

Wellness Wednesday October 2023

October 4, 2023

Stress Management

Stress is a common response to many of life's activities. From big moments like starting school or giving a speech, to smaller moments like sports games, stress is all around us. Stress is a natural response to situations our brains perceive as dangerous or negative. As a result, the brain produces hormones that make us more alert and ready to take on our surroundings. The way we react to stress can be positive or negative, and properly managing stress is an important part of maintaining mental health.



Distress and Eustress

Our response to stress can take two forms: distress and eustress.

- **Distress** is a negative response that feels disempowering and draining, preventing us from achieving our full potential
- **Eustress** is a positive response that motivates us to take action and improve our situation

In many cases, we can choose how we react to the stressors around us, and which pathway we take when responding to them.

Signs of stressed out children



Being aware of when children appear stressed can be important to give them the support they need. Look out for some of these symptoms which can be characteristic of a stress response:

- **Emotional outbursts and irritability:** Stress leads to increased expressions of anger, and more sudden displays of emotion
- **Sleeping issues:** Stress can lead to nightmares or difficulty falling asleep
- **Struggles in school:** Stress can make it difficult to focus and engage positively with other students
- **Frequent headaches or stomach aches:** Stress releases the hormone cortisol which can trigger physical responses in the body

Stress Management Techniques

- **Set and keep routines:** maintaining a schedule with clear expectations can help reduce stress
- **Find times to talk:** check on others, and make sure they know they can come to you in a moment of stress
- **Find humor in daily life:** stay light-hearted, and laugh often
- **Practice deep breathing:** in a moment of stress, focus on breathing and get centered before taking on a new challenge

Additional Resources

Stress (KidsHealth): <https://kidshealth.org/en/kids/stress.html>

Stressed out kids? Signs and strategies (Mayo Clinic): <https://www.mayoclinichealthsystem.org/hometown-health/speaking-of-health/stressed-out-kids>

October 11, 2023

Safe Halloween Tips



Halloween can be a fun holiday full of exciting costumes and delicious treats. It is important to celebrate safely while dressing up and trick-or-treating to ensure the holiday can be celebrated to the fullest. While sweets and candy are a fun part of Halloween, it is important to have treats in moderation and with clear limits. Follow the tips below to ensure both healthy nutrition and safe dressing up this Halloween.

Nutrition tips

The availability of sweets and candy on Halloween can be a very tempting source of sugar for children.



- **Eat a full meal before trick-or-treating:** Reduce the desire to snack on treats by having a full meal before trick-or-treating
- **Set a daily limit:** Limit children to one or two pieces of candy a day in the days following Halloween, until the excitement goes away
- **Create a barter or buy back system:** Have children trade in candy for fun experiences, like a trip or outing
- **Give candy to others:** Programs like Soldiers' Angels send candy to members of the Armed Forces deployed overseas, giving them a seasonal boost
- **Encourage healthy snacks:** Make Halloween themed snacks (linked below) and give children treats alongside healthy snacks like fruits and vegetables

Costume Tips

- **Be bright:** Bright costumes and colors, and the use of reflective tape, glow sticks, or flashlights, can help children be seen when trick-or-treating
- **Choose face paint:** Masks can limit a child's field of vision, so choose face paint for decoration instead
- **Choose the right size:** Make sure costumes fit to eliminate trips and falls from excess material
- **Be flame resistant:** Make sure costumes labels say "flame resistant" or are made out of flame-resistant fabrics such as polyester or nylon

Additional Resources

Halloween Snacks and Tips (AHA): <https://www.heart.org/en/healthy-living/healthy-eating/eat-smart/nutrition-basics/how-to-have-a-healthy-halloween>

How to Have a Safe Halloween: <https://www.fda.gov/consumers/consumer-updates/halloween-safety-tips-costumes-candy-and-colored-contact-lenses>

October 18, 2023

Digital Detox

Looking at screens for extended periods of time is often necessary for school or work. However, extended exposure to screens can have negative consequences, such as eye strain, tiredness, and an increased risk of obesity due to reduced activity and moving around. Increased time using devices with screens can also decrease creativity due to the passive nature of consuming digital media. Being conscious of screen time can improve a child's overall health.

Ways to limit screen usage

Reducing screen time does not necessarily mean imposing a hard cap on the amount of screen time each day. Try some of these ideas to limit screen time in a more meaningful way:



- **Before bed:** Eliminating screen time for an hour before bed can lead to improved sleep quality
- **Create a diversion:** Participate in an activity that does not use a screen. See more ideas below.
- **Keep devices out of the bedroom:** Keep an eye on screen time by keeping devices in family space rather than private space.
- **Don't eat in front of a screen:** Eating together without distractions (screens) and focusing only on food and conversation can help children feel that they belong while giving them a sense of security.
- **Be a good role model:** Since children will follow our example, we are all responsible for being good role models by limiting screen time ourselves

Ways to minimize impacts of screen time

- **Wear blue light glasses:** Blue light from screens can cause eye strain and worsen sleep, so filtering this light with glasses can limit its impact
- **Ensure proper ergonomics:** When sitting at a desk or using any device, ensure good body posture and limited strain, especially on the neck and back

Activities instead of screen time

- **Go outside:** play a sport or go for a walk to spend time outdoors away from screens
- **Play a board game:** Board games are fun and entertaining family time that does not involve a screen
- **Read a book:** A hard copy book is a great way to provide entertainment without a screen
- **Do arts and crafts:** Create a project with any materials on hand, especially recycled materials

Additional Resources

Screen Time (CHOP): <https://www.chop.edu/news/health-tip/screen-time-know-your-child-s-limits#:~:text=%E2%80%9CThe%20main%20principle%20is%20that,impact%20on%20a%20child's%20sleep.>

Children and Screen Time (Mayo Clinic): <https://www.mayoclinichealthsystem.org/hometown-health/speaking-of-health/children-and-screen-time>