

# Stress Management for Teenagers



Teens don't have jobs or bills and aren't raising a family, so teenagers don't have as much stress as adults. Not true! Just as with adults, stress is an everyday part of life for teenagers and for children. Yes, they are young, energetic, and resilient, but their lives are also full of changes and challenges that you, an adult, no longer have. The signs and symptoms of stress are similar to those of an adult, but the causes are totally different and will require some differences in management. Also, stressors for adolescents will include issues or situations that seem unimportant to adults.

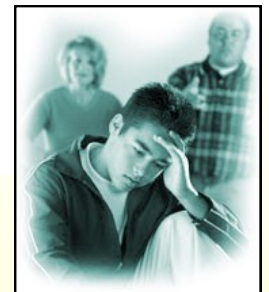
## Top Five Stressors for Adolescents

1. Schoolwork
2. Parents
3. Romantic relationships
4. Problems with friends
5. Siblings

Because adolescents are undergoing major physical and mental changes, their bodies and minds are even more susceptible to major stressors. In addition, adolescents are still acquiring coping skills through experience and role modeling. They are learning from everyone around them: parents, teachers, coaches, and peers. Although their behavior is still closely monitored at school with hall passes and tardy slips and closed campuses, they also spend more time on their own, often driving a car, working a part-time job, babysitting younger siblings, etc. They are beginning to assume adult responsibilities.

For a teen, new and different situations can be perceived as more difficult or painful than for an adult who has dealt with similar situations several times. In such a situation, your teen may or may not call on you or another adult for advice. They may cope with the situation by modeling peer behaviors or something they've learned in a movie or on television. The result may be even more stressful to your teen, you, and your entire family.

Statistically, girls are more affected by stress than boys, but they will respond by seeking help from others or consciously trying to reduce their stress levels with displays of emotion. Boys tend to ignore stress or engage in riskier behaviors. Both use healthy or unhealthy methods for dealing with stress.



You've lived with your teen for years and suddenly he or she is a stranger. Under that adolescent persona is the child you raised, and what you've taught your child about dealing with problems is still there. However, because of radical biological, psychological, and social changes in their lives, teens truly are disoriented, so you will have to model adult coping skills. The process is ongoing. In addition to managing all your other responsibilities, you still have the responsibility of guiding your teen to adulthood.

# Stress Management for Teenagers, cont.



As parent, you are ultimately responsible for your teen's well-being and behavior, so teen stress management is a shared responsibility. Their ability to cope with stressors and to manage stress is best learned from you. Your personal problems are part of their stress load and vice versa. Nagging feels good temporarily, but your stress level is elevated along with your teen's—keep the nagging to a minimum! Remember that the only real control you have over stress is your attitude toward it. Spend as much time as possible with your teen: over meals, sharing chores, having fun. Do some of your problem solving with your teen present and encourage your teen to come to you with their problem solving. Your teen's body may look more adult, but your teen is still a child.

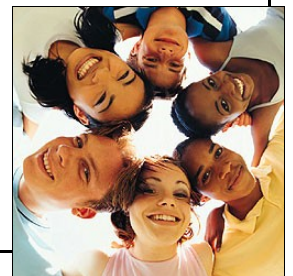
To remind yourself and your teen that stress is manageable, post a list of stress busters on the fridge and make it a family project to select the ones you want included. The following are some suggestions. Add some that can become family traditions, like setting aside one night a week to eat pizza and just talk about what's going on.

## Stress Busters (Pick One, or Two, or Three)

Take deep breaths/practice deep breathing	Watch your thoughts (make them positive)
Visualize what you want to happen	Feel proud of your accomplishments
Don't dwell on mistakes or weaknesses	Do some muscle relaxation exercises
Exercise daily	Prepare for tests early
Punch a pillow, scream, or kick a can	Take one thing at a time
Eat a nutritious meal or snack	Forgive yourself and others
Set realistic goals	Do something fun every day
Do something nice for someone else	Read or watch something inspirational
Talk to a parent, friend, minister, teacher, or counselor	Eliminate all thoughts or sentences that start with "What if..."

### Four Steps to Problem Solving:

- Brainstorm several solutions.
- Think of the consequences of each solution (both good and bad).
- Choose a solution.
- Evaluate your choice with an adult.



For more information on teen stress, please visit:

<http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/stress.html>  
[http://www.stressfocus.com/stress focus article/teen-stress-causes.htm](http://www.stressfocus.com/stress_focus_article/teen-stress-causes.htm)  
[www.aacap.org/cs/root/facts for families/helping teenagers with stress](http://www.aacap.org/cs/root/facts_for_families/helping_teenagers_with_stress)