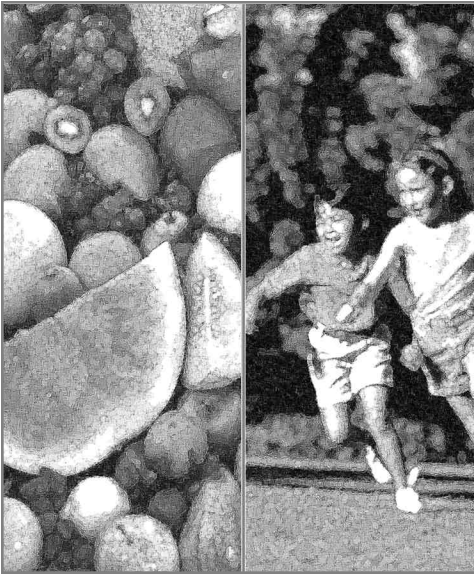


Children and Stress



Our children live in a world that can sometimes be very stressful and confusing for them. In addition to the normal stress that children feel as their bodies and minds grow, they also have to deal with many other demands. Pressure from friends, school and family can add stress. Unexpected events, divorce, death and exposure to violence all affect children and add stress to their lives. As adults we can do a lot to help children cope with stress.



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How to recognize stress in children

- Complaints about physical aches and pains, headaches and stomach aches.
- Overeating or under-eating
- Sweaty palms
- Not wanting to go to school or other places that are part of the normal routine
- Trouble in concentrating, listless

What can you do to help children with stress?

- Talk to your child's doctor about the changes you have seen.
- Listen to your children. Ask them how they feel. Accept how they feel without offering solutions. Don't tell them how they should feel.
- Be aware that when you are feeling stressed, they are too. Feeling alone makes stress harder to manage. Let children know that the stresses are real, and you are all feeling the stress.
- Teach your children one or more of the relaxation exercises on the following pages. Do it together.
- Reassure them that you always love them, even if things don't go well all the time.
- Let them know that it is OK to cry. Crying is a good way to relieve tension.
- Let them know that bad things happen that are not their fault. Life brings problems that we can't predict.
- Provide healthy foods. Avoid foods with a lot of sugar, caffeine or chemicals. Offer healthy snack foods like fruits, vegetables and fruit juices. Stay away from chips, sodas and fast food.
- Make sure your children get plenty of exercise. Go to the park or walk along the shoreline. Get lots of fresh air.
- If the stress is because of school, be sure to talk to the teacher and principal.