



HELPING TEENS SLOW DOWN AND STRESS LESS

For many teens, pressure comes from all sides: their friends, school and teachers, sports, and yes—even their parents. With a new Partnership survey showing that teens cite “coping with school pressure” as the number one reason for drug use, the Partnership and *Family Circle* magazine teamed up to offer tips for helping your teen blow off steam in a healthy way.



Make Time to Connect

A 2006 *Family Circle*/Harris Interactive poll found that 45% of kids who are feeling unhappy or just okay about their lives wish they had more time hanging out with their parents. Take the advice of Jessica Henderson Daniel, Ph.D., assistant professor at Harvard Medical School: “Schedule family dinners or get-togethers at least two nights a week and set it in stone just like sports practice or the debate club.”

Consider Competitive Influences

Harriet S. Mosatche, Ph.D. suggests parents discuss a time in their life when competition was a driving factor. Then ask your child, “Are you doing this because it really interests you or might you be doing it just because your friend is?” The conversation should be kept casual and nonjudgmental.

Show Your Love

It’s especially important to tell teens that you cherish and admire them for who they are, not for their grades and achievements. Stressed kids often feel isolated, which can lead to experimentation with drugs and alcohol, so it’s important to reassure your teen of your support. Talk to teens about the risks of drug and alcohol abuse, and let them know you love them too much to see them risk getting hurt by experimenting or using.

Make Time for Free Time

It’s okay for teens to have unscheduled blocks of time. Hanging around the house once in a while isn’t a bad thing. At the same time, parents should know who their kids are hanging out with and what they are doing when they are not playing sports, studying or engaging in other positive and productive activities.

Discuss How You Deal With Pressure

Have frequent conversations, giving your child details from your own life like, “I’m really worried about getting this proposal in by tomorrow. Do you get anxious like that about school?” Or ask, “Are your friends nervous?” Then you can follow up with, “What about you? How are you dealing with it?”

Encourage Sleep and Good Health Habits

Experts recommend that parents impose a regular bedtime. Help teens slow down by keeping light levels low and limiting computer, television and phone use after a certain hour in the evening. When morning comes, raise the light level in your home to get teens going again. Make sure your teen or tween eats right and exercises regularly. Physical well-being makes kids more resilient overall and less vulnerable to stressful situations.

Practice What You Preach

Parents should also limit their commitments, as obligations outside the home limit opportunities to talk with children on a regular basis about important topics like school, friends, peer pressure, sex and drugs and alcohol.