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Stress Management

TCHATT

(Texas Child Health Through Telemedicine)



Definition of Stress

- Stress is the body's reaction to a change that requires a physical, mental or emotional adjustment, or response.
- Stress can come from any direction and make children lose control of their thoughts and emotions. Stress often brings frustration, anger, and anxiety.
- Managing stress is all about helping your child take charge of their thoughts, emotions, schedule, and the way they deal with problems and circumstances.
- Stress management starts with identifying the sources or causes of stress in your child's life.



Impact of Stress, Sources and Symptoms

- Stress can be caused by an existing factor or a “stressor” such as school or grades, family, friends, work, physical or mental illness.
- Symptoms of stress include but not limited to inability to concentrate, poor judgment, pessimistic attitude and thoughts, anxiety, diarrhea or constipation, fatigues, sleeping problems, lack of motivation, irritability, anger, self-injurious behavior, suicidal ideations, and depression.
- Stress has the ability to lower your child’s immune system, it contributes to fat storage in the body/obesity, physical illnesses, development of mental illnesses, and has a significant impact on digestive system.



Negative Ways Children Cope with Stress

- Children and adolescents often cope with stress by overeating or not eating at all, smoking, using alcohol, using illegal substances or abusing prescribed medications, procrastinating, lashing out or experiencing anger outbursts, withdrawing socially from friends and family, and harming self or others (animals).



Coping with Stress

- There are many healthy ways to manage and cope with stress, however, they all require change.
- When deciding which option to choose for your child, it is helpful to think of The Four A's Rule: avoid, alter, adapt, accept.
- **Avoid:** Learn to say NO, avoid people who stress you out, avoid stressful topics, take control of your environment.
- **Alter:** Express feelings, be assertive, compromise, manage time better.
- **Adapt:** Focus on the positive, look at the big picture, reframe the problem, adjust your standards and attitude.
- **Accept:** Accept what cannot be controlled and forgive.



Healthy Coping Strategies

- Go for a walk, start journaling, listen to music, watch a comedy, take a bath/shower, play with a pet, spend time with friends and family.
- Help your child reduce stress by providing healthy meals, monitoring healthy sleep hygiene, encouraging physical activities, providing education regarding harm of alcohol and drugs, encouraging relaxation, and listening to them.
- Since everyone has a unique response to stress, there is no such a thing as “one size fits all”.



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Questions