

HELPING ADOLESCENTS COPE WITH STRESS

Adults can provide help, encouragement, and support during times of stress. They can help them develop the knowledge and skills to cope with future difficulties. And adults can get help for themselves when they need it.

PROVIDE HELP, ENCOURAGEMENT, AND SUPPORT

- Encourage adolescents to talk about what they are going through, and be willing to listen. Ask questions so you can understand the problem. **Don't just jump to conclusions and give advice.** Even if a problem seems small to you, it may be a major concern for the child. Minimizing a problem or saying "you'll get over it" is not helpful. It gives the message that you don't understand or are not willing to listen. Ask them if they want your advice or if they would like to know what you would do.
- Offer reassurance, encouragement, and support. Be willing to provide verbal or physical comfort, but don't be discouraged if the adolescent rejects your effort or is irritable. These are normal reactions to stress. Be patient and let the child know you're available if he or she needs you.
- Continue to provide structure, stability, and predictability. Within reason, stick to the same rules, roles, and routines.
- Encourage them to participate in activities they normally enjoy.
- Try to build a relationship so that adolescents will feel comfortable coming to you when they need help. It helps if they can just express how they feel or what they are going through.



HELP THEM DEVELOP COPING SKILLS

- Talk about how you deal with problems in your life. Make it clear that you are willing to talk about difficulties they may be facing.
- Help adolescents learn and practice problem-solving skills. Help them develop social skills.
- Suggest ways of coping with difficult situations. Help them understand that they can cope in different ways.
- Teach them specific skills they can use to make decisions or solve problems. Then give them chances to practice these skills. Help them identify their problem, come up with possible solutions, and evaluate the pros and cons of each.



HELP THEM LEARN AND PRACTICE WAYS TO MANAGE THEIR EMOTIONS

- Teach them safe ways to blow off steam and relax. They could go for walks, play basketball, listen to music, or talk with someone.
- Help them develop ways to see problems and situations in a different light. Get them to see the positive side of things and to talk to themselves to help manage their emotions.
- Help them learn and practice skills that will allow them to participate in and enjoy new activities. Provide

opportunities for activities that are fun and enjoyable. This can help adolescents recharge their batteries and blow off steam.