



## Stress & its Effects

### The Facts

Stress, a word that seems to have imbedded itself in our society's lifestyle, is creeping its way into the lives of our children. Children are on a fast paced road to adulthood. With numerous activities, school assignments and various commitments, kids in this day-in-age are becoming increasingly prone to stress. Stress is a natural part of everyone's lifestyle. The way we manage it is what is important.

#### What is Stress?

Stress is defined as anything new or different, which imposes an extra demand on a child's ability to deal with life. Basically, stress is the damage produced from real or imagined problems a child may face.

Derived from the Latin word distress, stress means to draw or pull apart. This cycle takes place in one's limbic system, which is the emotional brain. What occurs, is a stressor (i.e. outside pressures, problems, changes, etc.) cause one's body to perceive something in a certain manner thus causing stress.

In course, the limbic system reacts and stress hormones are released. As a result, the sympathetic nervous system will have a fighting response to the stress, while the parasympathetic system's response results in relaxation.

Stress occurs in two certain circumstances. Eustress occurs under happy circumstances, while distress takes place during unhappy circumstances. However, at times eustress can result in distress. The Yerkes-Dodson Law illustrates how one must acquire a certain amount of stress in order to boost the performance of any task. However, at times that level of acquired stress is exceeded and a person becomes overwhelmed and distresses.

## Effects on a Child

#### Damage of Stress among children:

- Heart problems
- They become ill
- Loss of appetite
- Disrupted sleeping patterns
- Irritable manners
- Loss of concentration and memory
- Depression



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- Violent tendencies
- Use of drugs/alcohol
- Suicide attempts

## Signs of Stress

**According to the Singapore Children Emotional Stress Scale your child is stressed when he/she:**

- is worried about a number of things
- is depressed or sad
- enjoys very few things
- sheds tears over things they have done
- is irritable and grumpy
- complains of aches and pains
- is quite and withdrawn from others
- is forgetting things

## Helping to Handle Stress

**Parents can help their child deal with their stress by:**

- Reassuring their child that they are not at fault or are responsible for certain things
- Coming to the conclusion that their child has stress
- Not assuming that what works for them in handling stress with work for their child
- Helping their kids learn how to deal with stress and how to handle situations
- Controlling their personal tempers or moods
- Being honest about changes that will affect their child
- Concentrating on good rather than bad news
- Making their child feel loved

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