

General Signs of Stress

For all of us, stress is a normal reaction the body has when changes occur, resulting in physical, emotional, and intellectual responses. Stress is your body's way of responding to any kind of demand or threat. It's important to know the signs of stress so you can learn how to recognize and deal with changes healthier. Below you will find some general signs of stress in parents, toddlers, and school-age children.

■ General Signs of Stress

- Overtired or unable to sleep, Changes in sleeping and/or Eating patterns
- Lack of enjoyment in preferred activities
- Physical complaints such as headaches and stomachaches.

In addition to these, see below for a breakdown by age.

■ Signs of Stress in Parents

- Racing thoughts
- Fixation on the to-do list with difficulty thinking of anything else
- Decreased productivity or ability to focus
- Quick to frustration (with situations or people, especially your child), change in tone (i.e., yelling), increased in substance use
- Emotional eating or other self-destructive behaviors

■ Signs in Children

Did you know that kids can experience stress too?

In addition to the list above, you may see more challenging behaviors from stressed kids, including:

- Moodiness, tantrums or emotional meltdowns often over minor things
- Power struggles and boundary/limit-testing
- Rigidity, and difficulty with transitions

- Anxiety through words or actions (including developing new fears, asking frequent questions or needing frequent reassurance).
- **INFANTS** may be fussier, harder to soothe, withdraw from contact OR want to be held more often.
- **TODDLERS/PRESCHOOLERS** children may regress to younger behaviors, be more “clingy” and/or have separation anxiety, toileting issues, and increase reliance on comfort objects (such as favorite toy, blanket, etc.) and/or self-soothing behaviors (thumb-sucking, use of pacifier, etc).
- **SCHOOL-AGE** children and teens may also display a change in attitude (including increase in acts of defiance, backtalk, talking negatively about themselves). They may withdraw from peers or loved ones, experience school resistance or decreased school performance, engage in risk-taking behaviors, and express worry, anger, or other strong feelings more often.

Please note that the behaviors listed are examples of possible stress responses. Consider variables such as personality, developmental level, physical health, etc.

You know yourself and your child best, so trust your instincts!