

Helping Teens Manage Stress

According to several recent high school surveys, approximately 70 percent of students said they were "stressed out". While most adults recognize that stress is a part of life and know that it must be managed regularly, sometimes teens don't even know why they are feeling stressed or what to do about it.

Students reported that the main causes of stress for them include:

- School work load and expectations for academic performance;
- Social life insecurities--problems with friends, peer pressure, not fitting in with friends.
- Family issues: problems at home, parents divorcing, deaths, moving, changing schools, etc.
- Taking on jobs and too many activities at once

Signs of Teen Stress:

1. Feeling down, on edge, guilty or tired
2. Having headaches, stomach aches, trouble sleeping
3. Withdrawing from friends, wanting to be alone
4. Feeling angry and resentful of others
5. Feeling like you have too many things you have to do

Teen stress can lead to more serious problems. Major stress and low self-esteem can lead to depression, eating disorders, self-harm behaviors, alcohol and drug abuse, and even teen suicide.

How Teens Can Relieve Stress:

- **Communicate:** It's important that teens have **someone to talk** to about how they're feeling. This helps them recognize their stress is normal and then learn ways to cope.
- **Develop a good support system:** Teens should have at least **one adult they can turn to for support**. This could be a parent, a teacher, a family friend, or a counselor.
- **Peer support is important.** They need to know that others their age experience similar challenges.
- **Keep expectations realistic:** Help your teen set realistic goals for academic performance and extra-curricular activities.
- **Balance life with plenty of fun and physical activity:** Make opportunities for recreation and humor as important for teens as expectations for academic performance. Learning "life balance" strategies as teenagers will help them be more prepared to be healthy, high-functioning adults.