



Dealing with Stress and Anxiety

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What Is Stress?

- Stress is the uncomfortable feeling you get when you're worried, scared, angry, frustrated, or overwhelmed. It is caused by emotions, but it affects your mood and body. Many adults think that kids don't have stress because they don't have to work and support a family...

...They are wrong!



What Causes Stress?

Stress comes from many different places.

From your parents.

- “Hurry up, finish this, do your homework, go out for the team, practice your music, do your best, stay out of trouble, make more friends, don’t ever try drugs.”

From your friends.

- “Be cool, try this, show us you aren’t a loser, don’t hang out with those dorks.”

Even from yourself.

“I need to lose weight, wear the right clothes, get better grades, score more goals, show my parents I’m not a baby.”

And from ...

Watching parents argue

Figuring out how to be independent

Feeling pressure to get good grades

Being pressured to do something, like smoking, drinking or drugs.

Not being good enough at sports

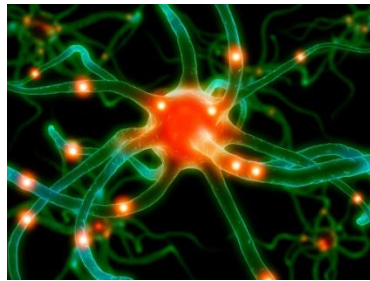
Worrying about how your body’s changing

Worrying about neighborhood or world problems

Feeling guilty

How Does the Body Handle Stress?

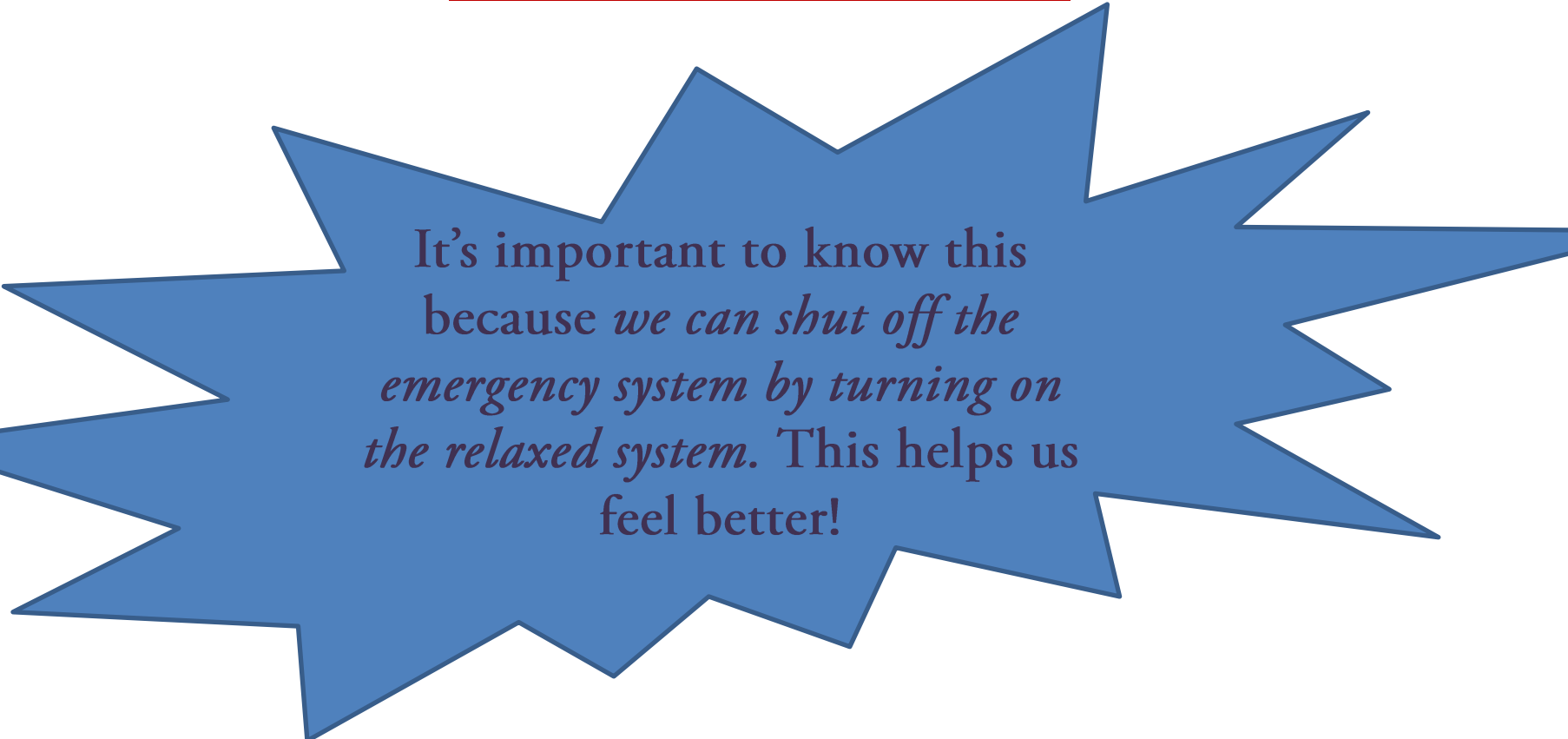
- *Hormone*. A chemical made by one part of the body to send a message to the rest of the body.



- *Nervous system*. The brain, spinal cord, and all of the nerves. The nerves send messages between your brain and the rest of your body.

Your body is a finely tuned machine that can change quickly to do what we need it to do, like react to stress. The body actually has 2 different sets of nerves. One set works while we're relaxed, and the other set works when there's an emergency.

These 2 systems cannot work together at the same time!

A blue starburst graphic with a black outline, containing text. The text is centered and reads: "It's important to know this because *we can shut off the emergency system by turning on the relaxed system.* This helps us feel better!"

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Is Stress Always Bad?



Even though stress makes us feel uncomfortable, it's not always a bad thing. Sometimes stress can really help us deal with tough situations.

A lot of stress changes our bodies quickly and helps us react to an emergency.

A little stress keeps us alert and helps us work harder.



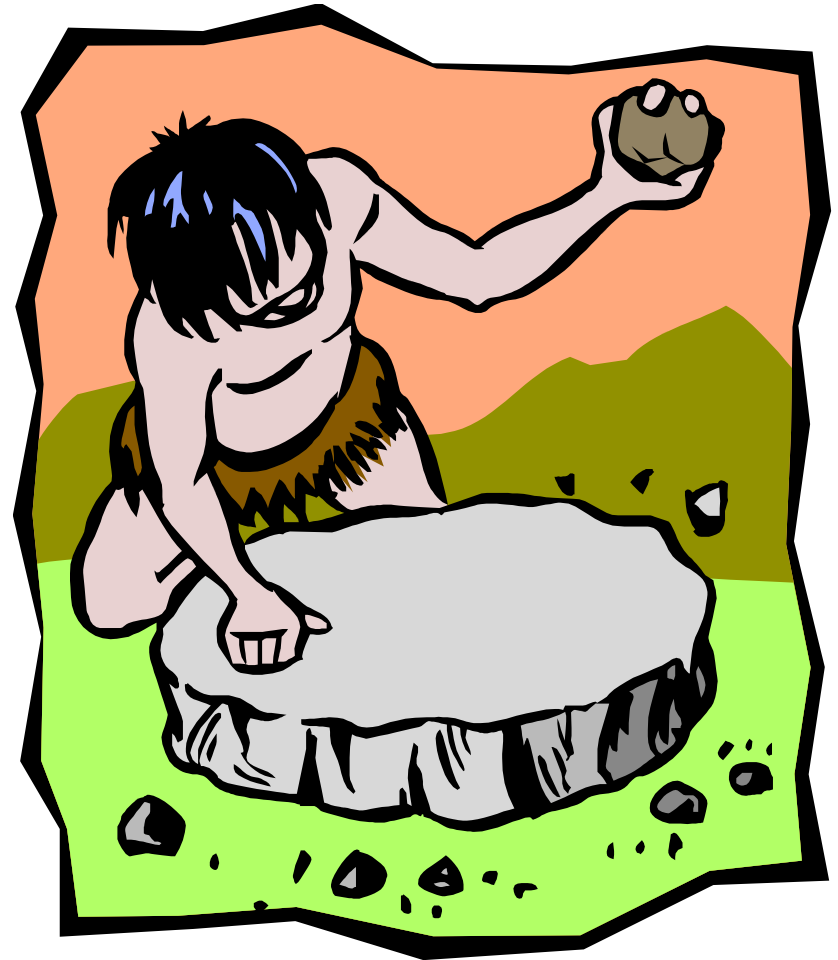
If Stress Is a Survival Tool, Why Does It Make Us Feel Awful?

Cavemen had few choices when the tiger chased them. Either the tiger ate them or they escaped.

As sick as it sounds, if they'd been eaten, they wouldn't have had much to worry about anymore, right?

If they lived, you can be sure their burst of energy allowed them to outrun the tiger or at least outrun Bob (their slower friend who was swallowed whole by the tiger instead)!

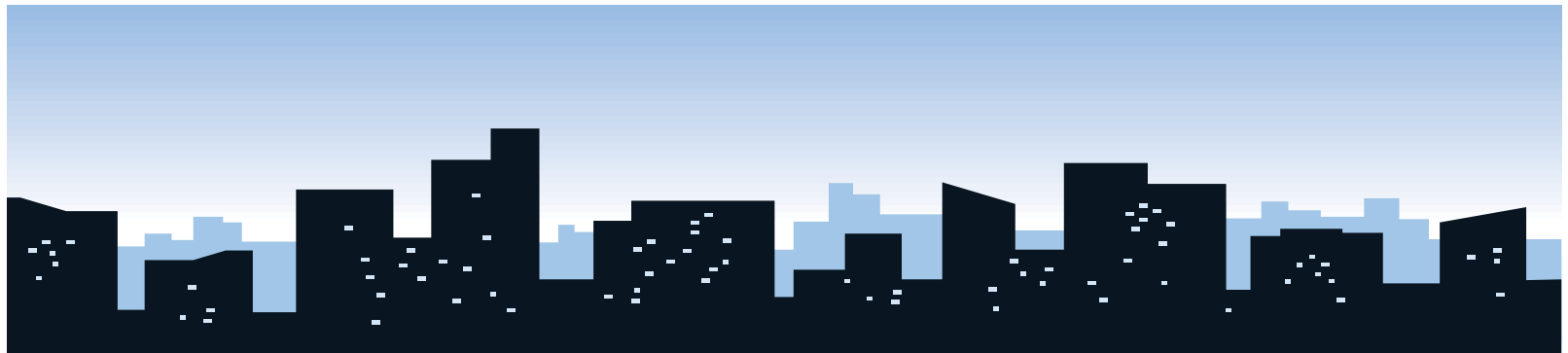
In their run for survival, our cavemen used up every drop of their hormones and then took a well-deserved nap.



In the modern world, our biggest worries are not usually about life or death. We don't literally have to run away from our problems.



But those same stress hormones stay in our bodies because unlike cavemen, we don't use them up by running. Instead, those hormones continue to hang around, unused and confused. They seem to be asking, "Why did my body stand still when that 'tiger' attacked?"





- Even when there are no real emergencies, our emotions can make our bodies act like there is a huge emergency. This is because the brain controls both emotions and stress hormones.
- *If your brain thinks something terrible is happening, your body will react as if it really is!*
- Even a little bit of stress that never seems to go away can confuse the body. It makes the body work harder to prepare for an emergency that may not really be there.

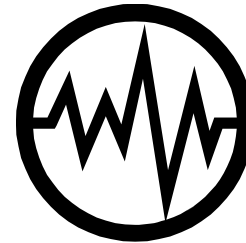




- A tiger running at you is a real crisis. If you believe a mild stress (like a math test) is an emergency, you will not be able to study. Your body will be preparing to deal with a real tiger. You won't be able to concentrate on anything but escaping.
- The trick is to figure out when something really is an emergency and when your emotions are only acting as if it is one.

How Do People Deal With Stress?

- Nobody can avoid all stress, but you can learn ways to deal with it. When you're stressed, it is normal to want to feel better. Some ways to deal with problems might make you feel better for a little while, but can make stress much worse later.
- Think about some of the ways people might deal with stress that can really mess them up.
 - Drugs
 - Cigarettes
 - Alcohol
 - Bullying
 - Fighting
- These harmful choices might feel good for a couple of minutes, but they can be dangerous. They end up messing up your life, and then you end up a lot more stressed. They're especially dangerous if they are the only way you manage stress. This is one of the ways addictions start.
- There are many healthy ways of dealing with stress. They are safe, help you feel better, and end up making you happy.



Teens can decrease stress with the following behaviors and techniques:

1. **Exercise and eat regularly.**
2. **Avoid excess caffeine intake** which can increase feelings of anxiety and agitation.
3. **Don't use illegal drugs, alcohol and tobacco.**
4. **Learn relaxation exercises** (abdominal breathing and muscle relaxation techniques).
5. **Develop assertiveness training skills.** For example, state feelings in polite, firm, and not overly aggressive or passive ways ("I feel angry when you yell at me." "Please stop yelling.").
6. **Rehearse and practice situations which cause stress.** One example is taking a speech class, if talking in front of a class makes you anxious.

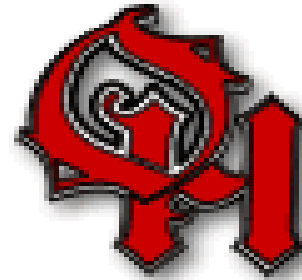
7. **Learn practical and effective coping skills.** For example, break a large task into smaller, more attainable tasks.
8. **Decrease negative self talk.** Challenge negative thoughts about yourself with alternative neutral or positive thoughts. "My life will never get better" can be transformed into "I may feel hopeless now, but my life will probably get better if I work at it and get some help."
9. **Learn to feel good about doing a competent job** rather than demanding perfection from yourself and others.
- 10 **Take a break from stressful situations.** Activities like listening to music, talking to a friend, drawing, writing, or spending time with a pet can reduce stress.
11. **Build a network of friends** who help you cope in a positive way.
12. **Art, Music, sports or lifting weights can be great stress relievers**
13. **Keeping a Journal of your thoughts and feelings.**

- **Some teens become overloaded with stress.** When it happens, inadequately managed stress can lead to anxiety, withdrawal, aggression, physical illness or poor coping skills (e.g., drug use, alcohol use, self injury or eating disorders). If you find yourself talking about or showing signs of being overly stressed, a consultation with a *qualified mental health professional* may be helpful.

WHO IS AVAILABLE TO HELP AT OHHS?

School Counselors:

- Mrs. Gilreath, House 1 (A-E)
- Mrs. Hausfeld, House 2 (He-K)
- Ms. Hunter, House 2 (F-Hd)
- Mrs. Southworth, House 3 (L-R)
- Mr. Dickson, House 4 (S-Z)



School Psychologists:

- Mrs. Elston, House 1 & 2
- Mrs. McNabb, House 3 & 4

All help will be confidential.

We can also provide information for counseling services outside of school if needed.



THANK YOU