

STRESS AWARENESS MONTH

APRIL 2023



Table of Contents

	Letter to Partners	•••••	
areness Month:			
	Background	•••••	4
	For Youth	•••••	5-
For Parents/Caregivers		•••••	7
	For Professionals	••••	8

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 <u>here</u>.

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

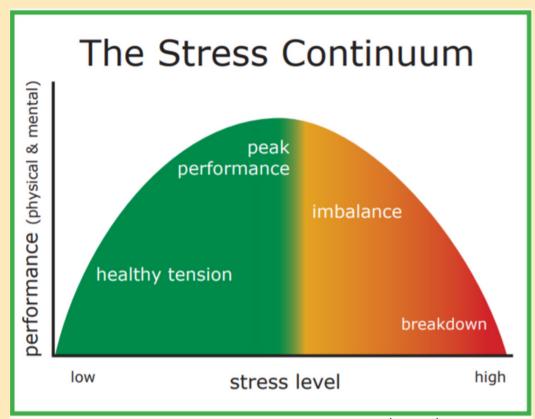


APRIL: STRESS AWARENESS MONTH

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





FOR YOUTH

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.









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.

Stress vs. Anxiety

Stress

- Generally is a response to an external cause, such as taking a big test or arguing with a friend..
- Goes away once the situation is resolved.
- Can be positive or negative. For example, it may inspire you to meet a deadline, or it may cause you to lose sleep.

Both Stress and **Anxiety**

Both stress and anxiety can affect your mind and body. You may experience symptoms such as:

- Excessive worry
- Uneasiness
- Tension
- Headaches or body pain
- High blood pressure
- Loss of sleep

Anxiety

- Generally is internal, meaning it's your reaction to stress.
- Usually involves a persistent feeling of apprehension or dread that doesn't go away, and that interferes with how you live your life.
- Is constant, even if there is no immediate threat.

TAKE ACTION

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









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 stressmanaging 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.







FOR PROFESSIONALS WORKING WITH YOUTH

TOWN:

According to the <u>2022 Georgia Student Health Survey</u>, 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

realthcare of Atlanta Strong4Life provides coping skills we can all use

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.





QUESTIONS? CONTACT

Maria Ramos Sr. Program Specialist Voices for Georgia's Children freeyourfeels@gmail.com