

HELPING YOUR STUDENT MANAGE STRESS AND ANXIETY

Stress has been defined as a physical reaction or response to any demand for change. When we think of it in those terms, it is easy to see how stress might present on a continuum of interactions between ourselves and the environment. A little stress seems a natural part of every day, but too much can be counter-productive. It is important that we understand both how to set limits for ourselves and how to use coping skills to manage stress.

Middle school aged children experience stress about their social lives, their changing bodies, their appearance and their school work. In some studies, school aged children cite school work as the biggest factor in dealing with stress.

In a learning environment it is important for our students to be able to feel calm and capable, so that they are at their best for meeting academic demands. As parents, you can help to give them the guidance and the tools they need to meet with success. The following are positive ways you can encourage your child to deal with stress on a daily basis:

- Talk to a friend, parent, guidance counselor
- Get some exercise each day
- Don't worry about things you can't control
- Don't try to be perfect—no one is!
- Look for solutions and move forward
- Practice deep breathing when you feel stressed
- Take a 5-minute mental vacation and picture yourself in a stress-free favorite place
- Learn to say "No" to doing too many activities
- Do get involved in positive activities that help you relax (listen to music, play a sport)
- Manage your time by making lists organizing regular homework time
- Get a good night's sleep—you will get things done more easily