

Do you ever feel overwhelmed with homework, worried about family or friendships, tired of rushing from one activity to the next? You're not alone! You're probably experiencing stress.

Some stress is normal

Experiencing some stress is actually a normal, okay thing. It is our body's way of helping us do well in challenging situations. Lower levels of stress can increase our energy levels, motivate us, and help us perform at our best. But when that stress and that energetic feeling (being "fired up") gets too high, we feel nervous, tense, and distracted —stressed out.



How can you tell that you're "stressed out"?



Here are a few signs of too much stress, or being "stressed out":

- **Body signs:** headaches, stomachaches, fast heart-beat, dry mouth,
- **Behavior signs:** Fidgeting, procrastinating, sleep troubles, substance use, overeating
- **Thoughts:** Easily distracted, difficulty focusing, going "blank", negative thoughts
- **Emotions:** Fear, worry, frustration, helplessness, overwhelmed, anger, depression

What are some causes of teenage stress?

For teenagers, stress can come from lots of different places, but here are some common factors that many teens talk about:

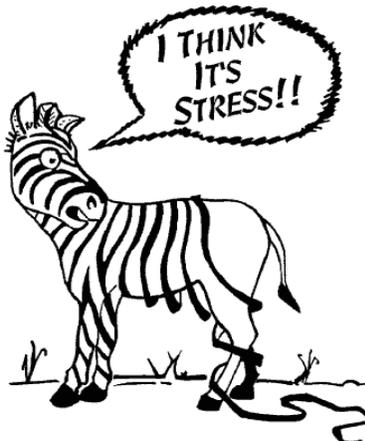
- **School** — Worries about homework, understanding the teacher, getting good grades, getting into college, competition in activities like sports, drama, or music.
- **Peers** — Concerns about friendships, boyfriends/girlfriends, peer pressure
- **Family** — Parent expectations, conflict at home, sibling arguments.
- **Self** — Worry about fitting in at school, being liked, changes in appearance, future plans
- **Life events** — Moving, financial worries, illness, unsafe neighborhoods

What can you do?

The causes of stress are not always changeable; but **you do have power over your choices**. Stress management is all about taking charge.

Some choices are positive and helpful in relieving stress. But some quick fixes—like drugs, alcohol, smoking, procrastinating, and overeating—actually hurt more than help.

So, let's talk about some healthy,



positive strategies you can use to manage your stress.

These are skills that will help you for the rest of your life (**life skills!**) and strategies to feel more calm, happy, and confident in your ability to deal with life's challenges.

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Positive Tips for Easing Stress

Make a change: Avoid things that bring you down. You know the people who might be a negative influence on you, the places where you're likely to get in trouble, the things that upset you. Choose people, places, and things that bring you up—not down.



Organize. Try new ways to organize your time—start big assignments early, make “to-do” lists and check off items that you complete, keep track of homework in a daily planner. Another helpful tip...if you do your homework first each evening, you can reward yourself with a favorite relaxing activity afterward.

Let go, say “no”. Think carefully about how many extra-curricular activities you choose to participate in at one time. There are many benefits to being involved, but make sure you have a little “down-time” every day...time to eat without rushing, to rest, to relax. You may have say “no” sometimes.

Talk to someone: Often times, just talking to someone can make a huge difference in easing stress. It isn't about the person solving your problems, but listening and helping you find your own answers. Talk to a trusted friend or family member, a favorite teacher or counselor, a clergyman...someone who you trust and who will listen.

Quiet your mind. People do this through a variety of ways. Some examples are meditation, prayer, yoga, and deep breathing exercises. Here's one example to try...

Deep breathing exercise: (cool air in, warm air out): With your eyes closed, concentrate on gently breathing in through your nose while counting to five. Be aware of the cool air coming into your nose. As you breath out and count to five, be aware of the warm air passing out of your nose or mouth. Just be aware the cool air coming in...1..2..3..4..5..., and the warm air going out...1..2..3..4..5



Think positive thoughts. Stress comes more from how we perceive (or think about) a situation. Replacing negative thoughts with positive ones can improve your mood and hope!

I am stronger because of this. I am growing and learning. I am as capable as anyone. I know that with time and effort, I can accomplish anything. I like myself, just how I am. I can do it!

Be healthy. Get physical. Go for a walk, dance, swim, skate, run...get your heart pumping! Physical activity relieves stress, improves your mood, and creates a strong, healthy body.



Eat healthy foods to feel better. Avoid too much junk food. They create highs and lows in energy levels and moods that can hurt your ability to cope with stressful situations.

Get rest. Ideally, teenagers should be getting at least nine hours of sleep each night. The best thing you can do for yourself is to go to bed at the same time each night—so turn it all off (phone, tv, music, computer) and get some zzzz's.