

# 6 Tips for Helping Teens Manage Stress

Like adults, teens also struggle with stress. Too many commitments, conflict in their families and problems with peers are all stressors that can overwhelm them. The key to helping teens manage stress is teaching them to problem-solve, plan and know when to say yes and no to activities and commitments.

## Here's how you can help your kids manage stress successfully:

### #1 Stop Overscheduling

Today teens are expected to pay attention and perform in school for seven hours, excel at extracurricular activities, come home, finish homework, and go to bed just to do it all over again the next day. Teens need downtime to rejuvenate. Their brains and bodies need to rest. And they might not realize this by themselves. So knowing when your teen is overscheduled is important.

Looking at your teen's schedules over the course of a week and make sure that there's enough downtime — when you're not watching the clock. Are there several hours on the weekend or a few nights during the week when your teen can simply kick back and relax?

#### Hint:

Pay attention to how your family is eating their meals. Is everybody eating on the run, in the car, grabbing and going? That's an indicator that too much is going on.

### #2 Make Sleep a Priority!

Sleep is vital for everything from minimizing stress to boosting mood to improving school performance! If your teen isn't getting enough sleep, that's another red flag that they're overscheduled. Again, reducing commitments helps. Also helpful is stressing the importance of sleep, and creating an environment that facilitates it.

**For instance,** keep TV – and other electronics – out of your teen's bedroom.

### #3 Make Time for Play!

It's important that play that isn't "pressured," that means there's no lesson, competition or end goal. Younger kids will do this naturally. But older kids may forget how to simply play. Combine play with physical activity, which is critical for well-being.

#### Some ideas include:

Riding your bikes, throwing around the baseball, wrestling and hiking.



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## #4 Teach Your Kids to Listen to Their Bodies

Teach your kids to understand their own bodies and the physiology of stress. For instance, sit in the car with your child, and press the gas and brake, and listen to the engine revving. Explain that “our body just revs and revs, and then it wears out and says ‘enough.’” Encourage them to listen to what their bodies are saying.

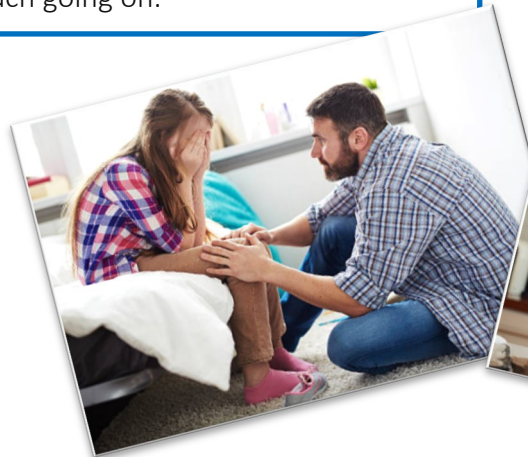
While it’s normal for a child’s stomach to feel jumpy on the first day of school, leaving class because their stomach hurts or waking up repeatedly with a headache is a sign there’s too much going on.

## #5 Manage Your Own Stress

Stress is really contagious! When parents are stressed out, kids are stressed out. If you’re living in an environment where it’s “one thing after another,” your kid is going to pick up on that.

It is important to show your kids how to relax and effectively deal with stress in positive ways.

**Kids watch how adults cope!  
How you cope matters!**



## #6 Prepare Your Kids to Deal with Mistakes

For kids a lot of stress comes from the fear of making mistakes. Remind them that they’re not supposed to know how to do everything or do everything right. Also, while making good decisions is an important skill to learn, the skill that might be even more important is learning how to recover from a bad decision.

Our kids can really stress out if we do not help them understand that screwing up is part of the process. Help your child learn to figure out the next steps after a bad decision or mistake. Help them figure out how to fix it, make amends, learn the lesson and move on.

The Platte County R3 (PC2)  
**PREVENTION COALITION**   
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