

Things that Upset or Stress Your Children

1. What bothers or upsets your children?
2. What do your children say that causes stress or bothers or upsets them?

Strategy

Find a time when you can spend 10 to 20 minutes with each child. Ask your child about times when he or she feels worried or upset or stressed.

Questions to children:

- What do you worry about?
- What upsets you?
- What do you do when you are feeling upset?

Or

Use a sheet of paper and ask your children to write down or ask you to write down things that bother them. They may wish to draw them, then discuss them.



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Stop! Look! Listen!

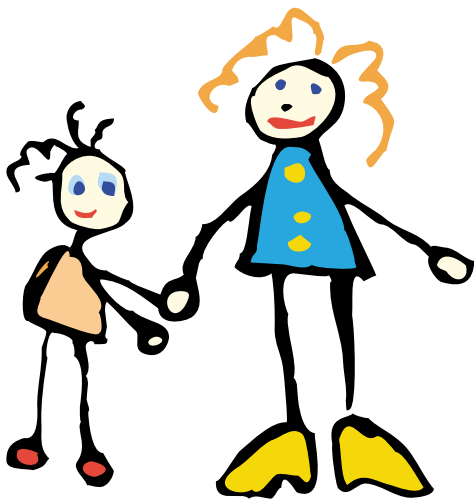
Creative ways to communicate with your children



It's important to know what bothers and upsets your children. Don't wait until you think your child is stressed. Ask them, when things are calm, what they worry about. Then listen very carefully. Try not to finish their sentences or interrupt. Stop, look, and listen!

STOP!

- Some parents find that the best time to talk to their children is when they are doing some everyday activity together, maybe riding on a bus, washing dishes or folding laundry. What times do you find your children open up and want to talk to you? Any quiet time during the day or at bedtime might work.
 - It is important to choose the moment. Find a time when you are relaxed and not feeling rushed and can be together without interruption.
 - Set the climate. You might say, "I know there are things that upset you sometimes. Can you tell me about them." Give your children time to finish what they're saying. Don't interrupt. Encourage them to continue by nodding, and listen to their words and the feeling in the words.

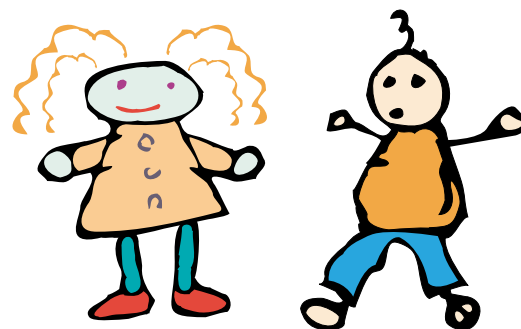


LOOK!

- Once a day, casually check your child's face from the child's level or holding him or her on your lap. When you look into her eyes, does she look back at you or do her eyes dart around? Does her jaw seem tense and tight? Is she smiling and happy? Does she seem relaxed?

LISTEN!

- To show you are really interested in your child and what he is saying, sit facing him and look at his face. Listen without speaking. Nod your head and give other nonverbal encouragement. Remember, the tongue works slower than the mind and it sometimes seems to take forever for a young child to say something. It can take even longer if a child is trying to express something difficult, confusing or upsetting. It is important to give a child time. Don't finish his sentence. Even if you think you know what he is trying to say, give him time to put it into his own words.



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Quick Ways to Relax

Kid Cuddle.

Standing or sitting, stretch arms out wide, wide, wide. Slowly bring arms forward, cross in front. Each hand holds onto the opposite shoulder. Squeeze, rock and cuddle the kid in your arms.



Cloud Push (to stretch out tight muscles).

We are going to practice stretching up and pushing the clouds away. Stand tall. Place your hands on your hips. Bring one arm way up over your head and stretch it straight up. Try and reach a cloud and push it away. Push, push, push! Now let your arm fall slowly to your side. Bring the other arm up and push the cloud. Push, push, push! Now let your arm fall slowly to your side. Lift both arms up. Clasp hands together; turn the palms up and push and bounce the cloud. Slowly, slowly, let your arms float gently back to your sides.



Who Knows?

Stand at attention, or sit up straight with hands along sides. Raise shoulders up to your ears. Hold. Let shoulders drop. While your shoulders go up, say, "Who." When you drop your shoulders, say, "Knows."
Repeat five times.

Deep Breathing (to slow down the body and quiet the mind).

Get into a comfortable position, either lying flat on your back or sitting comfortably with both feet flat on the floor and if you like, close your eyes. We are going to practice breathing slowly and deeply.

Imagine you have a balloon in your tummy. Place one hand below your belly button. Breathe in slowly and deeply through your nose to a count of four. Feel the balloon fill up with air. When the balloon is full, breathe out slowly, using a count of four, to flatten the balloon. Your hand may rise and fall as the balloon fills and empties.

1. Slowly blow up the balloon 1 2 3 4
2. Now, slowly blow out and flatten the balloon 1 2 3 4
3. Repeat five times and then breathe normally.

Caution. Remember to breathe out as slowly as you breathe in. Breathing in deeply without relaxed slow exhalation can lead to dizziness or hyperventilation.



Go Tight - Go Loose.



Stand at attention, hands along sides, fingers pointing down. Make a fist with each hand, squeeze each hand tight. Squeeze... Squeeze... Squeeze... Relax. Now, while you squeeze your fists again, tighten your arms to squeeze your body, Squeeze... Squeeze... Squeeze... Relax. Now, this time also squeeze your legs together while making a fist and squeezing your arms together, Squeeze... Squeeze... Squeeze. Relax. Repeat. Shake out your hands, arms and legs. Enjoy the sense of relaxation.

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The “What If?” Game

Sometimes children are upset by situations at home or school. The “What If?” Game is a fun way to think about what to do in certain situations. Playing the game with children helps them to practice mentally what they could do in different situations. It helps them to learn to anticipate, to think ahead and to come up with ideas. Make some “What If” situations playful and fun. Also encourage children to make up “What if” situations for parents and caregivers to answer. Give children time to think about what they might do. If needed, you might prompt with a comment that includes the answer. Be patient and don’t focus too much on the answers.



For children under five years old

What If someone is playing with a toy you want?

What If someone takes a toy away from you?

What If your brother changes the TV channel when you are watching your favourite program?

What If your little sister pushes over the tower you have been building?

What If it rains and you can’t go on the picnic?

What If you break someone else’s toy?

What If you could borrow an animal from the zoo today?



For children six to nine years old



What If you answer the front door to a stranger?

What If you forgot your lunch at home?

What If you could choose what we have for dinner tonight?

What If you wake up in the night and you smell smoke?

What If you are home and someone gets sick or hurt?

What If you are shopping with your mom and you get lost?

What If you miss the school bus?

What If a big kid steals your lunch money?

ANOTHER SUGGESTION!

Make up your own “What if” questions, based on the age and interests of your children. Or try the “What Else?” Game. It is more appropriate for children from six to nine years. It builds on the “What If?” Game by asking, “What else could I do?” When a “What If?” question has been answered, parents can ask, “What else could you do?”

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Ways to Solve Problems



It is important to relax before trying to solve problems.
For example, taking a few deep breaths encourages creative thinking.

Step 1. What is the problem? Name it. Clarify it.

- What happened?
- What are you doing about it?
- Is it working?



Step 2. How big a problem is it?

- Trace a hand, numbering thumb and fingers.
- On a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 not much of a problem and 5 a big problem, assign a number to the problem.
- How does it make you feel?

Step 3. What could you do?

- What could you do to solve the problem?
- What else could you do?
- What other ideas might work?

Step 4. What would you like to try doing?

- Which idea will you choose?
- What might happen if you choose to do it?
- Will it make things better or worse?

Step 5. (Some time later) How well did the solution work?

- What happened?
- Was the problem solved?
- If not, what else can you do?



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My Child's Life:

Things That Can Help Reduce Stress for My Child

- | | | | | |
|---|---|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1 | Gets enough exercise and free time to play and unwind | <input type="checkbox"/> Most Days | <input type="checkbox"/> Some Days | <input type="checkbox"/> A Few Days |
| 2 | Eats healthy, well-balanced food | <input type="checkbox"/> Most Days | <input type="checkbox"/> Some Days | <input type="checkbox"/> A Few Days |
| 3 | Has individual time with parents to share good times and problems | <input type="checkbox"/> Most Days | <input type="checkbox"/> Some Days | <input type="checkbox"/> A Few Days |
| 4 | Receives hugs and signs of affection | <input type="checkbox"/> Most Days | <input type="checkbox"/> Some Days | <input type="checkbox"/> A Few Days |
| 5 | Has a regular bedtime routine with time to be quiet and calm down | <input type="checkbox"/> Most Days | <input type="checkbox"/> Some Days | <input type="checkbox"/> A Few Days |
| 6 | Gets enough sleep | <input type="checkbox"/> Most Days | <input type="checkbox"/> Some Days | <input type="checkbox"/> A Few Days |
| 7 | Gets organized for the next day before bedtime | <input type="checkbox"/> Most Days | <input type="checkbox"/> Some Days | <input type="checkbox"/> A Few Days |
| 8 | Has a family that laughs and enjoys being together | <input type="checkbox"/> Most Days | <input type="checkbox"/> Some Days | <input type="checkbox"/> A Few Days |
| 9 | Lives with an adult who shows how to manage stress in a healthy way | <input type="checkbox"/> Most Days | <input type="checkbox"/> Some Days | <input type="checkbox"/> A Few Days |



Takehome Activity

One thing from the toolbox I would like to try with my child this week is...

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Taking Care of Me

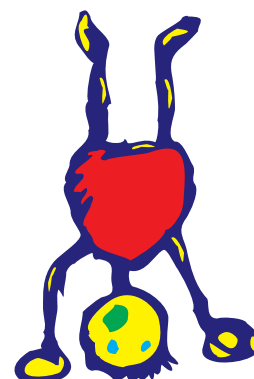
When I'm feeling tense and upset I can:

- Sing, jump, go for a walk, run or ride my bike
 - Play with a pet or a ball
 - Look at a book or draw a picture
 - Talk to someone I like
 - Listen to music
 - (Add your own favourite things to do)
-



To help myself feel better, I can:

- Go to sleep
 - Take some time out or enjoy quiet time
 - Talk to my stuffed animals
 - Talk nicely to myself
 - Put school things together the night before
 - Find something to enjoy each day
 - Do stretching or deep breathing to calm down
 - Punch or snuggle my pillow
 - (Add your own favourite things to do)
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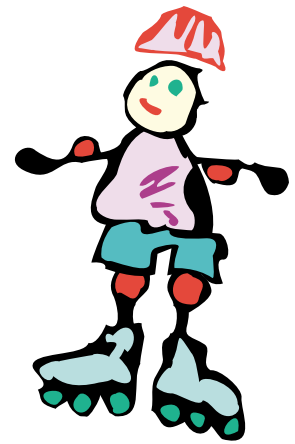


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Talking Nicely to Myself – My Two Voices

Children learn by example. When adults use their own positive voice out loud this encourages children to do the same.



Imagine that you have two little people one on each shoulder. One is a friendly little buddy who cheers for you, says good things about you and sticks up for you. The other is a mean, critical bully who points out all your mistakes and calls you nasty names.



When you hear your friendly buddy, listen carefully and repeat the words out loud. When you hear the mean bully say things like “you’re stupid” or “you’re lazy” don’t agree with what you hear. Say, “No, that’s not right!”

Remember to be your own best friend. Best friends are kind. Best friends are understanding. Best friends encourage us when we have disappointments. Best friends help us celebrate our successes.

Using Your Positive "Buddy" Voice

- When you do something very well, say to yourself, “I did a good job. That was great. I knew I could do it!”
- When you do something okay, say, “That was okay. I’m doing all right.”
- When you do something you’re not happy with, say, “That wasn’t my best work. I can do better. Next time, I can try harder. I can learn from this.”
- If you’re not invited to a birthday party, say, “Lots of people like me. I can do something else that is fun even if I can’t go to the party.”
- If you don’t do well at a sports tryout or game, say, “I didn’t make it, but I still had fun. Maybe if I practice and get better I can make the team next year.”
- If you do badly in math, say, “I didn’t do as well as I could have. I need to work harder at math if I want to do well. I can ask my teacher or my mom or dad for help. I can go over the math problems we did in class.”
- If you don’t get to sit with your friends in class, say, “I’m disappointed I’m not sitting with my friends. I can ask to move to be with them or see them at recess.”
- If you want a toy your friend has and you can’t afford it, say, “I really want a toy like Lee’s but I don’t have enough money to buy one. I’ll ask Lee to come over and bring his toy and we can play with it together.”
- If you accidentally rip a favourite outfit, say, “I feel sad about wrecking my outfit. I’ll ask Mom if she can fix it.”
- If your friend beats you in some important activity, say, “I really wanted to win. I like being first and sometimes I am. Maybe next time I will be.”



Think of other situations where you could practice your positive voice.

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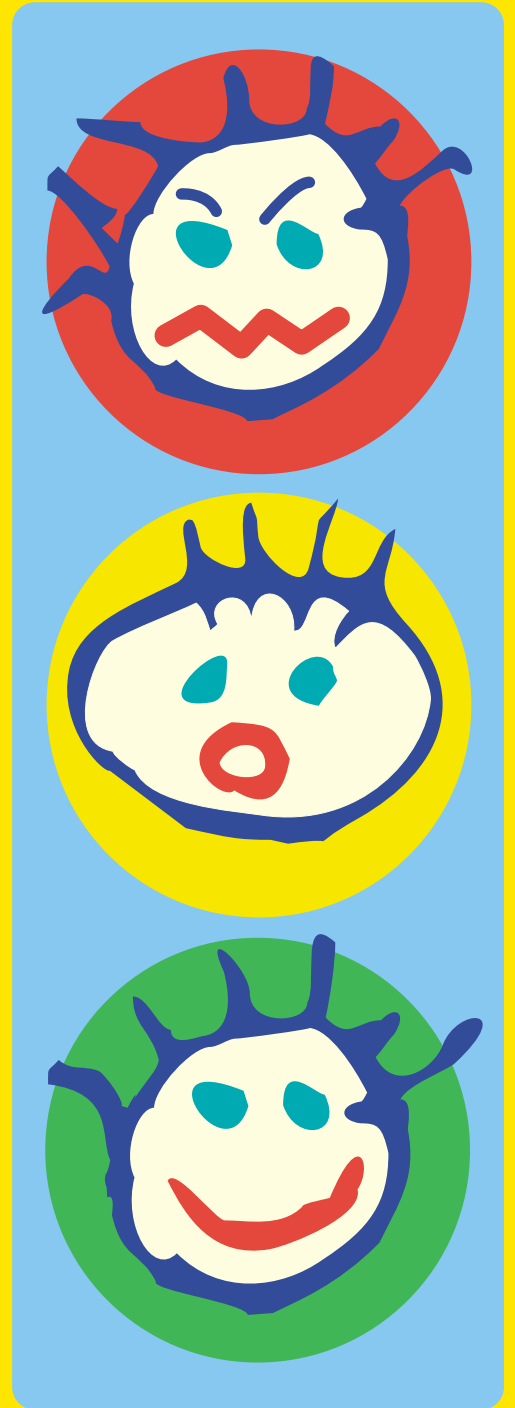


The Stress Stoplight

Red: Stop!
(Stress)

Yellow: Change!
(Use the tools)

Green: Go!
(I can cope)



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