

EXTENSION UPDATE

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Stress Affects Adolescents Too

Adolescence can be a very stressful time for today's youth. Completing homework, participating in sports, trying to fit in with peers, and maintaining family relationships all during the COVID-19 pandemic is a lot to worry about.

In addition to these stressors, the majority of youth will experience one or more major life challenges or changes during their adolescence. These include a death or illness of a family member, an ongoing parental conflict or divorce, substance abuse with the family, family economic stress, transferring to a different school, or a family move.

These factors combined with the daily struggles of school, minor peer and family arguments, time-management challenges and the physical, social, and cognitive changes of growing up may lead to feelings of stress, anxiety, and depression.

Alcohol abuse, delinquency, and school problems are all associated with the stresses of adolescence and the feelings of hopelessness and frustration some adolescents experience.

Most youth emerge through stressful periods without any long-term negative effects. However, some adolescents are at greater risk.

Research finds three factors influence an adolescent's vulnerability to negative effects of stress. These include: 1) the number of stressors, 2) the presence of internal and external assets, and 3) coping skills.

If only one source of stress is present, it is less likely to be a problem than if there are two or more stressors.

Assets, such as a healthy self-esteem, feelings of competency, close friends, good social skills, and a close relationship with parents protect youth from stress.

Finally, adolescents who take specific and purposeful actions to change the course of the stress often get along better than those who avoid problems or deny them.

It is important to remember stress is not always bad. Stress can help adolescents improve overall coping abilities and concentrate on problem solving. However, adults need to be supportive during this time in children's lives.

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