

Understanding Stress.

Version for professionals.

Did you know that...:

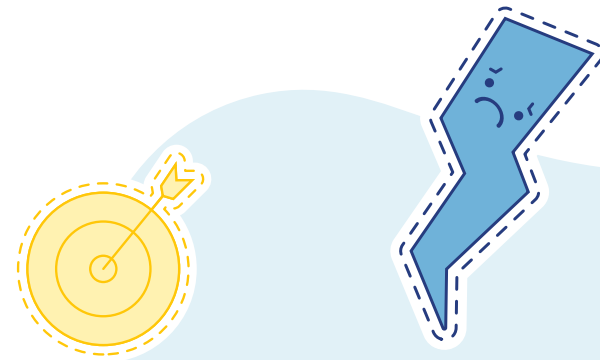
1. Stress is necessary in life and has allowed our species to survive!
2. Stressors are always present in everyone's lives.
3. Stress is a body's normal reaction to stressors in the environment or to how we interpret these stressors.
4. Stress is useful. Good stress management increases concentration and memory.
5. Only chronic stress can have negative health effects. Chronic stress occurs when we are exposed to prolonged and repeated stressors that cause us to produce stress hormones.
6. Adult stress influences children's stress. That's why it's so important to look after your own stress before helping your child look after theirs.



The younger children are, the more vulnerable to stress they are.

They are unable to use stress management strategies on their own or to control situations to reduce novelty and unpredictability

For this, adult support is needed to help reduce stress.



Understanding STRESS better



Absolute Stress

Absolute stress is that which occurs as a reaction to an exceptional trigger related to a question of survival. It's an objective, universal stressor that generally leads to a stress response in all of us. Examples? A car accident, an assault, encountering a wild animal, or fire alarm. .

Relative Stress

Relative stress comes from our interpretation of a situation. Stressors can be perceived differently from one person to another. This is a subjective stressor, which is why it does not cause the same reactions in everyone. For example, a schedule change, an oral, a test, a substitute teacher, a change of group, a death, or parents' separation.

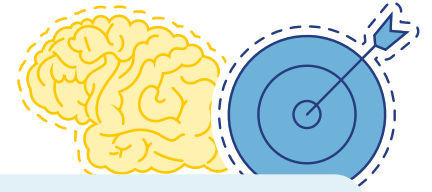
For a situation to be stressful, it must be associated with one or more characteristics. These are:

CHARACTERISTIC	DESCRIPTION
NOVELTY	Something new happens, an element that you have never experienced before.
UNPREDICTABILITY	Something completely unexpected happens or there is no way of knowing in advance what is going to happen.
THREAT TO THE EGO	Your skills and self-esteem are put to the test. You doubt yourself or your abilities.
SENSE OF CONTROL	You feel that you have little or no control of the situation.

To help you remember:
N.U.T.S.



Symptoms and signs



Depending on the individual and their age, the symptoms can vary and they manifest themselves in different ways.

Examples:

- Sudden change in behaviour.
- Stomach aches, headaches, nausea, change in appetite.
- Feeling of sadness (crying, withdrawal).
- Hot flashes, blushing
- Irritability, impatience, difficulty managing emotions.
- Problems sleeping.
- Reduced concentration, attention or memorization.
- Crises (crying, impulsivity, etc.).
- Avoiding stressful situations and refusing to participate.

Here are a few strategies to help reduce stress: breathe deeply, move around, laugh, talk about what's stressing you, listen to music, stroke your pet, surround yourself with other people, etc.

Why is stress management important?

- When we are not equipped to manage stress, chronic stress can set in.
- The accumulation of several stressors can increase the level of stress and the complexity of managing it.
- Many studies have shown that, when parents act to reduce the novelty and unpredictability experienced by their child, they can increase the child's feeling of control and, by extension, reduce their stress

I'm taking action!

1. Encourage physical activities.
2. Teach better management of time and priorities.
3. Set up quiet areas and zen corners.
4. Set up places with a variety of activities.
5. Set up places where it is possible to move around, and that encourage free play and spontaneity.
6. Announce changes and routines (for the youngest or most vulnerable clients).
7. Reduce visual stimulation (by, for example, removing posters and focusing on one theme at a time or each week).

Tips and tricks:

1. Laugh or sing.
2. Teach deep breathing.
3. Take the group's "temperature."
4. Recognize and talk about the emotions experienced.

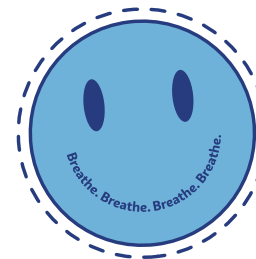


YOU SHOULD know that...

When stress hormones reach the brains of children and teenagers, they affect regions that are still developing.

Studies note that adults (US!) are among the most important actors in managing children's stress. An adult can do things to reduce novelty and unpredictability (for example, by visiting new places). An adult can also increase a child's sense of control by, for example, offering choices.

In case of anxiety, the interpretation of danger, its likelihood and its consequences are often exaggerated and impair a person's functioning. When anxiety becomes a source of distress or suffering, don't hesitate to direct the person to appropriate services.



What is MY ROLE?

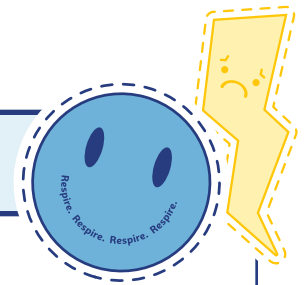
As an adult, I do what is necessary to reduce the excesses of novelty and instability for children and youth. I can increase their feelings of control and, as a result, decrease their stress.

As a significant adult, you act mainly on the relative stress of your clients. There are some tips and tricks that you can put in place to:

1. Reduce the symptoms of stress
2. Suggest effective stress management strategies.
3. Avoid the accumulation of stressors

Take the time to ask myself the right questions:

THREAT	EXAMPLES OF QUESTIONS TO ASK MYSELF
NOVELTY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are some of the ways I help young people cope with change? • How can I tell a more vulnerable youth that there will be a change at the next meeting or in the programming of an activity?
UNPREDICTABILITY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are some of the ways I communicate the activities schedule, routine, etc.? • Do the young people know the organization's rules? • How can I avoid something unforeseen happening during my meeting with a youth?
THREAT TO THE EGO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In what ways can I foster a sense of competence in young people facing a test, challenge, etc.? • How do I get young people to take on personal challenges so that they feel proud? • How do I intervene to support a young person with low self-esteem? • How do I explain to young people the importance of effort even though they will face difficulties?
SENSE OF CONTROL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the ways that I share power between the young person and myself? • Do I allow the young person to make choices? • Can the young person I am supporting make their own choices to resolve problems or conflicts?



This tool was adapted mainly from: Crevale. (2020). *Une trousse pour la saine gestion du stress (A toolkit for healthy stress management)*. <https://www.crevale.org/actualites/une-trousse-pour-la-saine-gestion-du-stress/> (in French only)

Source :

Centre d'études sur le stress humain. (2019). <https://stresshumain.ca/>

N. B.: All the information on this sheet comes from research by Sonia Lupien, Ph. D., and was taken from the Centre for Studies on Human Stress website.

Adapted in collaboration with the Public Health Department of the CISSS des Laurentides.