



## Teens and Stress Management

[www.usnews.com](http://www.usnews.com)



Some stress in high school is normal, even healthy, but parents should be aware of red flags from too much stress.



According to the US News and World Report, between the demands of school, the pressures of social media and the inherent challenges of growing up, teens are under a tremendous amount of stress. And that's before factoring in the [mental health threats](#) that have worsened during the pandemic.

Shannon Carpenter knows all of this firsthand. The 47-year-old dad co-hosts a weekly podcast about fatherhood and has three kids at home, including two teenagers. He says there's no comparison between what he dealt with as a teen and what this generation has to face.

In addition to modern-day stressors like year-round sports and increasingly competitive college admissions, teens are also hyper-aware of the world around them. There might have been a time when parents could shield their teens from some of those anxieties, he notes, but the internet has made that a thing of the past.

"Today it's not the same. College costs are rising and teens know that. They know about climate change, and inflation. They are more aware of the bigger world than we ever were," Carpenter says. High levels of stress, especially related to school, have been an issue for teens for years.

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### Where can teens go:

Weymouth Teen Center  
1393 Pleasant Street  
Weymouth, MA

Hours of Operation  
Monday-Thursday  
2:00 - 6:00 pm  
Friday  
2:00 - 9:00 pm

Phone (781) 335-9713

[Cont'd on next page...](#)

## Teens and Stress Management continued

Not surprisingly, mental health struggles for teens have also been on the rise. The NBC News/Challenge Success survey found that nearly one-third of high school students report concerns about their mental health as a major source of stress. The [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) in 2021 found that 37% of high school students reported experiencing poor mental health during the pandemic, with 44% reporting they persistently felt sad or hopeless. And just because students are back in the classroom doesn't mean those challenges have disappeared.

Since 2014, Traci Small has been the director of school counseling at [Somerville High School](#), just north of Boston. In addition to the usual stressors

Small sees in teens, like managing a class schedule and balancing relationships, she's noticed a troubling new trend since the return of in-person learning. "One thing we saw last year and this year is a lot more physical altercations at the high school level than we've ever seen before. Depression and anxiety are also through the roof,"



Small says. "As a staff, we're trying to figure out if this is normal adolescent changes or if there are other stresses, and not having been in school in particular."

## When to Be Concerned



As teens grow older, they are naturally pushing away and sharing less, Small says, so it becomes even more important for parents to be aware of [red flags](#), like frequent headaches or stomach aches, excessive hostility or withdrawal from longtime friends. If you are concerned about your teen, start by reaching out to the school counselor, who can provide support and resources as well as making referrals for more serious situations. "I think when you see extreme withdrawal, where they don't seem to be enjoying life at all and are withdrawing from families and peers, it's definitely worth reaching out to the school to see if the school is seeing it," Small says.

Parents should also be on the lookout for signs of physical harm. "Be aware of kids potentially handling stress through self-injury or substance abuse or other unhealthy coping mechanisms," Small says.

## Tips for Helping Your Teen Manage Stress

When it comes to day-to-day strategies for managing teen stress, parents can start with the basics.

- Encouraging healthy eating and adequate sleep.
- Help your teen learn how to focus their attention on the positive and take in the good.
- Learn deep breathing exercises to stay focused and remain calm.
- Self-care can start with small, everyday acts, like listening to a favorite song or taking the dog for a walk.



## Make Time for Small Talks

Helping teens deal with stress also means talking to them about it. But conversations between parents and teens don't have to mimic the "big talk" you might see families on television engage in, with moms and dads delivering a grandiose lecture. "Laying out everything all at one time doesn't work," Carpenter says.

"Teens zone out. You have 10 minutes and then they're gone."

What's worked for Carpenter and his kids are what he calls "microlessons." Throughout the week, he finds opportunities for 10- to 15-minute conversations to find out what's going on in their world by creating spaces where they feel comfortable talking. For his son, that's playing video games. With his daughter, it's watching a scary movie after school.

The key is asking the right questions and not settling for one-word answers.

"Ask leading questions and really listen to answers," Carpenter says. "For my daughter, I'll ask what happened at school, then about specific classes, then I go further about her friendships, or about something she's seen online. It's a minor interview."



**MentalHealth.gov**  
*Let's talk about it.*

## 10 Most Common Issues Teenagers Face Today

[www.wehavekids.com](https://www.wehavekids.com)

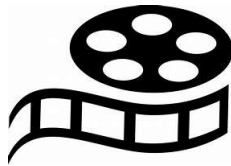
1. They suffer from negative body image.
2. They long to belong to supportive and accepting communities beyond their family.
3. They experience stress and difficulty prioritizing and managing their time.
4. They feel lots of pressure from peers, parents, and society conform to conflicting expectations.
5. They are at risk of mental and physical health issues.
6. They lack good mentors, role models, and heroes.
7. They are tempted to begin unhealthy patterns with drugs and alcohol.
8. They are exposed to on-screen violence and unhealthy social media.
9. They face bullying—online and off.
10. They may participate in risky sexual activity and behavior.



## Keeping up to date with what your teen is watching, can make a big difference in your conversations

The best teen movies of 2022 are both relatable and nostalgic.

1. Dude
2. Let it Snow
3. The Perfect Date
4. The Kissing Booth
5. Alex Strangelove
6. The package
7. The Duff
8. Dumplin'
9. Enola Holmes
10. Moxie
11. The Half of it
12. He's All that
13. Along for The Ride
14. Do Revenge
15. To All The Boys I've Loved Before





## What Can Parents Do to Help Their Teenagers?

**What we need is a paradigm shift of who our teens are and a clearer view of our role as parents.**

- We need to look at ways to help teens, amp up our parenting skills, stop complaining, and take responsibility for our teens now.
- We cannot ignore our parental duties. Even though they're in their teens, they still need us, just as they did when they were little. Cell phones, computers, and other gadgets that they spend time with cannot give them the nurturing they need.
- Provide a healthy and complete meals whenever you pack it or put it on the table. Make vegetables and fruits interesting.
- Build lines of communication that are so strong that your children always look to you as allies instead of enemies. Communicate positively and avoid commands and I-told-you-sos.
- Discuss and establish rules for chores, homework, driving, dating, sex, and drug and alcohol use. Keep talking about all these issues.
- Let them know that you don't always have all the answers and you are not always right. Listen to their opinions and offer help whenever needed.
- Be graceful enough to thank, appreciate, and love them at every possible occasion.
  - Punishing teenagers does not really work, but disciplining teenagers does. Make sure your policies are helping instead of hurting.
- Be willing to listen to their point of view. Give it a good thought before you trash it. An encouraging and supporting attitude goes a long way.
- Fear of failure is one of the greatest reasons for stress, so help them manage their anxiety and build self-esteem.
- Most importantly, let them know that you care!

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781-624-7423

*Youth Health Connection is a community benefits program of South Shore Health dedicated to the positive mental health and physical well-being of youth. Our programs collaborate with schools, families and community providers to help young people deal with the various challenges they face and the decisions they must make as they grow and mature. By combining efforts, we can ensure that local youth have access to the health-related knowledge, skills and resources they need to make healthy decisions throughout their lifetime.*

### Youth Health Connection:

*Builds and sustains community connections through healthy dialogue and sharing knowledge to keep our youth safe today and moving forward.*

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