

Stress & Youth

Youth experience high levels of stress whether this is acute (more immediate demands and pressures like social stress or exams) or chronic (unrelenting stressors like trauma or bullying). Acute stress can be easily managed but untreated chronic stress can lead to mental distress and increase risk of addiction or aggressive behavior.

Healthy Strategies for Youth to Reduce Stress

Be active Exercise 30-60 minutes a day

Eat right Avoid sugar and caffeine, eat 6 small meals a day, drink 6-8 glasses of water a day, eat fruits and vegetables every day.

Sleep well Get 9-10 hours of sleep a night on a regular schedule. Don't worry in bed, create a relaxing bedtime routine, and avoid screens before bed.

Don't use alcohol or drugs to cope with stress

Specific Activities that address Stress in Youth

Calm & deep breathing

Mindfulness: paying attention to the present moment, exactly as it is, to decrease stress and anxiety. Example mindfulness exercises:

1. Come back: Catch yourself worrying about the future or feeling guilty about the past, and tell yourself, "STOP! Come back!", take a deep breath, & focus on the present.
2. 5 senses – focus on what you can see, hear, taste, physically feel, & smell right now
3. Body scan: meditation that brings full awareness of the present moment through noticing and allowing whatever physical sensations are present in your body.
4. Mindful breathing: meditation that focuses on breathing to help calm the mind.

Visualizations

Imagining a relaxing place where one feels completely safe with as much detail as possible and using all five senses. Visualizations are also a great way to prepare for upcoming stressful events by visualizing success in those situations.

Body relaxation: Tense, hold, and release individual muscle groups with controlled breathing.

Resources -- Right by You Campaign – Tools for parents <http://rightbyyou.ca/en/tools>
Anxiety BC Youth - <http://youth.anxietybc.com/relaxation>

References -- Right By You (2017). Bringing Canadians together to better support teen mental health. Online.
Anxiety BC Youth. Healthy Habits. Online.
Anxiety BC Youth. Relaxation. Online.