



## FACT SHEET

### TOOL KIT FOR TEEN CARE, SECOND EDITION

# STRESS AND TRAUMA

## What should you know about stress?

- Stress is what people feel when reacting to pressure or worry.
- Stress is a normal reaction to many things.
- Stress is caused by emotions, but it can affect your body and your mood.
- All people experience stress in their life at some time.

## What causes stress?

- Stress can be caused by outside pressures, such as school, friends, parents, or work.
- Stress can be caused by outside worries, such as bullies, living in a dangerous area, or terrorism.
- Stress can be caused by life changes, such as a new school, new home, parents' divorce, moving away for a job, or death of a loved one.
- Stress can be caused by personal or inside pressures, such as wanting to do well in school or on the job or wanting to be liked by others.

## Can stress be helpful?

- Stress symptoms can be warnings of dangers that you can avoid.
- Pressure to compete can make you do better at work, school, or in sports.
- Pressure to meet deadlines can help you finish projects and homework.

## What are some signs of stress?

- Having frequent headaches, stomachaches, or chest pains
- Having trouble sleeping, tiredness, lack of energy
- Feeling anxious, nervous, or depressed
- Forgetting important things
- Having difficulty concentrating or paying attention
- Getting sick more than usual
- Not enjoying things the same as usual
- Blaming others for things that happen
- If you have any or several of these all the time, you may be “stressed out” or overstressed and you should get help dealing with it.

## What are some ways you can deal with stress?

- Get enough sleep.
- Eat healthy meals.
- Exercise regularly.
- Drink less caffeine (found in coffee, tea, soft drinks).
- List possible causes of the stress—try to control what can be controlled.
- Identify priorities and decide what is most important.
- Learn ways to relax, such as meditation and yoga.
- Talk to others about feelings and concerns that cause stress.
- Taking drugs or using alcohol or tobacco are not good ways to handle stress and will cause more problems.

## What is meant by trauma or traumatic events?

- Trauma or traumatic events can be personal, such as being physically attacked or raped or being involved in a motor vehicle accident.
- Trauma or traumatic events can be general, such as being present during a natural or human-caused disaster either as a victim or even just as a witness (eg, the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, the Oklahoma City bombing, and hurricane Katrina).





### What is posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD)?

- Posttraumatic stress disorder is a reaction to a traumatic, often life-threatening event.
- This disorder can occur anywhere from weeks to months after the traumatic event.
- Symptoms include flashback memories of the event, nightmares or other sleep problems, scary thoughts, irritability, depression, and physical pains.
- People with PTSD usually need the help of a professional to diagnose and treat the condition.

### For More Information

We have provided information on the following organizations and web sites because they have information that may be of interest to our readers. The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG) does not necessarily endorse the views expressed or the facts presented by these organizations or on these web sites. Further, ACOG does not endorse any commercial products that may be advertised or available from these organizations or on these web sites.

#### **American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry**

Telephone: (202) 966-7300

Web: [www.aacap.org](http://www.aacap.org)

#### **American Academy of Family Physicians**

Telephone: (913) 906-6000 or (800) 274-2237

Web: [www.aafp.org](http://www.aafp.org)

#### **American Academy of Pediatrics**

Telephone: (847) 434-4000

Web: [www.aap.org](http://www.aap.org)

#### **American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists**

Telephone: (202) 638-5577 or (800) 673-8444

Web: [www.acog.org](http://www.acog.org)

#### **American Psychiatric Association**

Telephone: (703) 907-7300

Web: [www.psych.org](http://www.psych.org)

#### **BAM! Body and Mind**

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Telephone: (404) 639-3534 or (800) 311-3435

Web: Your life: [www.bam.gov/sub\\_yourlife/index.html](http://www.bam.gov/sub_yourlife/index.html)

#### **National Center for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder**

PTSD Information Line: (802) 296-6300

Web: [www.ncptsd.va.gov/ncmain/index.jsp](http://www.ncptsd.va.gov/ncmain/index.jsp)

#### **National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH)**

Telephone: (301) 443-4513 or (866) 615-6464

Web: [www.nimh.nih.gov](http://www.nimh.nih.gov)

#### **Sidran Institute**

Telephone: (410) 825-8888 or (888) 825-8249

Web: [www.sidran.org/index.cfm](http://www.sidran.org/index.cfm)