

HOW TO HELP

- Start the therapeutic process by privately speaking to the child in a calm, approachable way. It is important to offer structure without smothering, and to provide a safe, judgment-free outlet for the student's thoughts and concerns.
- Encourage supplemental activities inside and outside of the classroom - engagement with nature, recess, expeditionary learning, work that involves gross motor skills and artistic outlets.

HELPFUL RESOURCES

- <http://kidshealth.org/parent/emotions/index.html#cat176> : Information regarding common childhood behaviors.
- <http://www.nasponline.org/families/stress.pdf> : The National Association of School Psychologists' tips on addressing childhood stress.
- <http://parenting.blogs.nytimes.com/2009/11/05/helping-our-children-with-stress/> : Tackling kids' stress from a parent's point of view.

TRUST YOUR RESOURCES

Collaborate with colleagues to help identify students who might be struggling. School nurses may notice the body language and physical manifestations of mental stress. Relying their observations to teachers and counselors helps keep everyone in the loop.

If necessary, consider referring the student to professionals who can provide prolonged, non-academic support. Mental health professionals can implement psychotherapeutic techniques that, when applied over time, help students develop a better sense of self-awareness and overall healthier behaviors.



"The hallmarks of a resilient child include knowing how to solve problems or knowing that there's an adult to turn to for help."

*-Robert Brooks, clinical psychologist,
Harvard Medical School*



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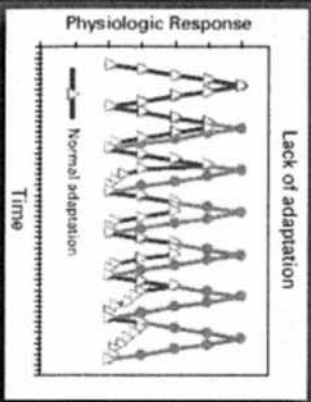
STRESS IN CHILDREN

How teachers can recognize, prevent, and mitigate stress in middle school students.



RECOGNITION PREVENTION MITIGATION

<http://arms.arps.org/>



The red line indicates the body's response to normal, short term stress. The blue line shows what happens as a result of toxic stress.
Adapted from: "The Science of Stress: How Stress Affects the Body" by Dr. Kelly McGonigall, TEDx Talks, 10/23/2015

WHY WORRY ABOUT IT?

Recent studies have demonstrated connections between toxic levels of stress and increased chances of heart disease, diabetes, and other health issues.

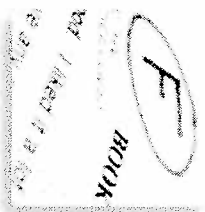


INDICATORS OF STRESS

- Hostile attitude towards teachers
- Predisposition to deflect and self-victimize upon confrontation
- Loss of appetite, nausea
- Unexplained aches, pains, headaches
- Sudden drop in grades, sleeping in class, unexcused absences, not doing homework, easily distracted
- Change in group of friends
- Transition from extrovert to introvert
- Ignoring hygiene (not showering or changing clothes)
- Flat affect
- Increase in amount of disciplinary referrals

EARLY RECOGNITION IS KEY

The sooner a student's stress-related symptoms are identified, the sooner the causes can be addressed. Early recognition can keep actions from becoming habits.



WHAT IS STRESS?

STRESS is the body's physical and emotional response to events that upset the balance of everyday life. There are three general categories of stress, each of which affects the body in different ways:

- **POSITIVE STRESS** helps the body naturally overcome minor daily challenges.
- **TOLERABLE STRESS** occurs with the onset of adverse life events that require additional effort for the body to fully recover.
- **TOXIC STRESS** follows prolonged traumatic experiences and results in impaired bodily functions.

Maintaining positive and tolerable levels of stress is imperative for long-term mental and physical well-being. Current public health initiatives are focusing on the relationship between childhood toxic stress and adult chronic disease.



KNOW WHAT'S STRESSING YOUR KIDS!



- Approximately 32.5% of Amherst Regional Middle School students come from homes that qualify for the free/reduced lunch program.
- ARMS students come from four elementary school districts, and must acclimate to a world of new friends, faces, buildings, and teachers.
- They are worried about everything: who to sit with at lunch, what to wear, how to fit in, and often, what happens when they go home.

Issues at home relate to issues at school.

- Many students lack a bright, quiet homework space away from school.
- Nutrition is important! Inadequate or infrequent meals due to financial strain can impact a student's ability to focus on education.
- If the home environment is not nurturing and safe, learning may become a second priority.