

Six Stress-Busting Strategies For Kids

Safe, stable, and nurturing relationships and environments in which children feel safe emotionally and physically can protect children's brains and bodies from the harmful effects of stress. You can help your child be healthier by managing your own stress response and helping your child do the same. Healthy nutrition, regular exercise, restful sleep, practicing mindfulness, building social supports, and getting mental health care can help to decrease stress hormones and prevent health problems.



1. Supportive Relationships:

- a. Double down on supportive relationships within your household and help your kids maintain connections with friends and loved ones outside of the home by phone, video chat, old-fashioned letter writing or age-appropriate social media. Turn off media and devices for high-quality time together making art, dancing, cooking or reading at home. Remain in touch with mentors, friends, and family by phone or video chat, including schools and community- or faith-based organizations

2. Exercise Daily:

- a. Engage in 60 minutes of physical activity every day. It doesn't have to be all at one time. Dance party in your bedroom, 35 jumping jacks here and there, 20 minute hula-hooping contest, film a TikTok and share it out, power walk around the block twice, running, bedtime yoga, 10 pushups, do some double dutch jump rope, the list can go on and on. Bottom line – get your and your kids' bodies moving and heart rates up to burn off stress.

3. Healthy Sleep:

- a. Get sufficient, high-quality sleep. This may be particularly hard right now, but things that help are going to sleep and waking up at the same time each day.
- b. Making a routine of reading a book to or with kids before bed.
- c. Create a calm place for sleep that is cool, quiet and free of distractions.
- d. Turn off electronics at least a half hour before bed.

4. Nutrition:

- a. This is not about losing weight. This is about ensuring you are getting proper nutrition to help combat stress. Keep regular mealtimes, includes snacks for kids. Minimize refined carbohydrates, high-fat, high-sugar foods and reduce your alcohol intake.
- b. General rule of thumb includes 5-9 servings of fruits and vegetables per day and foods rich in omega-3-fatty acids, including fish, nuts and fiber.

5. Mental And Behavioral Health Support:

- a. Engage in mental health care for yourself and/or for your child.
- b. Minimize the amount of exposure/consumption of news or other media content that feels upsetting for both you and your child.
- c. If your child currently sees a mental health professional, ask that those sessions can continue via video or phone sessions for psychotherapy, psychiatric care or substance use treatment. There are new laws to support your provider to do phone and video visits.
- d. Keep your own mental health appoints via video or phone calls, as well.
- e. Have open conversations as a family about emotional and mental health.

6. Mindfulness, Meditation, Prayer:

- a. Practice mindfulness, such as meditation, yoga, or prayer for 20 minutes, two times a day. Apps like Headspace and Calm are easy, accessible ways to get started. Meditations can be found online, as well. Both have specialty programs for kids of all ages.
- b. Mindfulness can help strengthen the brain pathways that actively buffer the stress response, helping you regulate body more easily.
- c. Take moments throughout the day with kids to notice and talk about how we're feeling, both physically and emotionally.
- d. Talk about, write out or draw five or more things we are all grateful for each day.

Courtesy: California Surgeon General's Playbook: Stress Relief for Caregivers and Kids during COVID-19

Link to the full file:

https://files.covid19.ca.gov/pdf/caregivers_and_kids_california_surgeon_general_stress_busting_playbook_draft_v2_clean_ada_04072020v2.pdf