



EPRESS

Questions from Directors

We have a wonderful monitor whose family has a long history of substance abuse. She has educated herself about substance abuse and knows a great deal about the issue. Is it okay for us to have her monitor our substance abuse cases?

I applaud your monitor for learning about the dynamics and struggles of substance abuse. It's an important topic that is often raised in supervised visitation referrals. The issue can be complicated, though, by the issue of ethics and professionals boundaries. Remember that all cases of substance abuse are not alike. Sometimes people link their personal experiences to other people's experiences, even when the situations are very different. We also want to make sure that monitors don't become over-involved in the client's cases, and we want to avoid having a monitor informally or otherwise "diagnose" a client. I would not assign any particular staff member to all of *any type of case*. That would suggest to other staff that the person is an expert on the topic – which she is not.

I am starting a new program, and I want to be able to give my clients referrals to other social services. How can I find them?

This one's easy: Dial 211 throughout Florida for information on local social services.

I am so upset about the visits happening at the local CBC. They are having visits in offices, with the case manager or someone else supervising visits from a desk. Why are they are not complying with the same safety standards as my program?

The short answer is because they are not required to. Although we have set a very specific best practices for supervised visitation, the CBCs are not required to use them for visits. Please remember that the SV standards were developed with a statewide team over a long period of time. I advise you to use our standards even if no one else in your community does. They provide a roadmap to safety, parent-child relationship development, strength-based practice, and trauma-informed care. Feel free to invite your CBC colleagues to join our phone conferences. Everyone is welcome to attend.

How to Be a Better Listener

By Kimberly Newby

Introduction:

Listening is a key component of communication. People share thoughts, ideas, and concerns with the purpose of being heard. Listening allows people to take in information, make sense of it and gain an understanding of what the speaker is saying. To gain the most information and insight when communicating with others, it is important to listen effectively.

This E-Press will cover skills that can make individuals better listeners. This information can be utilized by supervised visitation monitors in their daily work with clients or be given to parents to strengthen their parenting skills.

5 Ways to Be a Better Listener:

1. Be Present.

- As a listener, it is important to show the speaker you are paying attention. Make eye contact and use open body language such as leaning slightly forward to show that you are engaged. Remove any distractions and give the speaker all of your attention. Not only does this make the speaker feel heard, but it also helps you focus on what he or she is saying.



2. Keep an Open Mind.

- Refrain from making judgments or jumping to conclusions. This can allow you to see the speaker's perspective and focus on the words being said rather than on your personal opinion. Often times, when we have already formulated our own view on something, we are hesitant to listen to others views on the subject.

3. Resist the Urge to Interrupt.

- While you may have something important to say, it is best to let the speaker finish what he or she is saying before you comment. Interrupting

can send signals that are damaging to interactions and may make the speaker feel as if you do not want to listen.

4. *Try to Feel What the Speaker is Feeling.*

- Empathy is crucial in gaining respect from the speaker, as well as in understanding the message being delivered. Taking time to think about what it would be like to be in the speaker's position can help you to better understand and support the speaker.

5. *Establish Follow-up.*

- When the speaker has finished, ask questions for clarification if needed. Make sure to show appreciation for what the speaker has said by thanking or sharing what you thought was useful from the conversation.

Effective Listening	
<u>Looks Like</u>	<u>Sounds Like</u>
Eye Contact	One Voice at a Time
Head Nodding	Polite Language
Open Body Posture	Pleasant Tone of Voice
Appropriate Facial Expression	Short Responses like "Okay" "Mhm" "I see"

Conclusion

Ultimately, effective listening is about understanding the speaker and allowing him or her to be heard. Taking little steps to listen more effectively can go a long way in making interactions more positive and beneficial.



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<http://www.forbes.com/sites/womensmedia/2012/11/09/10-steps-to-effective-listening/2/>

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Adding New Relationships to the Family

Forming and developing new, adult, romantic relationships after separation or divorce can be a challenging task. There are positive strategies that individuals can use during the dating process to increase chances of both family stability and relationship success. As supervised visitation providers, you can provide this information to clients to help them introduce relationships into the family unit in a healthy way.



New Relationships

Most separated or divorced parents will eventually start to date and build new relationships. When parents build new relationships, they should remember that there may be challenges to introducing a new person to the children. If parents use discretion, take things slowly, and use positive communication strategies, forming a new relationship and introducing the individual into a new family unit can be a more positive experience for all involved.

Informing Children of a New Relationship

Many children hope their parents will get back together, but this is not usually realistic. This dream can complicate things when one or both parents start to date other people. A child might feel very possessive of his or her parents and home and may oppose any outsider.

Parents should try to comfort their children through the process of adding new relationships by easing the transition. Some positive strategies to help ease the transition include:

- *Being honest with the child about the situation.*
 - If the child is upset by the thought of his or her parent dating someone, the parent can discuss how it is similar to making new friends, just as the child may do in school.

- *Explain new time constraints or scheduling changes.*
 - The child may be worried that he or she will have less time with his or her parent. When parents discuss these worries with the child, the child can know what to expect.
- *Spend quality one-on-one time with your child on a regular basis.*
 - This will help to lessen the threat of the new partner to the child. Children need constant affirmation from their parents following separation or a divorce. This becomes even more important when a new relationship is introduced.
- *Keep the focus on the child.*
 - The child needs a regular schedule and personal attention. Parents should make it clear to the child that the new relationship will not keep the parents from having an active role in the child's life.



Tips for Introducing a New Partner to Children:

Once parents have considered all of the factors involved and made an informed decision to introduce a new partner to the child, here are a few tips for a successful introduction:

- *Start with a brief, casual meeting* before considering an overnight stay, extended visit, holiday, or trip.
- *Have an open discussion with the child* about the new partner and allow for any questions he or she may have.
- *Assure the child that his or her other parent will still be involved in the child's life* and that the new partner is in no way replacing the other parent.
- *Have realistic expectations of the child's acceptance of the new partner*, and understand that the child may take some time to adjust to the new partner and develop a warm relationship with him or her.

Helping Children with New Relationships

The most important factor in starting and continuing new relationships is to take it slow. Parents should make sure that the person they have decided to date is suitable to be

around their kids. Here is a list of tips to consider in order to help children become more comfortable with the idea of a new relationship:

- Give the relationship time to grow.
- Avoid introducing the new partner immediately, as things might not work out and children are much more sensitive to loss than adults are.
- Before introducing a new adult figure into the child's life, it may be appropriate to communicate with the child's other parent about how this will affect your child and the family structure, roles, and responsibilities.
 - If you and your child's other parent do not have a healthy, violence-free relationship, you and your child's safety comes first. It may not be the best choice for you or your children to speak to the other parent about the new relationship.
- Avoid waiting too long to introduce the new partner, as children could find out and that could lead to distrust and resentment towards the parent.
- Set boundaries. Be clear in setting expectations and guidelines for the new partner on what's appropriate with the child and within the family.
- Reassure the child that everything will work out.
- Be careful to monitor the growth of the relationship between the new partner and the child, as many children bond easily and can get too involved or attached too quickly.
- Spend time with the child apart from the new partner; your time is precious to them.
- **REMEMBER:** The child comes first!



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Addressing Teen and Childhood Depression; How Parents Can Help Their Children

By: Shayna Harris



Introduction

In May, 2015, researchers reported that the rates of suicide among African-American children have doubled in the last two decades, surpassing the rates among white children, which dropped over the same time period. It is important for all social service providers to learn about depression in children.

Children and teens go through a wide array of changes during their early years of development, especially emotionally and physically. It is not uncommon for children and teens during this period of development to have moments of sadness or the “blues”, but for many children and teens, this sadness is in fact depression. Often times, depression in children and teens gets dismissed as typical sadness and goes untreated. It is

important to identify depression in children and teens when it occurs and to connect children and teens to treatment and support when needed.

Objective

The purpose of this article is to provide information on how parents can address their child or teen's depression in a positive way. This article will help parents:

- Learn the definition and dynamics of teen and childhood depression
- Understand the negative ways in which depression affects young adolescents and children
- Identify warning signs of depression and suicide in their own children and teenagers
- Learn positive options for treatment and support within the family system
- Gain additional resources and information

What is Depression?

Depression is any sort of sadness, feeling of hopelessness, or extreme mood changes that are persistent over a period of time and affect everyday activities. There are multiple symptoms that parents can be on the lookout for if they suspect that their child is suffering from depression.



Symptoms:

- 1). Fatigue or loss of energy throughout the day
- 2). Feelings of worthlessness or guilt almost every day
- 3). Impaired concentration, indecisiveness, insomnia, or hypersomnia
- 4). Obvious loss of interest or pleasure in daily activities
- 5). Restlessness or feeling down
- 6). Significant weight loss or weight gain
- 7). Tearfulness or frequent crying
- 8.) Thoughts of death or suicide

The Negative Effects of Depression

Depression can have numerous negative effects on a child or teenager, especially if gone untreated. These negative effects include:

- Problems in the classroom. Depression can often result in low energy and makes concentrating difficult. These issues often result in poor attendance, frustration over school assignments, and even decreased academic performance. Even children and teenagers that once shined in the classroom may experience a decline in the academics if they are suffering from depression.
- Acting out to cope with the pain and sadness. Children and teenagers suffering from depression may begin to act out in negative ways to help deal with the emotions they are feeling. These negative actions may include running away, drug or alcohol abuse, internet addiction, dangerous or reckless behaviors, and even violent acts such as homicide or suicide.



Suicide Warning Signs

Social service providers must be especially aware of the potential danger of suicide in teens and children. Social service providers can talk with parents about the warning signs of suicide to help prevent a depressed child or teen from committing any form of self-harm. Warning signs include:

- Talking or joking about committing suicide
- Saying things like “I’d be better off dead,” or “I wish I could disappear forever.”
- Speaking positively about death, dying or suicide
- Engaging in reckless behavior or having a lot of accidents resulting in injury
- Giving away prized possessions
- Saying what seems like final goodbyes to friends and family

Treatment Options

Children and teens depend heavily on their parents, caregivers, teachers, and guardians to help them receive the medical treatment that they need. If depression is left untreated, it can be incredibly damaging; therefore, it is essential to seek professional help. The three most common treatment options for teens and children suffering from depression are one-on-one counseling, group counseling, and antidepressants.

1.) One-on-One counseling and Group Counseling. Counseling can be very beneficial for children suffering from depression because it can help them to understand their emotions and learn ways to deal with these feelings. In addition to helping them learn to identify their emotions and overcome negative thinking, counseling can also help children build confidence and learn to be more accepting of themselves.

2). Anti-Depressants. When it comes to anti-depressants, it is best that parents make the most informed decision they can with the advice and monitoring of a physician. Anti-depressants were originally only tested and created for adult brains, so their effect on children and teenagers is not fully known. Still, some children will benefit from carefully prescribed and monitored anti-depressants.

How can Parents Help?

The most important thing a parent or guardian can do for a child or teenager who is suffering from depression is to be supportive during their treatment. Parents can be supportive in a few different ways.

1).Be emotionally supportive. Parents can be emotionally supportive of their child or teen by listening without lecturing, spending one-on-one time with their child and helping their child learn thinking and coping skills.

2). Encourage the child to stay active. For many children and teens suffering from depression, it is important that they are encouraged to remain active due to the increased potential for isolation. Parents and guardians should be gentle but persistent when suggesting involvement in afterschool activities, physical activities, and socialization for their child or teenager.



3). Stay involved in the child or teenager's treatment. When it comes to medical treatment, children often feel that their wishes are ignored. **It is always important to ask children and teenagers for their input,** so that they will feel included and supported.

How to Handle Depression as a Family

It can be extremely difficult on the family as a whole when one or more child is suffering from depression. **It is important to make sure that the family as a whole is also being taken care of and not being neglected while parents are taking care of their child who is suffering from depression.** Social service providers can encourage families to...

1). Engage in self-care. It is easy for family members to be so focused on taking care of one individual that they begin to neglect their own needs. Parents need to make sure they are reaching out for support when they need it, and that they are not neglecting the siblings of the child suffering from depression during the treatment process. Parents shouldn't try to hide the truth from other members in the family to "protect" them. Being open and honest will allow the family to work as a collective group.

2). Avoid the blame game. It is easy for families to point fingers at each other when someone in the family is suffering from depression, but it is best to remind all family members that depression can result from multiple factors. Placing the blame on each other will not benefit anyone and only causes more issues within the family.

Conclusion

Depression can have an extremely negative impact on children and teens who depend on others for their treatment. Families need to be aware of the warning signs of child and adolescent depression in order to best support their children. Families should seek help as soon as possible for children struggling with depression. Help is available!

Resources

CNN: Suicide Rates Among Young Black Boys on the Rise <http://www.cnn.com/2015/05/19/health/suicide-youth/>
Depression In Teens-<http://www.mentalhealthamerica.net/conditions/depression-teens>
[Helping your teen with depression -http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/ency/patientinstructions/000646.htm](http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/ency/patientinstructions/000646.htm)
[TeensHealth: Going to a Therapist - http://teenshealth.org/teen/your_mind/feeling_sad/therapist.html#](http://teenshealth.org/teen/your_mind/feeling_sad/therapist.html#)
[A Teenager's Guide to Depression -http://www.helpguide.org/articles/depression/teenagers-guide-to-depression.htm](http://www.helpguide.org/articles/depression/teenagers-guide-to-depression.htm)
Parent's Guide to Teen Depression-<http://www.helpguide.org/articles/depression/teen-depression-signs-help.htm>
Depression Health Center - <http://www.webmd.com/depression/guide/major-depression>
Child Depression: What Should Parents Do? -<http://www.webmd.com/depression/features/child-depression-what-should-parents-do>
Child Depression: What Parents Can Do to Help - <http://www.healthychildren.org/English/health-issues/conditions/emotional-problems/Pages/Childhood-Depression-What-Parents-Can-Do-To-Help.aspx>
Tips for Parents and Caregivers - <http://www.adaa.org/living-with-anxiety/children/tips-parents-and-caregivers>
4 Facts about Teen Depression and How Parents Can Help - <http://psychcentral.com/lib/4-facts-about-teen-depression-and-how-parents-can-help/0007858>

Fun Ideas for Parent-Child Bonding at Home

By: Kimberly Newby

Note: This E-Press can be printed and given to *custodial parents* to promote parent-child bonding.

Bonding with your child can help create a positive relationship in which there is trust, comfort, and understanding. Spending time with your child provides opportunities for communication and fun. Here are some simple, inexpensive activities to do with your child at home.



Have a Sleepover in the Living Room:

Instructions:

1. Make a cozy area in the living room together. Grab blankets, pillows, and stuffed animals.
2. Pick out a movie to watch and turn it on.
3. Find a tasty snack to eat while watching the movie.
4. Enjoy!

Note: This can be an easy, exciting activity especially if your child has never been to a sleepover.

Have a Dance Party:

Instructions:

1. Turn on some tunes
2. Dance the day or night away!

Note: Make it more special by getting dressed up for the party! Let your child pick out what he or she wants to wear and listen to.



Have an Indoor Picnic:

Instructions:

1. Find a place in the house to have a picnic.
2. Lay a blanket down and spread out the food.

3. Enjoy a meal together!

Note: This can make a boring lunch fun and exciting! You can have your child “invite” his or her stuffed animals or dolls to lunch if you want.

Crafts to Make with Your Child

Rainbow Shakers:

Materials:

- A paper towel or toilet paper roll
- Dry rice, beans, or pasta
- Masking or duct tape
- Paint

Instructions:

1. Tape one end of the paper towel or toilet paper roll shut .
2. Add dry rice, beans, or pasta so that the roll is filled half way.
3. Tape the other end of the roll shut.
4. Paint the roll using brushes or your fingers (paint all different colors to make it “rainbow”).
5. Let the roll dry.
6. Enjoy making music!



Paper Bag Puppets:

Materials:

- Paper lunch bags
- Crayons, markers, or colored pencils

Instructions:

1. Flip the paper bag over so that the bottom is facing upward.
2. Decorate the bag and create your own puppet (draw the mouth on the flap of the bottom of the bag).
3. Open the bag up, stick your hand in, and enjoy your homemade puppet!

Note: It is encouraged for each family member to make one so that the puppets can be used together to interact or even create your very own puppet play. Some ideas for puppet designs are animals, monsters, or people.



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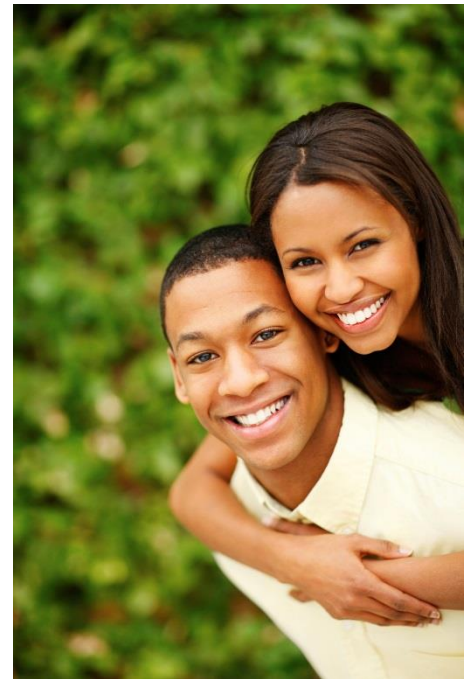
Encouraging Healthy Relationships in Adolescents

By Berline Cherelus

Having healthy models of adult relationships has been shown to increase the chances that teenagers exhibit healthy behaviors in their own relationships. A healthy relationship should allow for both people to be individuals within their relationship and to grow independently of one another while respecting each other's emotional, mental and physical states. All through their teenage years, young adults learn how to formulate safe and healthy relationships by watching and listening to friends, parents, teachers, and romantic partners. Teens look to others for examples on how to create a self-concept, as well as in forming intimate partnerships.

It is extremely important that teenagers see healthy models of relationships. Teenagers who start developing unhealthy relationships at a younger age are likely to be victims or perpetrators of dating violence in adulthood. According to the U.S Department of Health and Human Services, "Peers, in particular, play a big role in identity formation, but relationships with caring adults – including parents, mentors or coaches -- are also important for adolescent development." It is essential that adults, including parents and supervised visitation providers, show adolescents healthy models of relationships, as well as consistently speak to teenagers about healthy relationships.

Below are a few tips for both parents and supervised visitation providers to share when it comes to acknowledging what is healthy and unhealthy when forming relationships for teens.



The Characteristics of a Healthy Relationship

- **Safety-** Both individuals feel free from threats and physical violence, as well as feel safe to express his/her own opinions without a partner becoming angry or violent.
- **Mutual Respect-** Both partners respect each other's space, privacy, values, and morals, as well as have an appreciation for each other's boundaries.
- **Trust-** Both partners give each other the benefits of a trusting relationship, allowing both individuals to socialize independently without being scolded or yelled at.
- **Equality-** Individuals should feel they have an equal say in decisions about sexual boundaries, physical contact, and other decisions in the relationship.
- **Honesty-** Through a viable foundation of trust, both partners can strengthen the relationship through honesty regarding actions, feelings, and thoughts.
- **Compromise-** Individuals are able to find a compromise in times of differing opinions, recognizing each other's different perspectives and are enthusiastic to give and take from one another.
- **Pride-** Both partners should show pride in the other's accomplishments and celebrate his/her achievements.
- **Good Communication-** Communication is necessary for individuals to relay their needs and wants in a relationship, as well as to be able to resolve conflict healthily.
- **Self-Control-** Individuals are able to react in a calm manner when faced with a difficult situation with their partner, physically, socially and mentally.



Adults need to discuss warning signs of unhealthy relationships with adolescents to ensure understanding of abusive tendencies that can occur in otherwise healthy-looking relationships. Having this knowledge may prevent teenagers from engaging or staying in an unhealthy or even abusive relationship. Find a quiet, private place to discuss these issues and allow the adolescent to ask questions for clarification of the information below.

Signs of Unhealthy Relationships

- **Anger & Violence-** Any act of hitting, kicking, punching walls, breaking items, hurting physically or threatening to hurt physically may indicate an unhealthy and abusive relationship.
- **Control-** If one of the partners makes the decisions within the relationship or attempts to control the other partner in any way, such as what he/she does, who he/she spends time with, or even his/her clothing choices, that may indicate an unhealthy relationship.
- **Threats-** Threats of any kind are unhealthy and should not be tolerated. Threats are statements intending to inflict pain, injury, damage, or other hostile action on someone in retribution for something done or not done.
- **Unhealthy Dependence-** When one partner weighs the other one down with the responsibility of his/her happiness and health, saying statements like, “I would kill myself if you left me” or “Without you, I have no one”, this places a heavy burden on the other partner, which is ultimately unhealthy. Both individuals should engage in self-care and take responsibility for their own health and happiness.
- **Dishonesty-** If one partner lies or cheats, this can indicate deceit or dishonesty, an unhealthy characteristic in a relationship.
- **Jealousy-** Extreme jealousy over spending time with another person indicates control and sometimes even abuse. Be sure the adolescent can spend time with others freely to maintain healthy boundaries and independence.
- **Critiquing-** Partners should not critique the way his/her partner acts, looks, or dresses. Instead, partners should celebrate the uniqueness of their loved ones.
- **Unwanted Sexual Advancements-** If an individual tries to force his/her partner to go farther sexually than he/she wishes to, this is a sign of unhealthy behavior and may even indicate the presence of abuse.
- **Fear-** Individuals should not feel afraid of their partners in any way or at any time. Partners should feel safe and secure in their relationships.
- **Concern from Family and Friends-** If friends or family have shown concern about the relationship, this may be a sign that unhealthy behaviors are occurring.



Adults have the opportunity to encourage healthy relationships in teenagers by speaking to them about this matter. Healthy and unhealthy relationships should be

described in order to prescribe a full understanding of healthy relationships in adolescents. Adolescents should be encouraged to have happy, healthy, vibrant relationships throughout their lives.

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Activities That Can Reduce Stress in Children

By Katlin McGuire



Introduction

Stress is experienced by individuals of all ages. It is fairly common for children to experience stress throughout the day at school, within relationships, and in the home. There are many activities that children can do to reduce stress. As a supervised visitation provider, you can use this information to identify stress in your child clients and provide this information to parents.

This E-Press will discuss:

- Common Causes of Stress in Children
- Recognizing the Warning Signs of Stress
- Activities to Reduce Stress in Children

What Causes Stress in Children

There are many factors that can contribute to stress in children. Many times, a child experiences stress through feelings of anxiety or being overwhelmed. These feelings can come from outside of the child, as well as within.

External factors that cause stress in children include:

- Expectations of family members or friends
- Victimization from bullying
- Over-packed schedules
- Inconsistent sleep schedules
- Self-pressure, such as feelings of insecurity of abilities in school, sports activities, etc.
- Trauma. ***Seeing, talking about, or experiencing violence or natural disasters can leave a child feeling fearful, which can lead to stress.***
- Major changes in a child's life such as moving, the death of a parent or someone close, or divorce.



Recognizing the Warning Signs of Stress

Being able to help children to relax and process their stress is very important. There are some warning signs to look for that may indicate that a child might be feeling stressed. Look for any changes in a child's behavior, as this is often the clearest indicator of stress. Here are some additional warning signs of stress in children:

- Emotions: fear, sadness, touchiness, extreme anger
- Behavior: crying, temper-tantrums
- Physical: headaches, sleep problems, stomachaches, vomiting
- Other: being teased or teasing others, not wanting to see friends or go to school

Activities to Reduce Stress in Children

Children need time to process their emotions and de-stress. Below is a list of ten free or inexpensive activities that can help children reduce their stress levels. Remember to always supervise these activities.

1. **Breathing:** Our breath can tell us a lot about how an individual is feeling. If a child is experiencing stress or anger, his or her breathing may be very fast and short. If a child is feeling happy and calm, his or her breath may be slow and deep.

Have the child practice slow, deep breathing. This can help a child relax when he or she is experiencing feelings of stress.

- Start by telling the child to take a deep breath in through the nose. Instruct the child to hold his or her breath for a count of three and then breathe out through the mouth for a count of five.

2. **Physical Activity:** Physical activities have been found to reduce levels of stress. Going to the playground, the park, riding a bike, going swimming, or planting a garden are great ways to decrease stress in children. You can also have the child practice jumping jacks, engage in a sprinting contest, or dance to a favorite song to encourage physical activity in the moment.



3. **Exercise:** Exercise is a great way to release tension that has built up in the body due to stress. There are many simple exercises to do. Below are a few to get started with.
 - Overhead Arm Stretch: Tell the child to stand tall with feet together and reach both arms high to the sky. Have the child grab the left wrist with the right hand and lean to the right. Reverse sides.
 - Arm Circles: Encourage the child to reach both arms out to the side, making a T-shape. Have the child move his or her arms in small circles to the front and then small circles to the back.
 - Toe Touch: Tell the child to stand tall with feet shoulder width apart, and bend at the hip and reach arms down to touch toes.

4. **Help Signal:** Create a “signal” to use that communicates stress, worry, etc. It is not always easy for children to put together words to communicate how they feel. Using a signal that a trusted adult recognizes can help them to feel safe.
5. **Art Projects:** Painting, coloring, drawing, and collaging are fairly inexpensive and allow children to express themselves and have fun. For some specific art ideas, keep reading.

6. **“All Tied Up with Worry” Activity**

Materials: scissors, yarn, drawing materials, blank paper, sticky labels (sticky notes, or paper and tape)

- a. Use a face shape cut out from the craft store, or have the child draw a face shape on a blank sheet of paper.
- b. Cut out face shape and add eyes, nose, mouth and other facial features.
- c. Cut different size strips of yarn and set aside.
- d. On a sticky note (or other material), write down a stressor for the child, such as school or friends. Attach one “worry” note to one piece of yarn.
- e. Have the child place the “worries” on the face shape. Talk about how worries can fill up the mind and make it difficult to focus or think about other things. Discuss ways to “remove” the “worries” or to make them smaller.



7. **Homemade Stress Ball**

Materials: 1 balloon, 1 empty water bottle, ½ cup all-purpose flour (or sand), 1 paper cup (or funnel), 1 permanent marker

- a. Pour flour into water bottle with paper cup (or funnel)
- b. Stretch the balloon over the top of the water bottle.
- c. Squeeze and shake the water bottle until the balloon is filled with the flour.



d. Tie the balloon shut.

e. Draw a face on the balloon, let dry and then allow the child to shake it around to relieve stress. (*Remember, don't give this project to children under 4. They might swallow the ball.*)

8. "The Happy Brain and the Worry Brain"

Materials: paper and coloring materials.

This activity involves talking to the child about what happens to his/her brain when experiencing different emotions.

- Draw two outlines of a head.
- In the Happy Brain, draw images or write words of things that the child states make him/her happy. In the Worry Brain, draw images or words that a child states he/she feels when stressed or anxious.
- Talk about the differences and ways to have a happier brain.



Conclusion

Stress builds up in children and can lead to headaches, sleeplessness, stomachaches, vomiting, physical outbursts, and distraction from school and play time. Recognizing that stress can occur in children, as well as knowing the signs of stress to look for, is key in assisting children with ways to reduce stress.

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