

Stress Triggers for Kids

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How do you know what is stress and what is a temper tantrum? How do you figure out if the stomachache is from too many tacos last night or the math test scheduled today? Why would your six year old be stressed when you are the one who lost the job? Why would your eight year old suddenly hate Little League and begin wheezing as it nears time to go?

At times all parents are confused by what are normal growing pains and what is a genuine fear or stress in their child's life. The three standards to judge the situation are:

1. **Duration.** If the child just started complaining about being sick before the bus comes, it may be something happening that can be easily explained. If it is not a bad day, but an on going behavior some calm conversation and reassurance is in order.
2. **Is it age and developmentally appropriate?** Transitions are hard for anyone, but a two year old who clings is different than a nine year old who refuses to get out of the car.
3. **Degree of intensity.** If the behavior is disrupting family life or is becoming a major stumbling block to growth or happiness, intervention may be indicated.

Typical stressors

Babies: Over stimulation, too many care givers, any major change. They pick up on your stress.

Toddlers: Separation anxiety, transitions, being abandoned, Television shows and videos

Kindergarten/First Grade: Not being picked up after school, wetting their pants, not being chosen for games, being teased by bullies or not understanding what a teacher wants them to do.

Second/Third Grade: Report cards teased or called names by older students, not being invited to parties and sleepovers, not fitting in, teacher's discipline and parent's disapproval.

Fourth Grade: Being thought of as "dumb", losing a best friend, being chosen last, not getting school work done and any major change in family structure.

Fifth/Sixth Grade: Body changes, afraid they are abnormal, strange, and unlovable. Bad grades.

Jr. High School: Identity, peer pressure, standing out from the crowd, having others see their body.

High School: Popularity, appearance, lack of money or clothes, SAT tests, what to do with life.

Children and adolescents handle stress better when they are attached to at least one adult who will make them feel safe, secure and loved. Being able to trust an adult to look out for their best interests pulls them through stressful times and helps build a resiliency for all areas of life.

Let your child know you are always there for him to talk, console and support. While you won't solve the problems, the two of you can brainstorm solutions without judgment or criticism. The

best antidote for solving stress related problems is to have fun! Go play at the park. Take a hike in the mountains. Laugh, giggle, wiggle, dance, sing and just remember that this too shall pass.

About the author:

Judy H. Wright is a parent educator and author of over 20 books on family relations, wellness, and abundance. Free articles and a newsletter are available at www.ArtichokePress.com Also has a full listing of books, podcasts , eBooks and teleclasses. To schedule Judy for a workshop, please go to JudyWright@MontanaSpeakers.com