

6 Common Triggers of Teen Stress

All teens experience some amount of stress, but many teens suffer with significant stress levels that rival that of adults. Consider if these potential triggers of teen stress are affecting your teen

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According to data collected by the American Psychological Association for the Stress in America Survey, teen stress rivals that of adults. Results of the survey show that not only do teens identify that their stress levels are not healthy, but they also underestimate the impact stress has on their mental and physical health.

- For teens, the most commonly reported sources of stress are school (83 percent), getting into a good college or deciding what to do after high school (69 percent), and financial concerns for their family (65 percent).
- Many teens report lying awake at night (35 percent), overeating or eating unhealthy foods (26 percent), and skipping meals (23 percent) due to stress in the past month.
- Forty percent of teens report feeling irritable or angry, 36 percent report feeling nervous or anxious, 36 percent report feeling fatigued or tired, and 31 percent report feeling overwhelmed due to stress in the past month.
- More than one-quarter of teens (26 percent) say they snapped at or were short with classmates or teammates when stressed in the last month. Fifty-one percent of teens say someone tells them they seem stressed at least once a month.
- Teens report that during the school year they have an average stress level of 5.8 on a 10-point scale, compared with a level of 4.6 during the summer.

Signs of Stress

All teens experience some amount of stress, and some stress can even be healthy. Many teens, however, struggle with significant stress levels that interfere with learning, relationships, and other areas of functioning. Stress can manifest in different ways, and some symptoms of stress mimic normal teen behavior. To that end, stress can sneak up on teens. It's important to know what to look for when it comes to teen stress:

Emotional changes: Your teen might appear agitated, anxious, and/or depressed. Pay attention to changes in behavior.

Physical changes: Teens under stress are likely to get sick more often and complain of headaches, stomachaches, and other aches and pains.

Behavioral changes: Look for changes in eating or sleeping habits, and avoidance of normal daily activities.

Cognitive changes: You might notice decreased concentration, forgetfulness, and/or the appearance of carelessness.

Common Triggers of Teen Stress

All teens are different and stress can be triggered by a number of factors. The results of the Stress in America Survey show that there are some common sources of stress in the teen

population. The best way to understand how your teen processes stress and where the stress stems from is to engage in open and honest communication about stress. It's important for parents to normalize the concept of stress and empower teens to utilize adaptive coping strategies.

Consider these potential sources of stress for teens:

Academic Stress

From grades to test scores to applying to college, teens experience high levels of school-related stress. Many teens worry about meeting academic demands, pleasing teachers and parents, and keeping up with their classmates. Poor time management skills or feeling overwhelmed by the amount of work can play into academic stress as well.

Social Stress

Teens place a high value on their social lives. They spend the majority of their waking hours among their peers, and finding and keeping their tribes can include stress at times. Bullying and subtle instances of relational aggression are clear sources of stress on teens, but learning to manage healthy conflict and work through romantic relationships are no easy tasks for the developing teen. Peer pressure is an additional stress during the teen years. In an effort to establish and maintain friendships, teens can engage in behavior outside of their comfort zones to appease their peers.

Family Discord

Stress trickles down, and anything that impacts the family can affect the teen. Unrealistic expectations, marital problems, strained sibling relationships (including sibling bullying), illness in the family, and financial stress on the family can all trigger a spike in teen stress.

World Events

School shootings, acts of terrorism, and natural disasters worry parents, but they also trigger stress for teens. Teens are often privy to the 24-hour news cycle, and hearing bits and pieces of scary news, both domestic and abroad, can leave teens wondering about their safety and the safety of their loved ones.

Traumatic Events

Death of a family member or friend, accidents, sickness, or enduring emotional or physical abuse can have a lasting impact on teen stress levels. It's also important to note that teen dating violence affects approximately 10% of teens.

Significant Life Changes

Like adults, teens experience stress due to significant life changes. Moving, starting a new school, and changes in the makeup of the family (including divorce and blended families) can trigger stress for teens. Not knowing how to cope with big changes is overwhelming and can be confusing for the developing teen.

Source: <https://www.psychom.net/common-triggers-teen-stress/>