

HANDLING

TEEN STRESS

Model

The changes of adolescence can be stressful. However, there are positive ways of dealing with the stress. Consider what Ben did when his skin started to break out a few months ago. At first, he worried a lot about his looks. He even started avoiding his friends because he was embarrassed. Then he realized that this was only adding to his stress. He decided to try a more positive approach. First, he talked to his parents. They took Ben to the doctor, who gave him some medication for his skin. At the same time, he started seeing his friends again. Being with them made Ben realize that they liked him for who he is.

By dealing with his problems positively, he reduced his stress and improved his self-esteem.



Practice

Read about Ruth, a sixth-grade student who had a very stressful day. Try to identify all the sources of stress she experienced and how she dealt with them. Which of her reactions were helpful? Which ones were harmful?

Ruth overslept because she had been up late working on a report for school. Because she was in a hurry, she didn't have time to shower or wash her hair, which made her feel self-conscious. When her friend Tyler started teasing her about her "wild" new hairstyle, Ruth got upset. Tyler realized that he had hurt her feelings and asked if she wanted to talk. After Ruth told Tyler about her stressful day, he apologized for teasing her.

Apply/Assess

What situations cause stress in your life? The cards below show examples of common causes of stress during adolescence and positive ways of dealing with them. Work with a small group. Have each group member take an index card and write down an example of a stressful situation a teen might face. You can use an experience of your own or invent a situation. Then work with your group to identify a positive response to each of the stressful situations you have listed. Write the response on the card. Include an explanation of how the response could produce helpful results. Then, as a group, make a list of people who can help teens deal with stressful situations.

Cause of Stress: A friend teased me about being short for my age.

Positive Response: I talked to my friend about how the teasing made me feel.

How It Helps: I realized that my friend was only kidding, so I felt better. My friend realized that I'm sensitive about my height and agreed not to joke about it anymore.

Cause of Stress: My classes in school are a lot tougher than they used to be.

Positive Response: I asked my dad to help me with my homework.

How It Helps: I got a good grade and I understand the material a lot better now.



Stress Management

Stress-management strategies include

- identifying sources of stress.
- using positive coping strategies.
- building support systems.

Self-Check

- Did we name several sources of stress for adolescents?
- Did we list positive reactions to stress?
- Did we identify people who can provide support?