

## **STRESS MANAGEMENT TIPS.COM**

### **STRESS MANAGEMENT FOR KIDS**

From the bogeyman for small children to the bogies of SATs and final exams for the college-bound, stress affects kids of all ages. The first thing a parent can do to help their child manage stress is to build a strong family unit. Include your children in family discussions and be on the lookout for stress in your kids.

#### **Recognizing Stress in Children**

Especially small children with under-developed communication skills may display stress very differently than an adult does. Often kids' stress is internalized and most noticeable in physical symptoms such as frequent flu-like symptoms including headache, stomachache, and even nausea.

Children under stress may regress to behaviors like bedwetting, clinginess, and frequent crying. Behavioral symptoms may be extreme at both ends of a behavior spectrum. A normally active child becomes either listless or hyperactive, a usually docile child has fits of anger or a child that "acts out" becomes docile and introspective.

Some signs of stress in kids are easily confused with children's mental disorders. For instance, if schoolwork slides or your child's circle of friends undergoes a drastic change, it isn't a sure sign that your child is on drugs. Situations like these may simply indicate a child's inability to handle a stressful situation.

#### **Helping Kids Reduce Stress**

Children primarily learn by example. The best way to teach your child how to manage stress is by using the tools and articles at Stress Management Tips to learn to effectively manage your stressors. In addition, you can develop skills and child-oriented stress management techniques to help your kids recognize and manage their stressors.

- Eat healthy. A healthy body is better able to withstand stress-induced illness. Schedule regular meals and snack times. Don't allow your child to skip meals.
- Vigorous exercise is a good stress reliever. Just like adults, kids need time to unwind. If your kids are bound to video games, television, or a computer, get them on their feet by providing and encouraging the use of active toys like balls, punch bags, and bikes. If your child presently appears to be stressed, make a point of playing with them. Time spent with your kids is a great vehicle for getting them to open up the lines of communication.
- Be clear in setting rules and consistent with discipline. Kids live in a "black and white" world. Blurred guidelines and inconsistencies are even more confusing for them than they are for adults.
- Gentle physical touch is a great healer. Sometimes a hug is worth more than a thousand words. Another physical stress reliever can be a gentle massage of your child's neck and shoulders. Like you, your kids can also get knotted up with stress!
- Learn to be a good listener. When your child wants to talk about his or her problems, don't criticize. In addition, it isn't always necessary to give advice. Sometimes kids just need to talk. Encourage them with open-ended questions like, "So what happened next?" "How do you feel about that?"
- Teach your kids that everyone (including you) makes mistakes. A good start is admitting your mistakes to your children with an "I'm sorry" or "My mistake" when you goof-up. If the situation warrants, use personal examples of stressful situations you encountered during your childhood. Even if you were unsuccessful in dealing with your situation, you'll teach your kids that you can learn from and even laugh at your own mistakes.
- Finally, teach your kids stress relieving exercises and help them find stress reducing games they can play to reduce their stress.