

## ***TEENAGE STRESS***

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Stress is the way your body reacts to change. These changes can come from feelings, situations and people, and they can be good or bad.

### **Things that cause stress are called stressors --**

- change in your daily routine
- change in your health -- catching a cold, breaking an arm
- going to a new school
- divorce or separation of parents
- winning an award
- taking a test
- death of a relative
- imagining or fearing changes (this is called worrying)
- pushing your body too hard -- "hitting the wall," "running out of gas"
- relationships and peers
- overload - school, work, competitive activities

### **I bet you thought all stress was bad, but, guess what? It isn't!**

Most people see stress as worry, tension and pressure, but all stress isn't bad. Some stress can be happy, exciting and challenging. We need stress in our lives, without it life would be pretty dull. For example, right before a race, you may feel a little nervous. This stress helps you stay alert and prepared.

### **What makes stress good or bad?**

The way we think or feel about a situation can make stress good or bad. For example, if your mom told you that you will be moving to a new city, that might cause you stress, because it's a change.

If you're excited and happy about the move, then the move would be considered a good stressor. If you're sad and scared about the move, then it would be considered a bad stressor for you.

### **Is too much stress bad? Yes!**

Too much stress can have a negative affect on your body, mind and feelings. How you handle your stress has a lot to do with your health. When stress becomes too frustrating and lasts for long periods, it can become harmful.

Recognizing the early signs of stress and doing something about it can improve the quality of your life. If you have signs of stress very often ... WATCH OUT!

### **Signs of Stress**

- Headaches
- Nervousness, anxiety attacks
- Itchy skin rashes
- Stomachaches, cramps and diarrhea, colitis, irritable bowel
- Fast heartbeat

- Perspiration
- Increased urination
- Inability to study, lack of concentration
- Carelessness or forgetfulness
- Boredom
- Angry outbursts
- Drop in school performance
- Nightmares
- Feeling sad/depressed, scared, withdrawn

### **How do you balance the stress in your life?**

Stay aware of any signs of stress you may be feeling and learn ways to avoid stress overload:

- Talk to a person you feel comfortable with
- Take deep breaths and practice deep breathing
- Find time to relax and chill out
- Exercise daily and do muscle tension relaxation exercises
- Pray or read something inspirational
- Get enough sleep and rest
- Put humor in your life, learn to laugh at yourself, enjoy humorous events
- Don't dwell on your weaknesses
- Feel proud of your accomplishments
- Get rid of bottled-up anger and frustration through exercise or some sort of physical activity -- punch a pillow or punching bag
- Prepare for tests early
- Eat nutritious meals or snacks
- Take one thing at a time
- Set realistic goals
- Stop worrying about things that may never happen
- Learn from your mistakes
- Forgive yourself and others
- Get involved with things you like to do
- Make time for fun
- Do something for others

Get help from a mental health center, your family doctor, other professionals such as clergy, your employer, school advisor, school social worker or your local mental health association