

GUIDING YOUR CHILD THROUGH HEALTHY COPING

We can cope with our emotions in positive and negative ways. Here are some examples:

POSITIVE WAYS TO COPE

- ♥ Listening to music
- ♥ Talking to a trusted adult or friend
- ♥ Journaling
- ♥ Playing outside, bike riding, walking the dog
- ♥ Breathing exercise
- ♥ Eating a snack

NEGATIVE WAYS TO COPE

- ♥ Not talking about your feelings
- ♥ Throwing things
- ♥ Hitting someone
- ♥ Slamming doors
- ♥ Losing your temper
- ♥ Ignoring your stress

SHARE THESE WITH YOUR CHILD AND ASK WHAT ELSE THEY MIGHT ADD TO THE LIST!

Band-Aid Approaches

Any coping strategy, negative or positive, is only a short-term solution, and can be labeled as a Band-Aid approach.

As adults, we may cope with a glass of wine or binge-watch our favorite show – but we wouldn't want these activities to turn into long-term unhealthy habits.

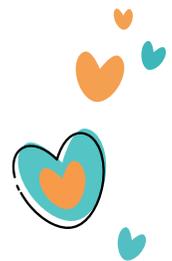
The same is true for kids. Playing video games, eating ice cream, or hiding in their room may be an appropriate coping strategy every now and then – **but we don't want it to become a pattern.**

Help guide your child toward positive coping strategies to help them feel better now, in the short-term but also discuss solutions for eliminating the stressor which will relieve the stress long-term.

The Key to Coping is Moderation

If they choose a coping strategy which we might consider negative or unhealthy, don't shame them for that choice. If needed, talk to them about how unhealthy coping strategies may make things worse and affect us long-term.

With the right guidance, you can help the child in your life develop strong communication and problem solving skills.



HELPING CHILDREN COPE WITH STRESS

Coping with stress in a healthy way can be hard for adults, so we should expect that the children in our lives will struggle with it as well. As a caregiver, you can guide your child through stressful situations by providing them with emotional support and helping them discover healthy ways to cope with stress.

Children with strong communication skills can seek help when they need it, and are less likely to act out, hurt themselves or others, or develop unhealthy forms of coping, which can help lower their risk for abuse.



WHAT YOU CAN DO

Here are some ways you can support the child in your life when they're experiencing stress:



Call Attention to the Behavior and Help Name the Feeling

If your child is experiencing big emotions or you notice a change in behavior, gently call attention to what you're noticing. You can then offer a suggestion for what they might be feeling. This can teach them to name and identify their emotions.

- ♥ *"You seem quieter than normal today. Are you disappointed with the grade on your math test?"*
- ♥ *"I see that you're disappointed that screen time is over. I understand why you're upset. Would you like to read a book or color now instead? We will have more screen time tomorrow."*

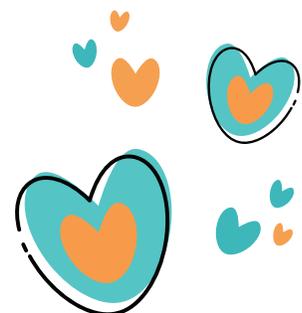
By describing their behavior and suggesting the emotion they might be experiencing, you're helping your child learn how to identify and manage their feelings through communication, rather than feeling overwhelmed and expressing their emotions through their behavior.



Brainstorm Coping Strategies

Work with your child to think of a few different ways to feel better when stressed. Helping them come up with their own solution can build a child's confidence. Support them when they suggest positive coping strategies, and add your ideas to the brainstorm as needed.

- ♥ *"Listening to music is a great idea! Is there anything else you can do to maybe help you feel more prepared for your class presentation?"*





Listen, Be Present, and Be Patient

When your child shares what's bothering them, make sure you listen to their response. Be patient while they talk and refrain from interrupting with advice or solutions. A good listener will help the child feel like they're being heard and understood. Sometimes they may just want to vent.

If your child doesn't want to talk, that's ok! Respect that decision while making it clear you're still there for them. Some kids might prefer to be alone, and we should respect their boundary.

♥ *"I'm going to respect your wish to be alone – but I'm going to come back and check on you in a little while to make sure you're doing alright. Remember, I'm here if you need to talk."*

For other kids, just because they don't want to talk doesn't mean they want to be alone. Instead of talking, try initiating another activity like taking a walk, baking cookies, or playing a game. Sometimes your presence and a fun activity can be enough to relieve stress!

♥ *"We don't have to talk about it if you don't want to. How about we watch a movie together to get your mind off of it?"*

