



Employee NEWSLETTER

Employee Assistance Program
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Helping Your Child Manage Stress – from Tots to Teens

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You might not hear them talk about it too often, but your kid has a set of stressors that they are learning to deal with every day. Just like adults, there's a certain amount of stress that's considered normal and healthy, and a point where the stress might become overwhelming for them.

Helping your child cope with the stress begins with teaching them the building blocks of healthy stress reduction: (1) skills for problems solving, (2) methods for planning ahead, and (3) helping your child determine what is important to them.

Lynn Lyons, a Licensed Independent Clinical Social Worker who co-authored "Anxious Kids, Anxious Parents: 7 Ways to Stop the Worry Cycle and Raise Courageous and Independent Children," suggests several ways for helping your child learn to manage their stress in a healthy way:

1. Cut down on their over-scheduling.

It may seem hard to believe, but it's not always easy for a child to tell their parent "no," especially when it comes to activities. This means that it's your job as a parent to check in about whether they have too much going on, and about what they would like to prioritize. They can't do it all, but that may be a hard lesson for them to learn.

2. Make time for play.

Just as important as watching your child's schedule, be sure to balance "on time" with "off time," where they can engage in physical activities that aren't competition-based. Consider hiking or riding bikes together.

3. Make sleep a priority.

Even more than adults, children need a set sleep schedule that includes eight hours of sleep. To help with this, try to create an environment that helps this goal. For example, consider moving electronics out of your child's room.

4. Teach your kids about their stress.

Talk to them about how they know they're stressed. Do they get headaches? Do their stomachs get upset? Do they have trouble sleeping?

5. Learn more about your stress.

You've probably noticed this by now, but stress is contagious. Your children will learn best by observing you – show them how to slow down, take deep breaths, and sleep better.

6. Prepare your kids to deal with mistakes.

One of the best skills you can teach your child is to view their mistakes and failures as opportunities to grow. This type of mindset is key to developing resiliency in adulthood, when life stressors are that much greater, and failures that much more difficult to deal with.

Ultimately, helping your child deal with stress begins with looking at what you're teaching them. Consider this a good chance to look at how much stress you carry around on a daily basis, and whether you might be able to let go of some of that in order to model something better for your family. Your kids might not thank you now, but you'll be giving them skills that they'll be using for a lifetime.