



PARENT

HEALTH BULLETIN



APRIL 2020

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<http://fcs-hes.ca.uky.edu/content/health-bulletins>

THIS MONTH'S TOPIC:

REDUCE CHILDHOOD STRESS



April is Stress Awareness Month, and it may be surprising, but similar to adults, children experience worries and feel stress. Stress comes from our ability to handle any type of demand placed on us. Kids can feel this when they are separated from family during the day or feeling pressure to do well at school. Some children can feel stressed when trying to fit in or participating in afterschool activities.

Not all stress is bad. However, too much stress can be overwhelming and can cause problems with health, sleep, and brain function. Some of the common ways that children show stress is through mood swings, stomachaches or headaches, and nightmares or insomnia.

Here are some ways you can take steps to manage or prevent your child from feeling too stressed.

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Downtime could include listening to music, reading for pleasure, hanging out with friends, or doing arts and crafts.



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Talk about It

Encourage your child to talk about what is bothering them. Listen to your child without solving the problem right away. Instead, work with your child to help them realize why they are feeling stressed and how to solve what is upsetting them.

Review the schedule

Is your child in many different activities? Talk with your kids about how they feel about extracurricular activities. If they complain, discuss options of stopping activities. If stopping is not an option, explore ways to help manage their time and responsibilities so their anxiety will lessen.

Emphasize free play

Find time in your kid's schedule or between activities for downtime. This is time when they are free to rejuvenate and reset. This will look different for everyone but could include listening to music, reading for pleasure, hanging out with friends, or doing arts and crafts.

Encourage sleep

Sleep is vital for everything from minimizing stress to boosting mood to improving school performance.

Model stress management

Be a role model for healthy coping strategies. Be open about how you handle stress by showing them how you slow down, relax, and effectively handle stress.

Routine

Family routines can be comforting and help relieve stress. Prioritize a family dinner or movie night. You could even set the tone for each day with a routine that makes mornings smoother.

Tell your kids that it is okay to feel angry, scared, lonely, or anxious and that everyone experiences those feelings. Remember that some level of stress is normal. However, it is important to contact your child's health-care provider if your child is becoming withdrawn, depressed, or unable to control behavior and anger.

REFERENCES:

- <https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/002059.htm>
- <https://www.apa.org/topics/stress-children>
- <https://www.healthychildren.org/English/healthy-living/emotional-wellness/Pages/Helping-Children-Handle-Stress.aspx>
- <https://kidshealth.org/en/parents/stress.html>

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