

Safe kids ☺ Healthy kids ☺ Happy kids

Coping with Childhood Stress and Frustration

Childhood should be fun and carefree. However, some kids struggle with the demands of school, homework, friends, family, sports and other interests. Worried and frustrated, they feel stress.

Some children are more easily frustrated than others. This comes from within. They may:

- Have a short attention span.
- Be easily distracted.
- Worry more.
- Doubt themselves.
- Lack an ability to cope.
- Need help to complete tasks and stay motivated.

Other factors that cause anxiety and worry include:

- Learning disabilities,
- Lack of sleep,
- Too many after school activities,
- Projects or tasks that are beyond their ability, and
- Family problems such as job loss, divorce or illness.

Sometimes, it is easy to see frustration. Your child may slam a book shut or yell for no apparent reason. Other symptoms are not as easy to see. They may include bedwetting, a change in sleep patterns, stomach aches, headaches, or withdrawal from friends and family.

How can parents help and support an easily frustrated child?

1. Make time to be with your child – daily. Your child may want to talk or *just be with you*.
2. Make sure your child gets plenty of rest and eats regular, healthy meals.
3. Focus on the problem, not the behavior. Instead of saying, “Stop whining”, say, “What is it that you do not like about piano lessons?”
4. Watch for early signs of frustration. Step in to help problem-solve before your child yells or cries. Talk, and together come up with solutions.
5. Prepare your child in advance for times of stress.
6. Break homework or projects into small tasks. Plan. Applaud each success or completed task.

7. Build in breaks between tasks. Have your child do 5 math problems. Take a break, and do 5 more.
8. Remind your child of her successes. After a lost tennis match, discuss how her serve has improved.
9. Know your child’s abilities and lack of ability. Help him set a goal and work to meet it.
10. Practice patience as *you* tackle problems.

Seek professional help if these steps fail to work. Your child needs to develop coping skills — for life.



Brought to you by Parent Help Line and St. John's Children's Hospital



Call the Parent Help Line. Help is just a phone call away.
1-217-544-5808 or 1-888-727-5889, 10 a.m. to 10 p.m., 7 days a week
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