

Stress Management

The entire family can benefit from stress management practices, and fostering your child's mental health will help them heal faster and feel better. While having setbacks at a younger age is very challenging, it also helps children build resilience and develop the tools needed to become independent adults and handle future challenges.

 <h3>TALK</h3> <p>Talk with your children about their mental health. Make topics around mental health, stress, anxiety, fear and feelings common in your home and in your child's life.</p> <p>#weALLhaventmentalhealth</p>	 <h3>TRUST</h3> <p>Trust your gut; you know your child best! If you believe your child is struggling or needs help, trust that feeling.</p> <p>#NoHealthWithoutMentalHealth</p>	 <h3>ROLE MODEL</h3> <p>Show your children it is ok to talk about and care for their mental health by taking care of yourself.</p> <p>#ChildrensMentalHealthMatters</p>
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MENTAL HEALTH FOR CHILDREN

What Parents Can Do

NATIONAL FEDERATION OF FAMILIES FOR CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH, FFCMH.ORG • THE YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH PROJECT, YMHPROJECT.ORG

 <h3>ASK FOR HELP</h3> <p>Get a referral to a mental health specialist, if needed. Provide your child with every opportunity to receive treatment and support – just as you would for a broken arm or a fever.</p>	 <h3>CONNECT</h3> <p>You are not alone; 1 in 5 children experiences a mental health condition. Connect with other families who can offer support, help and resources.</p>	 <h3>TEAM UP</h3> <p>Build a team with the professionals and child-serving systems involved in your child's life. An open and honest dialogue with teachers, coaches, doctors and others will give them the information they need to support your child.</p>
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Tips for managing stress, for yourself and your child.

See the Helpful Resources section below for links to guided meditations and other helpful information or videos:

- Regular exercise and unstructured play are essential to managing stress in the long-term, and they are great tools to decrease stress in the moment. Go for a jog or a bike ride, play tag in the backyard. See the Activity section of this handout.

- Release emotional tension through creativity, art, talking, journaling, or laughter.
- Practice Active Relaxation through deep breathing or putting your body in a relaxed position (such as lying on the couch). Start a regular meditation, mindfulness, or yoga practice.
- Fully disconnect by reading a book, enjoying hobbies, visiting a new park, or seeing a play. Put away your phone, don't get on social media.
- Start a gratitude journal. Every day write down one thing you are grateful for.
- Get adequate, high quality sleep to improve your mental health and capacity to handle stress. See the Sleep section of this handout.
- Eat healthy foods to keep your blood sugar stable and improve your mood throughout the day. See the Nutrition section of this handout.

If typical stress management practices don't seem to be helping, don't be afraid to get more help (for yourself or for your child). Mental health professionals are specially trained to help children and families feel better faster. You wouldn't expect to treat your child's condition without your doctor, so you shouldn't expect yourself to handle mental health needs without a professional as well. Here are some signs of anxiety in children (and adults!); if you see these, you should talk to your doctor about getting more mental health support:

- Difficulty concentrating
- Difficulty falling asleep or staying asleep
- Quickly getting angry or irritable
- Constant worry or negative thoughts
- Complaining of stomach or headaches frequently
- Feeling tense or fidgety
- Using the toilet often
- Wetting the bed past age 5

Helpful Stress Management Resources:

- National Institute of Mental Health – Stress & Anxiety:
<https://www.nimh.nih.gov/sites/default/files/documents/health/publications/so-stressed-out-fact-sheet/im-so-stressed-out.pdf>
- Meditation and Mindfulness: What You Need to Know:
<https://www.nccih.nih.gov/health/meditation-and-mindfulness-what-you-need-to-know>
- Mindful.org – Guided Meditations for Kids:
<https://www.mindful.org/mindfulness-for-kids/>
- Deep breathing exercises for kids: [Deep Breathing Exercises for Kids — Coping Skills for Kids](#)