

Mental Health Matters



Stress

Information for Parents

Stress is the body's reaction to change, demands, and difficult situations. Stress is a part of life, but when stress becomes too much to handle, it can negatively impact your child's life and mental health. Here's what you need to know to help your child deal with stress.

Signs of stress in young people

When it comes to your child's mental health, keeping the lines of communication open is crucial. However, young people often will not verbalize how they feel, which is why it's important to pay attention to nonverbal signals like the ones below.

- ▶ emotional outbursts and irritability
- ▶ an increase in headaches or stomachaches, and/or a change in appetite
- ▶ trouble falling or staying asleep
- ▶ problems at school, such as difficulty focusing, a drop in grades, discipline issues, and/or trouble with friends
- ▶ a desire to spend more time alone
- ▶ forgetfulness and/or trouble concentrating
- ▶ an increase in defiant behavior

You know your child best. If something seems off, talk to them and try to figure out what's going on. Read on for ways to help your child deal with stress.

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Anxiety

Information for Parents

Occasional anxiety is a part of life. It's a natural reaction to events or situations that are stressful or frightening. But when anxiety is long-lasting and persistent, it can impact a young person's quality of life.

Signs of anxiety in young people

When it comes to your child's mental health, keeping the lines of communication open is crucial. However, young people often will not verbalize how they feel, which is why it's important to pay attention to their moods and behavior.

Below are some signs of anxiety in young people.

- ▶ headaches or stomachaches without a clear medical cause
- ▶ sleep issues, such as nightmares or trouble falling/staying asleep
- ▶ mood swings, including sudden tearfulness or angry outbursts
- ▶ problems at school, such as a drop in grades, discipline issues, and trouble with friends
- ▶ excessive worry about future events
- ▶ withdrawal from school, family, and friends

You know your child best. If something seems off, talk to them and try to figure out what's going on. Read on for ways to help your child deal with anxiety.

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Self-Esteem

Information for Parents

Self-esteem is the perception of one's worth. Young people with high self-esteem have the confidence to try new things, are better able to cope with setbacks, and are more equipped to stand up to peer pressure. Here's what you need to know to support your child's self-esteem.

Signs of low self-esteem

Low self-esteem in young people can manifest in various ways, and it's important for parents to be aware of the signs.

Negative self-talk. Young people with low self-esteem may constantly criticize themselves and express feelings of unworthiness.

Social withdrawal. Avoiding social interactions, isolating oneself, or struggling to make and keep friendships can be a sign of low self-esteem.

Perfectionism. Low self-esteem can cause young people to set unrealistically high standards for themselves—and be overly self-critical when they don't meet those standards.

Lack of assertiveness. Young people with low self-esteem may have difficulty expressing their needs or opinions and have a tendency to go along with others to avoid conflict.

Academic underachievement. Low self-esteem may cause students to struggle academically due to fear of failure or lack of confidence in their abilities.

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Social Media

Information for Parents

While social media can provide opportunities for connection, information-sharing, and self-expression, it can also have a negative impact on the mental health of young people.

Social media and mental health

Here are some of the ways social media can impact an adolescent's mental health.

Comparison and self-esteem. Constant exposure to selected snippets and idealized versions of other people's lives on social media can lead young people to compare themselves with others. This can contribute to lower self-esteem, feelings of inadequacy, and increased anxiety.

Addiction and avoidance. Excessive use of social media can contribute to tech addiction and avoidance of real-life activities. Spending too much time online may also interfere with responsibilities, sleep, and face-to-face social interactions.

Fear of missing out (FOMO). Social media often showcases only the highlights of other people's lives. This can cause young people to feel that they are missing out on experiences or events, leading to dissatisfaction with their own lives.

Cyberbullying. Online harassment, cyberbullying, or negative comments on social media platforms can have a significant impact on a young person's mental well-being.

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Depression

Information for Parents

We all go through times when we feel down or unhappy. For most of us, these periods are temporary and we soon feel better. Those who suffer from depression, however, have constant, overwhelming feelings of sadness and hopelessness. These feelings affect their schoolwork, relationships, and overall well-being.

Signs of depression in young people

When it comes to your child's mental health, keeping the lines of communication open is crucial. However, young people often will not verbalize how they feel, which is why it's important to pay attention to nonverbal signals like the ones below.

- ▶ persistent low mood
- ▶ lack of energy
- ▶ trouble falling asleep or sleeping too much
- ▶ sudden weight loss or gain
- ▶ withdrawal from hobbies, friends, and social activities
- ▶ changes in school performance, such as a drop in grades and/or not wanting to go to school
- ▶ engaging in risky behavior

You know your child best. If something seems off, talk to them and try to figure out what's going on. Continue reading for ways to help your child cope with depression.

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Support and Resources

Information for Parents

If you're concerned about your child's mental health, it's important to seek information and support to navigate this challenging situation. You are your child's primary source of support, but mental health issues often require professional guidance. The following are ways that you can provide your child with the support they need.

In-person support

If you have specific concerns about your child's mental health, the best place to start is with their **pediatrician** or **family doctor**. Your child's doctor can prescribe medication or refer them to a specialist who can help.

Your child's **school counselor** can also provide personalized advice and support, as well as make recommendations for what to do if your child needs professional help.

If you want to find a mental health professional in your area, **Psychology Today** has a directory of mental health professionals by city or zip code. Visit [psychologytoday.com/us/therapists](https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/therapists).

Mental health professionals, such as therapists, counselors, and psychiatrists, can provide personalized guidance based on your child's specific needs. If you're ever concerned about your child's immediate safety, don't hesitate to contact emergency services.