

Information for School-Age Children and Teens About Stress and Anxiety

FAST FACTS

- It is common for older children and teens to struggle with feelings of anxiety or stress and to worry about things (real or made up).
- These feelings can make it hard to go to school, talk with teachers, or hang out with friends.
- Your parents, teachers, and friends might describe you as a “worrier.”
- Your body feels worry too. You might not feel good and may have headaches, stomachaches, or feel tired, especially when you have to do something that stresses you.
- Worry can make it hard to pay attention at school. It can even make you feel sad, angry / grumpy, or frustrated!
- Most people, at some time in their lives, need help to deal with stress. There is nothing to be ashamed of in asking for help with how you feel.
- There are many things you can do to help feel less stressed and worried.
- It is important to see a doctor or practitioner to talk about your worries and to undergo a check-up, as it is important to make sure that there is not a medical reason for why you are feeling the way that you do.

WHAT YOU CAN DO ABOUT WORRY AND STRESS

- Talk to someone you trust about how you are feeling.
- If you have trouble talking, write down how you feel in a journal and then share it with someone.
- Try to do relaxing exercises (imagine being at your favorite place; take slow deep breaths and, when you breathe out, imagine all of your stress leaving you; listen to calming music).
- Do positive self-talk every morning and night, before you go to bed (e.g., “I am feeling calmer; I am going to handle this well”).
- Stay focused in the present moment (try not to feel guilty about something that has happened in the past or worry about the future, because most things we worry about don’t ever happen). When you start to worry, turn your head slowly from left to right and notice what you are seeing, hearing, and feeling.
- Exercise for at least 30 minutes, 5 days a week (this is a great way to release stress!).
- Don’t take certain medications or drugs that can cause you to feel anxiety. These include caffeine, which is found in drinks such as Pepsi, Mountain Dew, energy drinks, coffee, and tea; nicotine in cigarettes; marijuana; nasal decongestants (e.g., Sudafed); stimulant medication (e.g., Ritalin), or street drugs (e.g., cocaine).

This handout may be distributed to families.

From Melnyk, B. M., & Lusk, P. (2022). *A Practical Guide to Child and Adolescent Mental Health Screening, Evidence-Based Assessment, Intervention, and Health Promotion* (3rd ed.).



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WHEN WHAT YOU ARE DOING ISN'T HELPING

- Talk to your parent(s), your doctor, or nurse practitioner if you think you worry too much about things. Describe how you think and feel.
- Ask your primary care provider for things to read or websites to visit so you and your parents can learn more about how you are feeling.
- Your doctor or practitioner might want you to meet with a counselor to help you with your worries. You might meet with the counselor alone, with your family, or in a group with other kids who have the same problems.
- Medication may help to stop your worry. Ask your doctor or practitioner how this could help.

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