

What is Stress?

- ❖ Stress is the result of demands and the ability to meet those demands.
- ❖ Stress is the body's physical and psychological response to anything we perceive as overwhelming.
- ❖ Stress is a natural part of life, but too much or too little limits our effectiveness.

Why Should We Be Concerned About Stress?

Excessive stress interferes with our interpersonal relationships at home, at school/work, and socially. As a result, we become negatively influenced in our attitudes and feelings about ourselves. In addition, medical researchers estimate that as much as 90 percent of illness and disease are stress related. Stress can make existing medical problems worse.

What Causes Stress in Children and Adolescents?

Changes in lifestyle and disruptions in the normal routine of people in all age groups can bring about stress. For children and adolescents some of the causes include:

- ❖ Changing schools
- ❖ Problems with peers
- ❖ Injuries or severe illness
- ❖ Recent move to a new home
- ❖ Loss of anything valuable to the child
- ❖ Parents' divorce, separation or marital conflict, remarriage
- ❖ Inadequate physical resources-food, clothing, shelter
- ❖ Recent death of a loved one-parent, grandparent, sibling, friend
- ❖ Constant fatigue brought about by inadequate rest, sleep or recreation
- ❖ Regular conflict between your child and another family member, close friend or school teacher
- ❖ Taking a test
- ❖ Not enough privacy at home
- ❖ Birth of sibling, especially a new half sibling
- ❖ Family financial concerns
- ❖ Not knowing how to handle a social situation
- ❖ Adaptation issues with bodily development changes
- ❖ Taking on too many activities at one time
- ❖ Academic pressures
- ❖ Decisions about colleges and careers
- ❖ Pressure to look a certain way
- ❖ Pressure to smoke, use drugs or alcohol, skip school

Factors That Amplify Stress in Youth

Multiple issues can cause a domino effect

⇒Divorce can lead to a reduction in family income⇒Which can require a move to a new, smaller home or apartment⇒ Siblings may be required to share a room or be separated into different households⇒ Kids miss their non-custodial parent⇒

Kids perception of a perfect family formed by view of peer families

⇒Kids think that their family is the only family with problems⇒They envy how they think other kids live⇒

Kids pick up on their parent's mood

⇒When parents are upset kids worry
⇒Kids should not know financial or relationship details⇒In their young minds they cannot understand all of the specifics of these issues which results in causing undue anxiety and uncertainty

Stress Overload

What Causes Stress Overload?

Although just enough stress can be a good thing, stress overload is a different story-too much stress isn't good for anyone.

How is Stress Experienced?

Everyone experiences stress differently. Some become angry and act out their stress or take it out on others. Some people internalize it and develop eating disorders or substance abuse problems. Some people who have chronic illness may find that the symptoms of their illness flare up under an overload of stress.

Some stressful situations can be extreme and may require special attention and care. Posttraumatic stress disorder is a very strong stress reaction that can develop in people who have lived through an extremely traumatic event, such as a serious car accident, a natural disaster like an earthquake, or an assault like rape.

Some people have anxiety problems that can cause them to overreact to stress, making even small difficulties seem like crises. If a person frequently feels tense, upset, worried, or stressed, it may be a sign of anxiety. Anxiety problems usually need attention, and many people turn to professional counselors for help in overcoming them.

Stress Overload

Pressures that are too intense or last too long, or troubles that are shouldered alone, can cause people to feel stress overload.

Here are some of the things that can overwhelm the body's ability to cope if they continue for a long time:

- ❖ Being bullied or exposed to violence or injury
- ❖ Relationship stress, family conflicts, or the heavy emotions that can accompany a broken heart or the death of a loved one
- ❖ Ongoing problems with schoolwork related to a learning disability or other problems, such as ADHD (Usually once the problem is recognized and supports put in place the stress disappears)
- ❖ Crammed schedules, not having enough time to rest and relax, and always being on the go
- ❖ A feeling of being constantly pressured, hassled, and hurried
- ❖ Anxiety or panic attacks
- ❖ Irritability and moodiness
- ❖ Physical symptoms, such as stomach problems, headaches, or even chest pain
- ❖ Allergic reactions, such as eczema or asthma
- ❖ Problems sleeping
- ❖ Drinking too much, smoking, overeating, drugs
- ❖ Sadness or depression

Warning Signs For Teens

Occasional stress can help adolescents get ahead in school and sports, but too much of it can cause mental and physical harm.

Too much stress can cause sadness to spiral into depression, a debilitating illness affecting 5 percent of American adolescents every year, according to the National Institute of Mental Health. Girls after puberty and children with learning disorders are at the highest risk of developing depression.

Stressed-out adolescents may notice more hair loss when combing or headaches caused by unconscious contractions of the facial muscles triggered by anxiety-provoking events at school. Other warning signs are less obvious.

“SIGE CAPSS” (SEE-ge-kaps) is a mnemonic doctors use to diagnose depression.

Sad or depressed feelings (Irritability is more prominent in children).

Interest decrease or loss of pleasure in previously enjoyed activities. Presents as persistent boredom in children.

Guilt or having feelings of worthlessness.

Energy low or having daily fatigue.

Concentration low resulting in poor school performance or frequent absences.

Appetite low or high usually accompanied by changes in weight.

Pain or frequent complaints of headaches or stomachaches in children.

Sleeping too much or too little.

Suicidal or homicidal thoughts.

22 Signs of a Teen in Trouble

Experts have found that teens at risk for depression or becoming suicidal show danger signs in advance. If you notice any of these signs yourself, talk to an adult. If you notice any of them in a friend, tell an adult you trust.

- Sudden changes in personality
- Sudden changes in eating or sleeping habits
- Sudden changes in behavior
- Alcohol or other drug use
- Lack of interest in or withdrawal from planned activities (sports, clubs, social events, etc.)
- Persistent boredom
- Severe depression that lasts a week or longer
- Withdrawal from family and friends; self-imposed isolation
- Inability to have fun
- Concealed or direct suicide threats *
- Loss of interest in personal grooming
- An illness that has no apparent physical cause
- Preoccupation with death and death-related themes
- Giving away prized possessions to family and friends
- Saying good-bye to family and friends
- Difficulty concentrating
- An unexplained decline in the quality of schoolwork
- A recent suicide of a friend or relative
- A previous suicide attempt
- Talking about suicide, either jokingly or seriously
- Running away from home, family, school, etc.
- Feelings of meaninglessness in life

***Talk to a trusted adult right away. You can also call a Crisis Hotline or Suicide Hotline listed in your area: Oakland County, MI = Common Ground Sanctuary 24 Hour Crisis Line 1-800-231-1127**