



Canadian Mental
Health Association
Toronto

Stress and Mental Health in Teenagers



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Tonight

- Stressors for students
- Signs of stress, anxiety and depression in kids
- How to help
- How to talk about suicide
- Resources



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Discussion: What stresses your kids out?



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Students and stress

- Discrimination
- Identity
- Bullying
- Isolation/alienation
- Work load/assignments/exams
- Uncertainty: what happens after high school?
- Changes/transitions
- Pressure (internal and external)
- Family



Students and stress

- Social media
- Dating
- Finances
- Work
- Violence and abuse
- Physical health
- Death or loss of loved one



Signs of stress

Physical – Emotional - Behavioural



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10 Things Parents Can Do To Help Kids Deal With Stress

1. Listen: supportively, without judgement
2. Encourage your children's strengths
3. Respect feelings and expression of feelings
4. Keep things in perspective
5. Help break down big, overwhelming tasks into smaller, more digestible pieces



10 Things Parents Can Do To Help Kids Deal With Stress

6. Problem solve with kids rather than for them
7. Show you care and offer reassurance and comfort
8. Model healthy stress management
9. Encourage balance
10. Get more help (online resources; school resources; professionals; peer support)



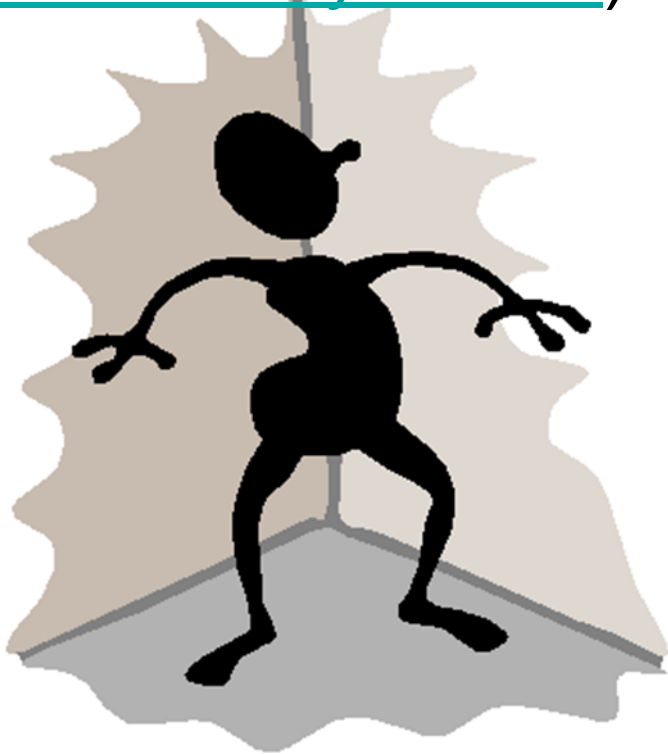
Resources



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Anxiety

Anxiety is a problem when your body reacts *as if* there is danger when there is *no real* danger. It's like having an overly sensitive smoke alarm system in your body (www.anxietybc.com)



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Three parts to anxiety

Thoughts (what we say to ourselves)

- “What if I forget what to say in the middle of the presentation?”

Behaviours (what we do)

- Looking for an excuse to get out it

Physical symptoms (how our body responds)

- Cold sweat, racing heart, stomach ache

Source: www.anxietybc.com



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How can parents help?

What helps in dealing with anxiety?

1. Learning about anxiety.
2. Learning to relax.
3. Challenging scary thoughts.
4. Facing your fears.



Four Steps To Learning About Anxiety (Anxiety BC, www.anxietybc.com)



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Depression

With depression, you may feel down, hopeless, or find that you can't enjoy things you used to like. Some people feel angry or irritable, and some people say they feel 'numb' all the time.

Canadian Mental Health Association (2014). Children, Youth and Depression. Available at www.cmha.ca. Accessed April 21, 2015.



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Depression and Your Child

You might notice changes in your child's:

- feelings
- physical health
- thinking
- behaviour



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How can parents help?

- Say what you see:
 “I’ve noticed....” “I’m wondering...”
 “I’m worried....”
 “How can I help?”
- Listen
- Take your child to see their family doctor or another health professional they trust
- What’s up? Walk-In Counselling (see CMHA Quick Guide)



Communicating with your teen

Your young person may not always want to turn to you for help, but it's important not to give up and keep reinforcing that you're there for them.

- Be **persistent**. Continue to try and talk to your young person to find out what's bothering them.
- Reinforce the message that you **care**. Let your young person know that you're concerned and are there to help.



Source:

<https://healthyfamilies.beyondblue.org.au/age-13/raising-resilient-young-people/communicating-with-your-teenager>



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Communicating with your teen

- Be **understanding** – even if you don't agree or even quite comprehend where they're coming from. This will help your young person feel validated.
- Try to **connect** with your young person in the best way you can. This might mean involving other family members or friends who can help.
- **Change it up** – if you feel you're not getting anywhere, try a different approach. If you're hard, try softer. If you're soft, try be more firm.
- Give your young person **hope** that there are solutions to their problems.

Source:

<https://healthyfamilies.beyondblue.org.au/age-13/raising-resilient-young-people/communicating-with-your-teenager>



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If you're worried your young person is thinking about suicide

- Don't ignore it
- Ask direct questions about suicide
- Talk about their thoughts and feelings
- Listen, without judgement
- Get support
- Stay safe



<https://healthyfamilies.beyondblue.org.au/age-13/mental-health-conditions-in-young-people/suicide/how-you-can-help>



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Phone Support (Crisis)

Distress Centres of Toronto

Provides 24-hour telephone support to those experiencing emotional distress or in need of crisis intervention and suicide prevention

416-408-HELP (4357)

Kids Help Phone

24-hour, national telephone and online counselling, referral and information services for children, youth and young adults

1-800-668-6868

For more supports and resources:

https://toronto.cmha.ca/mental_health/youth-zone/



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Remember

- Anxiety and depression are **common** in children, teens and adults.
- Anxiety and depression are **not character flaws or the result of bad parenting.**
- **Support** is a key part of getting better. Your child needs support, and so do you. You are not alone.



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Discussion

- What's worked for you?
- What have you found challenging?
- Questions?



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Thank you!



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