



PowerTalk for Families

Strategies for Dealing with Stress

Our children have lots of stressors in their lives—school, grades, sports, friends, technology, lack of sleep. Unmanaged stress can be overwhelming and lead to anxiety related illnesses. Teaching adolescents healthy ways to manage stress helps them to become emotionally healthy individuals. Emotionally healthy individuals are less likely to use alcohol as a coping tool.

Stress is not always a bad thing. It is our body’s way of dealing with a difficult situation. When we are stressed, we have physical reactions like rapid pulse, increased breathing or tense muscles. Stress helps our bodies cope with tough situations and can even increase our performance. It becomes a problem, when it begins to impact mood, health or our ability to function or concentrate.



STEP 1: The first step in dealing with stress it to identify the things that cause stress for you. Each person had different stressors in their life. As a family, do this “thumbs up, thumbs down” activity to determine areas of stress for the members of your family. Choose one person to read the list of stressors and keep track of the responses.

Is this a stressor for you?	# thumbs up (yes)	# thumbs down (no)
Money		
Illness/injury (yourself or someone else)		
Friends		
Family relationships		
Work or school		
Time-not enough time; feeling overscheduled		
Change in job, school or home (move)		
Travel		
Emotions of other family members		
Feelings about myself		
Are there other things that cause stress for you?		

As a family, discuss the areas that had thumbs up (yeses). What happens to you when you feel stress about that thing? Do you know why that is stressful for you? Is there something you do to help manage the stress? Is there something another family member can do to help you manage that stress?



STEP 2: Make a plan! What are some things each person in your family can do to manage their stress? Each family member should choose one of the things they identified as a stressor. Then, look at the list of suggested techniques on the next page. If necessary, add a technique that would work for you. Choose a technique that might help you cope with the thing that is causing you stress. Fill in the chart on the next page.



STEP 3: How are you doing? Set a date in a few weeks (actually put it on the calendar!) to meet together to discuss your progress. Did your plan work? Do you need to make changes? Are you ready to tackle another stressor?

High fives all around! You are taking steps toward a healthier family!

