Northeast and Caribbean (HHS Region 2)
MHTTC Mental Health Technology Transfer Center Network
Funded by Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration

Stress Management for Children and Teens

Worry and anxiety are regular parts of life, but they can also be indications that your child needs more support. The recognition of anxiety disorders in young people has increased significantly over the past 10 years. Approximately 30% of children and adolescents will experience an anxiety disorder at some point in their young lives. Knowing the signs and seeking professional help when needed will help to interrupt a progression that can lead to depression, poor school performance, and substance use1.

1Child Mind Institute. (2018). 2018 Children's Mental Health Report. childmind.org/awareness-campaigns/childrens-mental-health-report/2018-childrens-mental-health-report

Signs of Stress in Children and Teens

- Complaints of headaches and/or stomach aches
- Chest pain, heart palpitations
- Insomnia or excessive sleeping
- Nightmares
- Bedwetting in younger kids
- Appetite changes
- Anxiety or worry
- Mood swings/Irritability
- Restlessness
- Clingy behavior
- Increased crying, anger, and/or aggression
- Emotional overreactions to minor incidents
- Regressive behaviors (e.g. thumb-sucking)
- Social isolation

Potential Stressors

Conflict with friends

School changes

Academic problems

Problems at home

Parental divorce/separation

Bullying

Puberty changes

Fear of the future

Dating relationships

Peer pressure

Over involvement in activities

Performance issues

How Caregivers Can Help

- Create a safe space
- Talk to your child - Listen, don't lecture
- Help your child develop healthy coping skills
- Spend quality/unpressured time with your child
- Manage your own stress and model healthy coping skills
- Encourage your child to take breaks from activities and stressful events (e.g., Mental Health Day)
- Build routines with your child that include work and play

Seek professional help if your child experiences extreme distress or worries that interfere with daily activities.

This work is supported by grant H79SM081783 from the Department of Health and Human Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration