

COPING WITH STRESS

Helping your teenager cope with stress about schoolwork



Coping with schoolwork stress and high workloads in high school can be a difficult experience for many young people. Some young people need some extra support to help manage high levels of stress, and to use skills to help calm themselves. There are various reasons why your teenager might be feeling stressed about schoolwork. Some reasons might be that they feel pressure from themselves to excel, that they have difficulty with organisation and planning, or that they are having difficulty managing their time with other commitments in their week, for example. Here are some tips which might help you and your teenager through periods of high stress.

ORGANISATION AND PLANNING

The early years of high school can be challenging for many young people to adapt to the added workload of high school compared to primary school. Some young people have difficulty with organising their time and planning ahead. Sit down with your teenager each week and help them plan out a schedule or timetable for their week's work. There are various free templates available online. Aim for this to be a collaborative discussion between you and your teenager. You can hang this weekly plan somewhere around the house, and speak throughout the week about parts of the schedule that aren't working so well which need to be changed. A schedule can help your teenager feel comforted and supported by a sense of structure, and this can be particularly helpful for long-term larger projects.

CALMING AND RELAXATION

Sit down with your teenager and brainstorm a list of their favourite activities which help them feel calm and relaxed. Schedule in your teenager's favourite calming activities into their studying schedule. Try to include activities which involve connection with other people, and also calming activities your teenager can do alone. Some activities might be doing deep breathing exercises, listening to calming music, taking walks outside, taking hot baths, progressive muscle relaxation, writing about their stress, or using sensory tools such as stress balls. Hang this list of calming activities around the house, and remind your teenager to use a skill frequently throughout the day, even when they're feeling calm.

OPENING UP ABOUT STRESS

Encourage your teenager to open up to you about their stress and the reason why they're feeling stress. Are they comparing themselves to others? Are they worried about university entry requirements? Are they having trouble staying motivated? Discussing the causes for your teenager's stress might help both you and them to better understand what's going on for them, and can help you understand how to support your teenager with their stress. Sometimes young people find it hard to ask for help when needed. Encourage your teenager to ask for help when they need it, and role model this in your own life. Letting the school know about your teenager's experience with stress can be helpful so they can know what to do to support them.

MAINTAINING BALANCE

During periods of stress, it can be really challenging to find time for activities which are not related to the activity about which you're feeling stressed. Try to encourage your teenager to become involved in extracurricular activities unrelated to their schoolwork. This can help your teenager to develop confidence in their non-academic strengths, and also to give them a distraction from thinking about schoolwork. Encourage your teenager to get enough sleep each night, to be physically active, and to eat healthy snacks and meals to support their stress levels and life balance.



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