

10 Ways to Manage High School Stress

It is important to develop an inner watchdog that can recognize when emotions, duties and responsibilities could or are beginning to feel overwhelming.

1. Identify symptoms of anxiety

Take inventory of your inner voice when it repeatedly announces, "I'm worried about ____." Whether it's that upcoming math test, party or soccer game, make note of the silent alarm bell in your head. Catch yourself, and pay attention to nervous habits: hair twirling, nail biting, eye twitching, foot tapping.



2. Ask for help

You don't have to handle everything solo. Look for a helping hand. Or you can delegate a portion of a task that is overwhelming. Even the act of venting to someone about all the stress you feel will help you find emotional support and nurturing.

3. Create an action plan to handle an upcoming worrisome challenge

Divide the task up into parts you can manage. A one-step-at-a-time approach divides and conquers anxiety.

4. Identify activities that relax you

Listening to music, talking a walk, calling a friend -- those are healthy diversion techniques. Take note of the things that bring you pleasure, and exercise them when you need a lift or distraction.

5. Analyze how you explain failure

Do you blame yourself? Laying blame and taking responsibility are two different things. Pessimists blame themselves; optimists don't. Don't say, "I failed the test because I am stupid or incompetent." Do say, "I failed because the test covered material I didn't focus on when studying." In the latter situation, you are in control of changing the situation for the better. Realize that you can plan more effectively for similar challenges in the future. Beating up on yourself is self-defeating; it leaves you feeling powerless when, in fact, you are not.

6. Get enough sleep and eat properly during tough times

When your schedule is packed with events, chores, challenges and responsibilities, make sure you take care of your basic needs first. If you become overtired or undernourished your body is less capable of performing well under pressure.

7. Purge yourself of intense emotions

Keeping a journal is a helpful way to express your anger, sadness or disappointment. When you write it down, you are, in effect, transferring the emotion out of your body and onto paper. This process helps you understand what's behind the emotions, too.

8. Draw boundaries for yourself, within reason

Can I land the lead in the play? Can I drop 20 pounds by prom night? Is that possible or impossible? Reach high with your expectations, but just short of setting unattainable goals.

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9. Set priorities

There are times when the whole world seems like a to-do list. Take out the garbage. Finish that homework. Study for the test. Read the book for a report. Practice that musical instrument. Run so you are conditioned for the game. Do some volunteer work. Shop for shoes for the dance. Learn to decide what is most important, and focus on that first. Arrange your to-do list in order of importance. Sometimes it's best to put off till tomorrow so you can manage today.

10. Get physical

Exercise revs up your body and makes you feel more hopeful and energized. No matter how much is on your plate, find time to get outside and walk, run, bike ride, skate, swim, play tennis or partake in whatever physical activity delights you.



Remember!
There is always someone you can talk to.

(A message from your CN Guidance Office)