

A Conversation About Teen Anxiety
and
How to Recognize When Your Teen is
Overscheduled

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What is Stress and Anxiety?

- Stress causes emotional and physical reactions
- Rapid heartbeat- shallow rapid breathing.
Tightness and tense feelings in muscles..
- Good stress- normal-burst of energy-motivates teenagers to do things-be more efficient- helps them meet daily challenges and meet their goals.
- Bad stress-stress that is more constant for weeks and months at a time.
- Anxiety is a normal reaction to stress.

Common Events that Cause Stress in High School

- Finals week – it's coming up.
- Oversleeping for an exam.
- Having a boyfriend or girlfriend problems
- Ending a steady dating relationship.
- Serious illness in a close friend or family member.
- Sense of overload in school or work.
- Two exams in one day.
- Difficulties with parents.
- Lack of sleep.
- Competing or performing in public.
- Drinking or using drugs.
- Concerns about your appearance.
- Falling asleep in class.

Questions?

- In a typical day does your teen have three different responsibilities taking up his/her time? (extra school, job, sports). Is there an activity that your child should give up?
- Is your teen in a steady relationship?
- Have your teen's grades been falling since he joined a sport, started a job or added a new time-taking responsibility?
- When do you notice your teen stressed out?
- Is your teen showing signs of burnout in a sport or other activity?(Burnout is feeling disillusioned, helpless and worn out)
- Does your child tell you he/she is too busy to spend time with the family?
- Is your teenager often telling his/her friends he/she cannot hang out because of a responsibility?
- Does your teen feel pressured to not only succeed but exceed?
- Is your teenager starting to experiment with alcohol or drugs?
- Has it been harder to get your teen out of bed in the morning?

Emotional Symptoms

- Anger and argumentative – more often than usual
- Denial of a problem
- Loneliness
- Feeling powerless –afraid to talk about their stress and the anxiety it is causing
- Constant worry

Strategies That Help

- Research shows that talking about stress and anxiety-confronting feelings and thoughts regarding a stress can have long-lasting positive effects – even though this can be hard for teenagers.
- Think about ways you can spend more time listening to your teenager, without judging or making suggestions!
- When they are overwhelmed, ask how you can help.
- Lessen a responsibility or chore when your teenager is particularly stressed.
- Give your child a card that shows your love and support.
- Cognitive Therapy-an approach that helps people change or modify their thinking and negative emotional responses. Teenagers often make errors in the way they draw conclusions, i.e., jumping to conclusions and over generalizing. “I am never going to be good at math!” “I am so fat!” “I’m worthless.”

Cognitive Therapy

- Lists of Cognitive Distortions-
- 1. All or nothing thinking- you look at things in absolute black and white categories.
- 2. Fortune –Telling- you arbitrarily predict that things will turn out badly.
- 3. Magnification- You blow thing way out of proportion.
- 4. “Should statements”- You criticize yourself with “shoulds” “oughts” “musts” and “have to”. Say “it would have been better”

Cognitive distortions

- Personalization- You blame yourself for something you weren't entirely responsible for.
- Labeling- Instead of saying "I made a mistake" you tell yourself, "I'm a jerk", or a "fool" or "a loser"

Does Stress “trickle down” in Your Home?

- How is the atmosphere at home?
- How are you as parents handling your own stress?
- Do you model how to handle stress in helpful ways?
- Breathing techniques- Exercise- Mindfulness
- Compassion. Empathy. “ I understand.....”

Mindfulness- Breath

- Mindfulness is moment to moment awareness. Being fully aware of the reality around you but without judgment! Nonjudgmental awareness
- Breath work- pay attention to the movement of air in and out of your nose- Count the breaths
- Body scan- progressive relaxation. Observe the parts of your body.

Techniques

- Relaxation-yoga, breathing exercises, meditation, visualization-schedule a relaxation break.
- Time management- list priorities- break things down into steps.
- Caffeine- can make you tense and jittery-disrupts sleep. Look at other behaviors and habits that are not healthy and work at changing them.
- Spend less time on your cell and computer and instead show up as available to spend time with your teen.
- Sleep well-and enough.
- Be mindful of nutrition in your home.
- Be more aware of enjoying.....Notice the positive things your teenage does.

Other ways to reduce stress

- Humor- Take time to enjoy some laughter.
- Take a time-out to be creative by drawing, playing an instrument, singing, writing in a journal, play with dog, read about something you are interested in.
- Talk it out with friends or parents.

Five Secrets of Communication

- Disarming technique- You find some truth in what the other person is saying.
- Empathy – thought empathy- you paraphrase the other person's words. Feeling empathy- you acknowledge how he or she is probably feeling.
- Inquiry- You ask gentle probing question to learn more what the other person is thinking and feeling.
- You use “I feel” statements rather than “you statements”
- You find something positive to say to the other person.

Thank you for your time!

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