

## Managing Stress in Children, Adolescents, and... OURSELVES!

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## Stress is...

### Responses to Stress

- **Fight or Flight**
- **Physiological Response**
  - Adrenalin "Sounds the Alarm"
    - Muscles Tighten
    - Sugar Flows
    - Breathing Quickens
    - Digestion Slows
    - Pupils Dilate
    - Skin Turns Pale- as blood is diverted to muscles and brain
    - Heart Speeds Up- to pump blood faster

### Kids' Stress

- **School as the Training Ground for Life**
  - What kids say stresses them about school
  - What kids say stress feels like

### 3 Myths About Stress

- **Stress is Only About Bad Times**
- **A Stress-Free World Would be Great**
- **Stress is The Same For Everyone**

### Teen Stress

**"Perfect"**

-Simple Plan

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f-5gLjWzfn0>

**"Sticks and Stones"**

-Aly and Aj

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vwW/s-nODYFo>

**"I'm Just a Kid"**

-Simple Plan

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jxIV9EhDN4o>

**"Beautiful"**

-Christina Aguilera

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OvLLG99O9Gc&feature=related>

### Teen Stress

**"The Voice Within"**

-Christina Aguilera

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yxYGO8cPMPo>

**"Fifteen"**

-Taylor Swift

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CeMVMVrduH4>

### Multiple Factors That Influence Stress

**Developmental Stage**

**Gender**

**Culture**

**Environment**

### **Sources of Stress**

Relationships

Social Issues

Work/School

### **Causes of Increased Stress Today**

- **Decline in childhood (media)**
  - “Screen Time”
  - Individualized Activities
  - Emotional Disconnection
- **Hurried child (the little adult)**
- **Sexual behavior**
- **Home situation**
- **School situation**

### **Stressors at Different Ages**

- **Young Child (3-5)**
- **School-Aged (6-10)**
- **Pre-Adolescent (11-13)**
- **Adolescent (14-18)**

### **Sources of Stress at Different Levels**

- **Microsystems-** where we live, our family, our peers, our schools, and our neighborhoods.
- **Mesosystems-** the interaction between experiences in the microsystems.
- **Exosystems-** another social setting that we do not have an active role in, but that have an immediate influence on us.
- **Macrosystem-** the culture in which we live.

### Behaviors that Indicate Unsuccessful Coping

- Physical Complaints
- Drop in grades
- Withdrawal from friends and activities
- Inability to Concentrate
- Sudden clinging behavior
- Significant changes in sleeping habits
- Sudden weight gain or loss
- Mood swings/sudden teariness
- Lying/Stealing
- Fighting and Aggression
- Threats to Harm Oneself
- Drug and Alcohol Abuse

### Causes of Increased Stress Today

#### Cyberbullying

Tyler Clementi



Megan Meier



<http://www.meganmeierfoundation.org/>

### Causes of Increased Stress Today

#### Sexting

<http://getbetterhealth.com/parents-your-kids-may-be-sexting/2009.10.29>

Hope Witsell  
Jesse Logan

<http://today.msnbc.msn.com/id/29546030/#29546237>

[http://www.aarp.org/family/love/articles/sexting\\_not\\_just\\_for\\_kids.htm?CMP=KNC-3601-GOOGLE-FAM&H&X\\_OU=50&H&X\\_PK=sexting&utm\\_source=Google&utm\\_medium=CPC&utm\\_term=sexting&utm\\_campaign=ARRP%20Family](http://www.aarp.org/family/love/articles/sexting_not_just_for_kids.htm?CMP=KNC-3601-GOOGLE-FAM&H&X_OU=50&H&X_PK=sexting&utm_source=Google&utm_medium=CPC&utm_term=sexting&utm_campaign=ARRP%20Family)

### Teen Stress

#### The Breakfast Club

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G8vqlhi3QQw&feature=related>

#### Mean Girls

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vBAYiBoy43M>

#### Thirteen

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cw1kGKJrs2E>

### **Coping with Stress:**

- **Those who “thrive” on stress**
  - **Attitudes**
  - **Generating Alternatives**
  - **Personality “Hardiness”**

### **Coping with Stress**

#### **High-Stress/Low-Illness People:**

- **Are much more actively involved in their work and social lives**
- **Tend to accept and embrace challenge**
- **Feel more in control of events of their lives**

### **General Goals**

#### **Help Children to:**

- **See world from more positive viewpoint**
- **Become aware of how they personally contribute to and enhance their own lives**
- **Learn skills for understanding themselves**
- **Improve their ability to relate to others**
- **Develop confidence**
- **Gain proficiency in managing stress**

### **Patterns of Coping**

#### **“Evasive Mechanisms”**

**Denial:** Act as though stress doesn't exist. Alleviates pain and thus helps children to preserve equilibrium. May also use fantasy to obliterate reality (e.g., imaginary friends, magical beliefs).

**Regression:** Become dependent and demanding. Receiving physical comfort as a result eases existing stress.

### **"Evasive Mechanisms"**

**Withdrawal:** Children take themselves physically and mentally out of picture. Run away or become quiet (concentrate on inanimate objects, pets or lose themselves in daydreams).

**Impulsive Acting Out:** Act impulsively to avoid either thinking of past or the consequences of current behavior. Conceal misery by making others angry at them. Seek quick/easy ways to stop pain, thus drawing attention to self.

### **"Mature Mechanisms"**

#### **Altruism:**

##### **Positive:**

- Can forget own troubles by helping others, especially parents and siblings. Gain satisfaction from helper role and being useful.

##### **Negative:**

- Become adultified; lose childhood

### **"Mature Mechanisms"**

#### **Humor:**

##### **Positive:**

- Can express anger and pain by joking about difficulties.

##### **Negative:**

- When taken to extreme, can lose the ability to cry or reach out to others.

### **"Mature Mechanisms"**

#### **Suppression:**

##### **Positive:**

- Enables children to set aside anxieties temporarily, without being afraid to go back to stressful situation.

##### **Negative:**

- May use to a point of denial

### **"Mature Mechanisms"**

#### **Anticipation:**

##### **Positive:**

- Children are able to foresee and plan for the next stressful episode. They are then prepared to protect themselves and to accept what cannot be avoided.

##### **Negative:**

- May become too fearful and develop compulsive need to know and plan for what is coming next.

### **"Mature Mechanisms"**

#### **Sublimation:**

##### **Positive:**

- Find ways to vent anger, overcome their fears, or express their sadness through becoming absorbed in games, sports, and hobbies.

##### **Negative:**

- Can become so engrossed that other pleasures, or the needs of family members can be ignored.

### **What We Need in Order to Help**

#### **Knowledge:**

- Stressors
- Coping strategies
- Effects on child and family

#### **Appreciation:**

- Child's point of view, and choice of coping strategy
- See stressor through child's eyes
- Complexities of situation

### **What We Need in Order to Help**

#### **Skill:**

- Communicate easily and warmly
- Gain trust
- Help child to talk openly

#### **Self-awareness:**

- Personal biases and belief systems about stressors and children

## Helping Strategies

**Remove at Least One Stressor:** Even a small improvement in the overall situation can help children to feel *stronger* and more *able*.

**Teach New Coping Strategies:** A larger repertoire of coping techniques results in better chance of successful coping (e.g., anticipating visiting ill family member).

**Transfer Coping Strategies to Other Situations:** Children tend to apply coping techniques only to the situations in which they were learned.

## Cognitive Behavior Therapy

### A-B-C Model of Stress and Anxiety

#### A- Activating Events- Stressors

Everyday events, Normal Stressors  
Panic causing events / phobias

#### B- Beliefs, Worries and Fears

Beliefs: "I have to be the best at everything I do to be good at all."  
Worries: "If I don't get a \_\_\_\_ on my SATs I won't get into an Ivy."  
Fears: "I won't be able to get to a hospital in time and will die driving."

#### C- Consequences

**Emotional-** Stress, anxiety

**Behavioral-** Phobic avoidance, procrastination, overcompensation, excesses (↑ alcohol)

**Physiological-** muscle tension, adrenalin secretion, ↑ heart rate, hyperventilation, changes in blood pressure, flushing, dry mouth, ↑ sweating, ↓ gastric secretion

## Cognitive Behavior Therapy

### A-B-C Model of Stress and Anxiety

#### R- Reinforcing Consequences

Primary gains such as anxiety reduction from avoidance, possible secondary gains from being excused from work or adults helping and taking responsibilities away

## Patterns of Thinking

### Optimistic Thinking vs. Pessimistic Thinking

### Practical Mental Patterns

- Awareness of Automatic Thoughts
- Argue with Your Negative Thinking
- De-Catastrophize Your Thoughts

### Slowing Down Runaway Thoughts

- What is the Evidence for my negative thoughts about why this is happening?
- What is the Evidence against those "automatic" negative thoughts
- What are some other ways of seeing this situation?
  - What is the worst thing that might happen from this?
  - What is the best thing?
  - What is the most likely thing?

### Develop an Action Plan

- What is one thing I can do to help stop the worst thing from happening?
- What is one thing I can do to help the best thing happen?
- What actions can I take if the most likely think happens?
  - Actions that could improve the outcome for me and anyone else involved?

### Coping with Stress

#### The "FRIENDS" Solution:

*"So no one told you life was gonna be this way/  
Your job's a joke, you're broke, your love life's D.O.A./ It seems  
you're always stuck in second gear/ When it hasn't been your  
day, your week, your month, or even your year, but/  
I'll be there for you...."*

### Strategies to Reduce Stress

- **Communicate**
- **Recognize Warning Signs**
- **Don't Overschedule**
- **Validate Child's Experience**
- **Applaud Success**
- **Ration T.V.**
- **"Quiet Hour"**
- **Practice**
- **Empower Child**
- **Perspective Taking**
- **Connect to Others**
- **Regulate Sleeping and Eating Habits**
- **Have Fun!!**

### Intervention

#### Relaxation Techniques

Four Square Breathing  
Progressive Muscle Relaxation  
Guided Imagery

#### Story Telling

"The Tyler Stories"

#### Empowerment with Success

Remind of own successes- video tape  
Help younger child or even adult

#### Time Management

Schedules  
Drawer System

### Intervention Four Square Breathing

#### INHALE

through your nose for 4 seconds  
Picture a balloon in your stomach filling up with air

#### HOLD

for 4 seconds

#### EXHALE

for 4 seconds, breathing out through your nose  
Picture air blowing out of balloon  
Say the word "Relax" to yourself

#### RELAX

for 4 seconds

### Intervention

#### PROGRESSIVE MUSCLE RELAXATION

- **Do four cycles of 4 Square Breathing**
- **Each time you tense a muscle, *Inhale***  
**Each time you relax, *Exhale***

**Intervention**  
**PROGRESSIVE MUSCLE RELAXATION**

**Slowly tighten and then relax each muscle:**

Fist: Clench right fist, then left, then both

Biceps: Bend elbows, tense biceps

Triceps: Straighten arms and feel tension along the back

Forehead: Wrinkle forehead, frown

Eyes: Squint, then close tightly

Jaw: Clench jaw, grind teeth together

Tongue: Press against roof of mouth

Lips: Press together

Neck: Press your head back as far as it will go; roll to right; roll to left, bring head forward to chest

**Intervention**  
**PROGRESSIVE MUSCLE RELAXATION**

**Slowly tighten and then relax each muscle:**

Shoulders: Shrug one, then the other, then both

Chest: Fill lungs with air, hold, and breathe out

Stomach: Tighten stomach muscles, push stomach out

Lower Back: Arch up back, make lower back hollow, feel tension along your spine

Buttocks and Thighs: Flex by pressing down on heels (flat on floor); then straighten knees and flex again

Calves: Press feet and toes downward against floor, tensing calf muscles

Ankles and Shins: Bend feet toward head, feeling tension along shins

**Six Symptoms of  
Poor Time Management**

- 1. Rushing**
- 2. Chronic Vacillation between unpleasant alternatives**
- 3. Fatigue or listlessness with many slack hours of non-productive activity**
- 4. Constantly missed deadlines**
- 5. Insufficient time for rest or personal relationships**
- 6. Sense of being overwhelmed by demands and details. Having to do what don't want to do most of the time.**

**Rules for Making Time**

- Learn to say "NO." Danger of saying "Well,..."
- Banish "Bottom Drawer" Items.
- Build time into your schedule
  - Reasonable time estimates
  - Time for interruptions, unforeseen events
- Set aside "Quiet Time" each day
- Keep a list of short tasks (5 minutes)
- Learn to do things at once
- Get up a half hour earlier, and do something you enjoy
- Block off all escape routes for "Top Drawer" items
- Limit less productive activities
- Stop Perfectionism! Just get it done! Nobody is perfect!

### **Learning Disabled Students' Vulnerability to Stress**

- Toxic effects of repeated failure
- Toxic reaction of others
- Poor awareness of LD
- Student comparison of self to others
- Insufficient attention to child's strengths
- Over-dependent on adults
- No Exit- Can't flee
- No Questions asked
- Focus on Product vs. Process
- No alternative ways to represent knowledge
- Devaluation of alternate strategies

### **Learning Disabled Students' Vulnerability to Stress**

- Unmonitored performance in "cooperative learning groups"
- Fast-paced & multi tasking demands
- Block Scheduling- positive and negative
- Therapies cutting into school work & leisure time (e.g., tutoring)
- Poor choice of extracurricular activities (Decrease multi-task aspect. No- Soccer, Lacrosse; Yes- Golf, bowling, canoeing, archery)