



**QEGSMAT**  
MULTI ACADEMY TRUST

# Safeguarding Bulletin

Issue 5: April 2023

## Young People and Stress

If we tried to list every reason why a child gets stressed, we would be here all day. From school deadlines, to bullying, to making sure they are up on the latest trend. The point is, everyone is different and therefore the reasons to get stressed are too.

Stress is a normal part of life. But sometimes it can get the better of us. When that happens, it is important young people know they have somewhere or someone to turn to.

### Recognising the Signs:

It isn't always obvious when a child is feeling stressed. They might be trying to hide it, or not even know they are going through it themselves. Look out for any changes in behaviour, such as problems sleeping, a change in eating habit, stomach aches or being more irritable. But remember, everyone responds to this differently, so be

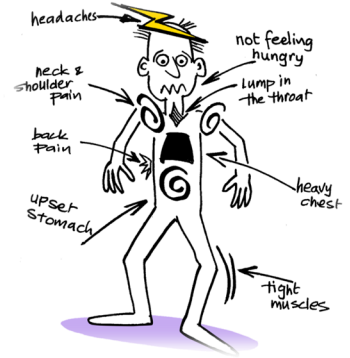
ready for anything. Even if you get a negative response, as long as you are understanding and gentle you have now let them know they can approach you when they feel comfortable. Showing a more vulnerable side can help. Being open about your own stress can help strike up a conversation. Most people, children included, are worried they are the only one that behaves or feels a certain way when they are stressed. You don't always have to have the solutions. Just like adults, young people want to be heard. Letting them talk through how they are feeling could be all they need to get to the bottom of these overwhelming feelings.

Regardless of your initial reactions, make sure you don't seem judgmental. We all react and deal with things differently. Your thought process might be vastly different when responding

to a problem, but that doesn't make it right or wrong. A lot of young people might not feel ready to talk about stressful situations. It could even be triggering. If talking isn't getting you anywhere, it is important you let young people know that there are other constructive ways to deal with their emotions.

Exercise is often described as a medicine. It can be as simple as going for a walk or playing football at the local park. Physical activity has the ability to improve our mental health and wellbeing. It can take our mind off things and replace it with another focus.

From The Children's Society



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### Apps to help with stress

Mobile phones are synonymous with children today. And while they can be associated with causing stress, there are also some nifty apps designed to help. When young people don't want to open up, or are looking for techniques to help them calm down these might help.

- **Breathe2Relax:** portable stress management tool
- **Calm:** guided meditations and sleep stories to ease stress and improve sleep
- **Headspace:** train your mind for a healthier, happier life by reducing daily anxieties and stresses

### Building emotional resilience

Emotional resilience is your ability to respond to stressful or unexpected situations and crises.

The amount of emotional resilience you have is determined by a number of different things, including your age, identity and what you've experienced in your life.

You can learn to increase your emotional resilience by:

#### Getting a sense of perspective

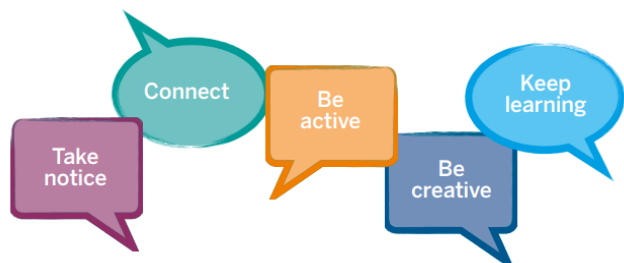
Ask yourself how you will feel about the thing that's upsetting you in a week, a month or a year? Considering issues in this way will help you have some perspective about how much you should let them bother you.

#### Practising positivity

Each of us is far stronger than we know, so even if you feel like you can't carry on, try and appreciate just how strong you are and know you can get through whatever's happening.

#### Giving yourself a break

Sometimes you can be your own worst critic, so it's important that when you feel stressed or worried you aren't too hard on yourself. Try to remember that despite how you may feel, you're a valuable person who deserves good things – it's absolutely right that you should treat yourself when you feel bad.



## What is stress?

When your body is under stress it produces hormones such as adrenaline and cortisol. These hormones prepare the body to take urgent action – also known as fight or flight – and have a number of side-effects.

These side-effects include anxiety, depression, concentration problems, weight gain or loss, dizziness and sleep problems. To make matters worse, these side effects can actually cause more stress. This is why it is important to find ways to cope and support others with stress, ensuring you can support young people to deal with it as soon as it comes.

When people are under stress they react differently. At times, they may shout and throw things, or hide away and stop socialising. Other times, they may feel they cannot cope, feeling tearful but outwardly appearing angry and behaving aggressively. Learning to deal with stress can take a lot of practise but it will worth it in the long-run.

## How can we manage it and support others to do so?

Below are some tips to help you and young people you work with, when things are getting stressful:

- \* **Recognise triggers:** begin to track times where you have felt stressed and look for patterns in how you reacted. What was happening when you felt stressed? What did you think/feel/do just before you felt stressed?
- \* **Awareness:** once you are aware of difficulties that are likely to make you feel stressed you can take steps to prevent stress or deal with it quickly
- \* **Self-care:** be kind to yourself – stress is a human experience. Try to connect with friends and talk about how you are feeling
- \* **Exercise, relaxation and meditation:** some people find that exercises and activities such as meditation, breathing exercises and deep muscle relaxation are helpful
- \* **Eat well and sleep:** the better rested you are, the more able you are to cope with pressure
- \* **Talking therapy:** if you are finding it difficult to cope, consider meeting with someone trained to help – this might include your GP or talking therapy.

The Children's Society worked with young people to get ideas, advice and tips on managing stress:

Connecting with others is important for well-being.

Young people told us how important it is to stay connected. Some examples they gave of staying connected are:

- \* Staying in touch with friends
- \* Speaking to family
- \* Speaking to a trusted adult
- \* Seeing people face to face
- \* Seeing people online e.g. FaceTiming/video calls, texting and using social media
- \* Talking through problems/ sharing how you're feeling
- \* Supporting each other

## 6 STRESS MANAGEMENT TECHNIQUES FOR STUDENTS

### GET MORE SLEEP

Operating in a sleep-deprived state puts you at a distinct disadvantage. You're less productive and may find it more difficult to learn. Aim to get at least 8 hours a night and take power naps when you need them.

### GET ORGANISED

One way to reduce the amount of stress that you experience as a student is to keep a minimalist, soothing study area that's free of distractions and clutter. This can keep stress levels low while studying, save time in finding lost items, and keep classroom relationships more positive.

### USE GUIDED IMAGERY

Using guided imagery to reduce stress is easy and effective. Visualisations can help you calm down and detach from what's stressing you out. Using this ancient practice will help you turn off your body's stress response.

### FREQUENT EXERCISE

Exercise reduces levels of the body's stress hormones, such as adrenaline and cortisol. It also stimulates the production of endorphins, chemicals in the brain that are the body's natural painkillers and mood elevators.

### HEALTHY DIET

While a healthy diet isn't generally thought of as a stress management technique or a study aid, it can actually function as both. Improving your diet can keep you from experiencing diet-related mood swings, fatigue, high blood pressure and more.

