

Understanding Student Stressors

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Stressors

- While their specific stressors often differ from those of adults, children also face stress from a number of everyday sources
 - Academic and athletic pressures
 - Being bullied or teased
 - Dating and relationships
- Children may also face:
 - The death of a friend or family member
 - Natural disasters
 - Physical or sexual assault

Stressors

- Even when the stressor is the same, the experience and response of the child can differ from person to person
 - Experience of stress can be influenced by
 - Duration and severity of stressor
 - Past experiences
 - Psychological factors (sense of control, self-efficacy, explanatory style, etc.)
 - External factors (social and family support, presence of additional stressors, etc.)
- An individual's feelings of stress are determined not by the event itself, but by the perception, experience, and understanding of the event

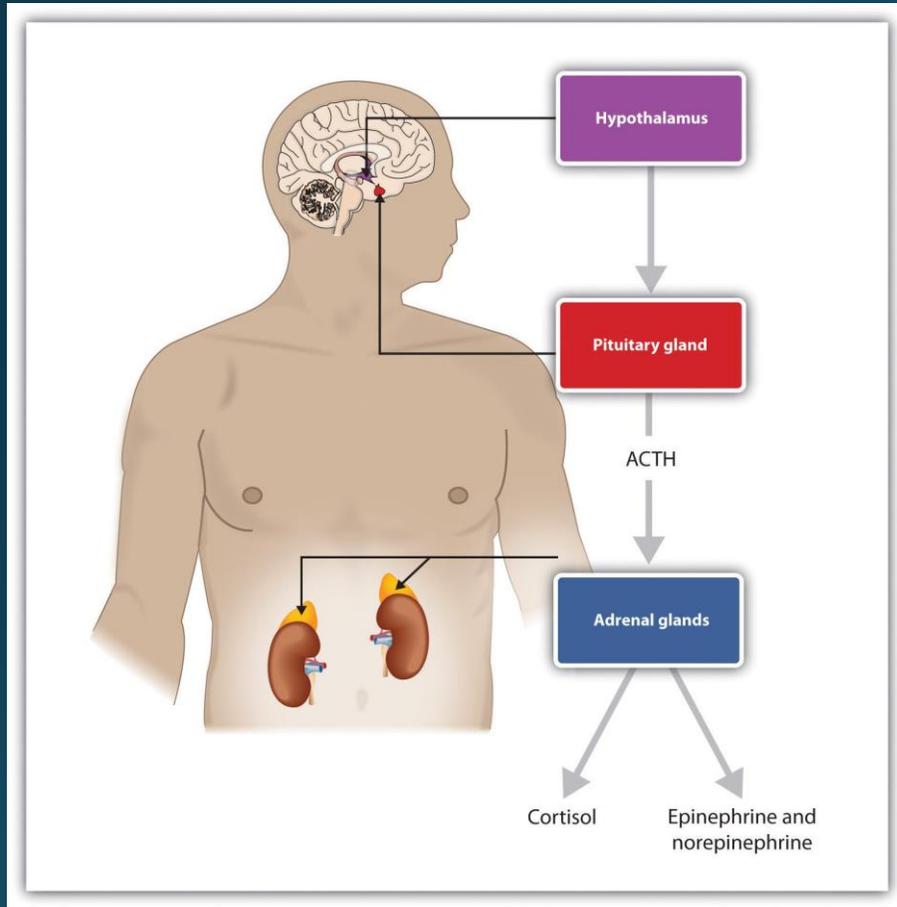
Stressors

- How can parents recognize the signs of stress and other difficulties in their children?
- What can parents do to help their children who are currently undergoing stress?
- How can parents talk with their children about the problems they are facing?
- What can parents do to protect their children and help them build skills they can utilize when they face stressful situations in the future?

Understanding Stress

- Stress is not a bad thing
 - Stress is part of the body's way of preventing injury and pain
 - When danger is sensed, structures in the brain stimulate the release of stress hormones (incl. cortisol) throughout the body
 - After the initial burst, the HPA axis continues to release stress hormones until the perceived danger is gone
 - In cases of chronic stress, the HPA axis remains active, constantly releasing low levels of cortisol and causing prolonged feelings of stress

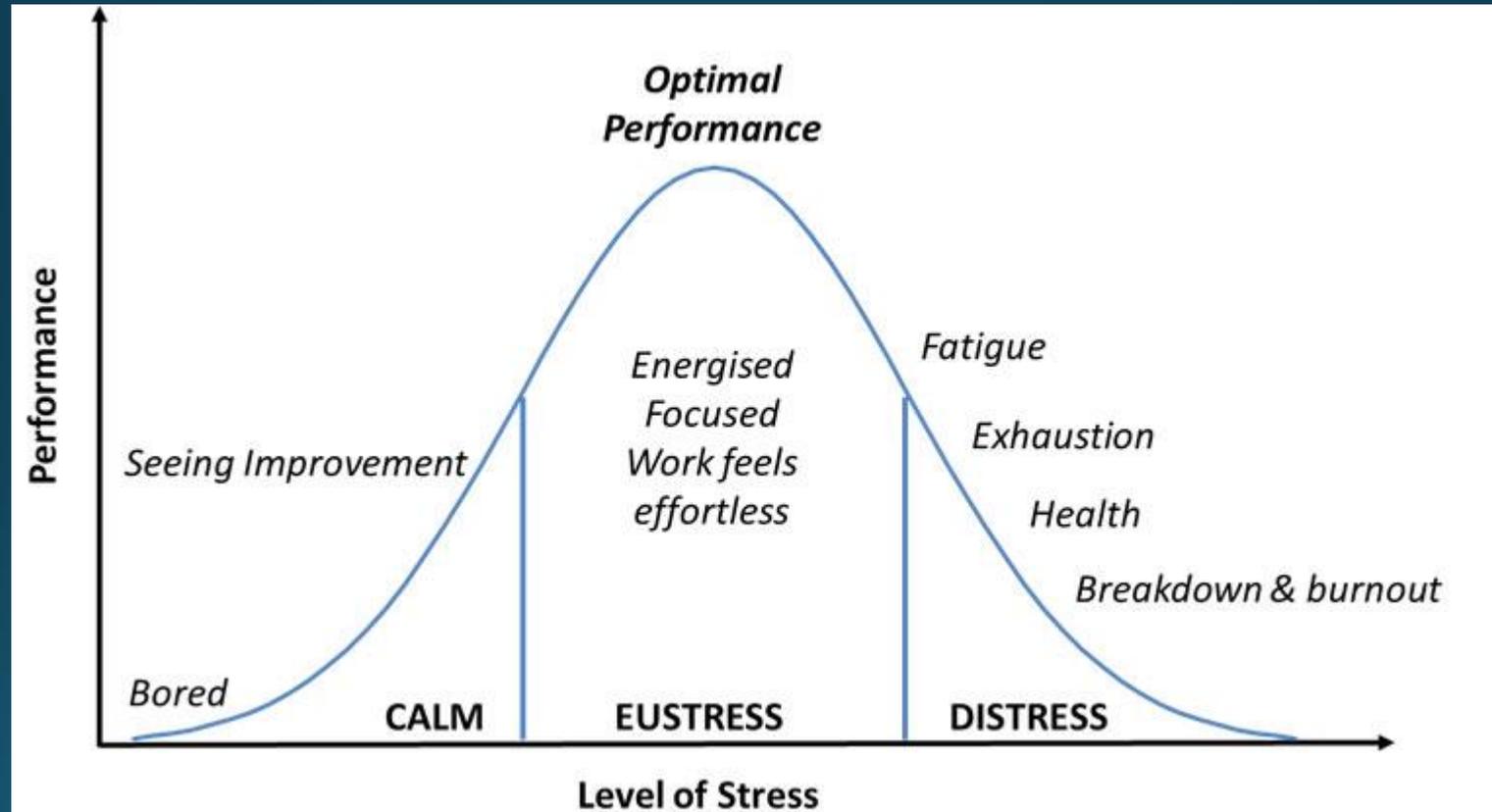
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- Stress can play an important role in motivation and focus

Understanding Stress



Stress – Recognizing the Signs

- Physiological
 - Frequent or recurring headaches
 - Digestive problems
 - Weakened immune system
 - Can be signified by frequent colds or infections
 - Cold or sweaty hands and feet
 - Chest pain or heartburn
 - Insomnia or poor sleep
 - Increased heart rate and shallow breathing
 - Panic attacks

Stress – Recognizing the Signs

- Behavioral
 - Nervous habits, fidgeting, foot tapping, etc.
 - Obsessive or compulsive behavior
 - Increased frustration or irritability
 - Indecisiveness
 - Social withdrawal or isolation
 - Reduced work efficiency
 - Frequent crying
 - Increased defensiveness or suspiciousness

Stress – Recognizing the Signs

- Psychological
 - Feeling overwhelmed or unable to cope
 - Anxiety, worry, and/or nervousness
 - Guilt or self-blaming
 - Loneliness or worthlessness
 - Anger/frustration (directed at others or self)
 - Chronic fatigue and lack of energy
 - Loss of enjoyment
 - Cynicism and detachment
 - Impaired concentration or attention

Understanding Bullying

- 28% of U.S. students in grades 6-12 report that they have been bullied in school
- Bullying involves unwanted aggressive behavior, a real or perceived power imbalance, and repetition (actual or likely) of behaviors
- Bullying can be direct or indirect
- Four types of bullying:
 - Physical
 - Verbal
 - Relational
 - Damage to Property

Understanding Bullying

- Cyberbullying occurs online and typically involves verbal or relational aggression
 - It can also include damage to property, such as distributing personal information (“doxxing”)
- Depending on the specifics of the case, bullying may fall into criminal categories such as harassment, hazing, or assault

Bullying – Recognizing the Signs

- Unexplainable injuries
- Lost or destroyed possessions
- Frequent headaches, stomach aches, feeling sick, or faking illness
- Changes in eating habits
- Sleep disturbances
- Declining grades or loss of interest in school
- Sudden loss of friends or social withdrawal
- Feelings of helplessness or decreased self-esteem
- Self-destructive behaviors, such as running away from home, self-harming, and talking about suicide

Understanding Depression

- Depression is a mental illness that affects how one feels, thinks, and acts
 - More than just feeling down after having a bad day
 - Different than normal, healthy feelings of grief that can accompany a significant loss
- Major Depressive Disorder is episodic, meaning that symptoms can come and go
 - Episodes last a minimum of two weeks
- Each year, about 12.5% of all U.S. teenagers experience at least one depressive episode

Depression – Recognizing the Signs

- Symptoms of Depression
 - Depressed mood
 - Lack of enjoyment
 - Significant weight gain or loss when not dieting
 - Unable to sleep or sleeping too much
 - Sped-up or slowed-down thoughts and reactions
 - Feeling tired or lacking energy
 - Feelings of worthlessness or inappropriate guilt
 - Difficulty with concentration or making decisions
 - Suicidal thoughts, plans, intention, or attempts

Understanding Suicide

- Suicide can affect anyone, regardless of age
- Suicide is the 2nd leading cause of death in the U.S. for individuals aged 10-24.
- Feelings of isolation and of being a burden to others are two of the biggest factors underlying the development of suicidal thoughts and behaviors
- Suicide affects not only the person struggling, but their friends, family, neighbors, peers, teachers, etc.

Suicide – Recognizing the Signs

- Talking, writing, or hinting about suicide
 - “I’m going to kill myself”
 - “My family would be better off without me”
 - “Nobody needs me anymore”
 - “I feel like I’m in the way all of the time”
 - “You won’t be seeing me around anymore”
 - “It’s too much to put up with”
 - “If _____ happens, I’ll kill myself”

Suicide – Recognizing the Signs

- **IS PATH WARM**

- Ideation
- Substance Abuse
- Purposelessness
- Anxiety
- Trapped
- Hopelessness
- Withdrawal
- Anger/Aggression
- Recklessness
- Mood Change

Protective Factors

- Protective factors serve to enhance resilience, counterbalance risk factors, and reduce the severity of symptoms
 - Receiving treatment for any mental, physical, and/or substance use disorders
 - Coping skills and problem-solving abilities
 - Sense of optimism and self-efficacy
 - Support networks
 - Strong family connections
 - Awareness of resources
 - Recognition of individual strengths

Helping Your Child

- No matter what the issue they may be facing, children can benefit from a supportive, loving relationship with their parent/guardian
- Knowing the warning signs is an important step to being able to identify problems early
- Establishing an environment of trust, support, and communication before concerns arise can increase your effectiveness in helping your child through difficult situations

Helping Your Child

- Talk to your child, even when it appears they do not want to talk to you
 - Take advantage of time together such as meals or in the car
 - Provide answers with honesty and reassurance
 - Ask their opinions about what is happening and listen to their answers
 - Provide normalization when they feel they are the only person going through their problems
 - Focus on making it a conversation, not a lecture
 - Make the positives about them and the negatives about their actions
 - Prevent defensiveness by avoiding attacking or accusing
 - Keep it short and simple – 50% rule

Helping Your Child

- Developing Self-Care Skills
 - Teach your child about the importance of healthy eating, exercising, and getting enough rest
 - Make sure your child has a good balance to their time, including time to relax amidst their scheduled activities
 - Identify things that you and your child both enjoy and schedule time to participate in these activities together
 - Have a sense of humor and help your child look at the humor in situations
 - Encourage emotional expression through talking or creative outlets such as journaling or art

Helping Your Child

- Developing Planning Skills
 - Work with your child to develop a schedule of what they need to accomplish on a daily or weekly basis
 - Plan ahead for time to complete homework, chores, and other tasks
 - Plan time for self-care and relaxation
 - Help your child break down large tasks into smaller steps as a way of creating manageable goals

Helping Your Child

- Navigating Social Media
 - Social media has become a major part of how children interact, share information, learn about each other, and explore social relationships
 - Certain websites and services can present dangers such as:
 - Cyberbullying
 - Online harassment and predators
 - Exposure to objectionable material
 - Sending or receiving explicit messages or pictures (“sexting”)
 - Even when these are avoided, overuse of social media can carry dangers such as a distorted sense of self-worth and impairment of social functioning

Helping Your Child

- Navigating Social Media
 - Talk with your children about their social media use
 - Know which sites/services they use
 - Educate them about the dangers involved
 - Discuss what information should and shouldn't be shared online
 - Visit the websites that your child uses
 - Be familiar with and use parental controls/security settings/content blockers
 - Encourage offline social activities and involvement
 - When in doubt, start with a more restrictive approach and become more permissive over time

Helping Your Child

- Navigating Tough Times
 - When your child becomes stressed and overwhelmed, encourage them to “take a break” by focusing on other things for a period of time
 - Foster self-efficacy by helping them identify how they have successfully handled similar hardships in the past
 - Work with your child to identify the resources available to them
 - Provide encouragement and support, but not an escape
 - Encourage them to trust themselves to be able to solve problems and to ask for help when needed

Helping Your Child

- Navigating Tough Times
 - Help your child:
 - Look at problems in a broad context and keep a long-term perspective
 - Recognize there is future beyond the current problem
 - Recognize that change is an important part of life
 - After your child gets through a tough time, talk about what helped them get through that period and what they learned about themselves through the process

Helping Your Child

- Turning It Outward
 - Helping others can be an empowering experience and a chance for your child to see how they can have a positive impact on others
 - Help your child brainstorm how they can use their strengths to help others
 - Look for volunteer opportunities for your child to participate in the community
 - Make volunteering a family activity
 - Ask for their help at home and let them know how you appreciate it

Helping Your Child

- Knowing When to Ask for Help
 - Many parents feel overwhelmed and unsure of how they can best help their children
 - Recognize and utilize the resources available to you:
 - Talking with other parents/guardians
 - Talking with school counselor
 - Finding a counselor or psychologist in the community

Helping Your Child

- Knowing When to Ask for Help
 - Make sure both you and your child are familiar with important phone support lines and keep them in an easily accessible place
 - General Crisis Lines
 - 1-800-273-TALK
 - Text: HOME to 741741
 - Teen-Specific Lines
 - 1-800-852-8336
 - Text: TEEN to 839863
 - In an emergency, call 911 or go to the nearest hospital

Contact Information

West Elementary

- Ms. Grandson, M.Ed
- sgrandson@pinescharter.net
- 954-450-6990

West Middle

- Ms. Blackburn, Ed.S
- dblackburn@pinescharter.net
- 954-443-4847

Share with us your thoughts

<https://goo.gl/forms/W8y1WIUkddmdSUBS2>



Questions