



MODULE 04

Stress  
Management

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This module is comprised of the following sections:

- SECTION 1: Key Messages
  - SECTION 2: Discussing Stress with Children and Youth
  - SECTION 3: Stress Management Strategies
  - SECTION 4: Resources and Handouts
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When discussing stress with children and youth, it's important to remember that experiencing some stress is normal and necessary, and should not be pathologized or feared. This positive stress (or eustress) is healthy and gives one a feeling of fulfillment. It can motivate, increase performance, and provide opportunities for learning. For children and youth, examples include giving a presentation in school or pushing themselves to master a new skill.

Children and youth, like adults, will inevitably experience daily hassles or concerns (e.g. having too much to do with too little time, negotiating with parents) and unexpected demanding situations or events (e.g. divorce). Children and youth can respond to these situations in a positive or healthy way by employing appropriate stress management or coping strategies, or in a negative way by not employing (or employing unhealthy or risky) stress management or coping strategies. While the demanding situation or event may not be in the child's control, their *response* to the situation can be adjusted so that challenges are confronted in a healthy way.

Healthy coping and stress management can reduce the negative impact of stress, which can affect both the physical and mental health of children and youth. For instance, negative stress can lead to headaches, abdominal pain, nervousness and sleeping difficulties as well as increased risk-taking behaviour, anxiety or depression.<sup>1,2</sup> Chronic stress can contribute to lower immunity, can aggravate autoimmune disorders<sup>11</sup>, and may play a role in the development of cardiovascular disease and metabolic disorders including obesity, insulin resistance, and Type 2 diabetes mellitus.<sup>3</sup> Health care professionals can play an important role in identifying and helping children and youth cope with stress. This module provides you with information to promote healthy coping and stress management for children and youth with mental health challenges.



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# Key Messages

Here are some key messages to keep in mind when discussing stress with children, youth and their families:

## 1. WHAT YOU DO AND HOW YOU THINK CHANGES THE WAY STRESS AFFECTS YOU

Let children and adolescents know that stressful events happen to everyone, and what is important is how they react to these stressful situations – if they react with effective coping and stress management strategies, they will be able to manage the demanding situation in a healthy way.



All young people will experience stress differently, and their reactions can be quite different depending on their age



## 2. STRESS CAN AFFECT HOW YOU FEEL, THINK, AND ACT

All young people will experience stress differently, and their reactions can vary depending on their age. Being able to recognize how they react to stress is important to help build prevention skills so that the next time a stressor occurs, they can use an effective coping strategy *before* they experience a negative stress reaction. Some ways to help children and youth recognize their reactions to stress can be found in Section 2.

## 3. STRESS MANAGEMENT IS NOT 'ONE SIZE FITS ALL'

Different strategies will work for different children and youth in different situations. Strategies discussed in Section 3 include appraisal-focused strategies (modifying the way one thinks), problem-focused strategies (dealing with the cause of the problem) and emotion-focused strategies (such as employing relaxation techniques). It's important to find a strategy that works for the individual child, and is appropriate for the type of stressor they are reacting to.

## 4. IS IT STRESS OR SOMETHING MORE SERIOUS? WHEN TO REFER

All children and youth will experience some stress in their lives. However, the symptoms of stress may be similar to the symptoms of a more serious mental health concern, and may require a referral to an appropriate health professional. Information to help you make this distinction can be found in Section 2.

# Discussing Stress with Children and Youth

In this section, key considerations to keep in mind when discussing stress with children and youth are offered. These include tips for bringing up stress, helping a young person identify their reactions to stress, and making the distinction between stress and mental health or substance use concerns.

## Bringing it up



Many children and youth may not understand what the word ‘stress’ means. In order to help them understand what stress is, here are some different ways you could describe it:

- Instead of using the word ‘stress’, you could try using other related words such as ‘worry’
- Earl Hipp, in his book *Fighting Invisible Tigers: Stress Management for Teens* (2008)<sup>5</sup>, suggests that stress could be described as “the feeling you have when facing many challenges all at the same time”, and that it may be helpful to get youth to imagine all of their worries and problems as separate rubber bands around their heads, and the pressure they feel from the rubber bands as stress
- Kenneth Ginsburg, in his book *A Parent’s Guide to Building Resilience in Children and Teens* (2006)<sup>29</sup> suggests describing stress as “the uncomfortable feeling you get when you’re worried, scared, angry, frustrated, or overwhelmed. It is caused by emotions, but it effects your mood and body.” He also suggests relaying to teens that “many adults think that teenagers don’t have stress because they don’t have to work and support a family. They are wrong!” This approach to describing stress can help to normalize and validate the youth’s stress
- Some children and youth with mental health challenges have difficulty understanding emotions, including emotional reactions to stress.<sup>4</sup> A resource to help children/youth recognize emotions can be found here: [http://www.drcheng.ca/resources/Articles/mood\\_scales-facesforallages.pdf](http://www.drcheng.ca/resources/Articles/mood_scales-facesforallages.pdf).

When bringing up stress with young people, start by asking the child or youth if anything is worrying them or stressing them out. If the child or youth can’t describe or pinpoint anything, try providing some prompts – for example,

you could ask if anything is bothering them at school, at home, or in their relationships. You might also want to start by asking the “three wishes” question: “If you had three wishes and could change any three things in yourself, your life, or your world – what would they be?”

## Discussing Reactions to Stress



### QUESTIONS TO HELP YOUNG PEOPLE RECOGNIZE THEIR REACTIONS TO STRESS:

- How does it feel when you’re stressed?
- How would you know when you’re stressed?
- What sort of thoughts do you have?
- How does it affect your behaviour?
- How do you act towards others at these times?
- How do other people behave towards you?
- How would you recognize stress in others?<sup>6</sup>

The first step in discussing stress with children and youth is helping the young person to recognize their reactions to stress. Discussing current stress helps the young person build prevention skills so that next time, they can use an effective coping strategy *before* they experience a negative stress reaction.

Explain to children and youth that stress can affect how they *feel* (mentally and physically), how they *think*, and how they *act* – questions to help young people recognize their reactions to stress can be found on the left hand side of this page. Some health professionals find it helpful to discuss the biological and evolutionary underpinnings of stress (the ‘fight or flight response’), as this can lead to a more intuitive understanding of how stress affects the mind (mood, emotions, thinking) and the body (cardiovascular, respiratory, immune, etc.). It can also help the child or youth start to identify their own responses to stress. Some ways to describe this to children and youth can be found on the KidsHealth website ([kidshealth.org](http://kidshealth.org)), in the book *Fighting Invisible Tigers* by Earl Hipp, or in the book *A Parent’s Guide to Building Resilience in Children and Teens: Giving Your Child Roots and Wings* by Dr. Kenneth Ginsburg (details on how to access these books can be found in the resource section, under ‘Books’).

Some ways in which children and youth may react in a negative way to stress include:<sup>7</sup>

- Acting out
- Eating or sleeping difficulties (such as nightmares)
- Irritability or crying a lot
- Withdrawing from others
- Losing interest in school or friends
- Physical signs like headaches and stomachaches
- Going back to behaviours they outgrew, like wetting the bed



Pre-teens and teens may also show stress by:

- Going against rules or expectations
- Showing a lot of anger or distrust
- Exhibiting poor self-esteem, like putting themselves down or assuming that others won't like them
- Engaging in risky behaviours such as using drugs or alcohol, engaging in unsafe sex, skipping school, or getting into fights

## Discussing Skills and Resources



### KEY SUPPORTIVE FACTORS INCLUDE:

- Family
- Peer Supports
- Caring Adult Support
- Spiritual/Religious Support
- Hobbies
- Creative Outlets
- Connection to School

It's important at this stage to explore what effective and healthy coping skills the child or adolescent already uses, who their supports are, and what they can identify as their strengths and resources. Try asking them:

- When you're stressed out, what do you do to help yourself feel better?
- Who can you talk to about it?

For more information on helping children and youth identify and build on their strengths and assets, see Section 3 (under 'Focusing on Strengths and Resources').

Once both current reactions to stress and current coping skills/resources have been explored, move to building on the child or youth's current strengths, and suggesting stress management strategies they could try to prevent negative stress reactions from occurring in the future (see Section 3 for a review of strategies).

## When to Refer

### MAKING THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN STRESS AND MENTAL HEALTH OR SUBSTANCE USE CONCERNS

All children and youth will experience some stress in their lives. However, the distinction must be made between stress and more serious mental health or substance use concerns, such as anxiety or depression. If you suspect that the reactions above may actually be a sign of a mental health condition, refer to an appropriate health professional. The Kelty Mental Health Resource Centre ([keltymentalhealth.ca](http://keltymentalhealth.ca)) can provide you with information on how to make this distinction, and if necessary provide referral options. Additionally, some major stressors are beyond the ability of children and adolescents to cope without



While some signs of stress are also common signs of an anxiety disorder, stress and anxiety disorders are not the same thing

professional help, and should be referred to an appropriate professional immediately (e.g. sexual abuse, witnessing violence).

One mental health condition that has many overlapping symptoms with stress is anxiety – while some signs of stress are also common signs of an anxiety disorder, stress and anxiety disorders are not the same thing. With stress, signs go away as stress lessens. With an anxiety disorder, the signs continue to affect a child’s life long after a stressful situation or event is over.<sup>7</sup> If you suspect that the child or youth you are seeing may have an anxiety disorder, visit Anxiety BC for more information on signs, symptoms, and treatment options: [www.anxietybc.com](http://www.anxietybc.com).

Teenagers sometimes use substances, such as alcohol, tobacco, cannabis, caffeine, or other drugs to cope with stressors in their lives.<sup>3</sup> Excessive or inappropriate use of alcohol or other drugs can interfere with daily life and negatively affect school, relationships, and physical and mental health.<sup>11</sup> If you suspect the child or youth you are seeing is using substances in an excessive or inappropriate way, resources and referral information can be found on the Kelty Mental Health Resource Centre website ([keltymentalhealth.ca](http://keltymentalhealth.ca)), the Youth in BC website ([www.youthinbc.com/learn-more/drugs-alcohol-addictions](http://www.youthinbc.com/learn-more/drugs-alcohol-addictions)), or the Alcohol and Drug Information and Referral Service website (<http://bc211.ca/adirs2.html>).

# Stress Management Strategies

This section details key stress management strategies that health professionals working with children and youth with mental health challenges may find helpful. Additional strategies suggested by families can be found in the *Guide to Healthy Living for Families*, available from: [keltymentalhealth.ca/toolkits](http://keltymentalhealth.ca/toolkits)

When discussing stress management strategies, work with the child or youth to choose a strategy and help them to develop a small, achievable goal (a SMART goal) using the resources provided in Module 1.



## Relaxation Techniques



### EXPLAINING RELAXATION TO YOUNG PEOPLE

You could try explaining relaxation to young people as “finding your calm centre”, and as a way to relieve tense muscles and relax your brain<sup>5</sup>

Relaxation techniques have been shown to have immediate relaxation effects on children and youth, both physiologically as well as subjectively.<sup>12,13,14</sup> Relaxation techniques are found to be especially effective for situations that are not under the personal control of the child. In addition, relaxation techniques may be particularly beneficial for children who worry a lot, who can’t settle down, who are distractible or hyperactive, who have difficulty falling asleep, or who have depression or anxiety.<sup>4,14,15</sup>

Some techniques that have been found to be effective with children are detailed below. When choosing a technique, keep in mind the child’s personal preferences and developmental stage. Resources (text, audio and video) of some of the relaxation strategies described below can be found in the resource section.

#### DEEP BREATHING

Deep breathing (‘belly breathing’) is one of the easiest and quickest ways to relax, as it can be done anywhere and at anytime. It allows young people to visit their ‘calm centre’ whenever they start to feel overwhelmed by stress.<sup>5</sup> In order to help children and youth understand deep breathing, you can:

### BELLY BREATHING FOR CHILDREN:



- Describe the difference between how we breathe when we are stressed (fast and shallow) and how we can breathe when we are relaxed (slow and deep)
- Fast/shallow breathing is breathing that comes from your chest, while deep/slow breathing comes from your stomach/belly

- Inhale slowly for 4 seconds through the nose
- Ask the child to pretend that he or she is blowing up a balloon in the belly, so the child's belly should inflate when inhaling
- Wait 2 seconds, and then slowly exhale through the mouth. Ask the child to pretend that he or she is emptying the balloon of air, so the tummy should deflate
- Wait 2 seconds, and then repeat

When belly breathing, make sure the child's upper body (shoulders and chest area) is fairly relaxed and still.<sup>17</sup>

### PROGRESSIVE MUSCLE RELAXATION

Progressive muscle relaxation (PMR) is a method of systematically tensing and relaxing muscle groups throughout the body. This technique can be done during the day or in the evening to relax or aid sleep. PMR has been found to benefit children experiencing stress<sup>2,15</sup> and has been used as one of several techniques to treat a variety of childhood difficulties, including anxiety disorders, sleep disturbance, hyperactivity and impulsivity.<sup>16</sup>

It is important to ensure that the technique used is developmentally appropriate. For some children, having an adult guide them through the process may be helpful. Additionally, metaphorical PMR scripts (e.g. pretend you are a turtle going into its shell) are preferred by some young children to literal PMR scripts (e.g. squeeze your shoulders to your ears).<sup>16</sup> A simple PMR script can be found on the *Quick Ways to Relax* handout, found at the back of this module.

### MASSAGE THERAPY

Massage therapy may help to reduce stress levels in children and youth with certain mental health conditions. Massage therapy has been shown to be effective in reducing stress levels in child and adolescent psychiatric patients<sup>14</sup>,



### GENERAL VISUALIZATION

reducing sleep problems and difficult behaviour in children with autism<sup>18,19</sup>, and increasing feelings of happiness in adolescents with ADHD.<sup>20</sup> If you feel massage therapy may be beneficial for a child or youth you are seeing, refer to a registered massage therapist who has experience with this population.

### VISUALIZATION

Visualization (or mental imagery) is a potent method of stress management, especially when combined with physical relaxation methods such as deep breathing.<sup>21</sup> There are different ways of practicing visualization – some may be more effective for general feelings of stress, while others may be more effective for specific worries.

Children or youth can be instructed to close their eyes and picture themselves in a calm, peaceful environment. They can then describe to themselves what it looks, sounds, smells and feels like. They can return here when they feel stressed or worried. It may also be helpful for them to find a quiet place in their home or school where they can go to practice visualization. A simple visualization exercise can be found at the back of this module (on the *Quick Ways to Relax* handout).

### SPECIFIC VISUALIZATION - THE WORRY BOX

The worry box is a place to ‘trap’ worries so they’re not running wild in the child’s mind, and the child/youth knows where they are. Creating a worry box involves the child/youth creating a picture in their mind of a place to put their worries for safe keeping, like a drawer, jar or locker. Worries can be put into the worry box and locked up – the box can be opened at a later time to take out a few worries and think about ways to solve them.<sup>22</sup>

Additional visualization techniques for children can be found in the book *Taming Worry Dragons: A Manual for Children, Parents, and other Coaches* (4th Ed.). See the resource section under ‘Books’ for details on how families can order this book, free of charge, to anywhere in B.C.

## Healthy Lifestyle & Environment



Playing with pets has been found to be particularly beneficial at reducing stress levels and increasing emotional well-being<sup>25</sup>

### MAINTAINING A HEALTHY LIFESTYLE

Being physically active, as well as eating and sleeping well, are some of the best stress-management strategies. Maintaining a healthy lifestyle can help keep the immune system strong and energy levels high, and can help to reduce muscle tension and mental fatigue that accompany stress.<sup>3,5,6</sup> For more information on healthy eating, physical activity or sleep please refer to the other modules within this toolkit.

### CONTACT WITH NATURE

Contact with nature can reduce feelings of stress and increase well-being.<sup>23,24</sup> Try encouraging children and their families to spend time outdoors, and if possible in or near nature. A handout for families at the back of Module 3 provides some ideas for being active outdoors. In addition to actually being in nature (e.g. parks, wilderness, areas with trees or water), studies show that viewing images of nature also helps to relieve stress and improve well-being.<sup>26</sup>

### SOCIAL SUPPORT

A healthy social environment, most importantly social support, has been found to be one of the most important factors in lowering feelings of stress.<sup>8</sup> For teens, this social support – especially from peers – is particularly important. This seems to be especially true for teenage girls, as they are most likely to go to their friends for support when they are feeling stressed.<sup>1,3,6</sup> A website developed specifically for teenage girls dealing with stress is: [www.howtochill.ca](http://www.howtochill.ca)

Ask young people to think about those who can give them support when they need it, and encourage them to talk to trusted friends and family members or other trusted adults about their worries.

## Healthy Thinking

Learning to think in a healthy way is a powerful stress management tool. It allows children and adolescents to control the way situations affect them and how (or if) other people affect them.



### COMMON THINKING TRAPS

- Overgeneralizing (using words like ‘never’ or ‘always’)
- Black and white thinking
- Jumping to unfounded conclusions
- Taking things personally
- Exaggerating the consequences of a situation
- Predicting something bad will happen, without any evidence
- Focusing on the negative in a situation and ignoring the good
- Telling yourself how you “should” act<sup>11</sup>

### AVOIDING THINKING TRAPS

Talking to young people about the link between their feelings and thoughts can show them how managing difficult thoughts can help to minimize feelings of stress: while external circumstances can’t always be changed, their reaction to these situations can. Research has shown that people who reinterpret a stressful situation in a more balanced way have a less intense response to the stressor.<sup>6</sup>

One of the most common thinking traps is engaging in negative self-talk. Encourage children and youth to think about what their negative self-talk is, and how they can re-frame it. The new script might include things such as:<sup>22</sup>

- “I can handle it”
- “I will try my best and not worry about it”
- “Just because \_\_\_ is nasty to me doesn’t mean everybody dislikes me”

Changing their method of self-talk may take some practice, and writing down both their negative and positive (or ‘red’ and ‘green’) thoughts can be helpful. Resources for managing self-talk can be found in the resource section (under ‘Anxiety BC’ and ‘Here to Help’) as well as in the *Guide to Healthy Living for Families*.

### FOCUSING ON STRENGTHS AND RESOURCES

Stress can be seen as a badly tipped scale, with more demands on one side than personal coping resources to deal with them. Stress management can look at decreasing the demands, but it can also look at boosting the personal resources to cope.<sup>8,9,10</sup> When discussing stress with children or youth, it is important to help them identify their internal and external resources for coping with stress. For instance, internal resources could include believing they can handle stress, or having high self-esteem or a sense of humor. External resources could include support from friends, family or teachers.

Try asking children or youth to think about a time when they did something well or accomplished a task to get them thinking about their strengths and resources. You could also encourage them to think about and write down the positive things in their lives, such as people, things or talents – this simple technique has been shown to be effective at helping youth to not dwell on the negatives.<sup>5</sup> Another technique is getting the child or youth to keep a gratitude journal, in which they write down what they are grateful for each day. This can be done individually by the child, or as a family.





Mindful behaviour involves an individual being fully in contact with what is taking place in the present moment

### MINDFULNESS

Mindfulness is the practice of “paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, and nonjudgmentally”.<sup>34</sup> Thus, if a child/youth was walking to school ‘mindfully’, they would practice maintaining a continuous awareness of their breathing, pay attention to the feeling of their bag on their shoulder, and perhaps the mild tension associated with approaching the school.<sup>31</sup>

A growing body of research suggests that mindfulness-based psychosocial interventions are effective for a wide range of mental health and physical health disorders in adult populations.<sup>32</sup> For example, research in adults has shown that mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR), an evidence-based group training program for managing stress, can significantly reduce anxiety and panic symptoms, depressive relapse, and psychological distress in both clinical and healthy, stressed populations.<sup>32</sup>

Preliminary research on mindfulness-based interventions with children and adolescents is emerging, with promising results.<sup>30,31,32,36</sup> For example, in a number of recent pilot studies, child and youth participants in MBSR training reported increased relaxation, improved sleep and concentration, greater self-awareness, and less emotional and behavioural reactivity.<sup>32,33,36</sup> Mindfulness-based interventions with children and adolescents in school- and community-based settings have also shown promise.<sup>30,31</sup>

If you feel that a mindfulness-based intervention may be useful to the child or youth you see in your practice, you may want to explore opportunities in your community. Additional information on mindfulness can be found in the resource section of this module.

## Behavioural Strategies

### TIME MANAGEMENT

Stress can be caused by not having enough time to get everything done. For children and youth with some mental health conditions, managing time can be especially challenging – for instance, children with ADHD may have difficulty organizing tasks or activities, and can be easily distracted.<sup>27,35</sup>



### SETTING PRIORITIES: THE ABC METHOD

- Write out all of the things that need to get done in the near future
- Mark the very important ones as 'A', pretty important ones as 'B', and things that would be nice to do but not essential as 'C'
- Order these by letter
- Within each letter prioritize again by number (i.e. A-1, A-2, A-3, etc.)<sup>5</sup>



### FIVE STEPS TO PROBLEM SOLVING

- Step 1: Choose the problem
- Step 2: Understand the problem
- Step 3: Come up with different solutions
- Step 4: Compare the solutions
- Step 5: Find the best solution and put it into action<sup>28</sup>

Some top time management tips include:

- Writing out a weekly schedule and looking for ways to make it more balanced
- Practicing the 'ABC Method' of time management (see text on the left hand side of this page)
- Practicing saying no to tasks that are unimportant or that there simply isn't enough time for
- Getting enough sleep – this ensures you have enough energy to get all necessary tasks done (see Module 5 for more information on getting a good night's sleep)

Links to child- and youth-focused websites that discuss time-management skills can be found in the resource section.

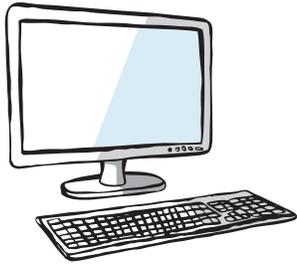
### PROBLEM SOLVING

Problem solving is a skill that can be applied to many situations. It can help to decrease stress once it has occurred, and can help to prevent stress from occurring in the first place. While the steps for solving problems are fairly straightforward, many children and youth have not learned these steps.<sup>6</sup> Five simple steps to problem solving can be found on the left hand side of this page.

Some questions that can be asked to help the child/youth understand the problem include:<sup>28</sup>

- Have you had this problem before? How did you handle it?
- Is there anything more you need to know about this problem before you can solve it?
- Are there people who can help support you in solving this problem?

An important component of problem solving is knowing the difference between problems that can be solved and problems that can't. For problems that can't be solved, coping techniques such as healthy thinking or relaxation may be more beneficial. A problem solving worksheet for younger children can be found as a handout at the back of this module and resources for youth can be found in the resource section (under 'MindCheck' and 'Here to Help').



In this section, you will find resources that may be helpful to both yourself as well as to the families you see in your daily practice. At the end of this section, you will find some tools and handouts. Some of these tools will be useful for you to use with the children and youth you see (e.g. assessment tools), while others can be given to children, youth or parents / caregivers as a handout.

## Online Resources

### GENERAL STRESS

| Organization                        | Details   | Web Address  |
|-------------------------------------|---|--|
| Adolescent Health Working Group     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Adolescent provider toolkits; stress management section in the <i>Behavioral Health</i> toolkit</li> </ul>                       | <a href="http://www.ahwg.net/knowledgebase/nodates.php?pid=79&amp;tpid=2">www.ahwg.net/knowledgebase/nodates.php?pid=79&amp;tpid=2</a> |
| Anxiety BC                          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Resource on stress management and anxiety specifically for youth and young adults</li> </ul>                                     | <a href="http://youth.anxietybc.com/">http://youth.anxietybc.com/</a>  |
| Child & Youth Health                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Information on stress written for younger children, including relaxation exercises</li> </ul>                                    | <a href="http://www.cyh.com">www.cyh.com</a><br>(type in 'kids and stress' in the search bar)  |
| Kelty Mental Health Resource Centre | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Information on stress management, including a healthy thinking interactive activity, for children, youth and families</li> </ul> | <a href="http://keltymentalhealth.ca/healthy-living/stress">http://keltymentalhealth.ca/healthy-living/stress</a>                      |
| KidsHealth                          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Web page for parents with info on recognizing signs of stress in children and helping them cope</li> </ul>                       | <a href="http://kidshealth.org/parent/emotions/feelings/stress.html">kidshealth.org/parent/emotions/feelings/stress.html</a>           |
|                                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Information for teens on recognizing and dealing with stress; includes an audio breathing exercise</li> </ul>                    | <a href="http://kidshealth.org/teen/your_mind/emotions/stress.html#">kidshealth.org/teen/your_mind/emotions/stress.html#</a>           |
| Here to Help                        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Handouts on stress, problem solving, healthy thinking and more</li> </ul>  | <a href="http://www.heretohelp.bc.ca">www.heretohelp.bc.ca</a>   |
| mindcheck.ca                        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Stress management resources for young people, as well as mental health screening tools</li> </ul>                                | <a href="http://mindcheck.ca/mood-stress">http://mindcheck.ca/mood-stress</a>  |

## RECOGNIZING EMOTIONS

| Organization      | Details   | Web Address   |
|-------------------|---|---|
| DrCheng.ca (CHEO) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Free, downloadable booklet to help children express feelings (<i>Mood Scales: Faces for all Ages</i>)</li> </ul> | <a href="http://www.drcheng.ca/resources/Articles/mood_scales-facesforallages.pdf">http://www.drcheng.ca/resources/Articles/mood_scales-facesforallages.pdf</a> |

## RELAXATION

| Organization   | Details  | Web Address  |
|--|--|--|
| Fighting Invisible Tigers  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Includes free audio excerpts from the book, including breathing and PMR</li> </ul>  | <a href="http://www.freespirit.com/stress-management-fighting-invisible-tigers-stress-management-for-teens-earl-hipp/">www.freespirit.com/stress-management-fighting-invisible-tigers-stress-management-for-teens-earl-hipp/</a> |
| YouthInBC  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Visual, audio and text stress reduction tools (includes yoga videos, mindfulness, and PMR)</li> </ul>   | <a href="http://youthinbc.com/learn-more/stress/stress-management-exercises">youthinbc.com/learn-more/stress/stress-management-exercises</a>   |
| MindMasters (Child and Youth Health Network for Eastern Ontario)       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A research-based program that teaches simple techniques like deep breathing, PMR and imagery</li> <li>Audio tapes accompany many of the activities</li> </ul> | <a href="http://www.child-youth-health.net/english/publications-and-resources/mindmasters/">http://www.child-youth-health.net/english/publications-and-resources/mindmasters/</a>  |
| Psychology Foundation of Canada ( <i>Kids Have Stress Too</i> Program) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Videos on how young children deal with stress and stress reduction activities</li> </ul>  | <a href="http://psychologyfoundation.org/index.php/programs/kids-have-stress-too/">http://psychologyfoundation.org/index.php/programs/kids-have-stress-too/</a>  |
| University of Massachusetts Center for Mindfulness                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Research, and a listing of mindfulness-based stress reduction programs worldwide, including some in B.C.</li> </ul>   | <a href="http://www.umassmed.edu/cfm/home/index.aspx">www.umassmed.edu/cfm/home/index.aspx</a>   |

## TIME MANAGEMENT

| Organization | Details   | Web Address  |
|--------------|---|--|
| It's my life | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Time management tips for kids</li> </ul>               | <a href="http://pbskids.org/itsmylife/school/time/index.html">pbskids.org/itsmylife/school/time/index.html</a> |
| ADDitude     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Time management tips for children with ADHD</li> </ul> | <a href="http://www.additudemag.com/adhd/article/5992.html">www.additudemag.com/adhd/article/5992.html</a>     |

## Books

### FOR CHILDREN

Garland, JE, & Clark, SL (2009). *Taming Worry Dragons: A Manual for Children, Parents, and other Coaches* (4th Edition). Vancouver, BC: BC Children's Hospital

NOTE: This book can be borrowed or purchased from the BCCH Family Resource Library, and mailed free of charge to any location in B.C. To do this, go to the Family Resource Library website, and search for this title in the Online Catalogue: <http://www.bcchildrens.ca/KidsTeensFam/FamilyResourceLibrary/LibraryCatalogue.htm>. Alternatively, call toll free 1-800-331-1533 ext. 2

### FOR TEENS

Hipp, E (2008). *Fighting Invisible Tigers: Stress Management For Teens*. Minneapolis, MN: Free Spirit Publishing

NOTE: This book can be borrowed from public libraries across B.C. (ISBN: 1575422824)

Biegel, G (2009). *The Stress Reduction Workbook for Teens: Mindfulness Skills to Help You Deal With Stress*. Oakland, CA: Instant Help Books (A Division of New Harbinger Publications, Inc.)

### FOR PARENTS

Ginsburg, K (2011). *Building Resilience in Children and Teens: Giving Kids Roots and Wings* (2nd Edition). Elk Grove Village, IL: American Academy of Pediatrics

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# Tools and Handouts



## Breathe Deeply

### Breathing Exercise

1. Slowly blow up the balloon  
1 .... 2 .... 3 .... 4 ....
2. Now, slowly blow out the balloon  
1 .... 2 .... 3 .... 4 ....

You can help slow down your body and quiet your mind by breathing deeply. Here is one way to try deep breathing:

- Imagine you have a balloon in your tummy. Place one hand below your belly button
- Breathe in slowly through the nose for four seconds
- Feel the balloon fill up with air - your belly should expand
- When the balloon is full, slowly breathe out through your mouth for about four seconds
- Your hand will rise and fall as the balloon fills and empties
- Wait 2 seconds, and then repeat a few times
- When belly breathing, make sure the upper body (shoulders and chest area) is fairly relaxed and still

*Adapted from AnxietyBC*



## Visualize A Calm Place

- Find a quiet place and close your eyes
- Think of the most calm, peaceful place you have ever been. Picture yourself in that place
- Describe what it: **Looks** like, **Sounds** like, **Smells** like, **Feels** like
- Return here when you are feeling stressed or worried



## Relax Your Muscles



- Make a fist with each hand, squeeze each hand tight. Squeeze... Squeeze... Squeeze... Relax
- Now, while you squeeze your fists again, tighten your arms to squeeze your body, Squeeze... Squeeze... Squeeze... Relax
- Now, this time also squeeze your legs together while making a fist and squeezing your arms together, Squeeze... Squeeze... Squeeze... Relax
- Repeat if you would like
- Shake out your hands, arms and legs. Hopefully now you feel more relaxed

*Adapted from the Psychology Foundation of Canada*

# How to Problem Solve



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**1.** Figure out what is the problem (name it).

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**2.** Decide how you feel about the problem.



Sad



Angry



Scared



Confused



Frustrated



**3.** Decide what you want to do about the problem (for example, you could ask for help, tell the person how you feel, or walk away to think about it). Think of three things you can do to solve the problem.

1 \_\_\_\_\_

2 \_\_\_\_\_

3 \_\_\_\_\_

**4.**



Try out the plan you decided on.

**5.**

Make sure that you explain how the problem affected you, how you are feeling about it and what you want to happen to help you feel better.



**6.**

If the plan you chose does not work, DO NOT give up, ASK FOR HELP!

# Stress Busters

Use one or more of these activities the next time you want to relax or when you feel stressed out. Each activity only takes 10 to 30 minutes.

## Exercise

Exercise for 30 minutes 3 to 5 times a week. You can walk, run, swim, dance, bike, play sports, or any other activity that gets your body moving. Exercise is a great way to release extra energy and keep fit.

## Eat Healthy

Eat healthy foods such as whole grain breads, fruits, vegetables and drink lots of water. Be aware of how much you eat when stressed out. Try not to eat too little or too much. Eat breakfast every day. If you can, pack a healthy lunch and snack such as a sandwich made with wheat bread and a piece of fruit. Avoid junk food, soda, juices with added sugar, caffeine, nicotine, alcohol, and drugs.

## Breathe Deeply

1. Find a quiet and comfortable place to sit or lay down.
2. Close your eyes or look at a spot on the wall.
3. Clear your mind of thoughts or focus on a word like “breathe” or “relax.”
4. Breathe in slowly through your nose until your chest is fully expanded. Breathe out slowly through your mouth until the air in your chest is pushed out. Try not to think about anything else except your breathing.
5. Repeat this deep breathing 10 to 20 times until you feel relaxed. (Don’t be surprised if you fall asleep).

## Imagine Relaxation

1. Find a quiet place and get comfortable.
2. Close your eyes and imagine a place where you feel safe and relaxed. Think about how you feel and what you hear, see, and smell in this place. Or imagine the stress slowly flowing out of your body.
3. Stay with these feelings, thoughts, and sensations. Breathe quietly until you are ready to get up.

## Express Yourself

Write in a journal. Or create art, play music, write stories or poetry, cook, laugh, or volunteer. Talk to someone you trust about how you feel.

## Relax your muscles

1. Find a quiet place where you can lay down and get comfortable.
2. Close your eyes. Relax your entire body. Imagine that your muscles are limp.
3. Flex the muscles in your feet while you keep the rest of your body relaxed. Hold for five seconds and do not release. Then continue to flex other muscle groups one at a time: calves, thighs, stomach, chest, arms, hands, and face until your entire body is tense. Remember to keep parts of your body relaxed until it is time to flex them.
4. Hold your entire body tense for five seconds then release all the tension.
5. Relax, breath slowly and deeply, and imagine your body melting.
6. Get up slowly when you’re ready.

## Get in Touch with Your Senses

Listen to music you enjoy. Take a shower or bath. Go outside for a walk or run. Focus on what you see, hear, and feel.

### Resources:

- ♦ Emotional Health. Go Ask Alice!: [www.goaskalice.columbia.edu/Cat4.html](http://www.goaskalice.columbia.edu/Cat4.html)
- ♦ Mind Your Mind: [www.mindyourmind.ca](http://www.mindyourmind.ca)

*Do you have any comments or questions about this handout? Please contact Adolescent Health Working Group by emailing [feedback@ahwg.net](mailto:feedback@ahwg.net) or calling (415) 554-8429. Thank you.*

# Stress Management Resources for Children, Youth and Families



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## Online Resources

| ORGANIZATION                        | DETAILS   | WEB ADDRESS  |
|-------------------------------------|---|--|
| <b>General Stress</b>               |   |  |
| Anxiety BC                          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Stress management and relaxation resources for youth and young adults</li> </ul>   | <a href="http://youth.anxietybc.com/">http://youth.anxietybc.com/</a>  |
| Child & Youth Health                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Information on stress written for younger children, including relaxation exercises</li> </ul>  | <a href="http://www.cyh.com">www.cyh.com</a><br>(type in 'kids and stress' in the search bar)  |
| Kelty Mental Health Resource Centre | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Information on stress and stress management for children, youth and families</li> </ul>  | <a href="http://keltymentalhealth.ca/healthy-living/stress">http://keltymentalhealth.ca/healthy-living/stress</a>  |
| KidsHealth                          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Web page for parents with info on recognizing signs of stress in children and helping them cope</li> </ul>   | <a href="http://www.kidshealth.org/parent/emotions/feelings/stress.html">www.kidshealth.org/parent/emotions/feelings/stress.html</a>                                 |
|                                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Information for teens on recognizing and dealing with stress; includes audio breathing exercise</li> </ul>   | <a href="http://www.kidshealth.org/teen/your_mind/emotions/stress.html">www.kidshealth.org/teen/your_mind/emotions/stress.html</a>                                   |
| mindcheck.ca                        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Stress management resources for young people, as well as mental health screening tools</li> </ul>  | <a href="http://mindcheck.ca/mood-stress">http://mindcheck.ca/mood-stress</a>  |
| <b>Relaxation</b>                   |   |  |
| Fighting Invisible Tigers           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Includes free audio excerpts from the book, including breathing and Progressive Muscle Relaxation (PMR)</li> </ul>   | <a href="http://www.freespirit.com/catalog/item_detail.cfm?ITEM_ID=219">www.freespirit.com/catalog/item_detail.cfm?ITEM_ID=219</a>                                   |
| YouthInBC                           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Visual, audio and text stress reduction tools (includes yoga videos, mindfulness, and PMR)</li> </ul>  | <a href="http://www.youthinbc.com/learn-more/stress/stress-management-exercises/">www.youthinbc.com/learn-more/stress/stress-management-exercises/</a>               |
| MindMasters                         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A research-based program that teaches simple techniques like deep breathing, PMR, and imagery</li> <li>Audio tapes accompany many of the activities</li> </ul> | <a href="http://www.child-youth-health.net/en/child-youth-health/mind_masters_p280.html">www.child-youth-health.net/en/child-youth-health/mind_masters_p280.html</a> |
| <b>Time Management</b>              |   |  |
| ADDitude                            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Time management tips for children with ADD/ADHD</li> </ul>   | <a href="http://www.additudemag.com/adhd/article/5992.html">www.additudemag.com/adhd/article/5992.html</a>   |
| It's My Life                        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Time management tips for kids</li> </ul>   | <a href="http://www.pbskids.org/itsmylife/school/time/index.html">www.pbskids.org/itsmylife/school/time/index.html</a>   |

## Books



### FOR CHILDREN

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*NOTE: This book can be borrowed/purchased from the BCCH Family Resource Library:*  
<http://www.bcchildrens.ca/KidsTeensFam/FamilyResourceLibrary/LibraryCatalogue.htm>

### FOR TEENS

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