essential stress reliever for people of all ages. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services recommends at least 60 minutes a day of activity for children ages 6 to 17.



Learn mindfulness.

In a study of a five-week mindfulness training program for 13- to 18-year-olds, researchers found that teens who learned mindfulness experienced significantly less mental distress than teens who did not.



How can parents help?



o **Model healthy coping.** Caregivers can talk with children about how they've thought about and dealt with their own stressful situations.

Talk it out.

Talking about stressful situations with a trusted adult can help kids and teens put things in perspective and find solutions..



Make time for fun -- and quiet.

Just like adults, kids and teens need time to do what brings them joy, whether that's unstructured time to play with building bricks or uninterrupted hours to practice music or art. Also, while some children thrive bouncing from one activity to the next, others need more down time. Find a healthy balance between favorite activities and free time.

Get outside.

Spending time in nature is an effective way to relieve stress and improve overall well-being. Researchers have found that people who live in areas with more green space have less depression, anxiety and stress.



- **Let kids be problem-solvers.** It's natural to want to fix your child's problems. But when parents swoop in to solve every little glitch, their children don't have a chance to learn healthy coping skills. Let your children try to solve their low-stakes problems on their own, and they'll gain confidence that they can deal with stressors and setbacks.
- **Promote media literacy.** Today's kids spend a lot of time online, where they can run into questionable content, cyberbullying or the peer pressures of social media. Parents can help by teaching their children to be savvy digital consumers, and by limiting screen time.
- **Combat negative thinking.** "I'm terrible at math." "I hate my hair." "I'll never make the team. Why try out?" Children and teens can easily fall into the trap of negative thinking. When children use negative self-talk, though, don't just disagree. Ask them to really think about whether what they say is true, or remind them of times they worked hard and improved. Learning to frame things positively will help them develop resilience to stress.