



Teen Guide to Surviving Stress

Stress - good or bad?

Everyone feels stress during their lives. Stress (the body's excited feeling or cranky attitude) is your body's reaction to something you may or may not want to do. Feeling stress is normal. Sometimes stress is good. It keeps you focused and doing the best you can; like the excitement before a game or getting ready for a dance. But sometimes stress feels bad. You can't sleep or feel sad and lonely. Don't ignore these feelings. Stress needs your attention. Deal with it. Get help.

Signs of Stress

Do you...

- feel tired for no good reason
- have headaches or an unexplained back pain
- eat a lot more or a lot less than you usually do
- have trouble sleeping
- have more colds than usual
- suddenly have flashes of anger or fight more with your family and friends
- let little things bother you
- feel sad, moody, and lonely
- have trouble thinking as clearly as you usually do

If you answered "yes" to any of these questions, you may be stressed out

So why are you stressed out?

- Family problems - these may include divorce, money problems, violence in the home, problems with alcohol or other drugs, or the illness or death of a family member.
- Peer pressure - are your friends asking you to do things you don't want to do such as use alcohol or drugs, have sex, join clubs or go places you don't want to go?
- Self-esteem - the way you feel about yourself emotionally or physically.
- Your grades - do you feel one test score will change your life?
- Too many activities in your life - trying to do a lot of things may sound like fun, but may not give you enough time to "chill out."
- Changes in your everyday routine - such as switching schools or moving.
- Fear of violence - feeling unsafe can create almost constant stress.

How can you beat stress?

Get a grip on yourself. You are in control of your own emotions. You may not be able to change the outside world, but you can learn to deal with it.

Here are some tips for beating stress.

- Recognize that you are in charge of your stress. You can choose to make changes in your life which reduce your stress.
- Try to determine the importance of a situation. Example: If you aren't invited to a certain party, it's not the end of the world. It may seem that way, but it's not. There will be other parties.
- Go easy on yourself. No one's perfect and no one has all the answers. If you are trying hard and doing your best, that's all anyone can ask of you.
- Take one thing at a time and prepare for it! Manage your time wisely.
- Take care of yourself. Eat food that's good for you. Limit caffeine and get enough rest. Drugs and alcohol won't solve anything and may lead to bigger problems.
- Exercise regularly.
- Laugh or cry to relieve your tensions and improve your outlook.
- Get involved at school, at home, at your church or some other activity center.
- Relax. It's essential for physical and mental health and enriches your quality of life. Spend at least half an hour doing it. It might be stretching out in a warm bath, curling up with a good book or plugging into quiet music.
- Visualize yourself doing the activity or being in the situation which is giving you stress.
- Don't suffer in silence. An honest talk with someone you trust can help you get rid of bottled up feelings and help you see things in a different light. If you think your problem is serious, don't hesitate to go to your school counselor for professional help. Knowing when to ask for help is a strength, not a weakness.

Your plan for action

- Determine what's really causing the stress you feel.
- Brainstorm for solutions. Think of as many as you can, no matter how silly they seem. A trusted family member, teacher or school counselor may have good ideas.
- Talk about what may happen, the good things and the bad things, to all of your possible solutions.
- Act. Make the best decision you can and follow it through. If it still doesn't work for you, next time, try another solution.

If you still need help, where do you go?

Try talking to a close friend, a trusted family member, teacher or school counselor when you're upset. If you are feeling stressed out everyday for several weeks, maybe you have a more serious problem. Speak to your parents or another adult immediately. They want to help you. Asking for help is not a sign of weakness. You are never too old or too young to ask for help.