

Helping Kids Deal with 'Test Stress'

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Many children find doing tests stressful and experience negative impacts on their wellbeing. Tests lead children to suffer from:

- lost sleep,
- absenteeism,
- stress,
- fear of failure.

Encouraging children with these 7 Steps to Success for Tests can be a great opportunity to teach valuable resiliency skills that can be applied to all areas of life!

Understand The Power Of Thinking.

Teaching children to understand the difference between helpful and unhelpful thinking (e.g. "I can do this", "It will be okay") helps children to feel calm and brave and gives them the confidence to 'have a go'.

Many children have unhelpful thoughts (e.g. "I'm going to fail", "I can't do this", "It's too hard".) These thoughts trigger negative emotions that contribute further to the challenges and reduce resiliency. It is important that children learn to reframe unhelpful thinking into helpful thinking.

- Help them to see the difference between helpful and unhelpful thoughts
- Encourage them to reframe their thinking
- Display helpful thoughts and have them regularly repeat these out loud and to themselves.

Learn How To Calm Their Bodies.

When children experience stressful emotions, their bodies release hormones that create a fight or flight response. These physiological responses lead to racing heart rates, sick feelings, headaches, etc. Teaching children to calm their bodies down reduces the impact of unpleasant body responses.

- Teach children to take slow breaths
- Relax their muscles by tensing and relaxing from the shoulders down
- Have a drink of water to settle their stomach

Help Them To Understand Good Sleep Hygiene.

When stressed many children struggle with sleep which contributes further to the problem. Encouraging them to have good sleep routines helps them develop habits that set them up for a greater chance of success. These habits might include:

- A regular bed time
- No technology in the bedroom, or for an hour before bed
- Having a warm bath or shower before bed

Connect Positively With Those Around Them.

Encourage time spent with friends and family that affirm and believe in them.

- Provide opportunities to do fun activities with friends
- Practise conflict resolution skills
- Provide positive feedback

Identify What Areas Children Are Most Challenged With Academically.

Lack of confidence in literacy and numeracy can create further test stress. Support children academically by:

- Teaching little tricks to remember rules or skills
- Providing extra coaching or support from another person
- Playing games to teach challenging skills

It's OK To Make Mistakes.

Some children become particularly anxious of not excelling or failing tests. These children benefit from learning that sometimes the greatest lessons in life come through our mistakes.

- When children make mistakes reassure them it's okay
- Ask them what they have learnt and what they would do differently in future
- Be aware of how you react when others make mistakes in front of you (e.g. in the car)

Reassure Them Their Worth Is Not Measured By Their Test Results

Children's sense of worth is very fragile. Their self-confidence and identity is still growing. As parents and teachers it is important that children know we value them not because of what they achieve but who they are.

How do we avoid children being stressed by the test? Approach the test not just from an academic viewpoint but from a social and emotional perspective too. Then, we not only see improved academic results, but we also see empowered students for life!

Source; <http://www.generationnext.com.au/2015/04/helping-kids-deal-with-test-stress/>