



**STRESS
AWARENESS
MONTH**

APRIL 2023



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LETTER TO PARTNERS



Spring has sprung!

To lift up Stress Awareness Month, April's toolkit provides resources for stress awareness and management . As always, resources are organized by audience -- for youth, parents/caregivers, and professionals supporting youth.

We hope you can apply the content to better support your mental health and the mental health of the young people around you.

Be on the lookout for a new toolkit and newsletter coming out in May focused on Mental Health Month and Children's Mental Health Week. If you haven't subscribed to receive our email updates, you can do so [here](#).

Thank you for your interest in Free Your Feels and for your support of youth mental health!

TAKE ACTION

Follow us on Twitter,
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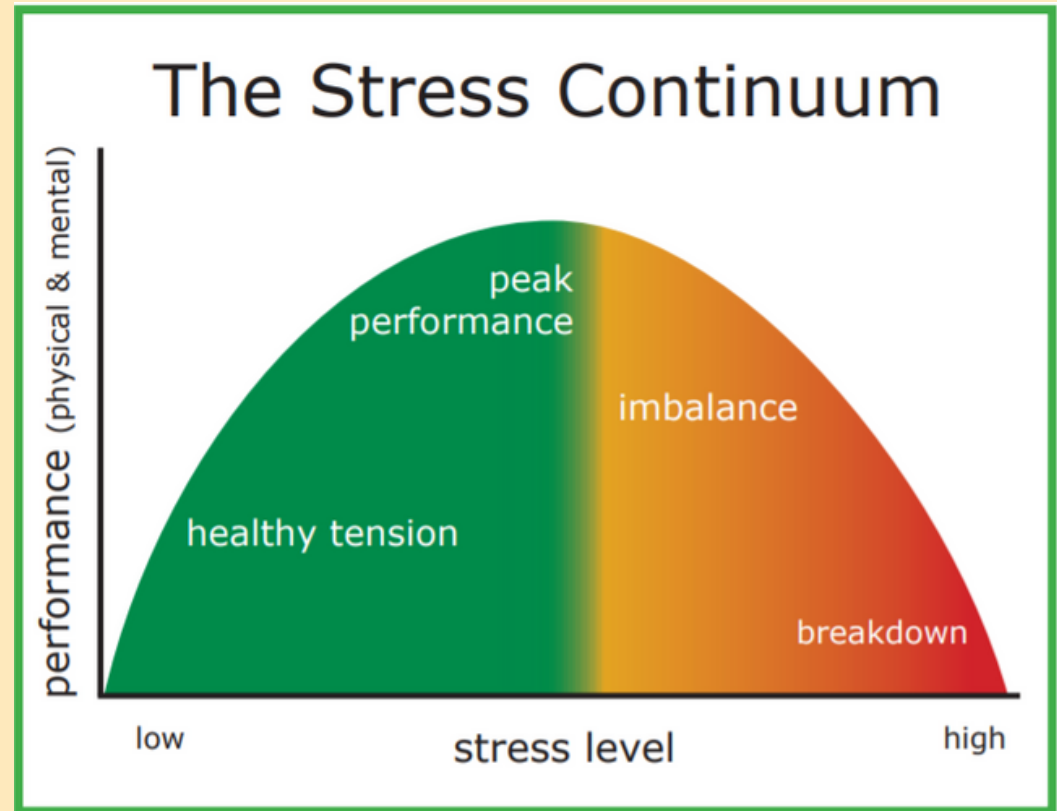
**APRIL:
STRESS
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BACKGROUND



April is Stress Awareness Month, and we're going to look at good vs. bad stress, how persistent stress can have harmful, long-term impacts on our health, and some tools and strategies to keep in mind for those stressful days.

We often associate stress with negative feelings, but did you know there's such a thing as "good stress"? When you experience good stress, your stress level is manageable and even motivating. As stress increases, you may start to feel overwhelmed, which can then have effects on your emotional and physical well-being. As we get to know our bodies reactions to stress, we can learn when and how to incorporate stress management techniques. Using stress reduction skills on a daily basis will help you become more resilient to those overwhelming, stressful situations.



Source: John Hopkins University

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FOR YOUTH

FREE
your
FEELS

When a situation seems difficult or painful, our minds and bodies go into “fight, flight, or freeze” modes as a response. Even though this stress response is turned on, it can also be turned off. Once we no longer see a situation as dangerous, we begin to relax. Developing skills to manage stress (developing a “relaxation response”) can lead us to feeling less helpless and to have more choices when responding to stress.

TAKE ACTION

Watch this 1-min. video about stress and anxiety in adolescence. If you're looking for coping strategies to help deal with your stress (aka tools to develop that relaxation response), skip to the :22 second mark.



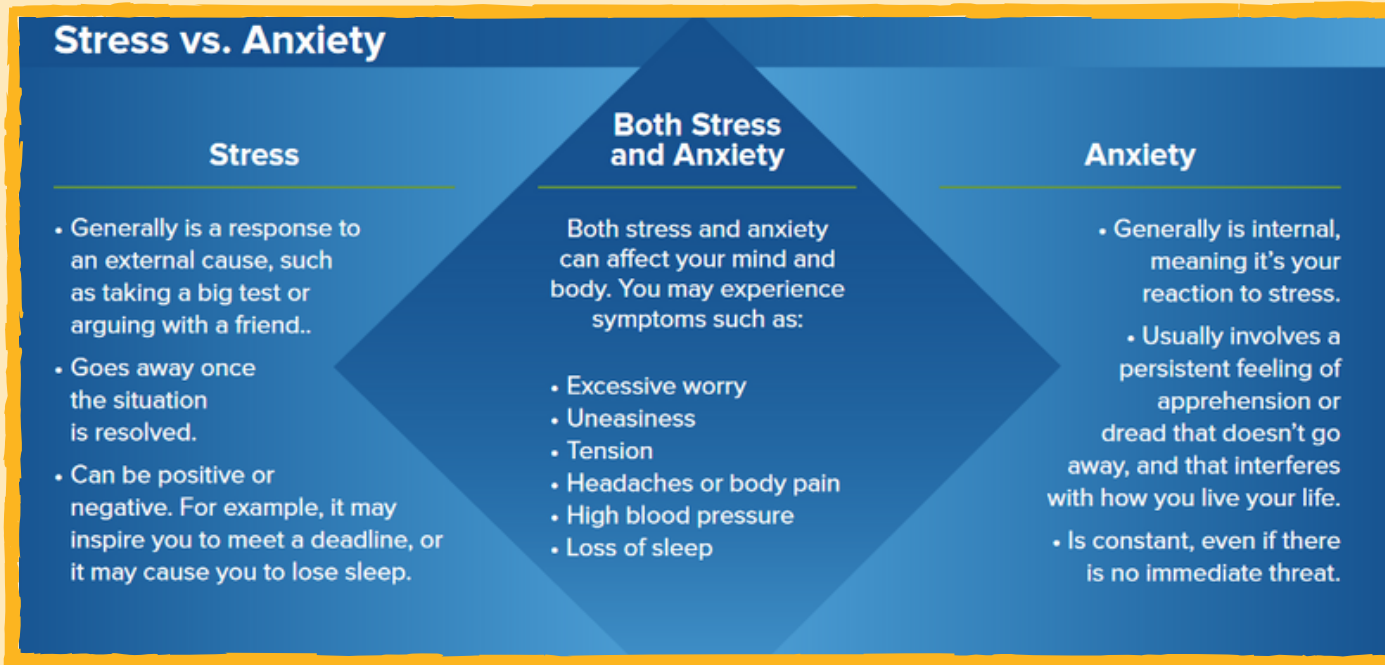
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FOR YOUTH



What is the difference between stress and anxiety? Did you know that there is a difference between the two? The National Institute of Mental Health has published a factsheet to help us understand the differences (and similarities) between stress and anxiety, how to cope, and recognize when to get additional help.



TAKE ACTION

Read this full factsheet on stress vs anxiety and know when to seek more help.

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FOR PARENTS / CAREGIVERS



According to the 2022 Georgia Student Health Survey, youth in Georgia reported feeling stressed for a variety of reasons, including: family reasons, demands of schoolwork, problems with peers or friends, social media, and housing concerns, among others. By recognizing the signs of stress as well as embracing your own healthy habits, you're helping your child adopt stress-managing practices too.

How parents can help

Parents and other caregivers have an important part to play, by adopting their own healthy habits and helping children and teens find stress-managing strategies. Some ways parents can take action:

- **Model healthy coping.** Caregivers can talk with children about how they've thought about and dealt with their own stressful situations.
- **Let kids be problem-solvers.** It's natural to want to fix your child's problems. But when parents swoop in to solve every little glitch, their children don't have a chance to learn healthy coping skills. Let your children try to solve their low-stakes problems on their own, and they'll gain confidence that they can deal with stressors and setbacks.
- **Promote media literacy.** Today's kids spend a lot of time online, where they can run into questionable content, cyberbullying, or the peer pressures of social media. Parents can help by teaching their children to be savvy digital consumers, and by limiting screen time.
- **Combat negative thinking.** *"I'm terrible at math." "I hate my hair." "I'll never make the team. Why try out?"* Children and teens can easily fall into the trap of negative thinking. When children use negative self-talk, though, don't just disagree. Ask them to really think about whether what they say is true, or remind them of times they worked hard and improved. Learning to frame things positively will help them develop resilience to stress.

TAKE ACTION

Know the signs of stress to look out for in your teen as well as coping skills to help the whole family.



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FOR PROFESSIONALS WORKING WITH YOUTH



According to the 2022 Georgia Student Health Survey, more than 60% of middle and high school students reported feeling stressed “always” or “sometimes”. The top three self-reported stressors? 1) Demands of schoolwork, 2) School grades or performance, and 3) Family reasons. Children's Healthcare of Atlanta Strong4Life provides coping skills we can all use to reduce and manage stress!

TAKE ACTION

Print out this Coping Skills worksheet (available in English and Spanish), keep it somewhere visible in your school or classroom, and constantly remind the youth in your care (and yourself!) of the various strategies available to manage stress.

A graphic of a "Coping Skills" worksheet from Strong4Life Children's Healthcare of Atlanta. The worksheet has a blue header with the title "Coping Skills" and the organization's logo. Below the header is a paragraph defining coping skills and a list of 15 ideas arranged in a 3x5 grid. Each idea includes an icon and a brief description.

Coping Skills STRONG4LIFE
Children's Healthcare of Atlanta

Coping skills are tools or strategies anyone can use to manage their feelings, reduce stress and become more resilient (better able to handle life's ups and downs). What works for you one day may not work the next, so build your coping skills toolbox by learning and practicing lots of different strategies.

The options are limitless, but here are some coping skills ideas to get you started:

Be active	Find your calm	Get creative	Connect with others	Shift your mindset
Put on music and dance	Take some deep breaths	Color, draw or paint	Cuddle or play with your pet	Think of something positive
Build with Legos or blocks	Listen to music or sing a song	Play with Play-Doh or sand	Read a book with someone	Focus on one thing you're grateful for
Do 10 jumping jacks	Close your eyes and count to 10 or backward from 100	Play an instrument	Play a game with a friend or family member	Identify your top three strengths

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QUESTIONS? CONTACT

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