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PARENT HEALTH BULLETIN

MARCH 2011

Reprinted by:
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THIS MONTH'S TOPIC:

HELPING YOUR CHILD COPE WITH STRESS

You may think that your children do not have any stress in their lives. However, that is generally not the case. The fact is children have very different stresses from adults. They can get stressed out about school work and friendships. These stresses can actually be very overwhelming for children.

You cannot stop your child from feeling stress but you can help your child learn how to deal with the stresses that he or she may feel.

Here are a few ideas to help your child when he or she may be feeling stress:

Notice out loud

Make a causal statement that says that you notice that something seems to be bothering your child. Simply, "it seems as though something is bothering you; is it something you would like to talk about?" Show sympathy for your child and show that you want to understand.

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Children can get stressed out about school work and friendships.

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Listen

Listening to your child is more than just being there when he or she is talking. Pay attention to what your child is saying. Try not to judge or criticize what you have heard. Make sure to get the whole story before starting to talk and then let your child take his time getting the story out.

Label the feeling

Maybe your child does not know how to label the feeling that he or she is feeling. After you have listened, try helping your child name what he or she is feeling: it may be it's anger or frustration. Children who are able to identify how they are feeling are less likely to act out.

What to do about it

If it is a problem that is causing all of the stress, help your child figure out what to do about it. Sit down and discuss options. Once you have decided how to act upon the stress, draw up a plan to help get rid of the stress. Both you and your child should do this together. When the plan is complete you should ask your child if he or she thinks that it will work and why?

Children have very different stresses from adults. These stresses can be very overwhelming for them.

Limit stress when you can

If your child is feeling stress from many places and you can help ease some of it, then do so! If your child is into too many afterschool activities and having trouble finding time to do homework, then find a plan to get homework done or cut out an activity.



Be there

Your child may not feel like talking to you about the stress that he or she is feeling. That is ok. However, it is important to be there when he or she is ready to talk. Spend some time together. Even if the problem is not being talked about, sometimes just being with you can help.

As a parent, you cannot solve all of your children's problems. But you can be there when they need you.

REFERENCES:

- Kids Health. "Helping Kids Cope With Stress" The Nemours Foundation. <http://www.kidshealth.org>

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