

STRESS-BUSTERS FOR KIDS

Do your kids ever feel stressed from trying to balance the pressures of school, homework or hectic after-school schedules? Knowing how to deal with stress can be half the battle. Below, Dr. Birute Wise, a Board Certified Pediatrician at Community Care Physicians Clifton Park Pediatrics Office, offers kids some advice from the Centers for Disease Control on how to de-stress both their body and mind. Dr. Wise is currently accepting new patients to her practice, she can be reached at 371-5437. Here are some tips you can pass along to your kids to help them cope with the pressures in their lives:

1. Put your body in motion.

Motion and exercise can be great ways to relieve stress. Physical activity is one of the most important ways to keep stress away by clearing your head and lifting your spirits. Physical activity also increases endorphin levels — the natural "feel-good" chemicals in the body which leave you with a naturally happy feeling.

2. Fuel up.

Start your day off with a full tank — eating breakfast will give you the energy you need to tackle the day. Eating regular meals and taking time to enjoy them will make you feel better too.

Fuel up with fruits, vegetables, proteins (peanut butter, a chicken sandwich, or a tuna salad) and grains (wheat bread, pasta, or some crackers). Don't be fooled by the jolt of energy you get from sodas and sugary snacks — this only lasts a short time, and once it wears off, you may feel sluggish and more tired than usual. For that extra boost of energy to sail through history notes, math class, and after school activities, grab a banana, some string cheese, or a granola bar for some power-packed energy!

3. Laugh!!

Some say that laughter is the best medicine — well, in many cases, it is! Did you know that it takes 15 facial muscles to laugh? Laughing can make you feel good — and, that good feeling can stay with you even after the laughter stops. So, head off stress with regular doses of laughter by watching a funny movie or cartoons, reading a joke book, laughter can make you feel like a new person!

Everyone has those days when they do something really silly or stupid — instead of getting upset with yourself, laugh out loud! No one's perfect! Life should be about having fun. So, lighten up!

4. Have fun with friends.

Being with people you like is always a good way to reduce your stress. Get a group together to go to the movies, shoot some hoops, or play a board game — or just hang out and talk. Friends can help you work through your problems and let you see the brighter side of things.

5. Talk to someone you trust.

Instead of keeping your feelings bottled up inside, talk to someone you trust or respect about what's bothering you. It could be a friend, a parent, someone in your family, or a teacher. Talking out your problems and seeing them from a different view might help you figure out ways to deal with them. Just remember, you don't have to go it alone!

6. Take time to chill.

Pick a comfy spot to sit and read, daydream, or even take a snooze. Listen to your favorite music. Work on a relaxing project like putting together a puzzle or making jewelry.

Stress can sometimes make you feel like a tight rubber band — stretched to the limit! If this happens, take a few deep breaths to help yourself unwind. If you're in the middle of an impossible homework problem, take a break! Finding time to relax after (and sometimes during) a hectic day or week can make all the difference.

7. Catch some zzzzz...

Fatigue is a best friend to stress. When you don't get enough sleep, it's hard to deal — you may feel tired, cranky, or you may have trouble thinking clearly. When you're overtired, a problem may seem much bigger than it actually is. Getting the right amount of sleep is especially important for kids because your body (and mind) is changing and developing, it requires more sleep to re-charge for the next day.

8. Keep a journal.

If you're having one of those crazy days when nothing goes right, it's a good idea to write things down in a journal to get it off of your chest — like how you feel, what's going on in your life, and things you'd like to accomplish. You could even write down what you do when you're faced with a stressful situation, and then look back and think about how you handled it later. So, find a quiet spot, grab a notebook and pen, and start writing!

9. Get it together.

Too much to do but not enough time? Forgot your homework? Feeling overwhelmed or discombobulated? Being unprepared for school, practice, or other activities can make for a very stressful day!

Getting everything done can be a challenge, but all you have to do is plan a little and get organized.

10. Lend a hand.

Get involved in an activity that helps others. It's almost impossible to feel stressed out when you're helping someone else. Signing up for a service project is a good idea, but helping others is as easy as saying hello, holding a door, or volunteering to keep a neighbor's pet. The feeling you will get from helping others is greater than you can imagine!

Most importantly, don't sweat the small stuff! Try to pick a few very important things and let the rest slide — getting worked up over every little thing will only increase your stress. Remember, you're not alone — everyone has stresses in their lives...it's up to you to choose how to deal with them.