

STRESS MANAGEMENT FOR KIDS

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Although many grown-ups like to believe that children live fun and relatively stress-free lives, the reality is often very different. Parents try to insulate their children and teens, kids can suffer a lot of stress in their busy day-to-day lives, with family time and energy stretched thin, with losses, and changes. Stressed out kids have less ability to solve problems effectively and feel less in control. The physical and emotional effects of chronic stress can be serious. Healthy living is the most important thing for dealing with stress. Parents can help kids to manage stress by helping them to get enough sleep and to eat properly. Also:

Get active. Turn off the TV and computer. Run, swim, ride a bike, walk the dog. Be active every day.



Limit media influence. Violent and over-stimulating television, music, and computer games are stressful and confusing kids and teens. Talk about feelings. When kids are upset, it helps to talk about it and to work out solutions to problems.

Spend time with others. Family, friends, teams, religious community can all be stress relievers.

Learn to relax. For example, Mindfulness Meditation is quickly gaining recognition as a powerful tool for managing stress. Practice mindfulness with your children, and encourage them to share their experience.

Mindfulness Meditation: Breathing

Mindfulness Meditation is a practice of paying close attention to the present moment without being distracted by the past or the future. Mindfulness Meditation involves focusing on the present moment, and gently, and without judgment, shifting the attention back to the present when it drifts.



With practice it can be simple to use, and kids and adults alike can use it in many places and at all different times of the day or week. Kids can learn to meditate while eating lunch, walking, sitting still, playing a game, or doing a

household chore. But it's important to set aside time specifically for practice. Like other life skills, mindfulness takes time and energy to learn.

A Breathing Exercise

Breathing meditation can be a great place for kids to start. But it can help to manage daily stress better and to feel more positive.

Find a comfortable position, sitting or kneeling on the floor or in a comfortable chair. Look for a place with few distractions. Dim the lights in the room to a comfortable level.

Breathe normally.

Pay attention to the flow of air into and out of your body as you breathe. Notice how the air flows in and out through your nostrils. Feel how your chest rises and falls with each breath.

Notice that each breath is new and unique. Experience each breath with curiosity and openness.

Take a slightly deeper breath.

Pay attention to the muscles in your chest and abdomen as they tense and relax.

If your attention wanders, just notice that it has wandered. Don't worry about it. Don't judge the diversion. Just notice where your attention went and then gently redirect your attention to your breathing.

Continue to meditate for as long as you feel comfortable. Keep your goals modest. Start off with five or ten minutes and increase the time as you feel able to.

Regular practice is the key to developing skills in meditation and receiving the gains that meditation has to offer.

If you're interested, you can read about [Mindfulness Meditation](#) or get help from a meditation teacher. ☐

