



Miramar High School



Stress Management

A certain amount of stress is normal. It's a common emotional, psychological, and physical reaction to the ups and downs of daily life. Teenagers often feel stress due to the many changes in life. These changes are both internal and external that come with growing up. And today's fast-paced, technology-saturated climate doesn't help. Then add a national pandemic and stress can be heightened.

In small doses, stress can help us get things done. However, if stress goes on long enough or gets bad enough, it can lead to health conditions that require professional treatment. That's why it's essential for teens to learn how to manage their stress.

Stress is an automatic response in the face of perceived danger. It triggers a surge of stress hormones, that lead to the "fight-or-flight" response.

Fight or Flight

The fight-or-flight response prepares people to react quickly in dangerous situations. This happens by either escaping from or fighting off the threat. For teenagers, a challenging social situation, an important exam, or a big game might trigger the stress response.

Here's what happens in the body when the stress response is triggered:

- The heart starts beating faster than normal
- Pulse rate and blood pressure go up
- Breath becomes more rapid and the chest feels tight
- Muscles tense
- Mouth gets dry
- You may feel flushed and sweaty
- Vision may narrow
- Hearing may become more sensitive.

Human beings are hardwired for the stress response. The more the stress response is activated, the easier it becomes to trigger and the harder it becomes to shut off. The bottom line, many are in a constant state of stress.



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Causes of Stress

Teen stress can be caused by both internal and external circumstances. Below are some common stressors.

External circumstances

- Major life changes, such as divorce or death in the family
- A National Pandemic that stops our normal way of living
- Parents' marital problems
- Overscheduled
- Financial problems at home
- Struggling with schoolwork or college applications
- Bullying, peer pressure or other issues with peers
- Starting to date or have sexual relationships
- Having way too much on their plate

Internal circumstances

- Being negative about everything
- Doubting one's abilities
- Low self-esteem, self-concept
- Fear of failure and not being perfect
- Rigid, one way thinking

The Impact of Teen Stress

The positive side of stress is that it can help us perform under pressure. Therefore, occasional stress can serve as a healthy coping mechanism. But ongoing or frequent stress can have multiple negative effects.

Symptoms of Stress

- Feeling nervous or anxious
- Frequently feeling tired



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- Stomach aches and chest pain
- Procrastinating or neglecting responsibilities
- Feeling overwhelmed
- Anxiety
- Moodiness
- Having negative thoughts
- Withdrawing from other people
- Difficulty sleeping or sleeping too much
- Problems remembering, focusing, and concentrating
- Using alcohol, drugs, or other substances as way to relax
- Eating too much or too little.
- When stress continues over a long period of time, it's known as chronic stress.

Parents can help their teen in the following ways

- Monitor if stress is affecting their teen's health, behavior, thoughts, or feelings
- Listen carefully to teens and watch for overloading
- Learn and model stress management skills
- Support involvement in sports and other pro-social activities
- Contacting the following **mental health agencies**:

-Henderson Behavioral Health (<https://www.hendersonbh.org/>) **(954) 731-5100**

- Chrysalis (<https://www.chrysalishealth.com/>) **(954)-587-1008**

-Banyan (<https://banyanhealth.org/>) **(954)-327-4060**

-Nova University Brief Therapy Institution: "Great for those without insurance."
<https://www.nova.edu/healthcare/clinics-services/family-therapy.html> **(954) 262-3030**

- **24/7 Hour Crisis Hotlines** Below
 - YES TEAM: (954) 677-3113
 - Banyan: (305) 774-3616
 - EMS: 911



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Teens can decrease stress with the following behaviors and techniques

- Exercise and eat regularly.
- Get enough sleep and have a good sleep routine.
- Avoid illegal drugs, alcohol, and tobacco.
- Learn relaxation exercises (abdominal breathing and muscle relaxation techniques).
- Develop assertiveness training skills. For example, state feelings in polite, firm, and not overly aggressive or passive ways.
- Rehearse and practice situations which cause stress. One example is taking a speech class if talking in front of a class makes you anxious.
- Learn practical coping skills. For example, break a large task into smaller more manageable tasks, divide study time up by day (red vs. blue), one hour per class.
- Decrease negative self-talk: challenge yourself to speak - only positive thoughts. "This Pandemic will never end, my life is over." can be transformed into "I may feel hopeless now, but my life will get better and some normalcy will resume."
- Learn to be okay about doing a good job rather than demanding perfection from yourself.
- Take a break from stressful situations. Activities like listening to music, talking to a friend, drawing, writing, or spending time with a pet can reduce stress.
- Build a network of great friends who help you cope in a positive way.

By using these and other techniques, teenagers can begin to manage stress. If a teen talks about or shows signs of being overly stressed, a consultation with a child and adolescent psychiatrist or other qualified mental health professional may be helpful.