

# How can I help my child handle stress?



Stress is the way our bodies and minds react to a particular challenge or situation. By recognizing the signs and symptoms of stress, you can help your child learn to manage his or her responses in a healthier way.

**Good stress** is a normal part of healthy development. A student may feel anxious about giving a class presentation, but that “good” stress can be used to inspire him or her to focus and prepare for the challenge.

**Bad stress** is when a child feels so overwhelmed with a problem at home or at school that it interferes with his or her ability to function normally. In these situations, the body activates a “fight-or-flight” response, resulting in heightened focus, strength and alertness.

## Signs of stress

- Irritability and moodiness
- Anxiety and panic attacks
- Muscle tension
- Rapid heartbeat and breathing
- Difficulty separating from caregivers
- Frequent headaches and stomach pains
- Sadness and withdrawal
- Sleep problems
- School problems
- Changes in eating patterns

## Parents can help

A moderate level of stress is normal, and learning how to manage and overcome stressful situations will enhance your children’s ability to cope with stress in the future. Help them learn to be more resilient and to manage the stress that accompanies new challenges by allowing them to feel safe to express their emotions, work on problem-solving skills and practice relaxation techniques. Proper rest, good nutrition and daily routines can help boost coping skills.

**20%** of children suffer from extreme stress, but **only 8%** of parents think their kids are stressed.



## When to seek professional help



If any change in behavior persists over a period of time, causes serious anxiety, or significant physical or social problems, it’s time to seek professional help.

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) is often used to help children learn stress-management skills and to teach them how to better manage their time and find healthier ways to cope.