

HEALTHY MINDS

Children and Stress

Our children live in a world that can sometimes be stressful and confusing for them. Although it is normal for children to feel stress as their bodies and minds grow, pressure from friends, school and family can add stress. Life events like divorce, death and community violence affect children too.



Luckily, as adults we can do a lot to help children cope with stress.

How to recognize stress in children

- Complaints about aches and pains, headaches and stomach aches
- Over-eating or under-eating
- Sweaty palms
- Not wanting to go to school or other places that are part of the normal routine
- Trouble concentrating, listless

What can you do to help children with stress?

Listen to your children.

- Ask them how they feel. Accept how they feel without offering solutions. Don't tell them how they should feel.
- Be aware that when you are feeling stressed, they are too. Feeling alone makes stress harder to manage. Let children know that the stresses are real, and you are all feeling the stress.

Children and Stress, What you can do . . .

Talk with your children.

- Reassure them that you always love them, even if things don't go well all the time.
- Let them know that it is OK to cry. Crying is a good way to relieve tension.
- Let them know that bad things happen and it's not their fault. Life brings problems that we cannot predict.

Make healthy choices.

- Teach your children how to relax. Try deep breathing or yoga.
- Provide healthy foods. Avoid foods with a lot of sugar, caffeine or chemicals. Offer healthy snack foods like fruits, vegetables and low-fat milk. Stay away from chips, sodas and fast food.
- Make sure your children get plenty of exercise. Sign your child up for a sports program at the local recreation center or take walks in nature. Get lots of fresh air.

Get help for your child.

- If the stress is because of school, be sure to talk to the teacher and principal.
- Talk to your child's doctor about the changes you have seen.
- Call Member Services at **510-747-4567** to find out more about mental health benefits for Alliance members.

You don't have to do this alone! To find out more about healthy minds and parenting, call Alliance Health Programs **510-747-4577**.

Toll-free: 1-877-932-2738 (TTY: 711)
www.alamedaalliance.org



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