

Counselor Connection



Parenting Tips
for Today

DECEMBER 2019 | VOL. 1 ISSUE 3

How to Cope With Holiday (and Other) Stress

Most people experience stress and anxiety from time to time. Stress is any demand placed on your brain or physical body. People can report feeling stressed when multiple competing demands are placed on them. The feeling of being stressed can be triggered by an event that makes you feel frustrated or nervous. Anxiety is a feeling of fear, worry, or unease. It can be a reaction to stress, or it can occur in people who are unable to identify significant stressors in their life. (*From Healthline.com*)

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention:

- 7.1% of children aged 3-17 years (approximately 4.4 million) have diagnosed anxiety.
- 3.2% of children aged 3-17 years (approximately 1.9 million) have diagnosed depression.
- In February 2019 a Pew survey found that 70% of teens say anxiety and depression is a “major problem” among their peers, and an additional 26% say it’s a minor problem.



Learning and emotions are connected. But how? According to Yale Professor Marc Brackett, “How we feel – bored, curious, stressed, etc. – influences whether we are present, in ‘fight or flight’ mode, or able to process and integrate information.” You’ll find more on this connection in his new book: [Permission To Feel](#), released in September this year.

And, it’s important to know that according to a 2016 article published in *Health and Human Services*, by Rebecca Bernstein:

“Stress takes a variety of forms. Some stress happens as the result of a single, short-term event - having an argument with a loved one, for example. Other stress happens due to recurring conditions, such as managing a long-term illness or a demanding job. When recurring conditions cause stress that is both intense and

sustained over a long period of time, it can be referred to as ‘chronic’ or ‘toxic’ stress. While all stress triggers physiological reactions, chronic stress is specifically problematic because of the significant harm it can do to the functioning of the body and the brain.”

Chronic stress can actually shrink the prefrontal cortex, the area of the brain responsible for memory and learning.

Not all stress is bad, however. Some benefits of stress are that it keeps us energized, motivated, and working towards our goals. It is also a vital warning system that floods our systems with chemicals like epinephrine, norepinephrine and cortisol, that help us act to avoid danger. It can even help to fortify the immune system according to some research.

The holidays in particular can be stressful. The end of a school semester or trimester, along with “extra” holiday demands can put students as well as parents on overload. Learning to manage stress is an important skill that once learned, will serve us well.

Here are some strategies that may help:

- Keep a positive attitude.
- Accept that there are events that you cannot control.
- Learn and practice relaxation techniques like meditation, yoga, or tai-chi.
- Exercise. Your body can fight stress better when it is fit.
- Eat healthy, well-balanced meals.
- Set limits; learn to say no to requests that lead to stress.
- Make time for hobbies, interests, and relaxation.
- Get enough rest and sleep.
- Seek out social support and spend time with friends.

We hope you enjoy this issue of *Counselor Connection*. We want to share what counselors and social workers in our schools are doing related to each *Connection* topic to promote our academic, social, emotional, and behavioral wellness.



Important Reads This Month

- [10 Reasons Your Child Might be Stressed -WebMD](#)
- [Students in High Achieving Schools Are Now At-Risk](#)
- [Tips to Reduce Stress](#)



School News

What are our schools doing on this topic?

- Elementary: Healthy Lifestyles curriculum, including learning how to recognize stress and strategies for calming oneself, lessons focusing on where

our bodies feel feelings, what to do when we feel them, what happens in our brains and bodies when we have strong feelings, Mindfulness training, Restorative Positive Intervention Behavior Support (PBIS), and small stress management groups.

- Middle: Mindfulness training and Kindness Week health curriculum, SAFE UT App, and Dude Be Nice activities.
- Junior High: Health Curriculum, Restorative Practices, Botvin Lifeskills Curriculum, SAFE UT app, Mindfulness training, and training for HOPE Squad recently provided by Dr. Ben Belnap.
- High School and Park City Learning Center: Botvin Lifeskills curriculum, Miner Advantage class offering including Mindfulness, Healthy Lifestyle Choice Education, HOPE Squad produced Holiday Stress video and SAFE UT app.



**Want To Learn More?
See Our Resources Section!**

More Resources

- [Kids Health - 5 Ways to Prevent Stress Buildup](#)
- [Holiday Depression with Dr. Ben Belnap \(Park City Television\)](#)
- [A Look at New Pressures Facing Teens -The Today Show](#)

Wishing everyone a restful and restorative Winter Break. See you in January!