



RECOGNIZING SIGNS OF STRESS IN CHILDREN

What are signs of stress in children? FOR PARENTS AND CAREGIVERS

Stress in children can arise from academic pressures, social challenges, family changes, or even global events. Recognizing stress early can help your child manage it in healthy ways and prevent long-term impacts on their well-being.

Common Signs of Stress

Stress may show up differently in every child, but here are some common signs to watch for:

Emotional Signs

- Increased irritability or mood swings
- Frequent worries or fears
- Difficulty concentrating or making decisions

Physical Signs

- Stomachaches, headaches, or fatigue without a clear medical cause
- Changes in appetite (eating too much or too little)
- Trouble sleeping or frequent nightmares

Behavioral Signs

- Withdrawal from friends and family
- Loss of interest in activities they once enjoyed
- Unusual outbursts or acting out

School-Related Signs

- Decline in academic performance
- Resistance to attending school
- Complaints of feeling overwhelmed



HELPFUL RESOURCES

[Medline Plus - Child Mental Health](#)

[SAMHSA - How to Talk to Children About Mental Health](#)



Stress & Anxiety Relief Through
Healthy Relationships



healthychildren.org



APA: How to Help Children &
Teens Handle Stress



How Parents Can Help

Talk and Listen

Create a safe space for your child to share their feelings. Use open-ended questions like, "What was the best part of your day?" Avoid dismissing their concerns and validate their experiences with empathetic responses.

Establish Routines

A consistent daily routine can help children feel secure and manage their time better.

Encourage Healthy Habits

Ensure they get enough sleep, eat nutritious meals, and stay active.

Set Realistic Expectations

Help your child prioritize their responsibilities and avoid over-scheduling their time. A balance between academics, extracurriculars, and downtime is key.

Teach Relaxation Techniques

Breathing exercises, mindfulness, or simple stretching can help your child relax.

Model Stress Management

Children learn by observing their parents. Demonstrate healthy ways to handle stress, such as taking breaks, staying calm, and using relaxation techniques.

Seek Professional Help

If stress persists or worsens, consider consulting a counselor or pediatrician.

RESOURCES! For more information check out these books:

The Teenage Brain: A Neuroscientist's Survival Guide to Raising Adolescents and Young Adults

by Frances E. Jensen, M.D. and Amy Ellis Nutt

This book sheds light on teenage stress responses and gives parents valuable insights into guiding teens through challenges.

Emotionally Intelligent Parenting

by Maurice J. Elias, Ph.D., Steven E. Tobias, Ph.D., and Brian S. Friedlander, Ph.D.

This book helps parents identify signs of emotional distress, including stress, and provides guidance on fostering emotional intelligence in kids, which is key to coping.

The Self-Driven Child

by William Stixrud, Ph.D. and Ned Johnson

Focused on fostering resilience and autonomy, this book helps parents understand helping kids manage stress by giving them more control over their lives, which can empower them to face challenges.

If you or someone you know is struggling or in crisis, help is available. Call or text 988 or chat at [988lifeline.org](https://www.988lifeline.org).