

mental health *for all*

Kids Have Stress Too! (KHST!) Can Help! - Fact Sheet



“A child’s ability to cope with stress in the early years has consequences for physical and emotional health throughout life”.

~ National Scientific Council on the Developing Child (2005)

“We are living in the midst of the most powerful revolution imaginable in our understanding of how to enhance a child’s development” says Dr. Stuart Shanker. An alarmingly large number of children continue to fall by the wayside or just manage to scrape through. The answer lies in how much stress they experience at the start of their lives.

Did you know?

- All children, even very young children experience stress
- All children benefit from an increased ability to deal with stress and can learn ways to do this
- Research shows that up to 90% of illnesses are related to stress

Too much stress causes problems for kids:

- Makes it more difficult for children to concentrate, to learn and to get along with others
- Has a profound effect on children’s health
- Interferes with children’s ability to focus and think. If they are afraid or anxious, children may spend so much energy worrying that they are unable to learn

But we know that:

- Children can learn simple, age-appropriate coping strategies
- Children who develop healthy coping skills to deal with stress feel more competent, are more resilient and are better able to relax and to solve problems

Kids say their stress comes from many different things:

- Change - moving to a different home or school, starting school for the first time
- Having too much to do. Kids need some quiet time.
- Feeling different from other kids or being teased or bullied
- Fighting or arguing among family members, not getting along well with brothers or sisters
- Having trouble with schoolwork

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- Being yelled at by family, friends or teachers
- Family break-up
- Most of all, when they feel lonely and unloved

How you can help your kids when they feel stressed

- Spending time with your kids is the most important thing you can do. Listen to them when they talk to you. Try to understand how they feel.
- Show your children you love them, with words, hugs and kisses.
- Do things with them. It will help them to feel they belong in the family.
- Do things as a family. Exercise is a great way to burn off stress. Make exercise part of your family life. Play ball or other games. Go for walks. Eat meals together. Talk. Share ideas, fun and how you feel about things.

Kids also need time to themselves – just to relax and do nothing! Listening to music. Reading or playing quietly may help them feel better. Doing nothing is fine too!

Other Ways You Can Help

- If you think your kids are feeling stressed – ask them.
- First they will need to calm down so that they can think more clearly. Taking a few deep breaths will help them to relax.
- Ask them how they feel, and why they think they feel that way.
- Next ask them how big the problem is. Listen carefully to what they have to say.
- Help them choose what to do next. Later you can ask if it helped.

Some Ways to Build a Less Stressful Home

- Make sure your child gets exercise and time to play.
- Healthy food can help the body cope with stress more easily.
- Bedtime routines help kids relax at the end of the day.
- Sleep is important. A tired child gets stressed more easily.
- Morning routines get the day off to a good start.
- Learn to manage your stress.

Kids Have Stress Too!® (KHST!) Can Help!

Developed by The Psychology Foundation of Canada, KHST! is a research-based primary prevention program designed to increase the ability for children to handle stress. The program educates parents, caregivers and teachers on how to recognize and understand stress in children and equips them with the knowledge, awareness, and skills to help children become healthier and more resilient by learning how to manage their stress.

The original KHST! program was developed for classroom use and then adapted for facilitators to use with parents of children ages 5 to 9 years. A second Pre-School Program for child-care providers was added for children 2½ to 5 years old. There are many delivery partners for both programs, including social service agencies, public health units and branches of the Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA). Together we are working to bring these comprehensive training programs to every province in Canada.

Do You Need More Information?

Mental Health Week is a designated week created by **The Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA)** to talk, reflect, engage and celebrate mental health for all. The theme of Mental Health For All represents the right of every Canadian to enjoy and have the best possible mental health. It's this attitude that represents ways in which all Canadians can actively protect and preserve their mental health at home, work and in their own community. CMHA develops policies and delivers programs and services through its 10,000 volunteers and 135 branches across Canada every-day. This year, Mental Health Week celebrates its 60th year in 2011 from May 1st to 7th.

Learn more by visiting www.MentalHealthWeek.ca

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