

Stress in Teenagers

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Abstract: *Teenagers today experience high levels of stress, often exceeding those of adults. Studies indicate that nearly 75% of high school students report persistent stress, largely due to academic pressure, social challenges, and concerns about the future. This paper examines the major causes, symptoms, and impacts of stress among teenagers. It also highlights differences between stress in children and adults and suggests effective strategies for stress management. The study emphasizes the importance of parental support, healthy lifestyle practices, and open communication in helping adolescents cope with stress.*

Keywords: Teenagers, Stress, Academic Pressure, Mental Health, Coping Strategies, Adolescents

I. INTRODUCTION

Stress has become a significant issue among teenagers in the modern world. Rapid academic demands, changing social environments, and uncertainty about future careers contribute to increased stress levels. According to the American Psychological Association (2017), teen stress levels often rival those of adults, yet teenagers tend to underestimate its impact on their mental and physical health. Understanding stress in adolescence is essential, as unmanaged stress can lead to serious emotional, behavioral, and physical problems.

Teenagers currently report stress levels that can exceed those of adults, with about 75% of high school students reporting constant stress, often driven by academic pressure, social challenges, and future worries. This high stress often leads to feelings of being overwhelmed (31%), depression (30%), and fatigue (36%). Key causes include schoolwork, changing social relationships, and overscheduling.

Causes of Stress in Teenagers

Academic Stress

Academic pressure is one of the leading causes of stress among teenagers. Expectations related to grades, exams, and college admissions create significant anxiety. Poor time management and workload overload further intensify stress.

Social Stress

Teenagers highly value peer relationships. Issues such as bullying, peer pressure, and romantic relationships contribute to emotional stress. The desire to fit in often leads to discomfort and anxiety.

Family-Related Stress

Family conflicts, financial issues, parental expectations, and illness within the family can significantly affect teenagers' emotional well-being.

World Events

Exposure to news about violence, disasters, and global crises increases anxiety among teenagers, making them feel insecure about their safety.

Traumatic Experiences

Events such as the death of a loved one, abuse, or accidents can have long-lasting psychological effects.

Life Changes

Major transitions such as moving to a new place, changing schools, or family restructuring (e.g., divorce) can be overwhelming for adolescents

Those are among the same sources of stress the [National Institute of Health](#) lists as leading causes of stress in students. Here are 10 main causes of stress that can contribute to [anxiety among teens](#) and negatively affect their overall well-being:

Family dynamics. Teens often carry stressful situations at home into the classroom, where they may already be feeling academic pressure. Arguing parents, bickering siblings, financial strains or an illness in the family are all causes of stress in high school students.

Schoolwork and grades. As mentioned earlier, academics are the leading cause of stress in students. This can either be self-imposed stress by teens themselves, or it can be parent-driven through high expectations. Regardless, meeting academic demands to please themselves or teachers, caregivers or parents can weigh heavily on student stress levels.

Life after high school. While college may not be part of a teen's next chapter, there are still plenty of things they are worrying about. Whether it is preparing to attend a trade school, join the military or enter the workforce full time, students are likely feeling stressed about what their lives will look like after graduation.

Trauma. Teenagers may not yet have the coping skills to navigate the grief they feel following a death in the family, leading to higher stress levels. Physical abuse or accidents are alstraumatic, stressful events.

Overscheduling. While part-time jobs and involvement in extracurricular activities, like sports, clubs, band, scouts and theater arts, can help develop confidence and healthy friendships, they can also add another layer of stress on teens. Often, they feel added pressure to excel in these activities. Overscheduling can lead to sleep deprivation and [other health issues](#), such as chronic headaches, eating disorders and panic attacks.

Finances. Teens are acutely aware of their family's financial situation. Even if precise figures aren't provided by their parents or caregivers, teens can tell when times are tough. The added stress of having financial concerns at home and watching their family struggle can cause teens to feel desperate or helpless..

Signs and Symptoms of Stress in Teenagers

Behavioral Changes

- Withdrawal from friends and family
- Decline in academic performance
- Loss of interest in activities
- Defiance or aggression

Physical Symptoms

- Headaches and stomachaches
- Fatigue and muscle tension
- Changes in sleep and eating patterns

Emotional and Mental Changes

- Irritability and mood swings
- Anxiety and excessive worrying
- Negative self-talk

Habitual Indicators

- Nail-biting
- Restlessness
- Increased anger

It is important for parents to note sudden, drastic changes in behavior and to maintain open, supportive communication, encouraging teens to express their worries.

Stress in children and adults differs primarily in the source of stressors and the capacity to articulate or manage them. While both experience similar physiological "fight-or-flight" responses, children often react through behavioral changes

(acting out, regressions) due to limited coping skills, whereas adults typically face stressors like work or finances, using cognitive, or, sometimes, maladaptive coping mechanisms.

Differences in Stressors and Manifestation

Children: Stressors often revolve around school, friendships, family, or routine changes. Symptoms include bedwetting, thumb-sucking, clinging behavior, nightmares, or sudden irritability.

Adults: Stressors are usually linked to career pressure, financial strain, relationship issues, or illness. Symptoms are often physical (headaches, muscle tension) or cognitive (difficulty concentrating, memory loss).

Key Distinctions in Coping and Impact

Perspective: Children may perceive minor challenges as overwhelming, while adults are better equipped to rationalize, but often feel chronic, long-term pressure.

Long-Term Effect: Chronic stress in childhood can alter brain development. In adults, it is strongly linked to long-term physical health issues like hypertension, heart disease, and digestive disorders.

Expression: Adults can often vocalize feeling "stressed," whereas children may only demonstrate it through behavior. Both children and adults can manage stress through routines, exercise, and strong social support.

How to Manage Stress?

Unlike what you may think, stress is actually a good motivator for any human being to achieve success in life. However, it is imperative that we manage our stress levels and keep it under control before it takes over the teens' minds. You can help your teen dealing with the stress using these simple yet effective solutions –

Resting, Relaxing and Rejuvenation

Between schoolwork, social life and home, teenagers often get very little time to rest and rejuvenate. They often tend to stay up late when finishing homework and assignments, leave the house early in the morning and spend a lot of time carrying out either physically or mentally exhausting activities all day long. Relaxation and rejuvenation is the best way to destress the body as well as mind. A full night's sleep helps the teens to deal with stress better. Power naps between tasks are cherry on the cake.

Physical Activities

Sports are the best ways to relieve stress for teenagers. Nothing beats the stress like a good warmup and a quick football match. Encourage the teens to exercise or take up a sport to keep their bodies and minds healthy.

Healthy Diet Plan

A healthy diet not only keeps the teenagers in good shape but also keeps their brains active and fresh. It's been proven multiple times that a healthy diet helps in maximising physical as well as cognitive performance of a person.

Parental Support

Dealing with the teenagers can be challenging and tough as it is. They get worse when stress takes over. Instead of yelling at them or getting angry with them when they are experiencing stress, try supporting them emotionally. This will not only help the teenagers deal with the stress better but also strengthen your relationship with them.

Focus on the Positives

Help the teenagers take their stress positively. Stress often makes us look at the things we don't have and it acts like a motivating factor in life. Teach the teenagers to utilise their stress in achieving their goals and being successful. Turn it into a tool for a better life.

Talk about Stress

Encourage the teenagers to talk about their problems, worries and the things that are adversely affecting their life. Talking acts like a therapeutic session and helps in venting out the negative emotions such as stress, anxiety, anger and sadness. Moreover, talking and discussing the problems also helps in finding out the solutions easier and sooner. The most important thing you can do as a parent is to listen to your teens and their feelings without reacting and see what you can do to make it easier for them.

Doing Things That Make You Happy

Encourage your teens to do things that make them happy. It can be anything from singing, dancing, playing a game or something as simple as reading a book. Let your teen do what she/he likes to relieve stress.

Keep in mind that nothing can eliminate stress completely. One can only manage their stress and prevent it from taking over their lives. The sooner your adolescents learn to deal with their stress, the better they will become at handling it in their

II. CONCLUSION

Teenagers currently report stress levels that can exceed those of adults, with about 75% of high school students reporting constant stress, often driven by academic pressure, social challenges, and future worries. 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. Signs of stress in teens include emotional outbursts, irritability, withdrawal from friends and activities, sudden academic decline, and changes in sleep or appetite. Stress is actually a good motivator for any human being to achieve success in life. However, it is imperative that we manage our stress levels and keep it under control before it takes over the teens' minds. Encourage your teens to do things that make them happy. It can be anything from singing, dancing, playing a game or something as simple as reading a book. Let your teen do what she/he likes to relieve stress.

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