



REMEMBER

- 60% of teens report feeling stress from either internal pressure (i.e. to be perfect or successful) or external pressure (i.e. from the expectations of older generations). Young people need wisdom and guidance to root their expectations of themselves in grace and elevate Jesus' view of them above the unhealthy internal and external voices.
- Pressure brings diamonds out of coal but can destroy a beautiful piece of pottery. Loving adults need to be aware of pressure's effect on a teen and provide them with truth and tools to withstand or the permission to move away from the pressure.
- Matt 6:34 (Msg.): "Give your entire attention to what God is doing right now, and don't get worked up about what may or may not happen tomorrow. God will help you deal with whatever hard things come up when the time comes."



RECOGNIZE

- Stress is a normal part of life and development. It can even be helpful and motivating. Many teens, however, struggle with stress levels beyond their capacity that interfere with everyday life.
- Stress happens when the perceived demands of a situation outweigh the person's internal and external resources. The young person feels threatened because they believe that the situation is more dangerous, difficult, or painful than they are equipped to manage. Teen's will respond to this threat with fight (aggression/agitation), flight (distraction/avoidance) or freeze (mind going blank/concentration difficulties).
- The most common stress triggers reported by teens surround school, uncertainty about the future, and family (including family finances). Possessing coping skills/resilience, supportive connections, and a positive perception of self, others and the possibilities affects the level of stress experienced.
- Adults need to be ready to supportively step in when stress begins to result in growing anxiousness, physical complaints (headaches/stomach aches), difficulties with sleep, scattered concentration, forgetfulness, negative coping through drugs/alcohol, or a sense of completely being overwhelmed.



STRESS

lifeteams
resources



RESPOND

Although the situation can't always change, we can help young people grow their internal and external resources to navigate the stress:

- Normalize the feelings - Feeling stressed is not a dangerous thing, it's a difficult thing. Help young people know that stress is a normal human reaction. It is simply an alert from our brains to remind us that the pressure is high and it's time to use our resources.
- Take stock - Guide the young person in creating a list of their internal resources (eg. knowledge, experience, faith, courage) and external resources (eg. people, time, stress release activities, having choices). Make a plan for using and adding to what they possess.
- Help them create a Relaxation Repertoire - Practicing measured breathing, prayer, intentional head to toe muscle relaxation and mindfulness (stopping and focusing on peacefully "being" in the present rather than frantically "doing" all the things that need to get done) impact brain chemistry. Explore, choose and practice these before stress hits.
- Evaluate patterns - Noticing and adopting new thinking patterns (such as optimism, gratefulness, flexibility, grace for oneself) can impact perception. Exercise, regular sleep, and healthy food can also have a huge role to play.
- Explore surrender - Releasing the illusion of control, especially when we surrender the situation to a present and loving God, shares and lessens the weight.
- Lower the bar - Have a conversation about expectations vs perceptions. Create spaces to explore feeling good about doing a competent or "good enough" job rather than demanding perfection.
- Connect - Close relationships cause a stress-relieving brain chemical (oxytocin) to be released. Cultivating deeper connections is often something a stressed-out teen feels they don't have time for, but simply giving love and being loved is a powerful force.



RESOURCES

<https://www.psychom.net/common-triggers-teen-stress/>

<https://kidshealth.org/en/teens/stress.html> - 3 short videos leading teens into developing some helpful stress reduction breathing techniques

<https://fervr.net/teen-life/how-i-found-peace> - Leaving stress behind and reaching for Jesus.