

University of Chicago High School Parents' Association

Relieving Student Stress

Facts about Stress in Students*

- Over 1,000 teens were surveyed reporting that their stress level during the school year far exceeds what they believe to be healthy. 83% of teens reported that school is a somewhat or significant source of stress.

Source: American Psychological Association (APA). (2009). *Stress in America*. Retrieved from <http://www.apa.org/news/press/releases/stress/2009/stress-exec-summary.pdf>

- A study of 6,294 students at 15 high-achieving schools reveals that some students who work hard in school may be compromising their mental and physical health in the pursuit of top grades. Most students reported working hard but two-thirds of students reported not regularly being “fully engaged” in their academic schoolwork. Absence of full engagement was associated with more frequent school stress, higher rates of cheating, and greater internalizing, externalizing, and physical symptoms of stress.

Source: Conner, J., & Pope, D. (2013). Not just robo-students: Why full engagement matters and how schools can promote it. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, Retrieved from <http://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10964-013-9948-y#page-1>

- 20-25% of youth in the United States experience symptoms indicative of emotional distress, such as depression, anxiety, eating disorders, and substance abuse.

Source: Knopf, D., Park, M. J., & Paul Mulye, T. (2009). The mental health of adolescents: A national profile, 2008. San Francisco, CA: National Adolescent Health Information Center, University of California, San Francisco.

- Depression is one of the most common disorders in adolescents. An estimated 20% of adolescents will have had a depressive episode by age 18 with as many as 75% experiencing a second episode within 5 years. Depression is associated with substantial impairment in school, relationships, and work. Those with depression are more likely to abuse tobacco and other substances.

Source: Clarke, G., & Harvey, A. G. (2012). The complex role of sleep in adolescent depression. *Child and adolescent psychiatric clinics of North America*, 21(2), 385.

- For more on Stress in Schools:

Abeles, Vicki. *Beyond Measure*. New York City, NY: Simon & Schuster (2015).

Noguera, Pedro. (2015, December 18). “Sunday Book Review.” Review of Vicki Abeles’ *Beyond Measure: Rescuing an Overscheduled, Overtested, Underestimated Generation*. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from <http://nyti.ms/1NXAy8j>

Scelfo, Julie. (2015, July 27). Suicide on Campus and the Pressure of Perfection. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from http://www.nytimes.com/2015/08/02/education/edlife/stress-social-media-and-suicide-on-campus.html?_r=0

Suggestions for Helping to Relieve Stress

- Help your children achieve a less stressful, more meaningful and fulfilling life by emphasizing that the true measure of success is not strictly financial or materialistic, or measured by where you go to college.
- Support enjoyment and engagement in learning rather than the traditional “skills-and-drills” approach.
- Provide guidelines for eating, sleeping, exercise, and efficient use of time emphasizing healthy habits, physical activity and mental fitness.
- Help your teens get the recommended 8-10 hours of quality sleep. (Lab students average only 6 hours of sleep on a typical school night.**) Provide limits and sufficient downtime for the use of digital devices, online activities and media. Refrain from TV and electronics before bed or in the bedroom.
- Learn to identify the warning signs/symptoms of stress such as headaches, stomach pain, sweating, excess anxiety, increased anger, changes in behavior or appetite, insomnia, constant tiredness, social withdrawal and seek help as soon as possible. (A majority of Lab students reported they were often or always stressed by schoolwork and had experienced exhaustion, difficulty in sleeping and headaches in the past month because of stress.**)
- Help children cope with stress through counting, meditation, reading, talking to others, networking and developing resilience to setbacks.
- Reinforce your involvement with your children by doing activities and chores together including having frequent family dinners.
- Contact your child’s advisor, guidance counselor or the learning & counselling department at school for suggestions about how to help your child cope more efficiently and effectively with his/her schoolwork, and for recommendations on additional resources.
- Model these tips for your children, and keep the message consistent.
- Consider providing your child with the following link written for teens:

<http://kidshealth.org/en/teens/center/stress-center.html#catstudysmart>

* Facts have been sourced from Stanford University Challenge Success. “Do You Know? High School” (2015).
http://www.challengesuccess.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/DYK_High-School_Dec2015.pdf

** Challenge Success. Stanford Survey of Adolescent School Experiences. *The University of Chicago Laboratory High School Report*, 2013.