

## What is **Stress**?

Stress is a fact of life – anything that’s exciting or uncomfortable is a natural source of stress.  
Stress = our body’s reactions to the challenges of daily living.

“*Negative stress*” is by definition, well...negative. Negative stress is pretty easy to identify– it includes things like worries about grades, family problems or money, being left out, feeling overwhelmed by everything we have to do, fears about violence in our neighborhoods, and/or concerns for friends and family who are sick.

But stress also sneaks up on us through activities we really enjoy – the things that keep life exciting. This “*positive stress*” can be a hidden part of competing and performing (sports, music, plays/shows...), successes (being promoted to a tougher class), and positive changes (starting at a new school). Positive stress can be useful...but it needs to be mixed with times of relaxation and comfort.



### Why Learn to Manage Stress?

If we don’t *control* stress...it can *control* us! Built-up stress can cause physical illnesses, trouble controlling our emotions, inability to enjoy life, and/or being unable to concentrate or think clearly.

### And the Good News is...

...*anyone can learn to manage stress*. It’s best to practice reducing stress daily – even if we’re not having a stressful day. Just like other skills, controlling stress gets easier when we practice. But recognizing warning signs of TOO-MUCH-STRESS can help us identify when its time to seek help.

### Some “Warning Signs” of TOO-MUCH-STRESS

- Feeling angry lots of the time, or at lots of people. Blowing up over the littlest things.
- Having headaches or stomachaches regularly. Or being sick off-and-on for quite a while.
- Having trouble sleeping. Or feeling tired all the time.
- Crying over seemingly small disappointments or problems.
- Feeling discouraged about lots of different areas of life.
- Feeling unable to stop worrying or thinking about problems.
- Feeling lonely – but still turning down friends’ invitations.
- Having friends or family tell you you’re “moody” or “not yourself” lately.
- Not having any fun these days – feeling that you just don’t care about things anymore.
- Having difficulty concentrating. Or having trouble thinking through or handling situations.



### Ways to Deal with Stress

Maybe you’re already using good stress-reduction basics in everyday life - without giving it much thought! Still, check out the “Stress Busters” on the next page – using one or more of them may help you reduce stress in your life. Then you’ll be better able to enjoy the good parts of every day!