

STRESS AND SCHOOL READINESS

Definition of Stress-Stress is a normal part of everyday life for children and adults. It's our body's response to any situation or factor that creates a negative emotional or physical change or both. People of all ages can experience stress. We tend to think of stress as a bad thing, but a certain amount of it actually helps us feel alert, energized and interested in life. It helps to motivate us and adds a positive challenge to life. However, too much stress can be counter-productive and overwhelming. Even very young children experience stress, and it's important for adults to recognize and help preschoolers deal with it.

Why it is important to be aware of how stress affects children?? Well, evidence indicates that too many environmental stresses early in child's life can have negative effects on the child's overall long term development. In fact external stressors have more physical effects on the nervous system of very young children than they can on older individuals, and can alter the course of brain development. The outcome of chronic stress in children can be increased health problems, learning difficulties and socialization problems.

Too much, Excessive stress can cause problems for kids:

- Has a profound effect on children's physical, emotional and mental health.
- Makes it more difficult for kids to get along with others.
- Interferes with children ability to focus, think and learn. If they are afraid or anxious, children may spend so much energy worrying that they are unable to learn.

The good news is that parents and caregivers are often in the best position to teach children lifelong stress management skills. The ability of young children to manage their emotions and behaviors and to make meaningful friendships is an important prerequisite for school readiness and academic success. Socially-emotionally competent children are also more academically successful, and poor social skills are a strong predictor of academic failure.

The signs and symptoms of stress can often be seen in challenging behaviors. "Children may be reprimanded by teachers and parents for actions that are really stress reactions, rather than intentional misbehaviors or poor cognitive ability. "

It's helpful to be aware of some of the typical signs and triggers of stress in preschoolers.

Signs of stress:

In young children:

- Thumb sucking
- Hair twirling
- Difficulty leaving parents
- Clinging behavior
- Poor sleep/restlessness

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- Resisting playtime
- Child appears less outgoing
- Child appears withdrawn
- Fewer smiles
- Regressed behavior (potty training pitfalls, baby talk, etc)
- Hitting, biting, and other aggressive behavior (that is not typical)
- Frequent crying
- Tantrums

Triggers of stress:

Change in routine

Learning How to Handle Stress is an important life skill for everyone

Today we will try to address the relationship between stress and school readiness as well as to try answering the following questions:

- The Impact of Stress on Young Children how to recognize and respond to stress in young children
- The Key Role relationships with parents and caregivers play in helping children learn to manage stress.
- Age appropriate stress management techniques that teach children to relax and become more resilient.
- Effective ways to promote positive emotional development and self-regulation in young children.

Resources:

- 1) Blair, C., & A. Diamond. 2008. "Biological Processes in Prevention and Intervention: The Promotion of Self-Regulation as a Means of Preventing School Failure." *Development and Psychopathology* 20: 899–911.
- 2) Troubled Family Life Changes Kids's Brains ,Conflict and neglect affect health through adulthood By [Ian Chant](#). Scientific American Newsletter. January 28, 2013
- 3) G. Draag, G.V. Breukelen, G. Kok, G., and C. Hossman, "Learn Young, Learn Fair," *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, vol. 50, no. 9 (2009): 1185-1195.U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "[The Effects of Childhood Stress on Health Across the Lifespan](#)," accessed November 2011.
- 4) U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "[The Effects of Childhood Stress on Health Across the Lifespan](#)," accessed November 2011.