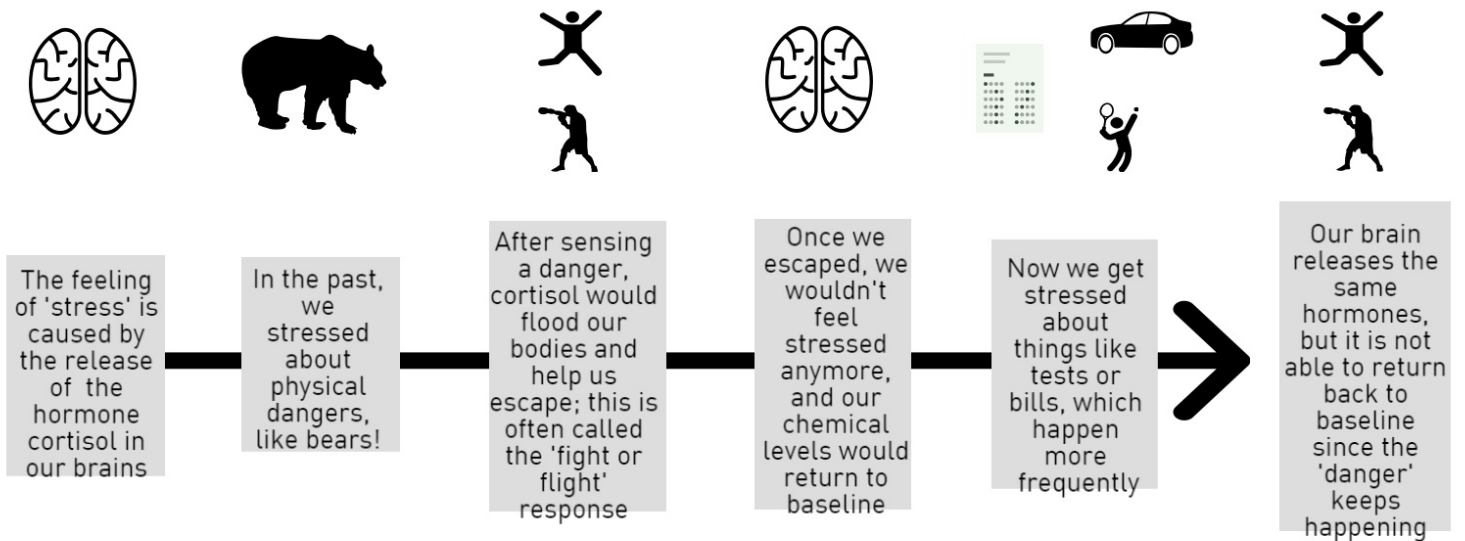


PARENT TIPS

Stress & Healthy Coping Strategies

WHY DO WE STRESS?



Some stress can be good & natural. For example, the stress you feel to do well on a project. This type is called "eustress" and it can be a good motivator!



However too much stress can be harmful, especially to child's brain! It has been shown to inhibit cognitive development, cause emotional problems (like anxiety or depression), disrupt sleep, and spark physical problems (like ulcers)

WARNING SIGNS OF TOO MUCH STRESS IN CHILDREN



Withdrawing from previously enjoyed activities &/or people



Acting irritable or moody



Trouble sleeping or eating too much or too little



Constantly having headaches or stomachs



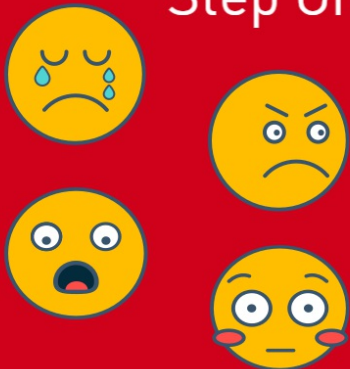
Acting fearful, crying out of the blue, or becoming really clingy

HOW TO TEACH HEALTHY COPING SKILLS

SOURCE: blissfulkids.com

When we experience stressful situations or overwhelming emotions, our body reacts instinctively, and some of those ways are more productive than others. Unhealthy strategies like getting into a fight, eating lots of junk food, or shutting away our feelings may feel good temporarily, but in the long term they do not resolve the problem or make us feel better. Healthy coping strategies give us the power to control our stress and get over daily upsets. We learn coping skills like we learn a new language. The basics of the strategies are easy to learn, but only through daily practice can we improve our abilities to cope in positive ways.

Step One: TEACH THEM TO RECOGNIZE WHEN THEY NEED TO USE A COPING SKILL



If you see your child starting to get overwhelmed teach them to stop and take a step back. When we are upset it becomes difficult for us to problem solve. If we are in this state our reactions will be more instinctual, like flight or fight. When we teach our children to stop and take a step back, it allows them to begin to think rather than just react. Each student may have different warning signs, like fast breathing or a racing heart. Help them identify their clues that they are stressed out!

IMPORTANT TIP

No matter what strategies you go with, one of the best ways you can help your students is to model healthy coping strategies yourself. For example, next time you are cut off while driving say "I was just cut off and I am feeling very angry, I'm going to take deep breathes until I feel better"

COUNTING

This point of this strategy is to help the student take a break rather than responding in the moment. Even just taking 10 seconds to think before we react, can help us deal with problems in a much more constructive manner.

1
2
3

POSITIVE SELF-TALK

Positive self talk is the practice of becoming your own inner coach. Like that the little engine that could, teaching your child to say I think I can when faced with a difficult situation can give them the confidence to go out and deal with it.



TEACH THEM HOW TO BELLY BREATHE



Begin by placing your hands on your belly. Then inhale through the nose & exhale through the mouth. The breath should be quiet & not gasping. The belly should move up and down, while the shoulders stay in place

EXERCISE

When we exercise our brain releases endorphins which make you feel better. While building in exercise is an essential part to any healthy routine, try teaching your child to also go on a brisk walk, do jumping jacks, dance, or even just stretch when their emotions are running high.



MINDFULNESS OR MEDITATION

Meditation & mindfulness teach us how to control our thoughts, which can have a big impact our feeling. If you're not a natural at relaxing, there are lots of online resources to help you teach your kids these skills



BE CREATIVE!



Singing, coloring, drawing, and dancing provide a safe outlet for emotions so they do not get built up. Just listening to music has also been proven to have a big impact on how we are feeling

RESOURCES

BOOKS

- Stress can really get on your Nerves! By Trevor Romain
- Creative Coping Skills for Children by Bonnie Thomas
- How to Take the Grrr out of Anger by Verdick & Lisovskies
- Wilma Jean & the Worry Machine by Julia Cook

WEBSITES

- blissfulkids.com
- gonoodle.com/calm
- Belly Breathe Song by Sesame Street & Colbie Caillat

- Stop, Breathe, Think
 - Breathe 2 Relax
 - Zones of Regulation
- ### APPS