

AS WE GROW FROM CHILDHOOD TO ADULTHOOD, WE INEVITABLY EXPERIENCE STRESS.

The famous physiologist Hans Selye defined stress as a response to any demand for change. It is how we adapt to change that measures how well we manage stressors, which may be welcome or unwelcome. Resilience describes those who are able to successfully endure stressful events and even thrive in adversity.

Stress is a major trigger for many illnesses and behaviors. Stress tends to trigger anxiety or depression in women while leading to alcoholism, aggression or isolation in men. The well-known fight or flight response is our bodies' way to react to danger. This includes changes in immune function, hormone levels, brain chemicals, vision, hearing, muscle activity, heart rate and blood pressure. This response is absolutely necessary for our survival. The problem is our bodies' response when stressors become chronic. Chronic stress leads to damage in all body systems, even brain cells important for learning and memory. Chronic stress intensifies emotions such as anger and fear, as well as depression and loneliness. People seek relief from stress through alcohol, tobacco, drugs, excessive entertainment, sex, food or work. Fortunately, there are much better ways to relieve stress.



Hastings School District #200

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Student and Family

What we know about Stress....



STRESS MANAGEMENT

There are a variety of physical, mental, emotional and social practices that can help us manage stress better. Important

PHYSICAL strategies are **exercise, rest, hot bath, nature, and nutritious food.**

Vital **MENTAL** strategies are **meditation, mindfulness, arts (visual, music, dance, and writing), reframing thoughts, biofeedback, constructive distraction, and prayer.**

EMOTIONAL strategies include **appreciation, compassion, gratitude, journaling and even laughter.**

SOCIAL strategies could be **participating in a church or club, nurturing a pet and spending time with friends and family.**

Our children need to learn stress management as they deal with their own stressors now, so they don't turn to destructive ways to manage stress. The Adverse Childhood Experiences study revealed that children exposed to certain childhood stressors such as physical, psychological or sexual abuse, violence towards a mother, or mentally ill, suicidal or imprisoned family members had a higher incidence of alcoholism, drug abuse, suicide attempts, depression, obesity, heart disease, lung disease, liver disease or cancer as adults.

WHAT SHOULD WE DO?

So now that we know about the dangers of stress in our lives, what should we do? Start right now with your own stress management plan. Every day, try to do at least one of these strategies and lead by example for your children. A great book for teens is **called Fighting Invisible Tigers; Stress Management for Teens by Earl Hipp.** A free app designed for children but great for any age is called [Healing Buddies Comfort Kit](#), which teaches simple ways to manage stress, fatigue, insomnia and pain. Not only will we become more resilient, we will find more joy in everyday life.

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The Hastings School District is working to improve the health and scholastic achievement of students. To learn more about the wellness initiatives in Hastings, check out the Smart Choices Website:

<http://www.smartchoiceshastings.info>