

Teens and Stress

- Like adults, teens can become stressed out without knowing it is happening. One minute all is well, but then you may get behind in homework or start one too many after school activities, or projects are due all at once, or a team goes to nationals, or a family faces a crisis that distracts the teen, or an important person in their life experiences a crisis, a friend or romantic partner dumps them there is no end to what can go wrong.

- Teens though, unlike adults, may not have ever experienced the new level of stress and may not be aware of how much it is affecting their behavior. Teachers and parents can help identify the signs of the stress and help teens find ways to remove some of the stress or at least cope with it.

Tips for preventing stress in teens

Follow a good role model.

- A good role model will remain calm when dealing with stressful situations. When stressed, a good role model will demonstrate coping strategies — getting enough rest, eating well, and seeking support. If you know a particularly stressful event is coming, talk with your teachers or parents about how to prepare and avoid getting “stressed out.”

Focus on the process instead of the outcome.

- How hard you try is usually more important than the grade you receive.

Ask adults to monitor your activities and “over scheduling.”

- Talk with your teachers and parents about your motivations, balancing extracurricular activities, sports, and schoolwork with time for friends, family, and relaxation.

Tips for addressing stress in teens

Identify “stress.”

- Recognize heart beating fast, butterflies, tightness in chest, obsessive thoughts about being ready for things, inability to enjoy restful activities, etc.....

Learn ways to relax and cope with stress —

- like taking a bath, exercising, yoga or deep breathing and meditation, listening to or making music, etc.....

- Remember that you are in control of some things in your lives; you can make decisions and prioritize activities.

- Talk about what is causing the stress and identify healthy ways of dealing with it.

- Identify perceived “unhealthy” ways of coping with stress including using alcohol or drugs, ignoring a problem, watching too much TV or playing too many video games, or getting irritable and cranky.