

THE PARTNERSHIP *presents*
BREAKING POINTS
TOOLS TO TAKE ACTION

ACTION 2: HOW TO TALK WITH YOUR TEENS ABOUT STRESS



Stress and anxiety are part of life. And some stress and anxiety is helpful because it motivates us to get work done. But too much can be overwhelming and can cause problems with health, sleep and brain function.

SIGNS OF A STRESSED-OUT TEEN

- **Teens under stress may feel:** Worried/anxious, angry, irritable, depressed, unable to focus
- **They may have these physical signs:** Headaches, back pain, difficulties sleeping, digestive problems, weight gain/loss, tense muscles, high blood pressure, shortness of breath, stiff neck
- **Stressed teens may also:** Develop anxiety about taking tests, not want to go to school, encounter problems in their relationships

TIPS FOR A PRODUCTIVE CONVERSATION

As parents, it's important to have ongoing conversations with your teen about the stress in his or her life. You want to understand how your child is feeling and what is causing his/her stress.

1

Get in the right frame of mind

- Find a comfortable setting without distractions.
- Be calm.
- Keep an open mind.
- Don't lecture.

2

Try to be an active listener

- Ask open-ended questions.
- Let your teen know you hear him.
- Ask permission to share or make suggestions.
- Offer sympathy and compassion.

3

Acknowledge & reassure:

- Explain to your child that it's okay to make mistakes – that's how we learn.
- Remind her that you care deeply about her health and well-being and love her no matter what.
- At the end of each day, call attention to all that she has accomplished.
- If she is taking steps to de-stress, be sure to point out these positive efforts.
- **If your child is suffering, reassure her that you will seek out appropriate professional help and then do just that.**

Some conversation starters:

- What's going on in your life that makes you feel stressed?
- Do you feel a lot of pressure? Where's it coming from?
- What are some ways we can lessen the stress in your life?
- When do you feel calm and relaxed?
- What are some healthy things you already do that help you feel calmer?

Brainstorm together healthy ways to help your child manage the stress in her/his life. (Ex: More sleep, yoga, recreational sports, volunteering, etc.) Let your child offer suggestions and help him/her think through the ideas.

Take the Pledge to #endmedicineabuse.
Learn more at drugfree.org/MedicineAbuseProject

