

Mindful Minute

A Mental Health Resource for Parents

Supporting Your Child's Mental Health: Recognizing Stressors and Offering Support

Being a young person in today's world can be very stressful. Children face a variety of stressors such as school, academic pressure, social situations, family, grief and loss, and global events. These stressors can lead to a variety of mental health conditions such as depression, anxiety, thoughts of self-harm and even possible suicidal ideation. Understanding and recognizing the stressors affecting your child's emotional well-being is a key step toward offering effective support.

Signs Your Child May Be Stressed

Children may struggle to express stress, so it's important to look for signs such as:

- Changes in behavior or mood.
 - Irritability, sadness, or withdrawal.
- Sleep Disturbances.
 - Difficulty sleeping, having/experiencing nightmares, or oversleeping
- Trouble concentrating or declining academic performance.
- Physical complaints.
 - Headaches or stomach aches.
- Increased sensitivity or emotional outbursts.
- Loss of interest in activities they once enjoyed.

Understanding Common Stressors for Our Children:

- **School and Academic Pressure:** Academic performance remains a significant source of stress for many students. The pressure to achieve high grades, excel in extracurriculars, and prepare for the future can be overwhelming. For younger children, the demands of learning new skills, taking tests, and keeping up with classroom expectations can also create stress.
- **Social Situations:** Navigating peer relationships, bullying, and the fear of exclusion are common stressors for pre-teens and teens. Social media often heightens feelings of comparison, anxiety, and isolation. Additionally, the process of identity formation—developing their personality, strengths, and skills—can be a significant emotional challenge.
- **Family:** Changes within the family, such as parental separation, financial instability, or the arrival of a new sibling, can lead to significant emotional strain. Even in seemingly stable households, everyday challenges such as conflict, transitions, or illness can impact a child's mental health.
- **Grief and Loss:** Losing a loved one, whether a family member, friend, or pet, can deeply affect children as they navigate the concept of loss. Similarly, major changes like moving, switching schools, or experiencing life-altering events, such as natural disasters or accidents, can take a toll on their mental well-being.
- **Global and Community Events:** Children are often aware of global issues such as climate change, political unrest, and economic uncertainty. The constant stream of news can cause anxiety and worry, especially if they are not given space to process these concerns.





How Parents Can Support Their Child's Mental Health

Create Open Lines of Communication: Provide a judgment-free space for your child to share their feelings openly. Encourage them to express concerns, fears, or frustrations, and listen actively to validate their emotions. Focus on understanding rather than solving their problems. Boost their confidence by celebrating their perseverance, resilience, and even small victories, reminding them that mistakes are essential for learning and growth.

Model Coping Strategies: Model healthy coping strategies by practicing emotional regulation, problem-solving, and self-care. Instead of providing solutions, brainstorm with your child coping strategies to empower your child and build their confidence. Regularly check in on each family member's emotional well-being to strengthen family bonds.



Family Bonding: Spend time with your child doing activities they enjoy, like watching movies, playing games, cooking, or taking walks. These activities help reduce stress and offer relaxation. Create routines, like family meals or weekly outings, to provide stability and a sense of connection during challenging times.

Teach Mindfulness: Help your child develop healthy ways to manage stress by encouraging mindfulness. Teach them to focus on the present to stay grounded and avoid worrying too much about things they can't control.

Physical Activity: Set aside time for your child to be physically active. Exercise is one of the best ways to reduce stress. It increases blood flow, releases endorphins, and increases energy levels which improves mood. Sports, organized activities, walks and playing outside will improve your mental outlook.

Set Realistic Expectations: Encourage your child to do their best while reminding them that perfection is not the goal. Acknowledge their efforts and progress rather than focus solely on outcomes.

Foster Social Support: Encourage healthy friendships and connections with others. Whether it's through school, extracurriculars, or community groups, having a support system can help reduce feelings of isolation.

Be Mindful of Technology Use: Monitor your child's screen time, especially social media engagement. Limit exposure to negative or stressful news and encourage time away from screens for offline activities.

Seek Professional Help When Needed: If you notice persistent signs of distress in your child or if stress begins to interfere with their daily life, consider seeking the support of a mental health professional. Therapy or counseling can provide your child with valuable tools for coping with stress and anxiety.





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Texas Child Mental
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Parent Self-Care: It's common to feel overwhelmed, worried, or even helpless when your child is struggling. Recognizing and accepting your emotions, rather than suppressing them, is essential. Set healthy boundaries to ensure you avoid burnout. Sleep is vital for emotional and physical well-being. Try to establish a bedtime routine and stick to it. Lean on your support system by sharing your life with them and taking time to have adult interactions, not focused on your kids. Pay attention to your nutrition, as eating well can impact your energy and mood. Exercise regularly and practice mindfulness regularly to keep regulated and grounded. If you're struggling, it's okay to ask for help from others such as family members, friends, or professionals.

Supporting Your Child

Every child experiences stress, but by being proactive and supportive, you can help your child develop resilience and healthy coping mechanisms. By maintaining open communication, recognizing signs of distress, and promoting a positive environment, you can empower your child to navigate challenges with confidence. Remember, you're not alone in this journey—working together with your child, teachers, counselors, and other trusted adults can make a significant difference in supporting your child's mental well-being.



Helpful Resources



Scan the QR code to explore a variety of mental health articles and videos.