

# STRESS AND ANXIETY IN TEENAGERS

\*What is stress? Stress is the way our mind and body reacts to the pressures we face every day.

\*Anxiety is an overload of stress.

\*In small amounts stress and anxiety can be a good thing because it can motivate us and help us be more productive. A certain amount of anxiety is a normal part of a child's healthy development. Brief separation anxiety, fear of the dark, and fear of strangers are all common worries that children may experience as they grow and mature. If stress, anxiety, or fears begin to interfere with a teen's daily functioning or activities, there may be need for concern. Stress can affect the way we think, feel, and act.

## SOURCES OF TEENAGE STRESS

### \*Big changes in the family

- Divorce
- Death
- Moving
- Birth of a new sibling
- Illness

### \*Over-packed schedules

- difficulty with time management
- balancing the responsibilities of school, home, work, extra-curricular activities, and Social life

### \*Academic pressures

- Tests
- homework
- FSA Testing
- College (getting accepted, earning scholarships, financial factors)

### \*Social Pressures

- Peer Pressure
- Bullying
- Physical appearance

### \*Self-inflicted pressure

- The desire or need to be "perfect"
- fear of making mistakes or upsetting others
- fear of not being good enough

### \*Terrible News Events

- News headlines and television news images about natural disasters, terrorism, and violence can be upsetting and often cause stress. When teens see and hear about terrible news events, they may worry that something bad might happen to them or to someone they love.

### \*Recognition of Parental Stress (such as that seen in a divorce or financial crisis)

## **TEENAGE DEPRESSION**

Depression is intense sadness and hopelessness (feeling as if no matter what you do, things will never get any better) that lasts for at least 2 weeks and it interferes with the ability to function at school, work, or in personal relationships.

### **Warning Signs of Teenage Depression**

- \*Frequent sadness
- \*Frequent crying
- \*Isolation and withdrawal from family and friends
- \*Sudden and drastic changes in mood and/or behavior
- \*Changes in eating patterns (weight gain or weight loss)
- \*Changes in sleeping patterns (sleeping too much or not enough)
- \*Constantly worried
- \*Loss of pleasure or enjoyment in activities they used to like
- \*Irritability
- \*Anger/aggression
- \*Difficulty remembering things, concentrating, and staying focused
- \*Frequent physical complaints (headaches, stomachaches)
- \*Using drugs and/or alcohol
- \*Making frequent negative statements about one's life and self ("I hate myself," "My life stinks," "Nobody cares about me")
- \*Feelings of hopelessness, helplessness, despair, rejection, emptiness, and worthlessness
- \*Cutting or self-harming behaviors

### **How Caregivers Can Help**

- \*Provide a safe, secure, consistent, and dependable living environment
- \*Communication
- \*Be a good role-model
- \*Listen (There is a difference between listening and hearing. When we are truly listening, we stop all other activities and give the speaker our undivided attention)
- \*Build feelings of self-worth. Use encouragement and affection. Involve them in situations where they can be successful.
- \*Try to use positive encouragement and reward instead of punishment
- \*Allow opportunities to make choices and have some control in his or her life. This is particularly important because research shows that the more people feel like they have control over a situation, the better their response to stress will be.
- \*Encourage physical activity
- \*Increase awareness of healthy coping skills
- \*Recognize signs of unresolved stress

\*Seek professional help when normal everyday stress begins to interfere with typical functioning

## Ways to Relieve Stress

- \*Talk about thoughts, feelings, needs, and problems
- \*Engage in relaxing activities such as listening to music, taking a warm bath, deep breathing etc.
- \*Participate in hobbies and preferred activities
- \*Participate in exercise and physical activities
- \*Write in a journal or draw
- \*Set realistic expectations
- \*Engage in activities that promote a healthy self-image and self-esteem

## School Resources

- \*School Guidance Counselors
- \*School Administrators
- \*School Social Workers

\*Family Counseling Program- Free counseling to students and their families. Contact 754-321-1590 for more information

## Community Resources

- \***211- First Call for Help.** 211 serves as the gateway to over 800 non-profit organizations. It provides information on available community resources to assist individuals and families with a variety of issues. [www.211-broward.org](http://www.211-broward.org)
- \***Henderson Mental Health Center-** provides counseling, psychiatric, and crisis intervention. 954-677-3113
- \***Suicide Prevention Hotline-** 1800-273-TALK (8255)
- \* **Crisis Text Line-** 741741
- \***Tomorrow's Rainbow-** provides grief support groups. 954-978-2390. [www.tomorrowsrainbow.org](http://www.tomorrowsrainbow.org)
- \***Mental Health Association-** provides support groups for anger management, stress management and depression. 954-746-2055. [www.mhabroward.org](http://www.mhabroward.org)
- \***CHADD- Children and Adults with Attention Deficit Disorder.** 954-753-3518/ 954-680-0799
- \***Gilda's Club South Florida-** provides support groups for those living with cancer or who have loved ones or friends who have cancer
- \***Alanon and Alateen-** support groups for family and friends of alcoholics. 954-491-1915 [www.southfloridaaal-anon.orh](http://www.southfloridaaal-anon.orh)
- \***Women in Distress-** provides support and case management to victims of domestic violence 954-760-9800 [www.womenindistress.org](http://www.womenindistress.org)

\***American Red Cross**- provides support groups for those that have family in the military 954-797-3800 [www.redcross.org/fl/miami](http://www.redcross.org/fl/miami)

\***Broward Humane Society**- provides support groups for those grieving the loss of a pet 954-266-6848 [www.humanebroward.com](http://www.humanebroward.com)

\*\* You can also access the Broward School Boards Mental Health and Wellness Portal:  
<http://www.bcps-mentalhealth.com/index.php>

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