



## JERICHO PUBLIC SCHOOLS

### A STRESS MANAGEMENT TOOLBOX

#### Developing a Family Stress Management Plan

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***“People who waste their energy worrying about things they can't change don't have enough energy left over to fix the things they can.”***

***-Dr. Kenneth Ginsburg***

In today's world, many of our children are facing a new kind of stress. A stress that is fueled by instant access to information, high speed digital communication and peer criticism that is often cloaked in computer anonymity. This digital age has ushered in a generation of teens whom are often *“addicted to velocity”* and may be unaccustomed to gratification that is not immediate.

Delaying gratification has always been a life lesson that has been a struggle for adolescents. Higher academic performance standards, increased college portfolio demands, peer pressure and insecurity about our global future all conspire to create more complex stress for our children.

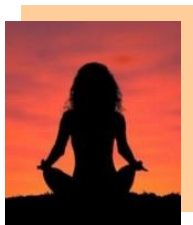
Without adequate tools and strategies, some teens cope by giving up, tuning out, or indulging in unhealthy behaviors. Our job, as parents, educators and counselors, is to help our students learn to reduce the stress that can be controlled, manage the stress that cannot be eliminated, and develop the wisdom to see that perfectionism is ultimately the goal of the unhealthy.

The four step approach to healthy family stress management, outlined below by Dr. Kenneth Ginsburg, is rooted in two key life skills strategies: communication and modeling. The first skill in your family's stress management toolkit needs to be good communication. Family communication is best served when it is a two-way street. To truly understand the stresses our children are experiencing, we need to ask and listen to what they are telling us.

The second key concept is modeling. If we as adults can model the virtues of balance, resiliency and keeping things in perspective, our children will have a head start in developing a good stress management plan for themselves.

#### **A FOUR STEP APPROACH TO A HEALTHY STRESS MANAGEMENT PLAN**

(As designed by The American Academy of Pediatrics: Kenneth Ginsburg, MD)



1. Tackling the problem
2. Taking care of my body
3. Managing my emotions
4. Making the world a better place

## 1: TACKLING THE PROBLEM



**Big Idea:** Figure out what the problem is and make it manageable.

- Many people deal with problems by ignoring them. This does not make them go away; usually they just get worse.
- When it comes to work, the best way to enjoy yourself is to get the work done first. People often do fun things first and do their work later. The problem with this is that they're actually having less fun because they're worrying about the work they're ignoring.
- Breaking the work into small pieces can be very helpful. As you finish each piece, the work becomes less overwhelming.

**Big Idea:** Letting some things go.

- It's important to try to fix problems, but sometimes there's nothing you can do to change a situation. Given that you can't change the fact that teachers must give tests, start studying instead of complaining about how unfair they are. You can't control what admissions committees do behind closed doors, so after you've sent in your applications, just let it go.
- People who waste their energy worrying about things they can't change don't have enough energy left over to fix the things they can.

## 2: TAKING CARE OF MY BODY

**Big Idea:** Exercising is crucial

- Exercise is a very important part of a stress management plan. If you are stressed about a test, but too nervous to sit down and study—exercise! You will be able to think better after you have used up those stress hormones.
- Yoga and meditation also teach great breathing skills. Slow, deep breathing leads to a relaxed system. Take a big, deep breath until your chest and belly feel full of air. Then let it out slowly as if you're blowing bubbles. Do this 10 times and you will feel more relaxed.



**Big Idea:** Eating well and sleeping well

- Everyone knows good nutrition makes you healthier. Only some people know that it also keeps you alert and your mood steady. People who eat mostly junk food have highs and lows in their energy levels. This hurts their ability to manage stress.
- Lack of sleep is a national epidemic for today's children, and the consequences are serious. Teens need between 8.5—9.5 hours of sleep per night for maximum brain functioning.

### 3: MANAGING MY EMOTIONS

**Big Idea:** Taking instant vacations.

Sometimes the best way to de-stress is to imagine being in a more relaxing place.

- *Visualize.* Have a favorite place where you can imagine yourself relaxing. The place should be beautiful and calm. When you're stressed, sit down, lean back, take deep breaths, close your eyes, and imagine yourself in your special place.
- *Take time out for yourself.* Everyone deserves time for themselves—a walk, a bath, or something special every day for time to think. Enjoy *hobbies* or creative art as an instant vacation. *Reading* a good book is an escape from reality. You have to imagine the sights, sounds, and smells—you are somewhere else for a while.

**Big Idea:** Releasing emotions.



Sometimes it's good to pick just one problem to work on and forget the rest for a while.

Here are some ideas to release your thoughts or worries one at a time:

- *Creativity.* People who have a way to express themselves don't need to hold it inside. Art, music, poetry, singing, dance, and rap are all powerful ways to let your feelings out.
- *Talking.* Every young person deserves an adult to talk to and some friends to trust. Hopefully, you can talk to your parents. If you do not want to tell your parents everything, make sure to find a trusted adult you can ask for advice.
- *Journaling.* Write it out!
- *Laughing or crying.* Let yourself really feel your emotions.

### 4: MAKING THE WORLD BETTER

**Big idea:** Making the world a better place.

Young people who work to make the world better feel good about themselves. They have a sense of purpose and handle their own problems better. They learn that they can make a difference in other people's lives.

By taking ownership of something bigger than ourselves through volunteerism or community service, we create a wonderful opportunity to keep our personal stress level in perspective. Maybe not surprisingly, people who spend their time creating a better future for all, end up creating a healthier, less stressed future for themselves as well.