

# School Stress: Helping your teen deal

When your child is stressed out, try these tips to help get things back on track:

## Be Organized

- Help your child put together a schedule of activities suggests [familyeducation.com](http://familyeducation.com). Start with things that happen at fixed times (such as soccer practice) then fill in the open spaces with study time, piano practice, relaxation time, etc.
- Schedule work time for big assignments that will take several days or weeks to complete. This will help your student avoid having to cram a long-term project into a day or two, thereby reducing stress and giving him or her a better chance at a good grade.
- Give your child an organized workspace. A messy desk or backpack can easily swallow up a homework assignment. The time spent separating schoolwork into subject folders, organizing school supplies, and throwing out what your student no longer needs will save loads of time (and worry) later on.
- Set house rules for study time. Cell phones and televisions should be off, and the Internet used for research only. Make sure other family members honor these rules, since even a TV down the hall can be distracting for a student who's trying to focus.

## Prioritize

- It's great to be involved in a range of different activities; however, if soccer, swimming, school newspaper, and youth orchestra are gobbling up too much time, figure out what your child can afford to quit. Take into account your child's intended college major and potential scholarships, but don't forget to factor in your child's genuine interest levels as well. Extracurricular activities that are purely for fun can help reduce stress. Ultimately, the decision should be up to your child. According to [stressfocus.com](http://stressfocus.com), choosing to say no helps a teen learn to prioritize and be independent.
- Figure out what can wait until tomorrow—or next month. It might be a term paper that isn't due for several weeks, or even ACT or SAT prep, which can be done over the summer rather than during the hectic school year.
- Help your child set realistic goals, both in and out of school, says [familyeducation.com](http://familyeducation.com). Having attainable goals to work toward will help him or her see the light at the end of the tunnel.

## Live a Healthy Life

- Sleep is a key factor when it comes to wellness. Children (including teenagers) generally need at least 10 hours of shut-eye each night. Studies have shown that teens who don't sleep enough have lower GPAs and higher rates of car accidents, and are more at risk for physical and mental illness.

- Exercise is one of the best ways to blow off steam. According to [an article](#) by New York Times blogger Gretchen Reynolds, studies have shown that regular exercise actually helps change brain chemistry to reduce stress.
- Eat well. A diet of high-calorie, high-fat foods can make your student feel sluggish, whereas a balanced diet will help him or her tackle the day. [Brainready.com](#) offers a list of five top brain foods.
- Be a healthy role model. If you tell your child to exercise, choose healthy foods, and go to bed at a reasonable hour, do so yourself, says [familyeducation.com](#). (You may find your own stress levels diminishing as a result!) By forming good habits, your child will be less likely to medicate anxiety with junk food, alcohol, drugs, or aggressive behavior.
- Schedule recreational time. Although it may be tempting to urge your child to use that free Saturday afternoon for ACT study or biology homework, it's important not to work constantly. Your child needs the chance to play, relax, space out, and have fun.
- Laughter really is the best medicine. According to [stressfocus.com](#), having a good sense of humor and watching cartoons can help relieve tension. Encourage your child to do things that make him or her laugh.

## Show Your Support

- Allow your child to talk about his or her stress, says [suite101.com](#). Let go of the idea that your child is “just a kid” and has nothing to be worried about, and offer a sympathetic ear.
- Find out what is causing your child's anxiety. Is it pressure to succeed? A big upcoming project? Standardized tests? Once you know the source, you can better help your student solve the problem. If your child needs academic support, visit [www.studypoint.com](#) to find out how we can help.
- Be positive. According to [about.com](#), praising your child for his or her accomplishments can go a long way when it comes to self-esteem. When your child is struggling (a bad grade, a missed catch, a rejection), help him or her focus on the opportunities the situation presents. Even a disappointing experience can lead to a useful lesson.
- Keep in mind that boys and girls handle stress differently, according to [stressfocus.com](#). Girls are more likely to seek guidance and support, while boys will either tune out the stress or tune into something else for distraction.

## Resources for Your Teen

- [The American Academy of Pediatrics website](#) has a teens-only section where your child can create a customized plan for managing stress.
- [Friendsofquinn.com](#) offers a list of stress-management techniques geared toward teens with learning differences.