

## **Stress: How to help the young person in your life**

Stress is a response to the demands of everyday life. Stress is common and can be positive, because it can bring energy and motivate you to do things. However, too much stress, or feeling stressed all of the time, can take a toll on mental and physical health and well-being.

### **Common stressors for young people include:**

- School work, tests, exams
- family
- friends
- financial stress within the family
- Gender and sexuality
- struggles with substance use (individually or within the family)
- feeling isolated
- physical health
- body image

Kids Help Phone offers some suggestions for talking to the young people in your life about stress.

### **Start a conversation:**

- LISTEN and try not to rush into problem-solving.
- Empathize with the young person
- Normalize feelings of stress - stress is a typical part of life. It can motivate us to improve ourselves and accomplish what we need to do in a day.

### **Find out more about the ways stress is impacting the young person. You can ask:**

- “On a scale of one to 10 (where one is not stressed at all and 10 is stressed to the max), how stressed are you right now?”
- “Where in your body do you notice stress?” (listen for symptoms, such as difficulty sleeping, headaches, stomach aches and muscle tension)
- “When did the stress start? How often do you notice it? How does it impact you?”
- “On a scale of one to ten (where one is no control and 10 is total control), how much do you feel you have control over your stress?”
- “What have you been doing to cope with stress?” (listen and look for negative coping strategies, such as avoiding tasks, drinking alcohol, isolation, etc.)

### **Encourage the young person to establish priorities:**

- If they have control over what is causing them stress (like studying for a test), encourage making a plan
- Suggest that they create timelines that also include stress-reducing activities and sleep.
- Help them to identify people who can support them. Ask: “Is there someone in your life who can help you with your commitments?”

**Encourage “positive self-talk.” Help the young person to:**

- focus on the facts
- give themselves credit for each success, big or small
- show themselves compassion
- praise themselves for all of their good qualities
- avoid words such as “should,” “ought to,” “must” and “have to”

**Share ideas for building a healthy and balanced routine with the young person:**

- practice deep breathing and relaxation techniques
- engage in active time management and scheduling, including building in time for self-care
- avoid overcommitment
- eat a healthy diet (if this is available to you)
- engage in regular physical activity
- spend time in nature
- engage in an artistic practice (such as journaling, drawing, photography or music)
- participate in cultural activities (such as dancing or drumming)
- promote the establishment of healthy sleep patterns
- limit screen time, especially just before sleeping
- spend time with friends and family

**Access the complete Kids Help Phone article *Stress: How to help the young person in your life* at:**

<https://kidshelpphone.ca/get-info/stress-how-to-help-the-young-person-in-your-life/>

Kids Help Phone (2022). *Stress: How to help the young person in your life*. <https://kidshelpphone.ca/get-info/stress-how-to-help-the-young-person-in-your-life/>