



Girl Scouts.

Ten Tips for Helping Children Deal with Stress

With news and conversations full of disaster, war and terrorism, children and teens may be feeling stressed and need you to help them cope. Children and teens may not have the combination of life experiences and critical thinking skills that can help adults deal with tragedy. But young people are generally resilient.

These ten tips can help you recognize the signs of stress and prevent an overload of stress in young people.

1. Recognize that children handle stress in different ways. Some show a regression in behavior – acting younger, more fearful, clingier. Outbursts of anger and aggression are also signals at all ages. A child or teen who withdraws or who seems constantly sad or has trouble sleeping or shows significant changes in appetite may also be showing signs of stress.
2. Encourage conversation. Look for opportunities to ask about feelings and opinions. Some of the best conversations happen in a car with the radio, CD player and cell phone off.
3. Think about your own reactions – are you feeling very stressed and is that being communicated to children? Find ways to relax yourself so that you can stay calm for them.
4. Look for creative ways to deal with stress. For younger children, puppets may help them act out their feelings. Teens could be encouraged to write their thoughts in a journal or diary. Reading books together not only provides valuable family time, but also gives everyone a deeper understanding of world events. Realizing how a character (real or fictional) coped with a disaster, war or difficulty can give lessons that can be emulated.
5. Plan for some exercise or sports activities that can be done together to release tension. From walking to swimming, biking or skating, getting everyone to move more makes a big difference in mental outlook as well.
6. Volunteer together or take a stand together. Look for opportunities in the community in which you can make a difference. Being able to contribute also helps your family or group to bond and understand what your family's and/or group's values are.
7. Try to acknowledge how a child may feel. Taking a child's or teen's concerns seriously, rather than minimizing them, builds a foundation for more open communication.
8. Answer questions honestly, and share what is age appropriate.
9. Don't make a promise that you can't keep. You can't tell your child that a natural disaster or terrorist attack will never affect your family or group. You can say that the chances are very small and that you will do whatever you can to keep everyone safe.
10. Keep tabs on what children are viewing and hearing – at home and at school. Know when to pull the plug on TV, and radio. When the news is on, try to view it together so you can discuss what you have seen and heard.

Resources for Helping Girls Deal with Stress

Girl Scout Program Materials

Daisy Girl Scouts

The Guide for Daisy Girl Scout Leaders: The Daisy Circle can be used as a place to discuss concerns; Daisy Petal Activities can focus on feelings and community service.

Brownie Girl Scouts

- Healthy Habits Try-It: # 6, Feelings Game
- Manners Try-It: #1 focuses on Respect for Others
- Working It Out Try-It: #3, Problem Solving
- Shape-Up Patch (online)

Junior Girl Scouts

- Becoming a Teen badge
- Fun and Fit badge
- Healthy Relationships badge
- Stress Less badge

Girl Scouts 11-17

- Conflict Resolution, Interest Project Award
- Emergency Preparedness, Interest Project Award
- From Stress to Success, Interest Project Award
- Media Savvy, Interest Project Award
- Sports for Life, Interest Project Award
- Your Best Defense, Interest Project Award
- *Express It! STUDIO 2B Focus Book* and charm
- *Issues for Girl Scouts: In the Zone, Living Drug Free*

Books

Ask Dr. M and Liz, by Harriet S. Mosatche, PhD, and Elizabeth K. Lawner. New York: Girl Scouts of the USA. 2005. Ages 9 and up.

Fighting Invisible Tigers, A Stress Management Guide for Teens (Revised and Updated), by Early Hipp. Minneapolis, MN: Free Spirit Publishing. 2004. Ages 11 and up.

Hot Stuff to Help Kids Chill Out: The Anger Management Book, by Jerry Wilde, PhD. Richmond, IN: LGR Publishing. 1997. Ages 11 and up.

More Hot Stuff to Help Kids Chill Out: The Anger and Stress Management Book, by Jerry Wilde, PhD. Richmond, IN: LGR Publishing. 2000. Ages 11 and up.

Stress Can Really Get on Your NERVES!, by Trevor Romain and Elizabeth Verdick. Minneapolis, MN: Free Spirit Publishing. 2004. Ages 8-13.

Too Stressed to Think? A Teen Guide to Staying Sane When Life Makes You Crazy, by Annie Fox and Ruth Kirschner. Ages 12 and up.

What to Do When You're Scared and Worried, by Dr. James J. Crisp, Ph.D. Minneapolis, MN: Free Spirit Publishing. 2004. Ages 8-15.

When I Feel Afraid, by Cheri J. Meiners, Minneapolis, MN: Free Spirit Publishing. 2003. Ages 4-8.

Online

Kids Health (<http://kidshealth.org/>) has sections for Parents, Kids and Teens. Nemours Foundation.

"Ask Dr. M and Liz" on Girls Only (<http://www.gogirlsonly.org/girltalk/askdrm/>) for girls 6-11; on STUDIO 2B (<http://www.studio2b.org/life/advice/>) for girls 11-17.