

Stress

What is stress?

Stress is what you feel when you react to pressure, either from the outside world (school, work, after-school activities, family, friends) or from inside yourself (wanting to do well in school, wanting to fit in).

Stress is a normal reaction for people of all ages. It's caused by your body's instinct to protect itself from emotional or physical pressure or, in extreme situations, from danger.

Symptoms of stress can include:

- Feeling depressed, guilty or tired
- Having regular headaches and/or stomach aches
- Trouble sleeping
- Laughing or crying for no reason
- Feeling like things you used to enjoy aren't fun or are hard work
- Resenting other people or your responsibilities

Is stress always bad?

No. In fact, a little bit of stress is good. Most of us couldn't push ourselves to do well at things--sports, music, dance, work, and school--without feeling the pressure of wanting to do well. Without the stress caused by a deadline, most of us also wouldn't be able to finish projects or get to work or school on time.

If stress is so normal, why do I feel so bad?

With all the things that happen in everyday life, it's easy to feel overwhelmed. Things that you can't control are often the most frustrating. Maybe your parents are fighting, or your social life is a mess. You can also feel bad when you put pressure on yourself for example

to do well at school or to get promoted at work. A common reaction to stress is to criticise yourself. You may even get so upset that things don't seem fun anymore and life looks pretty grim. When this happens, it's easy to think there's nothing you can do to change things.

But you can - managing the factors below can ensure you deal more effectively with stress:

- Maintain a well-balanced diet
- Consume less caffeine (found in tea, coffee, coke)
- Make sure you are getting enough sleep
- Take part in exercise on a regular basis

How can I deal with stress?

Although you can't always control the things that are stressing you out, you can control how you react to them. The way you feel about things results from the way you think about things. If you change how you think, you can change the way you feel. Try some of these tips to cope with your stress:

- Make a list of the things that are causing your stress. Think about your friends, family, school and other activities. Accept that you can't control everything on your list.
- Take control of what you can. For example, if you're working too many hours and you don't have time to study enough, you may need to cut back your work hours.
- Give yourself a break. Remember that you can't make everyone in your life happy all the time. And it's okay to make mistakes - everyone does.
- Don't commit yourself to things you can't do or don't want to do. If you're already too busy, don't promise to take on an extra shift at work, if you're tired and don't want to go out, tell your friends you'll go another night.
- Find someone to talk to. Talking to your friends or family can help because it gives you a chance to express your feelings. However, problems in your social life or family can be the hardest to talk about. If you feel like you can't talk to your family or a friend, talk to someone outside the situation, like a teacher or work colleague.