

**UNDER PRESSURE:  
CONFRONTING THE EPIDEMIC OF  
STRESS AND ANXIETY IN TWEENS AND TEENS**

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There are several things adults can do to address the upsurge of stress and anxiety in young people. We can:

- Correct key misunderstandings by
  - Recognizing that stress usually serves as a normal, healthy, and growth-giving part of life
  - Appreciating that anxiety usually acts as a normal, healthy, and protective emotion
  
- Fix well-meaning errors by
  - Being mindful of how we react to our children's over-reactions
  - Remembering that avoidance feeds anxiety
  - Teaching young people how to manage interpersonal conflicts effectively
  
- Parent for the current conditions by
  - Encouraging all students, but especially girls, to be tactical about school
  - Protecting our priorities from digital disruption

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## HOW TO MANAGE A MELTDOWN

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Pause between each step to see if it worked. If not, move forward to next step.

- 1) Listen without interrupting
- 2) Offer sincere empathy
  - a. "That stinks!"
  - b. "I'm so sorry that happened."
- 3) Validate distress
  - a. "You have every right to be mad/sad/upset."
  - b. "A good cry is the right thing right now."
- 4) Support coping
  - a. "Is there anything I can do that won't make this worse?"
  - b. "Would some tea help?"
  - c. "Want to cuddle the dog?"
- 5) Express non-dismissive confidence
  - a. "This is tough, and so are you."
  - b. "As hard as this feels right now, I do think that you'll get through it."
  - c. "I'm so impressed by what you are able to manage."
- 6) Offer to help problem solve
  - a. "Do you want my help trying to tackle this?"
  - b. "Any ideas about what might work to make this better?"
- 7) Divide problem into buckets of
  - a. things that can change
  - b. things that can't change
- 8) Brainstorm possible solutions to the things that can change
- 9) Support acceptance of what cannot be changed
  - a. "There's always some stuff we just have to live with."
  - b. "Let's focus your energy where it can make a difference."