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**Topic of Segment:** Parent Tips for Helping Children Manage Stress

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**Summary:**

The new-school-year thrill captivates both children and parents alike. However, once the initial excitement fades, the routine can eventually lead to stress. This can be extremely detrimental to the success of your child throughout the academic year. It's imperative to maintain healthy stress management as a family so the children aren't the ones who continuously feel the tension. After all, stress is a major reason for drug use in children and young adults. And stress coupled with depression, pressure and boredom is a recipe for disaster.

Some teens become overloaded with stress. When it happens, inadequately managed stress can lead to anxiety, withdrawal, aggression, physical illness, or poor coping skills such as drug and/or alcohol use.

**The Facts:**

- By the time they hit 12th grade, around half of teens will have abused an illicit drug at least once, according to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.
- Of kids who have tried alcohol, one in four had their first drink by 12, reports the U.S. Department of Justice Drug Enforcement Administration.
- Many kids relieve stress with self-harm/cutting.

**Tips to Manage Stress:**

- Children need to take time for self-care.

- Help children learn to change your thinking
- Take assignments one baby step at a time
- Set obtainable goals
- Stay balanced during exam periods

#### **Ways to Relieve Stress:**

- Exercise. Regular exercise is one of the best ways to keep stress levels under control.
- Learn ways to relax your body through meditation, massage, and breathing exercises.
- Laugh.
- Practice positive self-talk.
- Adopt a mantra such as “this too shall pass” or “I can handle this.”
- Create an assets column that includes all of the things that bring you joy.
- Talk to a friend or loved one.
- Make the best out of stressful circumstances – be optimistic – your outlook, attitude, and thoughts influence the way you see things.
- Ask for help. People who have a strong network of family and friends manage stress better.

#### **Beware of too much stress**

Stress keeps us focused and aware of all the things that need to be done. It can motivate you to study harder and complete assignments and projects on time. But when your stress level becomes more than a motivating tool, or when pressures are too intense or last too long, you may be in stress overload.

#### **Parents: Be on the lookout for these signs of stress overload**

- Anxiety or panic attacks
- Irritability and moodiness
- Physical symptoms such as stomach problems, headaches, or even chest pain
- Allergic reactions, such as eczema or asthma
- Problems sleeping
- Sadness or depression

#### **For more information:**

For more information about helping your children manage stress, visit the Southwest Behavioral & Health Services website at [www.sbhservices.org](http://www.sbhservices.org).