

# Helping Kids Cope with Stress

Coffee with the Counselors-February

# Helping Kids Cope with Stress

What stresses kids out?

Kids deal with stress in both healthy and unhealthy ways.

What are some examples of unhealthy ways?

# Helping Kids cope with Stress

Parent's can't protect your kids from stress-but you can help them develop healthy ways to cope with stress and solve everyday problems

# Notice Out Loud

- ❁ Tell your child when you noticed that something is bothering him/her.
- ❁ Name the feeling you think they are experiencing.
- ❁ Don't make it sound like an accusation.
- ❁ Don't put the child on the spot.
- ❁ Be EMPATHETIC and show you care and want to understand.

# Listen to your Child

- ❁ Ask your child what is wrong
- ❁ Listen attentively and calmly
- ❁ Be interested, patient, open and caring
- ❁ Avoid judgement, blame, lecture, or saying what your child SHOULD have done
- ❁ Let your child be heard
- ❁ Allow for silence, take your time!

Comment briefly on the feelings you think your child was experiencing.

Examples:

“This must have been upsetting”

“No wonder you felt mad when they wouldn’t let you in the game”

Your child will feel supported when feeling understood and listened to.

# Put a label on it

- ❁ Kids who can use ‘feeling’ words such as ‘angry’ and ‘frustrated’ are less likely to reach a boiling point.
- ❁ Strong emotions come out through behaviors when they don’t know how to communicate.

# Help your child think of things to do...

- ❁ If there is a specific problem that's causing stress, talk together about what to do.
- ❁ Encourage your child to think of a couple of ideas
- ❁ Brainstorm together
- ❁ Don't do all the work-let your child take ownership of their ideas
- ❁ Active participation will build self-confidence.
- ❁ Ask, "How do you think this idea will work"  
(give support)

# Listen and Move On

- ❁ Sometimes listening and feeling understood is all that is needed.
- ❁ Change the subject and move on to something that is more positive and relaxing.
- ❁ Don't give the problem more attention than it deserves.

# Limit stress where possible

- ✿ See if you can change a situation that is causing stress... i.e. too many after school activities that cause homework stress.

# Just Be There

- ✿ It's OK if your child doesn't feel like talking.

## JUST BE THERE

- ✿ Let your kids know you WILL be there when they are ready to talking.
- ✿ Initiate something you can do together.
- ✿ Be present!

# Be Patient

- ❁ As a parent it hurts to see your child unhappy and stressed.
- ❁ Resist the urge to fix every problem.
- ❁ Focus on helping your child slowly and surely
- ❁ Grow into a good problem solver
- ❁ A kid who can roll with life's ups and downs, put feelings into words and calm down can bounce back from life's stressors.



# Disasters

- ❁ Forewarned is forearmed
  - ❁ Review what types of disaster can happen in Valdez. (Earthquakes, tsunami, etc.)
  - ❁ Totally unsure how to start that conversation? FEMA kids has great resources to help you!  
<http://www.ready.gov/kids>
  - ❁ Be realistic: It's ok to be scared, but it's important to be prepared. Review how often disaster happen (rarely), but that you need to know where to go.

# Post Disaster

- ❁ The three R's: Reassurance, Relief, and Reflection.
  - ❁ Walk through these with your child. IE – “That earthquake was scary but we’re all OK (reassurance). It’s good it’s over! (relief) Next time we’ll need to remember to call dad when the shaking stops! (reflection)
  - ❁ Of these, reassurance is the biggest. Clue in on big words and phrases: you’re safe, we’re OK, everyone is fine.
  - ❁ Don’t minimize trauma. Big things are scary to small people. If your student brings it up, talk about it. Even if you are so over the topic.

Happy Holidays!

Remember, it's not the amount of PRESENTS you give your child this holiday season... it's the amount of PRESENCE you give that they will cherish and remember forever!