

STRESS HELPSHEET FOR PARENTS

Stress is a normal part of development, and can even be helpful and motivating. Many teens, however, struggle with stress levels that interfere with everyday life. For 60% of those youth the stress comes from perceived pressure—either internal pressure (ie., to be perfect or successful) or external pressure (ie., from the expectations of others). Youth need to learn to give themselves grace - and it starts with the messages and modeling they get from us.

NOTICE THIS:

Your teen seems to be more overwhelmed and unable to focus and get things done more than usual.



WATCH FOR THIS

Stress causes the youth to feel threatened because they perceive the situation to be more dangerous, difficult, or painful than they are equipped to manage.

A fight (aggression/agitation), flight (distraction/avoidance) or freeze (mind going blank/concentration difficulties) response may be the first reaction to challenges or requests.

Increased irritability, negativity, forgetfulness and scattered concentration may be misunderstood as bad behavior rather than signs of distress.

Physical complaints (headaches or stomach aches), difficulties with sleep, generalized worry, and a sense of being overwhelmed all the time are common when teens are stressed.



SAY THIS

“It seems like there are a lot of things on your shoulders right now. That must feel overwhelming at times. Would you tell me about it?”

“What am I doing that contributes to your stress right now? What can I do differently?”

“What are your internal resources? What are the things inside that can help you through this? (knowledge, experience, faith, courage)”

“What are your external resources? Who can you talk to and have fun with? What activities relieve your stress? ”

“What traits do you see in people around you that help them through stressful times?” (Suggest some helpful traits such as: Gratefulness? Flexibility? Optimism? Grace toward yourself?)



TRY THIS

Provide the tools to withstand—or the permission to be released from—the things creating unhealthy pressure.

Stressed-out teens may feel they don't have the time to just connect, but close relationships—and hugs!—release oxytocin which relieves stress.

Help them create a “relaxation repertoire.” Practice measured breathing, prayer, and intentional head-to-toe muscle relaxation.

“Mindfulness” impacts brain chemistry. Practice making space together to just be in the present moment without “doing” anything productive. Talk about how that feels.

Help them lower the bar of unrealistic expectations. What level of competence is actually required?



RESOURCES

To access all of our helpsheets online, visit youthunlimited.com/teentools

Credit to: lifeteams.ca

Remember:

“Give your entire attention to what God is doing right now, and don't get worked up about what may or may not happen tomorrow.”

(Matthew 6:34)