

[IMAGE]

4 Ways to Teach Your Kids How to Deal With Stress

By Editorial Staff

You might be an expert at handling stress after years of trial and error (or at least you like to think so), but children lack the experience to understand how to deal with stressful situations. Whether it's a heavy homework load, a disagreement with a friend, a new pimple in a conspicuous location or even a "bad day," kids need your help in learning how to handle stress when it arises. After all, as parents are acutely aware, stress isn't a passing phase; it's with us in one way or another our entire lives. It's how we manage it that makes the difference. Here are a few easy ways to help teach your children how to deal with life's daily stresses:

1. *See It Coming*: Sometimes the best way to avoid stress, or at least lessen its impact if it's unavoidable, is to see it coming and figure out a plan of action. For example, as we get older, life generally gets busier. For kids, that means more and more things fill their average day. What used to be homework once a week quickly becomes once a night, in multiple subjects, with multiple tests or projects due every week. Add in athletics, chores and everything else and it can become overwhelming in a heartbeat. Sit down with your child every Sunday night to prepare for the coming week. Have them write down their major responsibilities (sports practices, homework assignments if known, particularly tests, etc.) and then discuss how to best manage the "busy-ness" in an effective fashion. Trust us, taking a few minutes to get organized will make them – and you – feel a lot less stressed as the week proceeds.
2. kids with stress - Copyright â Stock Photo / Register Mark *Let Them Vent*: Your daughter's uptight, angry and disrespectful for no apparent reason. You try to ask her what's wrong, but she keeps getting louder and less respectful. Time to drop the hammer and ground her for a week? Not necessarily. These are all signs that she's feeling stress in some area of her life. To help reduce her stress, rather than increasing it by creating conflict with her, let her vent (within reason), while trying to get her to open up about what's bothering her. It may take some time and patience on your part, but you'll be accomplishing two important things: showing her that stressful situations require calm, patient response; and keeping yourself from getting stressed out by the very stress she's feeling.
3. *Take a Timeout*: If the above suggestion doesn't work (and it may not), keep the stressful situation from escalating by calling a quick "timeout" once you see things going downhill. This can be a

five-minute "break" from the stress that allows your child (and you) to calm down, move away from what was becoming a bad situation, and then come back to the table in a hopefully less-stressed position. If nothing else, your child will hopefully be removed from the raw emotion of the moment and be able to verbalize their frustration / stress to you a little bit. Even if they don't right away, it will set the stage for you to discuss what was bothering them later that day or the next; when *they're* ready.

4. *Run It Off*: Too many soccer, basketball and track practices might be the cause of your kids' stress, but in general, physical activity is actually a great way to *reduce* stress. Exercise not only lets you "get away" from what's bothering you and focus on something else (whether it's running around the blacktop or competing in a challenging event); it also encourages the release of endorphins, which are the brain's "feel good" neurotransmitters. Hard to stay stressed when your brain's sending feel-good signals, right? Of course, remember that getting away from the stress doesn't mean it's gone, so make sure to keep the communication lines open so your child can discuss what they were feeling – or may still be feeling once the feel-good period subsides.

We all experience stress, but how we handle it can be an absolute life changer. Plant the seeds for successful stress management early in life with these and other simple tactics to help keep your children's stress low. In doing so, you'll help develop a stronger, healthier person and build parent-child trust that will last a lifetime.

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