

# 5 Tips for Helping Teens Cope with Stress

The American Psychological Association (APA) recently released its Stress in America™ report. This year the report highlighted the stress experienced by American youth (teens ages 13-17) stating "high stress and ineffective coping mechanisms appear to be ingrained in our culture".

## Coping with Stress

According to the APA Stress in America report, forty-two percent of teens indicated not doing anything to cope with their stress or not knowing what to do to manage it. This is a significant concern given the impact stress can have on our lives. The Stress in America report also noted that physical activity is a great way to manage stress and "those teens who engaged in physical activity for stress management reported lower stress levels". In a recent blog post, I discussed many ways to increase physical activity to manage stress. Parents can also play a vital role in modeling healthy lifestyles and promoting physical activity by encouraging their kids to join sports teams, engaging in activities as a family such as dancing, or finding ways to exercise that don't cost money like walking or going to the park.

Here are *additional suggestions for coping with stress* provided from the APA (2014).

### ***Get some sleep***

Between homework, activities and hanging with friends, it can be hard to get enough sleep, especially during the school week. Ideally, adolescents should get nine hours a night. To maximize your chance of sleeping soundly, cut back on watching TV or engaging in a lot of screen time in the late evening hours. Don't drink caffeine late in the day and try not to do stimulating activities too close to bedtime.

### ***Focus on your strengths***

Spend some time really thinking about the things you're good at, and find ways to do more of those things. If you're a math ace, you might tutor a younger neighbor who's having trouble with the subject. If you are a spiritual person, you might volunteer at your church. If you're artistic, take a photography class. Focusing on your strengths will help you keep your stresses in perspective.

### ***Engage in physical activity***

Physical activity is one of the most effective stress busters. That doesn't mean you have to go for a jog if you hate running. Find activities you enjoy and build them into your routine such as yoga, hiking, biking, skateboarding or walking. The best types of physical activities are those that have a social component. Whether you're into team sports, or prefer kayaking or rollerblading with a friend or two, you're more likely to have fun — and keep at it — if you're being active with friends.

### ***Do things that make you happy***

Besides physical activities, find other hobbies or activities that bring you joy. That might be listening to music, going to the movies or drawing. Make a point to keep doing these things even when you're stressed and busy.

### ***Talk to someone***

It's so much easier to manage stress when you let others lend a hand. Talk to a parent, teacher or other trusted adult. They may be able to help you find new ways to manage stress. Or they may help put you in touch with a psychologist who is trained in helping people make healthy choices and manage stress.

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