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Stress in Children

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Stress occurs throughout the lifespan of individuals, thus, children also experience stress. Causes and responses to stress in children differs according to their age groups such as preschoolers, school-age kids and adolescents.

Adults tend to see the world of children as worry-free, untroubled and always happy. Sometimes, teens and adults can't help but say, *"I wish I were able to live as a child forever"*.

We all have wanted to drink from the mythical Fountain of Youth, because it's a common thinking among adults that kids don't have anything to worry about. Well, the truth is, children also feel stressed out not only once, but many times! In this article, we'll briefly discuss the experience of stress in children, and how they respond and cope with stress.

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Causes of Stress in Children

Typically, adults experience stress from work, school, relationships and other social demands. Kids also have these causes as the roots of their stress experience. In children, the sources of stress might be related to their age. In general, children are exposed to stress when they are at play, which is perhaps equal to work in adults.

According to studies, infants and toddlers tend to experience stress when they get separated from their parents, even for a few minutes. This is also referred to as separation anxiety.

Preschoolers experience stress when they are in dental checkups, because of their fear of body mutilation. On the other hand, school age children are pressured by school work, peers and expectations, causing stress.

Stress Response in Children

In terms of positive stress response, children begin to cry whenever they experience separation from parents and care providers. In school age children, positive stress response includes tendency to eat more nutritional foods, balancing academic and extracurricular activities, and studying harder to achieve better academic performance.

On the other hand, negative stress response include mood swings, sleep problems, acting out, and even regressive symptoms like thumb sucking and bedwetting. Physical symptoms like stomach upset and headaches are also common. Older children tend to defy authority, bully younger kids, or resort to lying.

Preschoolers

Typically, preschoolers react to stress through uncontrollable crying, anxiety, irritability, trembling, and sometimes, sleeping or eating problems. Sometimes, regression follows a very stressful experience, and toddlers may exhibit infant-like behaviors. They tend not to understand their own feelings, and their inability to understand their parents' feelings may also present added stress. They also show withdrawal, oversensitivity, and sometimes resort to biting.

School Age Children

Kids aged 6 years old to 12 years old are usually confuse about their stressor, and might complain about not being able to fully understand what the stressful situation means. They react to stress in such a manner that they lose concentration especially at academics, they become aggressive, fearful, and sometimes withdrawn.

Adolescents

Rebelliousness is a common reaction among adolescents, especially during tough, stressful situations. They easily get agitated and are readily angered. many adolescents react to stress in such a way that they show low self-esteem, irresponsibility and general distrust.

Helping Kids Cope With Stress

Parents should actively involve themselves in helping their children cope with stress [1]. Experts say that being aware of the real feelings of kids and being always available for them are two of the best ways though which parents can help their kids.

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Links

[1] <http://www.ces.ncsu.edu/depts/fcs/pdfs/fcs457.pdf>